



The Healing Nest

The Official Newsletter of **Rising Bird Healing Arts**

A healing space for the mind, body, & soul.

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Issue #3: Winter 2008

"The Healing Nest" is the official newsletter of Rising Bird Healing Arts.

This newsletter is for clients and friends of Rising Bird Healing Arts. You may send all correspondence and newsletter contributions to Courtney Putnam at cputnam@rising-bird.com.

Rising Bird Healing Arts

Massage • Reiki • Holistic Healing

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Courtney E. Putnam.

Arriving

"I have arrived
I am home

In the here
and in the now"

Thich Naht Hanh



We often think we are already here. I know I do. For instance, right now I am feeling quite present with my writing. I hear the clicking of the keys on my laptop and a bit of an ache in my knees as I sit at this cafe. But now I'm feeling a little nagging twinge and for some reason a to-do list is running through the landscape of my mind. I'm also having flashes of my dreams from last night. I remember something about returning to high school and having to finish a research paper in order to graduate. Now I notice my tea has gotten cold. Why haven't I been sipping? Drinking tea reminds me of my friend Kristen and our weekly writing dates. Ah, good. I'm back to writing again. I'm back to the present moment. Deep breath. I'm in my body again.

One definition of arrive is "to return." I love this definition because it reminds me that arriving means *returning to myself*. Even with the best of intentions for staying "in the now," I can find myself traveling to the past or the future in my mind, often stirring up a pot of anxiety stew. With some breathwork and focus, I try to find my way back to myself in the here and now. Sometimes this journey feels arduous. After all, the to-do list can be quite the distraction! And worry feels to me like the foggy film on the inside of your car windshield: you keep wiping it away, but it fogs up again.

But even when I travel away from the present moment, I know that I can return to myself with just a bit of focus and positive intention. I can breathe in Thich Naht Hanh's words: "I have arrived / I am home." I can remember that my thoughts are cyclical like breath, and that I can always, always breathe myself back into my body. So as you read this newsletter, why not try to do just that: read. Ask your to-do lists and worries to take a break from their daily duties, and allow yourself a few minutes to breathe, read, and be entirely yourself. In the process of creating this newsletter, I've tried to do the same.

On Healing:

An Interview with Dr. Greg Yasuda

I have known Greg Yasuda for the past four years, first as my anatomy and physiology instructor at the Brenneke School of Massage, and next as both his patient and colleague. Greg is a naturopathic physician, as well as a licensed massage practitioner certified in Craniosacral and Visceral Manipulation. With his background in naturopathic medicine and his bodywork experience, Greg brings to his work a powerful blend of modalities which serve to facilitate his patients' healing processes.

Sessions with Greg are multifaceted, integrative, and holistic. He focuses on what *your* needs are, which guides his work in a way that resonates with *you*. I find him to be one of the most open, contemplative, and receptive people I know, and these qualities allow him to listen to you deeply. Greg has helped me with migraine headaches, low blood sugar, and anxiety, among many other things. He has a gentle approach that always puts me at ease the moment I walk into his office.

What follows is my interview with Greg. What started out as a conversation about Greg's approach to his practice turned into a philosophical discussion of health and illness, the power of intention, and the transformative ability of our bodies to heal.

As a Naturopathic Doctor and a Licensed Massage Practitioner, how do you integrate such a diversity of modalities/approaches into your practice?

The practice of health care is truly a marriage of art and science. We follow the facts as far as they can take us, but true healing always incorporates a bit of the mysterious or unknown. What that means is that the practice of medicine always comes down to a judgment. Whether you are choosing between visceral manipulation and craniosacral, herbs and antibiotics, or Prozac and Welbutrin, we are always making our best educated guess that is informed by our sphere of knowledge: facts, experience and intuition. The true art of medicine lies in exploring the intersection or commonalities between our sphere as practitioners, and that of our clients. This is being in rapport. If I'm not connected with my patient, that's not medicine at all. That's my process and my protocol at the expense of their process, their needs. Only by being in rapport can we hope to transcend our personal agendas and facilitate the healing that our patients seek. I try to guide all of my interactions in this way, balancing the science with the art of medicine.

How you see the connection between our mental, emotional, and psychological states and our physical health? What is your approach to helping your clients heal on all of these levels?

While it is useful to consider these different levels of experience or being when working with patients, it is equally important to understand that these clear distinctions don't really exist. For instance, a patient presenting with depression may equally benefit from dietary modification, counseling, massage, sunlight, vitamin D, herbals, hormones, homeopathic remedies, exercise...and more. To put it another way, by engaging the patient on the physical, biochemical, mental, energetic, lifestyle or environmental level, we can affect the emotional. They're all related and interconnected. I believe it is impossible to interact with a patient on just one of these levels, and not have some effect, however large or small, on the rest of their being. So the real goal is not to worry about the depression per se, but rather to identify the most significant obstacle(s) to the healing of the whole person, and to start there.

In addition to your knowledge of the human body, your skill as a bodywork practitioner, and your experience as a naturopathic doctor, you also have cultivated a strong sense of intuition when working with people. How has your intuitive approach and your skill of listening deeply to the body enabled you to help your clients? How has this approach affected the way you feel about your work in the world?

The most powerful tools that any practitioner possesses are his assessment tools. Treatment is usually very simple - release this ligament, prescribe this pill. The trick is in knowing what to treat, and how. Having learned all about nutrients, all about homeopathic remedies, all about herbs... where do you begin? What do you give and, more perplexing, what don't you give? Indeed, shopping bags full of supplements is not the answer! We can look up how to generally treat a disease, but not how to specifically treat the person in front of us. I began to augment conventional diagnostic tools, such as laboratory testing and physical exam, with listening to the body as well as muscle testing. Both are tools to access intuition, and together they have transformed my practice by helping me to prioritize where to start, what are the most significant obstacles, and what is secondary. What I have seen is that healing often ensues without ever having to directly treat the disease. It's a very satisfying and life-affirming way to practice medicine, and it's also really useful to be able to take a totally different approach for those patients for whom disease treatment has not worked.

Is there a book you've read recently that you feel is impacting your work?

I've been reading a lot of books about the healing process lately, with the specific intent that it would impact my work! It's funny, but our education focuses so intensely on science, measurements and facts, that the experiential, intangible aspects of medicine get lost. For instance, what is the definition of healing? At some point I realized that I didn't have an answer for that question the same way

I can say, for instance, that blood pressure should be below 140/90 mm Hg. Why not? It seems a simple enough question for someone who makes this his profession!

I found a real gem in the library a few months back, called Healers on Healing. It is a collection of essays from practitioners of varied backgrounds about what they think the essential component of healing is. This did not exactly answer the question, but it helped me to understand that the question is really unanswerable: everyone has to define what healing means to them, and that will vary by circumstances. Healing from cancer carries with it an opportunity for personal transformation that just isn't the same as, say, from a paper cut!

But what about that paper cut? Even something so minor envelopes a piece of the mystery that is healing. We understand the physiologic events that heal such an injury, the what and the how of it, but we still don't know exactly why it happens... therefore we can't make it happen, either. It's quite ironic that a surgeon cuts for a living, but is not actually capable of healing the very incisions he makes. He helps the body as much as possible - placing sutures, preventing infection - but the body must heal itself. Health care practitioners really aren't healers, we are healing facilitators.

How would you describe the key differences between traditional western medicine and naturopathic medicine? In what ways do you think naturopathic medicine may work well with traditional medicine?

Conventional medicine is a paradigm of control. That's why it is so effective with acute trauma. When there's a major emergency, we can no longer rely on the body to regulate itself, so we control the situation to the best of our ability. The results are often astounding, particularly in the ER. Other times, this approach falters. Despite the highest spending per capita of any nation on health care, our infant mortality rates are comparatively high. I can't help but wonder if this is due, in part, to the nature of childbirth as a mysterious, ancient and powerful process that defies our attempts to control it. It is not like a vehicle accident or a drug overdose - it's much bigger than that.

Naturopathic medicine invokes the healing wisdom of the body. It's a surrender of control; it is an acknowledgement of the underlying, self-intelligent, self-activated tendency for the body to heal itself. In fact, in most cases it would require a massive effort not to heal - think of cuts, bruises, bone fractures, colds, headaches, etc. Thus, an essential component to naturopathic philosophy is to treat the whole person, not their disease. In this way, any obstacles to healing can be identified and addressed, whether it is their diet, their stressful job or a lack of sunshine. Remove the obstacles and the healing is imminent.

Traditional medicine also tends to be very suspicious and judgmental of alternatives. Naturopathic medicine

is almost the opposite - interested in an ever-growing array of alternatives! I tend to think of all medicines as complementary. No one has all the answers. We need each other as colleagues, as a community, as human beings. I can't think of many instances where it is more useful to separate ourselves from each other than it is to embrace each other, no matter what topic we are discussing.

How do you see the interplay between intention and health? I guess this is a question about the mind-body connection, but it may be a bit more specific than that. I'm wondering how you see our intentional thoughts and visions impacting our health - and I suppose our lives in general?

So much of the mind-body connection has been beautifully documented in scientific inquiry. What is perhaps most interesting to me that has come out of all of this is the validation of "mind-into-matter". When we experience an emotion, there are physical, biochemical and cellular changes that occur in the body as a result. Our mind has changed our matter. It is irrefutable, but I feel the significance is often lost.

Now let's take it a step further. There is a sizable body of information gathered from research in modern physics that demonstrates these types of effects extending beyond our bodies, affecting other people, affecting plants and even machines, even transcending time and space. That may be several steps further! Yet this research has been ongoing for decades, and recent mainstream success of books like *The Secret* and *The Power of Intention* suggests that the public at large is beginning to recognize that what mystics have said for centuries may be true: we create our own realities.

This provides some insight into the effects of positive or negative attitudes or self-talk, and the effectiveness of affirmations and focused intent. Perhaps we are what we eat, but also what we think! And in medicine, this suggests that we can indeed find meaning in our illnesses. Unfortunately, I have seen some people fall into this sort of trap, thinking that their illness is therefore their fault. But implicit in that thinking is that illness is somehow wrong. We seem to judge illness negatively: illness is bad, sick people are weak...I understand that nobody wants to be sick, but nothing is more natural in my mind than the healing process. Does that not require that illness be just as natural? Examining our lives compassionately, being mindful of our attitudes, and setting clear, animated intentions are perhaps the most powerful tools we have to impact our health, our lives and our world.

Greg Yasuda, ND, LMP may be reached via email at gregwizard@aol.com or phone at (206) 223-3333. His practice is located in the Ravenna Homeopathic Clinic building at 5502 34th Ave. NE in Seattle.

The Body's Memory

"To embrace our body's truth is to embrace our past. There is no other way. The body is home to all that has happened to us, and it remembers."

"We must go to the cells for our truth."

—John Lee, *Writing from the Body*

If our bodies do indeed remember all that has happened to us in our lives, imagine how much they know about us. Imagine how much we can learn about ourselves when we listen deeply to what our bodies have to tell us. We know that the body responds to daily stimuli -- temperature, light, sound, vibration, etc.--but I believe it also responds to inner rhythms or memories within us. Have you ever involuntarily responded to something and later realized with your conscious mind why you had such a reaction? Or think of a time during a massage when you've suddenly felt an emotion unexpectedly surface without your knowing exactly why.

It is so moving and powerful for me to witness, time and time again, how conscious touch can reveal a person's history within their very own skin. In massage school, I had a practice client who had some old scars on her body related to abdominal surgery when she was a child. When I massaged the scar tissue on her abdomen, childhood memories emerged and she was able to release an emotional holding related to fear and pain that she had been holding in that area of her body. And in a most beautiful way, both her physical and emotional tension related to her surgery came to the surface and then slowly melted away.

I need to take a deep breath now as I write this, for I remember that moment in my body, too. Sigh.

What does your body remember?

Try this: The History of a Scar

We all have scars. Well, I think most of us do anyhow. Choose one of the scars on your body, whether this mark on your skin is wide and deep or microscopic in size, and write its history. Start with how the scar came to be. Recall the moment when you received this mark on your body. Record not only how you physically felt, but also what emotions or thoughts came with the experience. Remember to write down your sensory experience, too -- sight, sound, smell, taste, touch.

Now, document the life of this scar. How has it changed over time? Has it faded? Stayed the same? Are there emotions still hiding in the creases of your skin or in the depths of your heart?

Winter Special: Healing Sunlight



This winter, imagine feeling **warmed to the bone**. Think summer, sunlight, and soothing warmth.

This two-hour session begins with thirty minutes of **full-spectrum light therapy**, a **citrus foot spa**—complete with two jet settings and continuous heat—and a soothing cup of tea. Full-spectrum light therapy is thought to considerably **alleviate S.A.D.** symptoms, helping you to experience a "mood lift," to feel more energetic, and to sleep better by stabilizing the melatonin and serotonin levels in your brain.

After this quiet time, you will bask in the deep heat and healing properties of **infrared light**. Because infrared light is more penetrating than visible light, it is an excellent source of heat for the body without the negative side effects of the sun. There are no UV rays in infrared light; instead, this soothing red-colored light simulates the **sun's radiant heat**, warming muscle tissue, easing joint stiffness, and calming the central nervous system.

While absorbing infrared light, you will receive an **acupressure treatment**. Pressure to points along your energy meridians may reduce muscle tension, headaches, and muscle tension, preparing the body for what comes next in this two hour special: an integrative **massage** to fit your needs.

Consider giving yourself or a loved one the **gift of sunshine** this winter! Cost: \$100.

Above art piece by Courtney E. Putnam, modified mixed media collage "Amor del Sol."

Newsletter Contributions

In my Fall 2007 issue of "The Healing Nest Newsletter," I offered two creative prompts. The first was to fingerpaint whatever you are feeling in your body, whether these feelings reflect illness or good health. The other prompt was an exercise in writing from the voice of your jaw. Thank you to Sue and Ann for such powerful contributions.

JAW MONOLOGUE

by Ann Teplick

She pops Aleve like they are Altoids. Scalds me with the hot water bottle. Wakes me with her bruxing— molars that grind and rock in my socket. Might as well be a mating dance. She is a loony tune, drives me bazooka— to the lemmings' edge, I tell you— but we're wedded, get it? Stuck like cement. Not exactly a perk for this recovering claustrophobe— so where would I go, anyway? To Vegas?

It's the typical goulash— you know the scene: strung out by a Nazi boss; a diet of venti mochas; a boyfriend who shaves his legs and moseys the aisles of Value Village for lingerie. Ooou weee. Not my cup of corn and peas. Though this clenching may be my demise.

And holy heaven—her dentist begs a night guard, and her shrink begs to ease her guard, and her dog guards her like she's the trophy from the track and field meet. Maybe she'll listen to me—her one and only jawbone— loyal, hinged at the ear, as I whisper, "Yoga. Yoga. Yoga."

Ann Teplick is a writer and Teaching Artist who lives and works in Seattle.



Sue's process statement:

"The finger painting exercise is the first exercise I have done. I started with the pain page. I was drawn to black which seems logical but then added red. I had some small pieces of book page on my table and felt it needed some words. Nothing in particular, just words. I especially found the word "whisper" to be in the right place at the right time.

The happy page came together quite quickly. I just grabbed a few colors and started squirting them on the page. I thought I would add more, circles maybe, but once I had this much done I had to just stop. Amazing how I try really hard to do a painting I like and the one I just sat down and did for fun is one of my favorites."

Sue Simpson is a mixed media artist and posts her beautiful creations on her blog at earthtonestudios.typepad.com.

Submit Your Creations!

Please submit your creations to me! I would love to receive digital copies of any of your creations—writing and/or art—for the next newsletter issue. If you'd like to share your creations and/or process, feel free to email me at cputnam@rising-bird.com. I'd be delighted to hear from you!

Check out new prompts on the last page of this newsletter in the **Creativity Corner** section.

The next newsletter is scheduled for May 2008.

Creativity Corner

Art Prompt: "Inner Critic"

Create a visual depiction of your inner critic. Using the art method of your choice (painting, collaging, drawing, sculpting, etc.), give your inner critic a form. Does your critic look like a human being? An animal? A pattern of some kind? When I did this exercise in my college days, my inner critic looked like a stern baseball coach. In my crayon drawing, he was blowing a whistle and pointing at me. It was freeing to see this voice of criticism in visual form; in many ways my critic lost much of its power because I "unveiled" him. I wonder what form my critic takes today. What about you?

Writing Prompt: "Dreaming Big!"

It's time to dream big dreams. Let's bypass those teeny-tiny wishes for now and dig up some of those Big Kahuna desires--the ones that you've been keeping in the back of the pantry next to the cream of broccoli soup. Dreaming big helps expand your mind, enabling you to see yourself as the marvelous, ingenious person that you are. Imagine there are no obstacles to your desires; imagine that you are free to actualize whatever it is you wish. Now freewrite for at least fifteen minutes without stopping. Let your pen move across the page with wild abandon. After your fifteen minutes are up, scan your writing looking for important key words that surfaced for you in your process. Circle these important words and re-write them on a fresh piece of paper. Feel free to post these words in your bathroom mirror or at your desk as a reminder of your deep down hopes and dreams.

Submission Guidelines:

Submit your writing or art to me via email (cputnam@rising-bird.com) by **April 15, 2008** to be considered for the Spring Issue of the newsletter. Subject line of email should read "Spring newsletter submission." Art should be in .jpg format, and writing may be in a Word document or pasted into the body of the email.

Next ART SHOW at Rising Bird Healing Arts:

Thursday, April 10, 2008, 6-9pm



Henna Artist Extraordinaire **Kara Jones** will be joining me for an evening of **art, henna tattoos, and merriment.**

More information to come. Stay tuned...

To learn more about Kara, feel free to visit her most fabulous blog: motherhenna.blogspot.com.

A Wee Bit About Me:



Courtney E. Putnam is a Licensed Massage Practitioner and Certified Reiki Practitioner, who offers a holistic approach to wellness. With a strong belief in the mind-body connection, Courtney holds a safe space for her clients to experience emotional as well as physical healing.

By integrating massage, energy work, and holistic wellness approaches, she invites you to experience a unique blend of healing modalities to support your body, mind, and spirit.

In addition to her bodywork endeavors, Courtney is a poet and visual artist and holds a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing.

End Notes:

As a writer and visual artist, I find that incorporating artistic expression in the healing process is helpful and revealing. Feel free to visit my **Healing Nest Blog** for writing and art exercises, stress reduction strategies, and bodywork you can do for yourself at home. Also, visit my **Sessions and Rates** page for detailed descriptions of all of my services, including full-spectrum light therapy, aromatherapy foot baths, and reflective journaling time. • I created all of the artwork in this newsletter. Feel free to visit my "Quiet Girl Gallery" art blog for more examples of my work.