



EXPLORATION

Healing

Readings



1. *Difference Between Healing and Curing* by Michael Lerner

In my thirty years of working with cancer patients, I've seen a profound distinction between curing and healing.

Curing is what a physician seeks to offer.... Healing, however, comes from within us. It's what "we" bring to the table. Healing can be described as a physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual process of coming home.

Even if we're losing ground physically, there's extra-ordinary emotional, mental and spiritual healing that can go on. ...It is ...healthier, ...more healing, to allow yourself to feel whatever is coming up in you, and allow yourself to work with that anxiety, depression, grief. Because, underneath that, if you allow those feelings to come up and express themselves, then you can find the truly positive way of living in relationship to those feelings. That's such an important thing.

Then there's the ideas we have about ourselves, our lives, about what the disease means. ...There is the opportunity that comes with ...[disease], to ask ourselves how we want to reinvent our lives. And that can be one of the most powerful healing things we can do.

Healing is the most fundamental aspect of our condition, and it's a continuous rediscovery of what it means to be alive. It spills over into the rest of our life and guides us. It's not only about some "spiritual experience" of being

high all the time. Not at all. It is about living with the ongoing stresses and strains and difficulties—and joys—of life, but doing so in a way that we feel whole.

Living in relationship with the struggles of life is what makes us human.

Source: <https://www.awakin.org/read/view.php?tid=1066>

2. *Space to Heal* by Thuy Nguyen

As we plow through day-to-day life, we dream about finding a time when there will be space to heal, rejuvenate and refuel. Some of us are holding off until the weekend, while for others the breaks are fewer and farther in between.

...We think of space as if it were a far-off destination or something we create. But really, space is ever present and everywhere. A room crammed full of stuff doesn't have less space than an empty room. It just has more stuff in it. We are not creating space when we take stuff out, space is already there. There is nothing but space.

Inside us is space as well. Like our external space, our internal space can become crowded with stuff that might impede our ability to move around and do things efficiently. Our internal space becomes more and more crowded with thoughts, beliefs, and judgments that keep us from healing, movement, and growth.

... "Should" thoughts and "can't" thoughts and "have to" thoughts and "never/always" thoughts are dis-empowering and create impossible conditions for our healing, depleting us of our energy. ...

We have the internal space to heal. We only need to be willing to let go of some of the discordant clutter and noise of our minds. ...A spacious and trusting internal world can positively affect both internal and external environments in subtle and miraculous ways. De-clutter some outdated thoughts right now. Re-

place them with: I have the space to heal, I have the capacity to heal, this very moment.

Source: <https://www.awakin.org/read/view.php?tid=2246>

3. *Only Service Heals*

by Rachel Naomi Remen

If helping is an experience of strength, fixing is an experience of mastery and expertise. Service, on the other hand, is an experience of mystery, surrender and awe. ...A server knows that he or she is being used and has a willingness to be used in the service of something greater, something essentially unknown. Fixing and helping are very personal; they are very particular, concrete and specific. We fix and help many different things in our lifetimes, but when we serve, we are always serving the same thing. Everyone who has ever served through the history of time serves the same thing. We are servers of the wholeness and mystery in life.

...Fixing and helping may often be the work of the ego, and service the work of the soul. They may look similar if you're watching from the outside, but the inner experience is different. The outcome is often different, too.

Our service serves us as well as others. ...Over time, fixing and helping are draining, depleting. Over time we burn out. Service is renewing. When we serve, our work itself will sustain us.

Service rests on the basic premise that the nature of life is sacred, that life is a holy mystery which has an unknown purpose. When we serve, we know that we belong to life and to that purpose. ... When ...[we] serve, ...[we] see life as whole. From the perspective of service, we are all connected: All suffering is like my suffering and all joy is like my joy. The impulse to serve emerges naturally and inevitably from this way of seeing.

...Only service heals.

Source: <https://www.awakin.org/read/view.php?tid=941>



4. ***Processing Anger with an Open Heart*** by John Robbins and Ann Mortifee

There should really be two different words ...for “anger-with-the-heart-closed” and ...for “anger-with-the-heart-open.” Most anger in our society is “anger-with-the-heart-closed.” Many of us are in the habit of automatically using our anger vindictively to protect ourselves or to impose our will upon others. We may believe ourselves totally justified in demeaning others’ self-esteem. We may believe that we do this for “their own good.” We may even believe that the will we are trying to impose is God’s will. From such unconsciousness have come generations of abuse. From such self-righteousness have come millennia of “holy” wars.

“Anger-with-the-heart-closed” is destructive. But there are times when our anger can be a gift to the other person, when it is not simply our own ego twisting in a knot, and trying to use the other person to undo the strain. Though we may feel great heat and urgency, there need be nothing mean in the way we express ourselves. For when there is no desire to wound or punish or blame, we become able to speak with great clarity and power. We may roar like a lion, but it is a healing roar. We may be challenging, but we are infinitely fair. We may be outraged, but we are respectful. This is “anger-with-the-heart-open” and it has a beauty, a passion, and a clarity that is unmistakable.

Source: <https://www.awakin.org/read/view.php?tid=929>

5. ***Ourselves We’re Helping, Ourselves We’re Healing*** by James Carse

I am touched by another when the distance between us is reduced to zero. I am touched only if I respond from my own center—that is, spontaneously, originally. But you do not touch me

except from your own center, out of your own genius. Touching is always reciprocal. You cannot touch me unless I touch you in response.

The opposite of touching is MOVING. You move me by pressing me from without toward a place you have already foreseen and perhaps prepared. It is a staged action that succeeds only if in moving me you remain unmoved yourself. I can be moved to tears by skilled performances and heart-rending newspaper accounts, or moved to passion by political manifestos and narratives of heroic achievement—but, in each case, I am moved according to a formula or design to which the actor or agent is immune.

...When I am touched, I am touched only as the person I am behind all the theatrical masks, but at the same time I am changed from within—and whoever touches me is touched as well.

...If to be touched is to respond from one’s center, it is also to respond as a whole person. To be whole is to be hale, or healthy. In sum, whoever is touched is healed.

...Healing, of course, has all the reciprocity of touching ... But healing requires no specialists, only those who can come to us out of their own center, and who are prepared to be healed themselves.

Source: <https://www.awakin.org/read/view.php?tid=484>

6. ***A Trinity of Wholeness: Contemplation, Action & Healing*** by Teresa Pasquale Mateus

Healing is part of an essential Trinitarian process of being—and to find healing, one needs a deep spiritual rootedness, which some call the contemplative spiritual path....

The core of the contemplative path is not just an individualistic process; it is about being a deeper part of the ... human family....

We all have the capacity to heal, but we cannot do it alone.

...This trinity of wholeness provides a synchronized spiritual and emotional chemistry to help us sustain ourselves—for the pain of life, the grief of loss....

...We have become reliant on words like “self-care,” which often become a

mandate for solitary practice, sought out by an individual, and done in isolation. ...We are meant to be in community with each other—something often lost in our Western conception of society, where the self is both meant to strive individually and also mend individually.

...Deep healing requires the resources of deep spirituality and deep community—rituals and practices that can be done alone but also shared, and become part of a larger rhythm of life that is beyond one practice and becomes a network of ways of being which move with us in every breath and heartbeat.

We all have the capacity to heal, but we cannot do it alone. ...We need ... communities ...where we can find authenticity and vulnerability and dive deep into our spiritual and healing journey as well. This is how we make our path sustainable—individually and together.

Source: <https://sojo.net/articles/faith-action/trinity-wholeness-contemplation-action-and-healing>

7. ***The Taming Power of the Small*** by Jon Kabat-Zinn

As a country, we need to take little steps, maybe even tiny steps, but brave steps nonetheless, in the direction of greater wholeness and greater embodiment of mindfulness if we hope to heal the suffering of the world while contributing less to compounding it. We will need to recognize earlier, and act more resolutely to stem the potential harm that always ensues from the delusional grasping for power at the expense of love and wisdom, kindness and interconnectedness, whether within ourselves or within others. ...The ancient Chinese called it *the taming power of the small*. Gandhi knew that the smallest move or gesture, well-thought out and morally grounded, packed huge potential, like the inconceivable amounts of energy contained in the tiniest atom.

Martin Luther King embodied this knowing, and mobilized tremendous power out of no power, out of moral persuasion, out of a long-downtrodden people’s pride in themselves and the beauty of his language. And of course, the eight-hour workday, child labor laws, gender equality, and desegregation



were all won through popular grassroots movements that started small, and that doggedly badgered and perturbed the system, often at huge sacrifice of many anonymous individuals, until it responded and shifted.

...Whether we are politicians or simply citizens, practice can mean allowing ourselves tiny little tastes of presence and goodness; sampling such moments many times over, and so coming to know the taste of inward clarity and peace. We can build on our experience by staying in touch with the present moment and not losing our minds in the face of the challenges and opportunities we face.

Source: <https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/quotes/quotations/view/25890/spiritual-quotation>

Wisdom Story

The Good Samaritan

by Rev. Christopher Buice

One day a merchant was traveling on a road when he was attacked by bandits. The bandits were so cruel that they beat the merchant, stole everything he had, and left him for dead lying on the side of the road. The merchant was so badly hurt he couldn't move or speak at all, and he could barely see through his swollen black eyes.

A long time passed, then down the road came a priest, a man of God. That priest looked good. He was wearing a fancy new robe and he was nice and clean from a recent bath. When the merchant saw the priest coming, he became excited. "Surely this priest will help me," he thought. But when the priest saw the man lying on the side of the road, he just kept on walking and passed him right by.

After a time, the merchant saw another man coming down the road. This man was a temple helper and he looked good. He was well groomed and had a

colorful robes and had a winning smile. Once again, the merchant became hopeful. "Surely this man will help me," he thought. But when the temple helper saw the merchant lying on the side of the road, he just kept on walking and passed him right by.

A very long time passed, and the merchant began to lose hope. "I will die here on the side of the road," he thought. But then he saw another man walking down the road with a donkey. This man did not look too good. He was dirty and his clothes had holes in them. He did not look like he had shaved or cut his hair in a long, long time.

"This man will not help me," thought the merchant. "He is from Samaria and Samaritans hate my people." But when the man saw the merchant lying on the side of the road, he stopped. He was moved with compassion. The Samaritan washed and bandaged the merchant's wounds. He put the merchant onto the back of his donkey, carried him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day, as the Samaritan prepared to leave, he gave the innkeeper money and said, "Please take care of this man. When I return, I will pay you any more money that you may spend."

From his window in the inn, the merchant could see the Samaritan walking off into the distance. He was too weak to call out or even to speak his thanks. But ever since that time the merchant has known deep in his heart that there is a big difference between looking good and being good.

Source: <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/story/good-samaritan>

Snippets

"It's a radical act to breathe, because oppression takes the breath away. Oppression limits access to freedom... The practice of yoga beckons us to notice our feelings... The only way out is through, by way of the feelings. If we're going to make social change, we need to cultivate a practice of feeling."

Michelle Cassandra Johnson

"Pain is a pesky part of being human, I've learned it feels like a stab wound to

the heart, something I wish we could all do without, in our lives here. Pain is a sudden hurt that can't be escaped. But then I have also learned that because of pain, I can feel the beauty, tenderness, and freedom of healing. Pain feels like a fast stab wound to the heart. But then healing feels like the wind against your face when you are spreading your wings and flying through the air! We may not have wings growing out of our backs, but healing is the closest thing that will give us that wind against our faces."

C. JoyBell C.

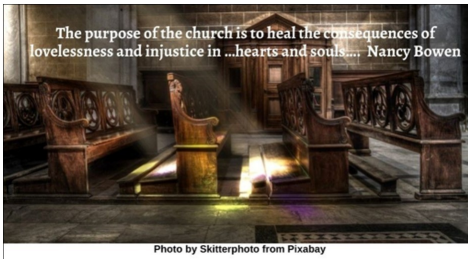
"And I felt like my heart had been so thoroughly and irreparably broken that there could be no real joy again, that at best there might eventually be a little contentment. Everyone wanted me to get help and rejoin life, pick up the pieces and move on, and I tried to, I wanted to, but I just had to lie in the mud with my arms wrapped around myself, eyes closed, grieving, until I didn't have to anymore." *Anne Lamott*

"In healing, our symptoms and disease may or may not disappear or come under control. Yet if we gain greater insight into our life, and learn to be more compassionate toward ourselves and others, we can still heal. The healing process involves a progressive expression of more of our being. Healing brings us to a greater awareness of all parts of our body [and] mind, along with their experiences, stories, and energies. Although we may still, for the time being, have various symptoms or ailments, we can be more alive, more aware, more creative, and at peace."

Donald M. Epstein

"From the Native American perspective, medicine belongs more to the realm of healing than curing.... Healing emphasizes your connection to people, nature, and spirit. It includes more than self-centered or personal care. The goal of healing is both wellness and wisdom." *Kenneth Cohen*

"Within mainstream Christianity, only a few voices ... [like] Morton Kelsey have risen to proclaim a vision of healing congruent with modern science,



the laws of nature, and the ministry of Jesus. Today, when people think of healing, they do not think of the church. Their minds turn to a metaphysical healer, a reiki practitioner, a massage therapist, or an acupuncturist.”

“...Kelsey reminds us that ‘forty-one instances of physical and mental healing are recorded in the four gospels’ and ‘nearly one-fifth of the entire gospels is devoted to Jesus’ healing and the discussions occasioned by it. To the Galilean healer who came that persons might have abundant life (John 10:10), no healing was too ordinary or too difficult for God’s concern.” *Bruce G. Epperly*

“To forgive does not mean overlooking the offense and pretending it never happened. Forgiveness means releasing our rage and our need to retaliate, no longer dwelling on the offense, the offender, and the suffering, and rising to a higher love. It is an act of letting go so that we ourselves can go on.... For in the end I knew, there is no healing without forgiveness, no forgiveness without love. Indeed, love is everything.”

Sue Monk Kidd

“Your potential as a healer is limitless. Is it not true that you have something of value to offer? Haven’t you seen some evidence in your life of your potential to give a gift that will gladden the heart of someone else? Haven’t you been kind? Haven’t you uplifted? Haven’t you helped someone at some time not to feel isolated and misunderstood? And is that potential in you not worth your effort to release more fully, and consistently? Your potential is love. ...To make others happy will do far more than make you happy. It will begin to release the world from pain and turn hell into Heaven.” *Hugh Prather*

“If healing is to mean more than a wel-

a fear-driven avoidance of collective pain, it must be connected to a process of inquiring deeply into the suffering that is part of everyone’s life and spiritual journey, and that is an overwhelming fact of life on the planet today.”

Miriam Greenspan

“Healing is, by its nature, a knitting together, a restoration of wholeness. It requires that we see and accept lovingly all part of ourselves. Our ability to contain more, to expand our identity, to accommodate the multifarious aspects of ourselves is the basis of healing. When we see our quirks as defects, we undercut the integrative impulse. Every acknowledgment of a symptom needs an enlarging affirmation to follow, so we don’t tighten the trap of limitation around our necks.” *Rudolph Ballentine*

Questions

1. In reading number #1, Michael Lerner writes about the differences between curing and healing. For him, the physician cures, but we are the healer through an internal process that involves the process of “coming home.” He suggests that disease brings with it an opportunity “to reinvent our lives.” Has this ever happened to you or someone you know/knew? What was the experience like? Lerner writes, “Healing ...is about living with the ongoing stresses and strains and difficulties—and joys—of life, but doing so in a way that we feel whole.” Does this shift your understanding of what healing might be? How? Lerner further suggests that, “Healing is ...a continuous rediscovery of what it means to be alive.” Are you mindful of healing in your daily life? Why or why not?
2. In reading number #2, Thuy Nguyen is concerned about how the lack of space, perceived or otherwise, has a negative impact. Part of external space is physical, part of it is time. But we also face insufficient internal space. This crowding is created by, “‘Should’ thoughts and ‘can’t’ thoughts and ‘have to’

thoughts and ‘never/always’ thoughts....” Nguyen writes that these “are dis-empowering and create impossible conditions for our healing, depleting us of our energy.” Is your space too cluttered? Are you plagued by shoulds, and oughts, and more? What does simplicity look like? What pathway could it open to healing in our always too busy lives? Nguyen suggests that the absence of space is an illusion, both externally and internally, which is why she writes, “We have the internal space to heal. We only need to be willing to let go of some of the discordant clutter and noise of our minds.” What could you let go of?

3. In reading number #3, Rachel Naomi Remen contrasts fixing and helping (and thus curing) with serving (and thus healing). Fixing and helping are important and have their place, but serving she writes is transformative. The choice is not either/or but both/and, yet they are different. As she writes, “...Over time, fixing and helping are draining, depleting. Over time we burn out. Service is renewing. When we serve, our work itself will sustain us.” Over your lifetime, what have you been fixing, where have you been helping? And, as importantly, what have you lived your life in service of? Why? Do you agree with Remen that “only service heals?” Why or why not?
4. In reading number #4, John Robbins and Ann Mortiffee make the distinction between “anger-with-the-heart-closed” and ... “anger-with-the-heart-open.” It is a profoundly important distinction. As they note, “Most anger in our society is ‘anger-with-the-heart-closed,’” and it is endlessly destructive, the source of “generations of abuse.” Where do you see examples of such anger? Have you experienced that kind of anger? What was it like? Does any good come from it, and, if not, why does it persist? As perpetrators, what do we get from it? But, as they note, there is another kind of anger. A concise description of it has been attributed to Aristotle: “Anybody



can become angry—that is easy, but to be angry with the right person and to the right degree and at the right time and for the right purpose, and in the right way—that ... is not easy.” This harder anger is “anger with-the-heart-open.” Have you ever seen this kind of anger? What was the result? As they note, this kind of anger has clarity and power. In what ways are our typical expressions of anger confused? They write that “anger with-the-heart-open” is fair, respectful, and, ultimately, healing. What must happen in order for us to cultivate this kind of compassionate anger?

5. In reading number #5, James Carse contrasts touching someone with moving someone. “Touching” is mutual intimacy, reciprocity, “moving” is power over. Does this distinction make sense? Have you witnessed examples of each? He writes, “If to be touched is to respond from one’s center, it is also to respond as a whole person. ... In sum, whoever is touched is healed.” Who or what has touched you? What was the experience like? How could this touching result in mutual healing?
6. In reading number #6, Teresa Pasquale Mateus writes that true healing is not an outcome of self-care, which can be isolating, rather it is a consequence of dwelling in deep community. What role has self-care played in your life, and with what result? Where have you found deep community? What meaning did it have for you? Did you find healing there? Could you? How would you define or explain true community? How can UU congregations become places of deep community?
7. In reading number #7, Jon

Kabat-Zinn writes that love and wisdom, kindness and interconnect-edness, and healing require a “greater embodiment of mindfulness if we hope to heal the suffering of the world while contributing less to compounding it.” While he does not use the term, he is writing about social healing. He calls to mind Gandhi and King, and while he does not mention it, nonviolence, as difficult as it is, is a path to social healing. He writes that “the ancient Chinese called it *the taming power of the small*.” What needs to be tamed within you? How would that lead to your healing? How could you use mindfulness to tame yourself? To tame others? To stay in touch with the present moment without losing your mind in the face of life, of the challenges and opportunities you face? How could taming ourselves and others contribute to the repair of the world?

The following questions are related to the Snippets.

8. Michelle Cassandra Johnson writes about the radical act of breathing, noting that “oppression takes the breath away.” Have you experienced oppression that took your breath away? If yes, what were the circumstances? If no, can you imagine it happening to others, a person of color, someone in poverty, etc.? What do you imagine the experience is like? Johnson suggests that the only way out “is through, by way of the feelings.” Do you agree? Why or why not? For her, spiritual practice like yoga is a vehicle “to cultivate a practice of feeling.” Why might this be true? In the end, she links spiritual practice to social change. Can we change circumstances around us if we do not change ourselves? Why or why not?
9. C. JoyBell C. suggests that pain, which can feel “like a stab wound to the heart,” can lead to “beauty, tenderness, and freedom of healing.” She then describes healing as a feeling “like the wind against your face when you are spreading your wings and flying through the air!” Have you ever experienced this degree of

agony and ecstasy? What were the circumstances? If time can dull our memory of such pain, can it also dull the memory of the miracle of healing? How? Should we hold as precious all the times that we have been healed? Why or why not? How could this “holding” lead to a deeper healing?

10. Anne Lamott writes about the depths of grief, of lying in the “mud” until some healing occurred. When have you experienced grief? What were the circumstances? What helped? What made things worse? Did some healing occur? What did/does that feel like?
11. Donald Epstein suggests that there is a holistic dimension to healing that brings a kind of peace that transcends “symptoms or ailments.” Do you agree? Why or why not? How do you distinguish between a cure and being healed?
12. Kenneth Cohen writes about healing from a Native American perspective. He concludes, writing, “The goal of healing is both wellness and wisdom.” Do you agree? Why or why not? How can healing lead to wisdom?
13. Bruce Epperly writes about Morton Kelsey’s take on healing in the ministry of Jesus. He laments the fact that “Today, when people think of healing, they do not think of the church.” Were you aware of the focus by Jesus on healing? How might the early Christian church have supported this emphasis? How/why was this emphasis lost? Are Unitarian Universalist congregations places of healing? Why or why not? How? If not, could they be? Should they be?
14. Sue Monk Kidd writes about forgiveness asserting that “there is no healing without forgiveness.” Do you agree? Why or why not? How does the failure to forgive the other or oneself hinder the healing process? How does the failure to be forgiven hinder the healing process? Like anger, the absence of forgiveness seems to get in the way of healing. What else gets in the way of healing?



15. Hugh Prather asserts that “Your potential as a healer is limitless.” Do you agree? Why or why not? The questions that he asks in defense of his assertion seem plausible. Have you ever thought of yourself as a healer? Why or why not? What if you chose being a healer as your vocation? Not occupation, but vocation. How might that transform your actions, your life? Might it begin with saying, “Today, I will be a healer”
16. Miriam Greenspan reminds us that our focus on healing must move beyond the individual, beyond the group or nation, to include all of creation. What is your sense of suffering in the world today as well as the suffering of the planet? Is it so overwhelming that we prefer not to consider it? What little piece could you consider that motivates you to participate in the repair of the world rather than overwhelming you? What would it mean if you placed your heart and your hands there?
17. Rudolph Ballentine suggests that healing must lead to wholeness. This happens, in part, by a loving focus on ourselves rather than seeing “our quirks as defects” so that “we don’t tighten the trap of limitation around our necks.” Have you ever felt the trap of limitation tightening for you? What were the circumstances? How were you able to loosen or remove the trap? What role did/could healing have played?