

## HEALING THE HEART WITH LOVE

by C. Shaffia Laue

### ABSTRACT

A sixty year old female, suffering cardiac hypertrophy with mitral and tricuspid valve regurgitation, severe osteoporosis, avascular necrosis in both shoulders, asthma, fibromyalgia, chronic pain and mood disorder has healed by intentional practice: progressive relaxation, connecting with Nature, breathing in healing light and spirit, and breathing out love, light, and compassion to those in distress.

At the beginning of treatment, echocardiogram was required every six months to monitor the deterioration of the heart and alert as to when the valves would need to be replaced or repaired. Antibiotics were required as a precaution for any dental work. After nine months of practice, her echocardiogram showed the hypertrophy to be minimal and the regurgitation from the valves to be almost imperceptible. After eighteen months, her cardiologist dismissed her from follow-up care and she no longer needs to take antibiotics during dental work. Bone density scans show a 170% increase. She has been able to reduce her pain and asthma medications. The avascular necrosis in her right shoulder has stabilized and she no longer needs surgery to maintain function of her right arm. With the physical relief, she also has a more positive attitude towards life, feels more balanced and centered and has more energy to give to her family.

**Keywords:** Heart valve regurgitation, cardiac hypertrophy, avascular necrosis, compassion, breathing practice

## PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL BREATHING

In my practice of holistic psychiatry, patients are taught the importance of breath and the physiology of breathing as well as the benefits to overall wellness by attending to their breath. In addition, we look for imagery that is compatible with their spiritual beliefs to invoke spirit with their “inspiration.” To introduce this imagery, we develop a progressive relaxation that is aligned with the spirituality to which they aspire.

## PRESENTING DIAGNOSIS

One patient, we'll call her Sarah, at age 60, had survived three primary cancers, asthma, fibromyalgia, and multiple surgeries. In addition she had two leaky cardiac valves and hypertrophy of the cardiac muscle. Her leaky valves were reviewed by echocardiogram every six months to monitor the deterioration of the valves and alert as to when the valves would need to be replaced or repaired.

Sarah had experienced many extraordinary stresses in her lifetime. In utero her mother took diethylstilbestrol. As a child had container of mercury on her desk to play with and she was exposed to asbestos. She had multiple difficult pregnancies, with three miscarriages and three premature babies. She survived the three primary cancers with chemotherapy and surgeries over a ten year period. Her father died at age 63 of a heart attack, after a harassing law suit that was politically motivated. During the lawsuit, before her father was vindicated, her child died in the first month of life. Her husband died in an accident two months after the baby died. Shortly thereafter her sister committed suicide.

Sarah could also be described as the original “bleeding heart” liberal; because whenever she saw someone in distress she would consciously try to breathe in their pain, in order to be of help to them. It was painful for her to be in the world because everywhere she looked she saw people in distress. Even watching the news or the weather was upsetting to her.

## PRACTICE

We worked with imagery that allowed her to connect with spirit. After relaxing her body she would visualize

breathing in the light of spirit “like a healing balm,” through the top of her head and filling her body with this golden light. Sarah would then focus herself and send that spirit-filled light “like a beacon from a lighthouse” from her heart to others rather than breathing in their pain. We discussed the problems of taking on someone else’s pain. Although it seems noble and helpful to try to energetically diminish another person’s pain, there is a need for pain to orient an individual towards areas that require attention. Taking on another’s pain is like doing a first grade student’s math homework for them, they may never learn what is required of them to help themselves develop mentally, emotionally and spiritually. If instead of taking on the pain, one chooses to send light, spirit, breath, or prayers to an individual to help them discover the capacity within to overcome the pain of a situation, then the person receiving this energy has developed their capacity. Which is not to say that one would never offer physical assistance or comforting words, these are both different that energetically taking on another’s pain.

## HEALING EXPERIENCE

After nine months of this practice: breathing love, light, and compassion to those in distress, her echocardiogram showed the hypertrophy to be minimal and the regurgitation from the valves to be almost imperceptible. Sarah had healed her heart with the love she was sending to other people. The technician repeated the exam four times because she could not believe what she saw. The tech recalibrated the instrument between the second and third exams. All patients assessed before and after Sarah showed examinations as expected. This “dis-ease” is not supposed to “go away.” Yet, Sarah was not trying to heal her heart, she instead found a new way to help other people without trying to pull their pain into herself.

## LASTING BENEFIT

Eighteen months later her cardiologist has dismissed her from follow-up care, told her that the mild regurgitation is within normal range, and she no longer needs to take antibiotics during dental work. Along with these changes in her physical heart Sarah has a more positive attitude towards life, feels more balanced

and centered and has more energy to give to her family. Sarah has been able to significantly cut back on her pain and asthma medications. The avascular necrosis in her right shoulder has stabilized and she no longer needs surgery to maintain function of her right arm. Although Sarah still cares deeply for the problems in the world she is less distressed herself as she now has something to do, an energetic, healing prayer to send with her breath, when she feels overwhelmed.

### COMPASSIONATE HEALING TRADITIONS

Sarah had spontaneously, inexpertly and with dangerous consequences, been attempting a very sophisticated form of Buddhist compassionate practice called Tonglen in the Tibetan tradition. Tonglen is Tibetan for sending and taking. Because human nature avoids suffering and seeks pleasure, Tonglen was developed to connect to the suffering of others, thereby softening the heart, creating compassion and wisdom. The intention of this practice is to take in the suffering of all beings, breathing in the suffering of all instead of resisting pain. Having breathed in the pain of others, one must then transmute the pain into compassion and send this light out to those who are suffering. This is an advanced practice and many people in the west have difficulty in the transmutation part. Like Sarah, we instead breathe in pain and feel “our heart breaking.”

The methods Sarah learned to practice have roots in Sufi healing and the Raphaelite traditions. Working with intention, concentration and breath, the practice focuses on breathing in light and spirit through the top of the head and sending out from the heart. While using a grounding orientation to the Natural elements of earth, water, fire, air and ether, the breathing assists the receiver to orient toward spirit that moves through the body and claim ownership to sit in the throne of their heart. This tradition offers grounding and connection to spirit, and can meet each individual where they currently reside in their own beliefs.

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