

# HONORING OUR PAIN



MICHAEL KEARNEY,  
MONTH 4

# THE SPIRAL OF THE WORK THAT RECONNECTS









WHY?



A NUMBER OF WISDOM TRADITIONS TELL US  
THAT, PARADOXICALLY, HEALING IS FOUND  
WHERE WE MIGHT LEAST EXPECT IT:  
IN THE WOUND, IN THE PAIN,  
IN THE SUFFERING

"MAY YOU HAVE THE COMMITMENT TO  
KNOW WHAT HAS HURT YOU,  
TO ALLOW IT COME CLOSER TO YOU, AND IN  
THE END TO BECOME ONE WITH YOU."

ST FINTAN

"YOUR DEFECTS ARE THE WAY THAT GLORY  
GETS MANIFESTED. WHOEVER SEES CLEARLY  
WHAT'S DISEASED IN HIMSELF BEGINS TO  
GALLOP ON THE WAY... SELF-COMPLACENCY  
BLOCKS THE WORKMANSHIP. ... DON'T TURN  
YOUR HEAD. KEEP LOOKING AT THE  
BANDAGED PLACE. THAT'S WHERE THE LIGHT  
ENTERS YOU."

RUMI



"RING THE BELLS THAT STILL CAN RING,  
FORGET YOUR PERFECT OFFERING.  
THERE'S A CRACK, A CRACK IN EVERYTHING;  
THAT'S HOW THE LIGHT GETS IN."

LEONARD COHEN

"WE ARE CALLED NOT TO RUN FROM THE DISCOMFORT, OR  
RUN FROM THE GRIEF, OR THE FEELINGS OF OUTRAGE, OR EVEN  
FEAR. FOR IF WE CAN BE FEARLESS WITH OUR PAIN, IT TURNS;  
IT DOESN'T STAY STATIC. IT ONLY DOESN'T CHANGE IF WE REFUSE  
TO LOOK AT IT. BUT WHEN WE LOOK AT IT, WHEN WE TAKE IT IN  
OUR HANDS, WHEN WE CAN JUST BE WITH IT AND KEEP  
BREATHING, IT TURNS. IT TURNS TO REVEAL ITS OTHER FACE;  
AND THE OTHER FACE OF OUR PAIN FOR THE WORLD IS OUR  
LOVE FOR THE WORLD; OUR ABSOLUTE, INSEPARABLE  
CONNECTEDNESS TO ALL LIFE."

JOANNA MACY

EXPERIENCING PAIN IS AN INEVITABLE  
SYMPTOM OF BEING ALIVE AS SENTIENT BEINGS  
IN A WORLD OF CHANGE.

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SYMPTOM OF BEING ALIVE AS SENTIENT BEINGS  
IN A WORLD OF CHANGE.

WHILE WE DON'T HAVE A CHOICE ABOUT THIS,  
WE DO HAVE A CHOICE ABOUT HOW WE ARE  
WITH AND WHAT WE DO WITH OUR PAIN



EVEN THOUGH IT'S COMMON SENSE TO TAKE  
OUR FINGER OUT OF THE FLAME, THE THORN  
OUT OF OUR FOOT (IF IT'S POSSIBLE TO DO SO),  
THESE TEACHERS (AND OUR OWN  
EXPERIENCE) TELL US THAT THERE COULD BE  
SOMETHING OF VALUE IN FINDING A NON-  
HARMFUL WAY OF BEING WITH OUR PAIN.

BUT EVEN IF WHAT THESE WISDOM TEACHERS TELL US IS TRUE,  
IT'S HARD, AND COUNTERINTUITIVE, TO TURN TOWARDS, YET  
ALONE "LEAN INTO," OUR PAIN?

*DO WE REALLY HAVE TO?*

UNFORTUNATELY, I THINK WE DO.

I DON'T THINK THERE IS ANY WAY AROUND IT.

IF WE WANT TO KEEP MOVING ON THE SPIRITUAL PATH WE HAVE  
TO FIND A CREATIVE WAY OF BEING WITH OUR PAIN.

WHAT IF WE DON'T?

EVEN IF WE CAN FIX THE PAIN, WE LOSE SOME  
POTENTIAL FOR HEALING IF WE SIMPLY AVOID  
THE EXPERIENCE.

AND THIS HAS EVEN GREATER CONSEQUENCES  
WITH PAIN THAT WE CANNOT FIX



"PAIN + RESISTANCE = SUFFERING"

## *UNATTENDED PAIN IS BAD FOR OUR HEALTH*

- IT EXHAUSTS US (BURNOUT)
- IT CAN MAKE US ILL
- IT DISCONNECTS US -- FROM OURSELVES,  
FROM OTHERS, AND FROM OUR WORLD

## QUESTION:

ARE THERE WAYS OF BEING WITH OUR PAIN THAT  
CAN SUSTAIN RATHER THAN DRAIN US?  
THAT CAN ALLOW OUR HEARTS TO STAY SOFT AND  
OPEN, EVEN IN THE MOST CHALLENGING OF  
SITUATIONS?

# THREE WAYS OF BEING WITH PAIN

## HEROIC

- MEDICAL MODEL
- "TREAT OR RETREAT" (FIGHT, FLIGHT, OR FREEZE)
- TRUST INFORMATION, EXPERTISE, TECHNOLOGY
- A POWER OVER/DOWN MODEL
- POTENTIAL FOR CURE



# THREE WAYS OF BEING WITH PAIN

## WOUNDED HEALER

- MINDFULNESS, SELF-KNOWLEDGE, SELF-COMPASSION
- "BEING PRESENT TO" – "HOLDING" – "WAITING"
- TRUST IN OUR OWN EXPERIENCE AND THE INNATE HEALING POTENTIAL IN THE OTHER
- AN EGALITARIAN MODEL
- POTENTIAL FOR HEALING

# THREE WAYS OF BEING WITH PAIN







*DEEP NATURE CONNECTION*

*RECEPTIVITY*







*EXPERIENCING*





*ALLOWING, LETTING BE, LETTING GO*

# THREE WAYS OF BEING WITH PAIN

## HEROIC

- PERSONAL PAIN THAT CAN BE FIXED

## WOUNDED HEALER

- PERSONAL PAIN THAN CAN'T BE FIXED

## FLOWING THROUGH

- OVERWHELMING PSYCHOLOGICAL PAIN

# THREE WAYS OF BEING WITH PAIN

## HEROIC

- PERSONAL PAIN THAT CAN BE FIXED

## WOUNDED HEALER

- PERSONAL PAIN THAN CAN'T BE FIXED

## FLOWING THROUGH

- OVERWHELMING PSYCHOLOGICAL PAIN
- *ATTITUDE AND PRACTICE THAT CAN INFUSE AND INFORM HOW WE APPROACH ALL KINDS OF PAIN*



## THE FLOWING THROUGH WAY OF BEING WITH PAIN

- BUDDHIST TONGLEN MEDITATION
- JOANNA MACY'S "BREATHING THROUGH MEDITATION"
- WOLF WAHPERAH'S ORAL TEACHING
- THE NEST IN THE STREAM: NOTICING HOW NATURE DOES IT

## THE FLOWING THROUGH WAY OF BEING WITH PAIN

- REALIZING (RE-MEMBERING) OUR ONENESS WITH NATURE
- BEING WITH A FELT-SENSE OF GRATITUDE
- OPENING & RECEIVING
- *ALLOWING OURSELVES TO EXPERIENCE THE FELT-SENSE OF PAIN IN OUR HEARTS*
- LETTING THIS BE, JUST AS IT IS
- RETURNING TO THE SENSATIONS OF THE BREATH-STREAM
- NOTICING THAT THIS FLOWING THROUGH IS HAPPENING ALL BY ITSELF
- RELEASING ALL, SURRENDERING ALL TO THE FLOWING THROUGH
- WITHOUT EXPECTATION OF ANY PARTICULAR OUTCOME
- FOR THE SAKE OF ALL BEINGS

THE FLOW THROUGH OF THE NEST IN THE  
STREAM IS ABOUT AN ATTITUDE OF OPENNESS  
TO LIFE;  
ABOUT THE EXPERIENCE OF DEEP CONNECTION  
THAT COMES WITH THIS;  
AND ABOUT THE YEARNING TO ACT THAT  
THEN EMERGES;  
NATURALLY AND SPONTANEOUSLY

IT'S ABOUT  
*REALIZING OUR DEEPER IDENTITY*



*BECOMING THE FLOW-THROUGHS WE ALREADY ARE*

# SKYPE EXERCISE



# 1. WHAT IS MY DE-FULT RELATIONSHIP WITH PAIN?

- HEROIC
- WOUNDED HEALER
- FLOWING THROUGH

1. WHAT IS MY DE-FULT RELATIONSHIP WITH PAIN?
2. WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF THESE ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS?



1. WHAT IS MY DE-FAULT RELATIONSHIP WITH PAIN?
2. WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF THESE ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS?
3. WHAT MIGHT/COULD/WOULD I LIKE TO DO DIFFERENTLY?

## REMEMBER

- *THERE'S NO HIERARCHY OF VALUE HERE*
- *EACH APPROACH HAS IT'S TIME AND PLACE*
- *NOT ABOUT SELF-BLAME OR JUDGMENT*
- *I PERSONALLY OPERATE FROM ALL THREE IN ANY GIVEN DAY  
(PROBABLY MOSTLY HEROIC, SOMETIMES WOUNDED HEALER,  
AND OCCASIONALLY - NOT ENOUGH - FLOWING-THROUGH)*

*I FIND IT HELPFUL TO BE MINDFUL OF HOW I AM WITH MY PAIN  
IN ANY GIVEN MOMENT SO I'M ABLE TO CONSCIOUSLY CHOOSE  
THE MODE OF BEING WITH PAIN, MY OWN AND ANOTHER'S,  
THAT I THINK/FEEL MIGHT BE THE RIGHT/MOST HELPFUL  
RESPONSE IN & TO ANY GIVEN SET OF CIRCUMSTANCES*



## MONTHLY ASSIGNMENT

- PRACTICE NATURE-GRATITUDE AND NEST-IN-THE-STREAM MEDITATIONS (MP3)
- IF HELPFUL, CONTINUE TO KEEP A "GRATITUDE JOURNAL" – ENTERING AT LEAST ONE THING AT THE END OF EACH DAY THAT YOU FEEL GRATEFUL FOR
- CONTINUE TO VISIT YOUR SIT SPOT AND GETTING TO KNOW THE NEIGHBORS
- READ ABOUT, LISTEN TO, AND PRACTICE AT LEAST ONE (IN ADDITION TO SIT SPOT) OF JON YOUNG'S "CORE ROUTINE OF DEEP NATURE CONNECTION"

## CORE ROUTINES OF DEEP NATURE CONNECTION

(JON YOUNG – “8 SHIELDS MODEL” OR “COYOTE MENTORING”)

- *THINGS PEOPLE DO TO LEARN NATURE'S WAY*
- *NOT “LESSONS”*
- *NOT “KNOWLEDGE”*
- *LEARNING HABITS*
- *COME AS SECOND NATURE TO ALL HUMAN BEINGS*
- *WHAT NATIVE AMERICAN PEOPLES CALL “OUR ORIGINAL INSTRUCTIONS”*

*“HUMAN BEINGS EVOLVED WITH ORIGINAL INSTRUCTIONS DESIGNED FOR  
DYNAMIC AWARENESS OF NATURE.*

*IF WE CAN INSPIRE PRACTICE OF THESE CORE ROUTINES, REMEMBERING  
OUR ORIGINAL INSTRUCTIONS WILL HAPPEN ON IT'S OWN”*

*JON YOUNG*

# CORE ROUTINES OF DEEP NATURE CONNECTION

(JON YOUNG – “COYOTE’S GUIDE TO CONNECTING WITH NATURE”)

1. *SIT SPOT*
2. *EXPANDING SENSORY AWARENESS*
3. *QUESTIONING AND TRACKING*
4. *ANIMAL FORMS*
5. *WANDERING*
6. *MAPPING*
7. *EXPLORING FIELD GUIDES*
8. *JOURNALING*
9. *SURVIVAL LIVING*
10. *MIND’S EYE IMAGINING*
11. *THANKSGIVING*
12. *STORY OF THE DAY*
13. *LISTENING FOR BIRD LANGUAGE*

# MONTH 5: SELF-COMPASSION PRACTICE



RADHULE WEININGER PHD