

“What is a Healer?”

I hesitated for a long time in considering how exactly to respond to this essay question. After some reflection, I focused in on the source of what felt like a visceral reaction to the question. I believe the word "healer" is a loaded and too often abused term, and is used in a way that implies that healing is something that comes from outside of us, and that the "healer" is a person who imparts healing on the patient. On the contrary, healing comes from the inside, and a "healer" is simply a person who helps another person to heal.

We all are healers - every person has within the power to heal herself, and also to help others to heal. The part about helping others to heal is where the problems emerge. Yes, a “healer” is a person who helps to facilitate the healing of another. However, the application of this term has been abused by certain practitioners in the New Age and Natural Therapy communities who seem to be troubled by messiah complexes, and as a result lay claim to great powers of healing which they will bestow upon their clients, usually for a sizeable sum. Aside from the issue of inordinate fees, I feel uncomfortable with this thinking because it goes against my understanding that the person in our care has a central role to play in therapy, and that the therapist’s role is as a facilitator.

The human organism comes complete with an innate ability for self-healing. When we come into contact with a substance in our environment, the body responds. If that substance is a toxin, the body works to isolate and remove the toxin. Inflammation, heat, swelling, vomiting, fever, diarrhea...there are myriad ways that our bodies work to keep us from danger and to restore balance. A healthy person is not a person who never gets sick, but is a person whose mind and body show balanced and appropriate responses.

In order for health to exist, there are some preconditions that need to be met. We all need : clean air, food and water; a roof over our heads, clothing, meaningful relationships, meaningful work and activity, expression of our emotions, sexual expression, exercise, an outlet for creativity, etc. When these preconditions cannot be met, our ability to be healthy starts to be compromised, and our bodies’ responses start to be out of balance - recurring headaches, colds that never go away, chronic pain, and so on.

There are endless assaults on our minds and bodies in everyday life that move us further away from being in a state of health. Modern life is full of traps that remove us from the preconditions needed for health, and we’ve come to a point where a person needs to consciously make the choice for healthy living and work to ensure that the conditions exist.

As Natural Therapists, our role is to work with the bigger picture of health and lifestyle of the people in our care. Our task is to help the people in our care to find the obstacles to health in their lives, to ascertain what preconditions for health might be lacking, to support them in

making the necessary changes, and to help them through the period of rebalancing. A therapist's role is not to impose anything on the person in her care - the person seeking help has to take an active role in their his healthcare.

The above vision of health is one very different from the palliative approach to health, which looks only for symptoms and offers treatment plans that only look at how to make the symptoms go away. This approach eventually leads to deeper problems requiring more serious procedures, although it may be useful or necessary in some short-term or emergency cases.

The word "healer" indicates an action and ability. It indicates that the person it's describing has the power to impose healing on another person. I don't doubt that there are individuals whose mere presence and energy can stimulate the healing processes in another person; however I don't feel entirely comfortable with its general usage to refer to a therapist. As therapists, we are **conduits** for healing - we use our skills and abilities to help the people in our care, but with our help it is they, as biological organisms and as conscious individuals, who do the healing. Themselves.

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