

Learning to Feel

by Todd Fiorentino

Many of us walk around numbed out. Our emotions and perhaps the human condition itself lead us to drug ourselves, escape and tune out. Although I'm guilty of this myself, massage can help us to once again—learn to feel.

I just read the first 20 pages of Ram Dass' book, "Being Here Now," a book that is rife with this idea of tuning in and tuning out (if you haven't seen the movie, "Ram Dass," that's really worth checking out, too). Reading this reminded me of various spiritual ideas and thoughts that I wanted to revisit. I remember a while back saying to myself, upon encouragement from a different book, "I am not Todd." And I said this again and again. It actually had a remarkable effect.

It reminded me that my potential is endless, that we limit ourselves with identity and "our stories," that we create class and prestige categories, that I am just a living breathing being on this planet no different from bacteria, a squirrel or a blade of grass. Most of our beliefs are held because they are advantageous for us to have them!

These existential questions of being are not easy to settle. While much of life is subject to whim and fancy, randomness and luck, it also seems that people pass through our lives for a reason. This is true of relationships and massage. Perhaps we need to heal a number of people before we can ourselves be healed. Maybe we are healing ourselves through healing others.

The other day, I had a client who, I must admit, I was dreading working on. This almost never happens. In the three years that I've been doing massage, I have only felt this strange negative energy coming from someone on two occasions. This was the second. Because it happens so rarely, I always try to listen to myself, and yet, I had to do the massage.

What was I feeling? Although I knew verbalizing it would just give it more power, I told a trusted staff member who advised me to "block well." This was another way of saying to get really grounded before starting. I thought, yes, I will do that, and I will try to work fast. What I found was a remarkable thing.

The energy of this client was, in fact, negative and strange, but I got beyond this experience by considering exactly why people come for massage in the first place. That's it! It's because your energy has, in a sense, become corrupted, that you seek massage. I was pleased to find that I could correct this client's energy and project only white light, only positivity. I saw the difference at the end of the session in him and me.

While this may sound mystical, I do believe that people can psychically alter your energy much to your detriment. Words, actions, thoughts, wishes—all have power. If someone hates you, or if lots of people hate you, this will start to affect your body and energy field. Others, who are into mysticism, speak of psychic attacks.

Doing massage is raising my awareness to some of these possibilities. Recently, I have started closing my eyes during certain parts of the session. Blind-folded massage is a common exercise done in massage schools, and historically, in some Asian cultures, blind people were put to work as massage therapists. But I had never done this in school. I notice it does increase your sensitivity.

I worked on an older woman a while back and was stunned at how much I was feeling. I don't mean muscle and bone, rather, I felt some kind of heavy trauma from her past coming through. Sound like psychic mumbo jumbo? I agree! It really does, but that's what happened. Although I empathize with all of my clients, this was distinct from empathy; I could feel it. It took great courage to pull myself together and finish the session.

Sometimes I find that my eyes seem to glaze over during a session, often toward the end. It's as if nothing else exists and I can't really see straight. If you've ever played that Magic Eye game with the book full of visuals, it's that kind of experience. In that state, I don't seem to care about anything, I mean nothing at all: time, noise. It's a dreamlike state, and I feel as if I'm casting a sleep spell on the person.

While I don't claim to be a psychic, I do believe that everyone has different levels of psychic power or the ability to sense things beyond our senses. For most, they must learn to develop this power. For others, it is an innate gift already at the surface, though still, they usually must work to refine and interpret the gift.

I had a dream about eight months ago that someone in my family died. It was very vivid and long and I awoke certain that I would be contacted soon. My mother called and left a message on my phone. I was literally just waiting for her to say it and then she did. Someone had died and my mom was calling to let me know of the arrangements being made.

However, it is also the case that I have had dreams of people dying and awoke to find that all was well and good. These were fear-based dreams or perhaps it was related to our conception of time. Either way, this is what I mean when I say these powers must be refined and interpreted. More often, our dreams are not spelled out in this kind of blatant fashion; instead, they are cloaked in layers of meaning and metaphor.

We live in a fascinating world, but it is also a world that has been limited in my view by culture, the scientific method, socialization, assumptions and identity. I like to consider the wider possibilities, the ideas that others have cast out. Is this magical thinking? Perhaps, but the world just seems more interesting when we suspend our disbelief. And as I like to say, the one surefire way to not have a spiritual experience is to not believe they exist.