

Spirit Medicine

Long ago, before mankind decided the mind was separate from the body and the entire body from the spirit, ancient healers treated each individual as a whole being, intricately connected to others, nature, the spiritual world, and the universe at large.

The traditions of healing and physical medicine can be traced back thousands of years, when looking at Egyptian, Greek, Chinese, Persian, Indian and African history. Hippocrates, for instance, understood that each human was more than just a physical body and if one were only to treat the body, not the mind nor the spirit, healing would be incomplete at best. Imagine that he was simply repeating what ancient healers had believed, as the shamanic healers, who transcended the human plane to travel back and forth to and fro from the spirit world, had been practicing in this light for over 20,000 years already. Whether using acupuncture, herbs, energy healing techniques, or nature as interventions, these healers knew that true healing meant treating the person as a whole being, mind, body and spirit.

With the advent of science, separation between church and state and science, and a history of wars and religious rhetoric, not only is western or allopathic medicine now separate from spirit, but void of it.

As a child, I always wanted to be a medicine woman. I remember watching a TV show and wanting to be like the Amazon priestesses who would call in Isis or another god or goddess to connect with a higher power or to access healing energy. I also remember sitting in my father's biochemistry lab and later working in it, intrigued by science, the molecular structure of life, and the intricacies of the human body and how it interplayed with the chemicals in food (My father is a biochemist in the fields of aging and nutrition). I knew at a young age that I would become a doctor and somewhere along the way, as I got entrenched in academia and the ways of modern medicine, I forgot about my dreams of being a true priestess and medicine woman.

I forgot, that is, until the fateful day in June of 1996 when I was stuck with a needle loaded with HIV blood and had to take a cocktail of medicine that would prevent me from getting the dreaded disease. I was lucky that the cocktail worked and I did not contract the virus, but the experience did change the course of my life. It was that experience that shocked me into asking myself what I was doing with my life, fixing symptoms rather than being part of a larger process. I did a lot of bargaining with a higher power for a second chance, for life, for help, and for love. I went deep into the depths of my soul to ask, "why is this happening and what am I to do?"

It was then that I started finding spirit in medicine—through the love I received from my family, friends and colleagues; the loving way I had to learn to treat myself and take care of myself; and the love I was connecting to in the most profound of ways through nature, the spiritual world and my meditation practice. My journey began fully then, bridging medicine as the western world knows it, with the medicine that our ancestors have known (and others still do in other cultures) for thousands of years, bringing it together in a format that anyone can access.

Understand that illness doesn't just happen. There is so much more going on in the body that what an x-ray will show that is not just physical. Your mental state, your psychological outlook and beliefs, your mood, memories and ancestral heritage, all play a part in the body's ability to heal and thrive. And most of all, there is love. Accessing love in its greatest form, is ultimately the way for healing to happen. When love is brought forth and our ancestors wisdom integrated, spirit medicine is born.

As far as I am concerned, medicine without spirit is simply a band-aide that does not offer a recipe for healing or resilience. Spirit medicine, in contrast, offers the total package. It includes addressing:

- Physical vitality, alignment, structure, movement, and disease.
- Emotional vitality, equilibrium, and intelligence.
- Psychological/mental vitality, processing, connection, and beliefs.
- Spiritual vitality, openness, connection to nature and other worlds, energy in life, ability to find one's zen (as in meditation), and connection with love.
- Relationship/group vitality, connection to others, knowing one's purpose and place in the world, and connection with love.