

**Remembering Roots to the Shamanic: Dance Archetypes for Healing Self and
Tribe**

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ABSTRACT: This workshop will illustrate through film, didactic, and experiential presentation, a successful expressive arts community intervention, whose efficacy has been evaluated with cluster controlled trials, internationally. Referring to ritual dances; it incorporates the vital building blocks for the simultaneous healing of individual and community following traumatic exposure to extreme stressors.

DESCRIPTION: Contemporary humankind has forsaken the sensory mode of perception, which celebrates the oneness of all life forms; environmental violence, including war, has transformed our perception to the mythic mode: "us against them". (LeShan). We have forgotten ancestral rituals for community celebration and healing; in all cultures there existed the consciousness transforming practices of dance and song circles. Considering the shamanic as a healing archetype, we understand the necessity for healing the self and maintaining a connection between the sacred (spiritual) and the profane (earth), in healing the community. It is this healing archetype and the transformed dynamic perception from mythic to sensory, that are foundations for the internationally evaluated expressive arts community intervention, CBI®.

Over the last eight years the CBI service continuum has been successfully implemented and evaluated in thirteen countries under extraordinarily

difficult circumstances. These circumstances include earthquakes, tsunamis, typhoons, as well as the aftermath of armed conflict and terrorist attacks, such as 9/11/01. In August of 2008 a cluster randomized trial of CBI was published in *JAMA* indicating strong effect in several domains. Most importantly, CBI appears to accomplish similar benefits offered by CBT and TF-CBT and the CBI effects of reductions in depression and PTSD, with increases in hope and pro-social behavior hold longer than CBT effects. It is the first expressive therapy based psychosocial intervention for large scale trauma to be published in the literature. (See: W. Tol, et al: J.T.V.M. (2008). School-based mental health intervention for political violence-affected children in Indonesia: A cluster randomized trial. *JAMA*, 300, 655-662.)

We developed the Classroom-Based Intervention program to provide a psychoeducational curriculum that can address the most critical needs of children and youth exposed to threat and terror. We are currently conducting this work in the United States, Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. Our group consists of clinicians with training in the arts and/or behavioral conditioning, and with specialized training backgrounds in youth trauma who partner with local teachers, counselors and parents to conduct this intensive intervention aimed at stress inoculation against prospective threats as well as at stemming the traumatic effects of a threatening incident, supporting healing, and developing skills and techniques for recovering positive development trajectories. (Macy, R., Macy, D., Brighton, P.)

The CBI's trauma specific treatment involves a sequence of interventions to help children stabilize and return to the level of functioning they had before the

traumatic event. The structure of this intervention program is based upon proven models for decreasing arousal, hyper-vigilance, fear, and numbing in traumatized children. The design of the CBI program especially targets the children's needs for safety, trust, and stabilization, the first phase of trauma treatment (Macy, R., Macy, D., Brighton, P.).

For safety building, this phase oriented and structured intervention begins with an integrated movement and sound ritual circle. Rhythm, preverbal and primitive, eliminates boundaries, encouraging affiliation, and is the foundation for these circles. Each child expresses his trauma narrative through art and drama based activities; Collaborative movement challenge activities which facilitating resource identification and installation, promote collective esteem, reincorporation and the integration of soma and psyche follow. Finally, a circle ritual provides a soothing and empowering ending for each session.

A developmental discussion of the archetypal aspect of the CBI's content and structure as well and its foundation in the shamanic practice of healing follows.

An archetype is an original model upon which other similar things are patterned. We have found that the integrated sound and movement rituals which frame the CBI intervention have been culturally familiar in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East; Our "Gesture Dance" which is a rhythmic circling of the arms from the heart center (self) to the sky, the earth and the community, has been likened to the Turkish Dervish, to Hindi and Buddhist healing rituals, and other indigenous community practices. (Johnson).

Unity was mankind's original dynamic; In the beginning there was the unity of Nature where in all creatures co existed harmoniously: men and women, animal and vegetation, tribes. Based upon this unity, templates for survival, interaction, communication , and healing evolved .The shaman developed ,in many cultures ,as a healer devoted to maintaining a healthy community. Self healing was his precursor to collective healing. The shaman assists the individual, through the practice of ritual, in maintaining a connection to the sacred, or spiritual, and to the profane, that which is of the earth, or man created. This shamanic practice may be perceived as archetypal as its ancient and continued relevancy can be found in most indigenous cultures. One of the most powerful aspects of the CBI training and intervention is the simultaneous training and healing of local caregivers. The training consists of five intensive days in which teachers, parents, and clinicians immerse themselves in their own debriefing, focusing upon their own trauma, surrendering to the power of group healing, and embodying the intervention which they will later conduct for the children of their community. This is the shamanic way.

Lawrence Le Shan, in his article, "Why We Love War" explores two fundamental human drives: 1) To be singular and 2) to be part of a tribe. In comparing two modes of perception, he considers the question, "How is it possible to satisfy both drives, simultaneously and without contradiction?". The mythic mode of perception, which we assume as we war, perceives "us against them...good and evil, with no innocent bystanders". (Le Shan). We default as a contemporary world, to viewing each other through this mythic lens. The "sensory mode"

perceives “us and them” as one. It is through this lens that ancient community healing was conducted. In circles of sound and movement, in meditative and spiritual development practices, there is a sense of oneness ; the individual and group identities are simultaneously exalted and satisfied. Sensory in foundation, the CBI is based upon reclaiming and experiencing the vital rhythm that balances affiliation and solitude. The healing process begins as we recognize the need for both: 1) contemplation, focusing upon the individual’s internal landscape and 2) outward expression, as the individual merges with the environment.

The time and nature symbolic structure of CBI, begins and ends with a ritual circle: The “nest” circle enclosure, an ancient animal notion deeply encoded within us, signifying safety. (Bachelard). The circles, ritualized as children practice simple, repetitive, and harmoniously integrated sounds and movements, symbolize “home”, and are practiced and shared by the group. We transform something monotonous into something rhythmic and capable of channeling the Unity, when we practice ritual.

The narrative component of the CBI structure represents the “journey” which is taken by each individual exploring his story. It is the memory of, and anticipation for, safety and home , that empowers the individual to embark on this solo journey. Symbolizing the courage which is made possible by the presence of belief and hope, CBI is symbolic of time past, present, and future.

We attempted toward these goals for CBI: to create balance between the individual and the tribe, to be consciousness transforming, and to encourage renewal and incorporation. Across time, culture, and religion, we found the

repetition of the following community building and healing elements:

circumambulation; movement chants with patterns of four beats and four repetitions; the physical and symbolic heart as the source of emotional expression; dynamic focal shifting of emphasis between the individual and the collective, and consistent gestures which were symbolic of aspiration, nurturance, and nourishing..

These archetypal elements can be found, among others, in the welcoming dance of Kuan Yin, the Bodhisatva of Compassion, and in the etudes of Isadora Duncan, a choreographer who was dedicated to dance as ritual for spiritual growth. Isadora made dances which reflected emotion as it related to visceral action and outward movement expression.

Incorporating toning, a chanting technique which utilizes vowel sounds and octaves and produces healing Alpha waves, proved to be integrative: The scrambled pieces of trauma narrative moved toward a sequential chronology as CBI's integrated sound and movement sequences repositioned the neurological puzzle. Singing allows the individual to interact with the environment while it simultaneously stimulates the singer's brain and sensory systems. Minimizing the perception of isolation which accompanies a traumatic event, singing increases the sense of affiliation.

The CBI intervention trains local caregivers to heal their communities in a manner similar to the ancient shamanic method. Having self healed, the shaman is empowered to care for the community. CBI methodology supports simultaneously, the human drive to be unique and whole, and to be component, or part of the tribe. CBI refers to the ancient community healing rituals which incorporate

contemplation and expression, sound and movement, action and rest. This international program is one of the first contemporary expressive arts based intervention to have been successfully implemented. In 2010, Taiwanese Dance therapists, trained in CBI methodology were first responders for children left homeless by devastating typhoons and Haitian psychologists soothed themselves and their children with CBI safety building rituals.

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