

Energy Healing: on the Rise

Based on an interview with Gloria Two-Feathers, founder and director of EarthWalk School of Energy Healing

Newly relocated to Woodinville, WA, east of Seattle, is EarthWalk School of Energy Healing, where students from across the nation come to study the art and science of energy healing. In 2001, EarthWalk opened as the first state-licensed energy healing school in Washington and the second in the nation. EarthWalk's program is offered in a series of weeklong intensives over the course of a year and a half. The curriculum covers the theory and techniques of energy healing, related sciences such as anatomy and physiology and basic business training. It also provides real world experience through student clinics, and internship programs with health-care providers.

Do you remember when "alternative medicine" was an edgy subject? Now, taking a centering breath before broaching the topic is rarely necessary. Many of us already know the name of a good acupuncturist or craniosacral practitioner, have a naturopath as a primary care physician or make regular visits to a chiropractor or massage therapist. Better still, a health care plan is probably footing part of the bill. These alternative medicines were the icebreakers, readying the medical mainstream for the crest of the next alternative wave: energy healing.

"Energy healing isn't about curing, but it is part of the cure; it's a part of what is missing," says EarthWalk's director, Gloria Two-Feathers. Conventional western medical science focuses on the cure: for example, wounds from a car accident that need stitching to mend. Energy work focuses on deeper healing, such as a resulting fear of driving that may linger after those physical injuries have recovered. In addition, energy healing can help to develop a strong mind-body connection to prevent future distress.

Energy healing is a broad term that includes any healing that restores or balances the flow of energy in the body. The practice is based on the belief that our health (physical, mental, spiritual) is directly tied to the unobstructed flow of our energetic system and that blockages stress our well-being and eventually lead to disease. Most commonly, energy healing is associated with a range of techniques involving light, color, sound and hands-on practice, which includes all work with the chakra system. The term "energy healing" seems to be a catchall phrase for the energy modalities that conventional western medicine has yet to accept. Naturopathy, homeopathy and craniosacral practice all involve energy work. In addition, many hospitals and hospices offer energy healing through Therapeutic Touch, Healing Touch and Reiki. Practitioners of yoga, tai chi and qi gong work with life-force energy through postures

and movements. *Hmmm... That crazy notion that life is energy seems to be catching on...*

As a practice that has yet to find an accepted scientific measurement, energy work's "woo-woo" reputation has kept it from the official embrace of the professional medical community. But some MDs are willing to speak out about its effectiveness. Dr. Dean Chier of Seattle Healing Arts asked Lisa, his EarthWalk intern, to extend the length of her internship at his office. He says, "It's interesting to compare my allopathic sense of what is going on — and my intuitive sense — with Lisa's reviews." Dr. Chier refers his patients to energy healers in cases where he notices that the need for emotional healing is hindering their physical healing. When referring, he uses a combination of personal interview and skill assessment to determine the legitimacy of the practitioner's work. He says that you can "learn" Reiki in a three-day intensive, so finds the idea of energy schools with higher standards encouraging. When I observe that he sounds like an unusual M.D., Dr. Chier laughs. "I trained at a very traditional medical school, and at the end of my schooling I found that I had learned a lot about disease and pharmacology and very little about health, healing and balance."

When Gloria opened EarthWalk, the only other state licensed school in the nation was the Barbara Brennan School of Healing in Florida. Gloria recognized that there was a need "to move energy healing out of the dark." She wanted to help bring honor and respect to the profession by establishing a licensed vocational school. Gloria points out that a student can obtain a certificate of "graduation" from a program of any length or caliber. Accountability is the name of the licensing game: the school's accountability to the public good and the student's accountability to the course material. State licensing for a school is an extensive process requiring submission of detailed lesson plans, policies and procedures. The state evaluates the initial curriculum based on its materials, its ability to meet course objectives and concrete measurement of student progress through testing. They review course work and student records annually. For all of these reasons, graduates of state licensed schools find that their education garners a high level of professional and public respect as well as better career opportunities.

An increasing sense of professionalism is developing throughout the energy healing field. Gloria's 564-hour program includes instruction in business management and ethics. EarthWalk students are required to carry liability insurance. The fact that they've graduated from a state licensed school allows them to upgrade to professional liability insurance. The school holds temporary clinics in which students are able to practice their skills with volunteer clients from the public. Internship programs introduce them to professionals in the medical

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community. Additionally, Brennan's school recently established the country's first Bachelor of Science degree in energy healing.

As a licensed practice itself, though, energy healing is not a likely candidate. The state establishes professional licensing only for fields that carry a risk of public endangerment. As a complementary therapy that involves no physical manipulation, energy healing is considered a safe practice.

Increasingly, students with a traditional medical background are coming to energy healing schools: doctors, nurses and veterinarians who desire to augment their work with skills in energy healing. Billing for those skills — or even mentioning that they are being

used — is another issue altogether. Alternative medical newsletters abound with anecdotal data obtained from MDs who request to remain anonymous, lest they find themselves disbarred from or laughed out of their professional circles. Public pressure has resulted in medical insurance coverage of many

EarthWalk School of Energy Healing at 866-533-0667 or www.earthwalkschool.com

For a listing of alternative medical programs:
Natural Healers at www.naturalhealers.com

National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) at www.nccam.nih.gov

alternative services, but not energy healing — yet. Personal benefit drives demand — ultimately the market will follow suit.

Taking its measure: For purposes of study, energy healing is included under the umbrella of complementary alternative medicine (CAM). In 2004, the National Institute of Health's National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) released their latest study reporting that 62 percent of the U.S. population uses some form of CAM in its broadest definition, up from 42 percent reported in 1997. In 1997, out-of-pocket expenditures for Americans were more than \$27 billion for CAM, compared to \$29 billion for physician services. The 2004 study did not track expenditures. *Following the money is highly relevant; what's up with that?* However you measure it — as a complement to western medicine or as a substitute — the practice of alternative medicine, including energy healing, is on the rise.

* In Ayurvedic medicine, the belief is that the body's vital energy flows from the feet to the top of the head, concentrating in seven major sites called chakras. Blocked or misdirected chakra energy affects our overall well-being.

— Kylie Loynd

As we transition from winter into spring, we see new life unfolding before our eyes. It is one of my favorite seasons and always signals new beginnings and a rebirth of our spirit.

Amazingly enough, our bodies are changing all the time. Every 120 days we replace our entire supply of red blood cells. Our bones are completely new in one year. In fact, every seven years our physical body has completely changed, with all new cells. Dr. Candace Pert, the leading neurobiologist in the world, reported in her book *Molecules of Emotion* that each cell in the body contains the memory and information of all other cells. For example, certain chemicals that we thought were released only in the brain are also released by muscle cells, and vice versa.

Dr. Pert proved that our thoughts and emotions change the actual physiology of our cells. There is no difference between brain and body. Our perception of the world and events — good and bad — determines our health, down to the cellular level. Stress related diseases such as cancer, fibromyalgia, headaches, diabetes and heart problems can be altered or drastically changed if we can forgive, let go of feeling like a victim and not dwell on the negative. I have seen many patients change their actual blood count and strengthen their immune system simply by forgiving someone and releasing the negative energy that they were holding on to.

Radical Forgiveness by Collin Tippin is one of my favorites of the books that I have read this past year. It has helped change my life and, I believe, my overall health. I would highly recommend this book for spring reading. An exercise he offers is a Radical Forgiveness Worksheet called "Making Room for the Miracle." This worksheet can be downloaded at his website. I have found this particular exercise to be very helpful and I encourage everyone to do it. It is my belief that as we incorporate what Collin Tippin is teaching in his book, new doors will open to us. We can help let spring enter our cells and create a new and vibrant body, allowing us to fulfill our purpose on earth.

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Molecules of Emotion: The Science Behind Mind-Body Medicine by Candace B. Pert, Ph.D.
Radical Forgiveness: Making Room for the Miracle by Collin Tippin; see www.radicalforgiveness.com.