

Personal Integral Healing Model – Unit 3: week 6C  
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### **PERSONAL INTEGRAL HEALING MODEL**



“Healing landscape” - Photo by Rocio Aguirre (Feb 2, 2011)

My Personal Integral Healing Model starts from the premises that:

(a) Healing is a transpersonal experience itself that goes beyond the individual to heal family and social relationships as well as our relation with the earth and the universe as a whole so that we can recover the balance and harmony within the web of life;

(b) Healing should move toward a multi-modal system that not only supports the recovery of a physical condition but involves other human dimensions: physical, energetic, mental, emotional, ecological, and spiritual;

(c) Physical sickness may emerge from internal causes such as how people handle stress and life crises, what self-image people hold in their minds, and/or their contact or lack of contact with a spiritual life;

(d) Disease may emerge from external causes and thus, healing starts with the individual but expands to others, the family, the community, and the Earth;

(e) Illness is an opportunity to evolve at deeper levels toward profound transformations so that we heal our life; it is a call that leads us to reestablish wholeness by shifting our consciousness even if the body does not survive; it moves us to live more fully and authentically;

(f) Healing is an on-going process throughout our lives; it is happening every second

although we may not be aware of it; health and wellness professionals should surrender to the healing force of the universe by going beyond the rigid steps of any modality so that healing can happen; and

(g) The healer and the healed interchange roles at subtle levels; they are both healing at the same time.

In my model, the medical center embraces both conventional and complementary and alternative modalities where healers (e.g., medical intuitives, physicians, psychologists, somatic and art therapists, etc.) as well as professionals of different fields work together to promote a deep healing rather than a cure; likewise, the medical practitioners in conjunction with the individual work together using an integral approach to determine the best modality or modalities based on the person's experiences, interests, and needs. It is a place where health practitioners are encouraged to work on themselves first by cultivating self-love, self-acceptance, self-awareness, and forgiveness; in the same way, health professionals experience healing modalities and practices firsthand.

#### PRINCIPLES THAT UNLOCK OUR INNATE HEALING FORCE

In my view, the following principles are essential prescriptions for healing take place; they embody the best of modern biomedicine and quantum integral medicine practices that unlock the innate healing force that promotes health and wellness; a real healing space promotes these elements naturally emerge:

**Healing flows in both directions.** We heal when others heal because we are not separate from them; we come from the same source therefore we all are manifestations of the Divine (The Absolute, The One, The Universal Mind, God, Allah, Krishna, or the name you prefer). Personally, this is the main principle underlying any integral healing practice; whatever I intend to do in my healing model is affecting both parties because we both are the healer and the healed simultaneously. Recalling this assumption will also allow me to put my ego aside; it is to forget professional medical titles and knowledge that may hinder the healing process; in other words, I heal when I remember the person is going through the same pain I have undergone.

**Being present.** Presence means simply to be present to what is. Being present is to listen quietly and attentively with your whole being, with your total presence; it is listening with the whole body to the whole body of the other person because the body carries inner wisdom. Being present to another person grows the seeds of trust and hope; hope that healing can occur no matter what the outcome is because whatever comes up is what is needed. In

addition to that, presence allows us to recognize what is or is not working beyond any particular modality so that we can make changes as needed. Being present alleviates the suffering that comes from regretting our past or worrying about the future because healing is living fully in the present; we heal when we learn to see the sacred in everyday situation for it comes to support our growth.

**Cultivating transpersonal qualities.** Attitudes and emotions play an important role in healing; therefore, an integral healing practice promotes a space that helps us cultivate transpersonal qualities. It creates a space where guilt, fear, anxiety, worry, judgment, hatred, envy, jealousy, and anger can be transformed for more life-affirming qualities conducive to inner peace such as patience, openness, faith, courage, compassion, and forgiveness for ourselves, others and the environment. True healing “always involves meeting suffering with loving-kindness, awareness, mercy, and balance, instead of trying to drive it away with fear, distrust, anger, and loathing” (Levine, 1989, p. 196); it is a space of unconditional love. Likewise, an integral healing practice leads us to resolve inner conflict by learning to recognize and accept our light and shadow so that the former shines more and the latter may be transformed; we become united and complete when those fragmented parts of ourselves are embraced.

**Healing the healing relationship.** An integral healing model should foster authentic human connection; it should support a space that offers encouragement as well as an open and flexible relationship without specific expectations, knowing that whatever comes up will be what the individuals need; as Rachel Naomi Remen (1989) contends, “The healing relationship needs to be unstructured enough to allow that wholeness to emerge” (p. 93). This requires a paradigm shift to break current ways of thinking created by our economical systems so that we go beyond current boundaries of time and money.

On the other hand, the health practitioner should be concerned not only for patient’s physical conditions but also for her emotional, spiritual, social, and cultural requirements; positive personal attention and caring relationships bring healing and growth to our lives. Wyatt (2005) points out, “To practice medicine from an integral perspective is certainly no easy task. But it offers an opportunity to transcend the limits of reductionist thinking and the possibility of true spiritual growth for ourselves” (p. 220).

**Empowering the client to take responsibility for her/his health and well-being.** The role of the therapist is to open a space that allows the person to heal herself by removing the obstacles that impede her innate healing potential. The healing space should foster mindfulness; this can be done by encouraging the person to take her health into her own

hands, relinquish unhealthy habits, and assume responsibility for her thoughts, feelings, and actions. The healer can guide the person to learn to tune in and trust her intuition so that she trusts her inner knowing/guidance/wisdom rather than relying exclusively on external authority.

**Finding who we are and meaning.** My personal integral healing model seeks to help people find meaning and growth in physical symptoms because they may be covering deeper issues; for example, sickness may be an opportunity to come to terms with who we are and what we really love so that we learn to follow our desires and effectively express all we have inside. It can be a time for self-discovery and being authentic; it can be a call to move toward what is really important for us, what brings us joy and deep fulfillment in order to feel alive! Joan Borysenko (1989) says, “Most of us are rarely in the present moment. Instead, we reside in a thicket of past regrets and future fears, often based on the expectation of others. Nothing is good enough –especially us” (p. 190).

We all want to have a purpose in life; this is our contribution and legacy to our family, friends, community and the world in general; it makes us feel vibrant, alive, and healthy. Larry Dossey (2005) points out, “The immense popularity of alternative therapies and therapists may be due in large measure to the fact that they help people find meaning in their lives when they need it most” (p. 152). Finding what is meaningful and valuable in our experience is essential for healing because it helps us to recover the soul loss we are facing and that is reflected not only in inner affliction but in the crises of the outer world (e.g., violence).

**Learning to accept death.** I believe healing comes also when we accept death as part of the natural and sacred process of life cycles: birth and death, death and rebirth; everything dies to make room for new life. Our fear of death is generally associated with what we believe happens after death (especially western thinking); for some people, it is our end (nothing else happens) and for others, we might go to a horrible place where we would be judged and punished for sins committed in life. If consciousness goes beyond the boundaries of time and space, it makes sense to me to think that there is life after physical death; it brings hope, growth, even joy to know we do not die. Changing our limiting ideas about death for more positive ones and discovering the sacredness within will lead us to approach death differently without fear; besides, healing our relationship with death also brings compassion to support those who are dying; as Siegel (1989) says, “...we too will be able to see that dying can be the final healing. For we die as we live” (p. 234).

## HEALING HUMAN DIMENSIONS

Healing occurs in multiple human dimensions or levels: physical, mental-emotional, spiritual, energetic, among others. Although we are integrated beings and these dimensions are connected and interrelated (meaning that imbalances or harmony at one level affect the others), I have separated them to describe my model; however, practices at one level produce an effect on the others. I will refer to some of those human dimensions.

**Physical.** Our body is a vehicle for our development; it connects us to the earth and all that exists; the body wisdom conveys intuitive messages and knowledge, is a source for spiritual experiences, and a resource to heal old wounds (our psychological history shapes our body-mind). The so-called “body-mind integration” means to live in our whole body; Nancy Rowe (2003) explains, “on a psychospiritual level, they (e.g., gut feelings) guide us by informing us when we are in our integrity and when we are not”; they also “ensure our survival and our self-preservation” (p. 159).

To heal at this level, we should develop body awareness; that is, to fully and consciously inhabit our body so that we remember what it means to be an embodied being; this leads us to more easily comprehend our relation with the world as our extended self and reminds us that the subtle dimension of consciousness pervades both our inner and outer physical environments. To make manifest the body innate healing and to promote our health and wellness, we should pay attention to stress and fatigue, practice physical exercises (e.g., sports) and/or any other body modality (e.g., yoga, authentic movement, dancing, to name a few) as well as have proper nutrition according to our individual needs.

**Mental-Emotional.** During our life we develop defense mechanisms or ego defenses such as repression, denial, and projection (we tend to attribute to others our own qualities, feelings, or intentions); they appear to protect us but they also distort our sense of reality limiting our life, arresting our psychological and spiritual development. On the other hand, our main drives are an endless material pursuit and an excessive search for recognition; we strive for being socially accepted to the point that we lose authenticity, spontaneity and sacrifice our deepest desires; we give a huge relevance to “doing” and “having” thinking that our happiness depends on it; “the more we get the more we want”. Having losing our deeper sense of self (our soul), we promote worldwide issues like racism, sexism, and classism creating even more differences and pain; and thus, we go through life suffering psychological and physical anguish, feeling disconnected, shameful, anxious, threatened, frustrated, disappointed, and overwhelmed by a great range of fears.

In search for a “cure” to our mental and physical suffering, longing for happiness and

wholeness, trying to find meaning in our lives and comprehend who we are, we look outside making an attempt to find answers to our questions. In spite of our efforts, nothing seems to fill our vacuum; we remain feeling a yearning for something deeper we do not understand but that is underlying here within us; we just need to turn inward and look inside.

How do we recover our sense of self? How do we honor who we really are and live authentically? We can start by acknowledging and embracing our light and shadow, recognizing our ego defenses, and replacing restrictive thoughts and emotions for more life-affirming ones. We can minimize or drop our inadequacies by being aware of them, understanding how they operate so that we can transform them; it is a matter of self-awareness. Self-awareness and mindfulness lead us to be the witness of our own process to reintegrate those fragmented parts of our selves instead of let them control or limit us. For that, we need to turn inward, to get closer to our inner world and thus, identify, observe, acknowledge those parts we do not know or want to recognize; in so doing, we need to be opened to accept all feelings including those of grief, anger, sadness, jealousy, and fear so that we can make them develop into tenderness, gratitude, love and compassion.

Using modalities such as dreamwork, shadow work, movement, art, imagery, visualization, journaling (written or oral reflection) and others, get us closer to our Self; they help us access our inner experiences, bringing feelings and memories to the conscious level so that we can accept, transform, and heal them.

**Ecology, family and community.** Looking for happiness in the wrong place leads us to an insane rush toward destruction due to our burning desires for power and dominance over others and the planet; we face life with aggressiveness and blindness. On the other hand, a healthy and mature person is considered to be very independent, competitive and powerful; a sense of independence and autonomy becomes inappropriate when it causes disconnection. Although new science studies show everything is interconnected, disconnection and isolation seem to be a common problem in our society; they contribute to psychological suffering besides they feed our fragmented worldview; we not only disconnect from others but from the authentic core of our being.

In my personal integral healing model to cultivate connection, I would promote the development of relational qualities, the use of natural settings and rituals that integrate the family, community, and the environment. First, to break with psychological anguish that comes from isolation, I would encourage the development of relational qualities such as healthy connections based on mutuality (openness to change and growth), empathy (understanding others), collaboration, appreciation of people differences and diversity, care

of others, and appropriate expression of feelings. I would implement healing modalities that encourage the person to be part of community activities and/or assisting family members especially providing guidance to the young; we all have a gift to share. Second, healing centers should be built in places (free of toxins) that allow integration with the environment so that the patient can feel the healing effects of natural settings; people can observe the Earth as a living system they are a part of. I would integrate the use of ecotherapies that remind us the interconnectedness and interrelatedness between all beings on Earth and the larger whole we all belong to; there is much we can learn from nature (e.g., about harmony and balance). Third, I would integrate the use of rituals for communal and/or individual healing due to their power of transformation; in so doing, I would encourage people to create their own rituals so that they have meaning and value. Rituals that are part of our belief system bring harmony and wholeness, help us experience oneness and connection with all beings and spirit, as well as lead us to feel and commemorate the sacredness of everyday life and the holiness of human existence.

**Spirituality.** It is not strange that despite the fast and high technological and scientific progress, there is an increase on psychological issues, violence acts, and other worldwide crises; it seems to me current afflictions are related to the loss of our spiritual direction. Ancient traditions have taught us how to connect with this spiritual realm that transcends our ordinary experiences through rituals, dance, drumming, dreams, pray, meditation, among others. Francis Vaughan (1998) talking about differences between spirituality and religion points out that the former is “The subjective experience of the sacred” and thus, “Everyone has access to it” because “it exists inside and outside of religious traditions”. Spirituality comes from direct experience with the sacred in our daily life, involves all human dimensions, goes beyond the individual ego boundaries, and moves us toward a greater, more inspiring and meaningful reality; it brings healing to our life because it invites us to accept and embrace hard times/life crises (e.g., sickness) as opportunities for learning and growth.

In my personal healing model, spirituality is relevant to human health; in order to promote connection with our spiritual dimension, we should have a soulful life as well as integrate silence and spiritual practices in our experience. First, having a soulful life is to bridge spirituality with everyday actions by bringing spirit and consciousness into each situation; it is to acknowledge the sacred in every moment; it is to recognize that through our relationships with ourselves, others and the Earth we have opportunities for connecting with care, harmony, kindness, respect, generosity, and compassion; it is not about being perfect but sincere.

Second, we can experience the transcendent dimension of our existence just by connecting with our inner silence; being opened to moments of solitude is healthy and enriching. Similarly, integrating spiritual practices into our life moves us to wholeness and in consequence, heals us; they are transformative when carried out with awareness, intention, and attention; some of them come from spiritual traditions such as meditation, prayer, sufi stories, ritual, ceremonies, yoga; others come from psychotherapy, (e.g., self analysis, dreamwork), others are ways of self reflection (e.g., journaling) and expression (e.g., art, movement, dance, music to name a few). The cultivation of transpersonal qualities such as, compassion, forgiveness, harmony, respect, love, gratitude, etc, not only improves our health but has a high social impact.

## CONCLUSION

In my view, curing and healing have different meaning; on the one hand, curing is limited to alleviate physical symptoms and focuses on sicknesses (as our conventional medical model does); healing, on the other hand, involves all aspects of human nature (physical, energetic, mental, emotional, ecological, and spiritual, etc.) influencing subtle levels that cannot be observed with our five senses; healing can happen even if our physical body does not survive.

For healing to take place, it is necessary to understand the body-mind integration and thus, the role of our conscious and unconscious beliefs over our health. Quantum physics theory explains there is no division between the physical world and consciousness; likewise, consciousness is out of the confines of brain and body and in consequence, its effects are nonlocal; this means that we need to be aware of the effects of our thoughts and feelings because they affect both our inner and outer world. This encourages us to transform limiting thinking for life-affirming attitudes because the mind can create bodily responses by linking intention; in other words, factors such as hope, expectation or placebo effects affect healing; sometimes a modality work just simply because it has meaning for us and we are aware of it; Dienstfrey (2005) says, "...the social situation or psychosocial factor exists and this existence has meaning for the organism" (p. 54).

In short, my personal integral healing practice fosters an integral medical model that acknowledges not only the objective but also subjective experiences that connect our inner and outer world; similarly, I would like to incorporate a broader and integral thinking that encompasses many perspectives and different ways of knowing by promoting an integrative vision that includes ancient wisdom and modern science, east and west worldviews,

rationality and intuition, spirituality and science, conventional and complementary medicine (including distant healing modalities such as, therapeutic touch, Reiki, intercessory prayer, among others).

The personal integral healing model I have tried to describe here may appear very optimistic, naive, even unreal for our current medical system and state of things; however, I think changes can happen or start to happen if we let go of fear and work together. As Frances Vaughan (2005) points out, “If we are to move toward a more integral approach to consciousness, we will acknowledge all perspectives, all the different ways of knowing, and include all the different ways of investigating and talking about this topic” and “we need to find ways of collaborating”(p. 394).

Finally, I strongly believe I should start these principles and guidelines for my own healing process first.



“Open wings” - Photo by Rocio Aguirre (Oct 2, 2010)

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