

Holistic Healing Through Spiritual Fitness

By Diana Rankin

If you were a citizen of classical Greece in need of healing, you most likely would travel to Epidaurus, among the ancient world's most famous cities. Ten miles out in a narrow gorge among the loftiest mountains of the Argolic peninsula is the chief home of Asclepius, the god of healing. Here at Epidaurus is the greatest of his temples, a sanctuary of healing known throughout the world for its miraculous successes in treating disease.

In this ancient world of Epidaurus, each person is treated holistically where the patient embarks upon a journey that includes theater with laughter and high drama, dancing, music, poetry, philosophy, massages, purification rites, baths, fasting, rituals, sacrifices, empirical medicine, charms, hypnosis, and communion with the gods that release the imagination and prepared the patient for spending a night in the temple. While the patient sleeps, Asclepius appears in a dream to give advice. In the morning, the physician-priests, the Asclepiads, interpret the dream and explain the god's precepts to the patient.

Many a miracle cure is attributed to time spent at Epidaurus, including the story of one man who had a suppurating wound made by an arrow lodged in his chest. When he woke after a night in the temple, the wound was healed and the arrow held in his hand. Others were cured of blindness, lameness, stomach ailments. At least one man was brought back to life. The stories of these miracle cures sound vaguely familiar, awakening within us a distant memory, dusty and fragmented with age like the stone tablets that were once the votive offerings of the patients cured by Asclepius to show their gratitude and dedication.

These faded memories tug at us, returning again and again through the stories people have told throughout the ages as though the memories are held within our very cells, awakening us to a deeper call, a call that is answered only through the understanding of the complex interrelationship between the different realms of our humanness—the physical and sensory realm experienced through our senses and in our bodies; the psychological world of the intellect and emotion; and the spiritual realm where we meet our essence self and move into the world of spirit, where, as Dr. Jean Houston writes in her book, *A Passion for the Possible*: "An energy moves through you that is Creation itself. It is as if you have hitched a ride on the Mind of God and traveled to the State of Grace."

It is this state of grace that we, as humans, seek to experience. Again and again as I walk the corridors of corporations I am reminded of the need for the individual spirit—as well as the corporate spirit—to be heard above the roar of the mundane. In my community workshops, as well as corporate seminars, people cry out for a healing of their spirits, not in the religious sense, but in the very human sense where we are called by that inner spirit to experience that which is greater than we now know.

To heal holistically requires traveling to this state of grace reached only through experiencing the full holographic spectrum of our humanness—our bodies, minds, and our spirits which by our very nature requires of us to delve into those often painful processes that do not make life happy and seldom fit into the molds we have designed. The tools of the spirit are not those used to heal the body nor the mind. The tools of the spirit are found in the melody the soul sings in the bandages of our wounds while we traverse the levels of the deeper realities of the spiritual realm.

The world of spirit, the world where our souls reside, is a world of mist and solitude

while we live in a culture that canonizes bright sunshine and togetherness. The world of the spirit is found on the other side of the mythical hero's journey beyond the murky waters of uncertainty where clarity dwells and we are able to find a deeper meaning for a soul taking on a horrific illness like cancer or a mystifying addiction. It is here we see the larger patterns that emerge as we are able to experience our world with hearts softened by love, the language of the spiritual realm. It is here we glimpse an understanding of human suffering and create the stories that allow us to find the triumphs in the tragedies. It is here we find the truth of who we are and in finding this truth we find our bliss.

Spiritual fitness does not come easily. It comes only with a diet of the rich interweaving of our body, mind and spirit, the food for our souls, the music of the mystics, the dance of the beloved, and the solitude of the poet. Whether we are the healer or patient, Asclepius, the god of healing, awaits our call to him in our dreams where we can perhaps travel back to ancient world of Epidaurus and hear the whisper of the soul, that whisper that reminds us to look to the human spirit when healing the human body and to the human soul when healing the human psyche; look to that which pervades all life-our spirit-the essence of all that we are. Then, only then, can we truly heal holistically.

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