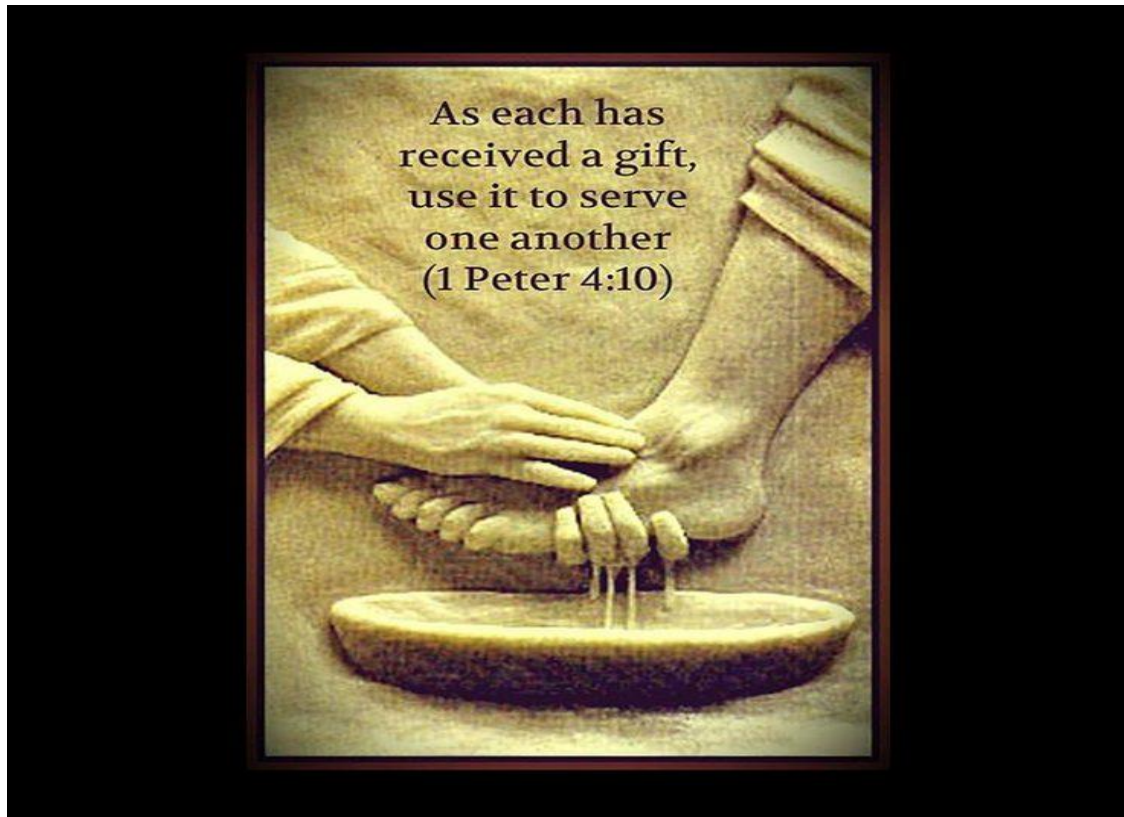


Creating a Healing Community



Holistic health care is a unique form of healing from several perspectives. Holistic health care focuses on the whole person, mind body and spirit. Holistic health care emphasizes prevention first and treatment of disease secondarily. Holistic health care teaches self-responsibility for the personal maintenance of health and in the healing process. Holistic health care relies on an equal relationship and partnership between the doctor/therapist and the patient. Holistic health care embraces the use of methods of healing which are nurturing to the normal physiological processes of the body and help to establish homeostasis (balance and harmony). Holistic health care employs modalities of care which engage and connect with the human being's mind, body and spiritual nature. Holistic health care defines healing as more than the sum of its individual parts, it is not just an energy, it is a power.

Holistic health care is fundamentally different from the materialistic allopathic (medical/osteopathic) approach to patient care which bases the validity, effectiveness, and worth of medicine solely on statistical outcome data. There are many ways to measure "validity", "effectiveness" and "worth" that have nothing to do with statistical outcomes but rather have everything to do with human values such as spirituality, self-awareness, belief, happiness, and growth.

Which is “real” medicine? A system that suppresses symptoms through the use of synthetic medication or a system which nurtures a profound understanding of oneself and purpose in life during the time one has in this life?

Due to the unique and transformative aspects of holistic health care, its nurturing characteristics, it combines well with concepts of community building. I recognized this aspect of holistic health care several decades ago and because of this realization I created a healing community around my practice. I knew as a single individual I was limited by my personal and professional abilities, as well as, by time and energy as to how I could engage with and serve my patients. A healing community combines the resources, talents, abilities and energy of many individuals.

What is a healing community? It is any group of individuals who unite around a common purpose and measurable goals and objectives. A healing community can take many forms and be centered upon different concepts or missions. It may be a service group, a support group, or a school.

When a healing community leads to the establishment of a school that school may have resulted from an initial service project which organically transformed to serve a more global purpose such as when a realization is achieved regarding certain critical needs within the original special needs population.

My first attempts to build a healing community centered around the development of the Blue Heron Academy martial art program for women who were victims of rape, incest, and domestic abuse and later led to the establishment of the Academy’s career programs in the healing arts and sciences. The martial arts program transformed into a vocational education program because of my realization that women in transition needed vocational training and jobs so they can support themselves and their families. Our first healing community was built around the combined energies and talents of two dozen individuals and led to the development of a community clinic that treated individuals from the mission district of Grand Rapids, Michigan and HIV/AIDS patients.

A primary characteristic of a healing community is to guide people along the path of personal transformation. It is the inherent nature of a healthy community to nurture growth within the individual members of the group and for the group to celebrate this growth when it is achieved.

The healing community must transform itself from within. If the community remains centered on a single personality or if the healing community fails to transform from within it will perish. Healing communities often begin around the personality of a strong and talented individual but if that individual does not willingly share power and authority and nurture others in their growth, the community will fail.

A healing community brings people together to love and to support each other along the journey of healing. An individual health care practitioner is limited by many personal factors in assisting individuals who due to illness or injury are thrust into the midst of a healing crisis. Our health care system is failing at the most profound and fundamental levels because it does not recognize or accept medicine beyond a pill. Drugs are not healing. There is nothing in a drug that is essential for the maintenance of a human cell. Drugs do not nurture life. Food, nutrition, pure water, spirituality, love, understanding, forgiveness, and acceptance lead to true healing.

A Chinese definition of a leader is a forerunner or some on who is walking on a path slightly ahead of those who are following. But only a few short steps ahead. At any time, the leader stumbles or falls those on the path immediately behind him or her can step forward and lead. I have taken this journey and led a healing community for many years. I invite others to consider doing the same, perhaps you already are.

For those of you that will, I have one more thing to share with you and it is a warning. For every light there is a shadow. The brighter the light the darker the shadow. You will be challenged and there are those around you and within your community who will arise to destroy the good you are doing. Do not let them do that.

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