

Presencing Issue 40: Asking for Help Part III - Working with Cancer

From Jack: *In my previous newsletters about asking for help I have tried to emphasize the effects of creating a spiritual inner life in which we become familiar with deeper parts of our consciousness. The reason for making these inner connections is that we can develop a sort of "knowing sense" about our lives and the various directions we can take. In this issue I will come at the theme of asking for help from a different direction... perhaps a direction that all of us take when we are overwhelmed by circumstances. We ask for help inside and outside, help comes, but we forget that we were answered. Especially in our work with clients, which is one-on-one, we find that we get stuck, about what to do, where to go next. In most of these circumstances we have to ask inside, because it is inappropriate or useless to ask the client. In the following case studies I will try to depict accurately my own internal process in seeking and receiving help.*

Background: The day was scheduled well ahead of time. I, and some of my students would be visiting a cancer hospital in Shizuoka, Japan, and demonstrate my work with some of the end-of-life patients in the palliative care wing of the hospital. That evening we would teach a class in somatics techniques to members of the hospital staff. As always when we visit there I wonder inside what kind of patient situations we will find. And I start to ask for help inside, because there are so many unknowns to be faced, I have learned to follow this process, of dedicating the day to discovering a deeper connection with my inner helper(s). So I feel that I am there to be taught as well as experience the guidance that emerges out of a presencing relationship with the clients. Because these clients are very close to their own transition out of the physical, there is an essence that seems to accompany the sharing of touch with these persons. So I entered the day with both trepidations and expectations.

Client 1: The lung cancer had metastasized to her spine. Her doctor told me that the patient was in pain all of the time... that she couldn't sleep so she wandered around the hospital. Both she and her husband were quite critical of the support they were getting in this publically funded hospital. So I was prepared for a very difficult client situation. I introduced myself to both of them and with Koito's translation I was able to find out where she was feeling the pain, as well as getting a strong sense of her husband's commitment to helping her in any way he could, and his frustration and fear that she would die and there was no way he could change things. They both looked to be in their 50s and because of her ordeal she looked about 10 years older than him. I started by having her lie on her left side. I softly ran my hands along her spine; I could pretty much feel where the tumors were because of the corresponding tightness in the paraspinals and intercostals. She confirmed those places and then I placed my hands softly in contact with t8-t10. I asked her if she could feel my hands; yes she could. I then asked her to breathe into my hands right through her pain. She could do that; "I can feel you coming into my hands; they are getting quite warm." I then asked her to feel what was happening to the pain. "It has disappeared; it feels very good." I then trained her husband to do the same thing. I think he was a tradesman because his hands were quite gnarly. But when he could feel her

breath coming into his hands, they softened. He had tears in the corners of his eyes and so did I. As they proceeded to move from tumor to tumor, she became more and more pain free. I was able to bring soothing movement to her torso; she actually became quite free in her spine. They both thanked me, he holding my hand and bowing profusely. I gave them some suggestions for carrying on these interactions.

Client 2: The next client was 85 years old. His doctor told me that due the cancer in his lower spine he had mostly numbness in his lower extremities and extreme pain in his upper thighs; also he had stopped speaking. When we entered the room, I could see him sitting up in bed. He was accompanied by his son and daughter-in-law. After a rather sketchy introduction, I asked him if we could try an experiment together. He agreed to work together; sort of... Koito's translation brought the two of us together. I placed my hands on his right leg and I could feel a combination of edemic tissue, flaccid major muscles and tight intrinsics. It felt like he was getting almost no circulation in his legs. We started with his feeling awareness. Holding his right knee, I compressed his upper leg toward his hip joint. "Can you feel that in your pelvis; he nodded 'Yes.' Now I would like you to push me back, very gently. I can feel you pushing back; is that OK with you?" Once again he nodded yes and a slight smile began to form. Next I held his foot with my right hand and his gastrocs with my left, and repeated the compression towards his hip joint, another nod. I asked him to gently push against my right hand; "Oh yes I can feel you here." I varied the upward compressions. Each time he was able to match the varied directions of dorsiflexion, inner and outer rotation, inversion, and eversion. I could feel his intrinsic muscles soften and come alive. I asked him to tell me where there was pain in his right leg or pelvis. "No pain." "You are making these changes in your body; all I'm doing is showing you where to bring your attention." Are you ready to do the same thing on your left side? He nodded. I need a formal agreement, a handshake. We shook and then we began bring his feeling into his left leg, in a similar way, mostly by engaging his proprioceptive awareness. He reported that he could feel no pain. I then sat on the bed and supported his right then his left leg on mine respectively. In this position I could bring movement to different parts of his legs. In true Trager® style I used his own unique tissue elasticity, plus gravity, plus easily nudging the tissue just enough to keep pace with his own rhythm. When we finished he had stronger feeling awareness in each leg, no pain, and an engaging smile on his face. I taught his son and daughter-in-law how to create the movement in his legs. I had a presentment that as he completes his journey in the physical, he will transition with much more body awareness.

Client 3: This time the cancer was in her brain. Her doctor reported that she was a very bright and articulate person, but because the cancer was attacking the speech center in her brain, her speech would be slurred and hard to understand. Once again, Koito's special skills as a translator, and her ease of empathy (she is also a clairvoyant reader) formed a bridge of communication with this client. I

found out that she was starting to lose the ability to move parts of her body. The first to go was her left arm and shoulder. I decided to weigh different parts of her arm while she was sitting up in bed. As I applied support to different joints and softly moved her in the direction of ease, she would join me in her body with feeling awareness. She was participating along with me in the surprising ways that paralysis was leaving this part of her body. She was accompanying these movements with chortling, cooing, eeeye, and other nonverbal sounds. I told her that I could feel her coming into her body. "I am following you, because as you come in, the tissue shows me where to go next." Apparently this really got to her and she started guiding me more and more through her proprioceptive awareness. Her arm and shoulder are becoming freer and freer. She can now touch her face and run her fingers through her hair. She is so surprised and so am I because she is guiding the movements! Literally I am being guided by her presencing. Now we are both chortling as are all the persons in the room, including her doctor. We have opened a doorway together and proven that even without normal neuromuscular articulation, she is able to feel her body in a sensitive way. I could feel her sensing inside and an astonishing untethering was taking place; no pain, no effort, emerging from the chrysalis of the human body. At the end she told me that she was grateful that I was gentle because I was the first foreigner she had met! ! Once again everyone in the room was chortling!



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