

**Compassion as Power
in the
Transpersonal Healing Practices of Therapeutic Touch:**

A Highly Human Function

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Therapeutic Touch as transpersonal healing starts with a deep yearning, almost a felt need or an irresistible urge to be compassionate to a healing partner, a healee, who is ill, in trauma, wounded, or approaching end of life. Such compelling, often emotionally-moving summons to compassion in action we have recently designated as The Call¹. Specifically, The Call is that undeniable inner prompting; a Call arising out of the deep stillness of one's Being to help or to heal. In committed response, the Therapeutic Touch therapist (TTrx) shifts into an altered state as she assumes a sustained centering of her consciousness, and remains in that state throughout the healing session. Consequently, in using the Therapeutic Touch method, it is compassion, one of the higher human functions, that is the constant companion of the transpersonal-sensitive psychodynamic background of the TTrx' healing style.

To clearly make the point, without compassion, whatever else one is doing with the techniques, it is not Therapeutic Touch. For, as the TT therapist continues this compassionate healing act, the special psychodynamic forces of compassion itself upwells within the therapist and drives her toward a crucial transformation in her worldview and her lifestyle. That is, over time the intentionality incorporated in the continued compassionate practice of TT sculpts the fine spaces of the therapist's vital-energy field, as the informed enactments of the TT process patterns and repatterns the pranic flow of healing energies to the TT therapist's healing partner. In this way Therapeutic Touch becomes a "habit" of compassion; that is, the "habit" is clarified and defined as the repetitive TT healing practices "sculpts" the pranic flow of the therapist's vital-energy field, and thereby reshapes

the field itself over time. It is this refashioned field which then expresses itself through the therapist as compassionate healing acts.

I have been deeply interested in healing since my very early 'teens, particularly in the use of compassion as a function of the heart chakra. As I pursued graduate studies in the life sciences, I looked at the concept of compassion within a Darwinian frame and wondered: Compassion is not a survival skill; why should it have persisted? What is its purpose re: evolution, where the acme is reached by a law which proclaims the survival of the fittest? Actually, it is the opposite that plays itself out in the compassionate act, for compassion demands that one opens oneself - one's heart, if you will - to the needs of others. This voluntary exposure of the more humane qualities has the effect of making one more sensitive, fragile and vulnerable to life's events. It was only as I grew in experience and reflection that I began to realize that the answer lay not so much in recognizing that such questions presented a paradox, but in the realization that the validity of compassion lay outside the common framework of modern science. Compassion is a power with its own sphere of influence, a realm engaged by fine energy patterns that play out as behaviors, such as aspiration, empathy and the fulfillment of a need-to-heal, rather than those driven by a competitive frame of reference that fosters dualisms such as win-lose, good-bad, etc. Compassion is a highly human - and humane - function.

However, for this to happen most effectively, the setting must be prepared. In Therapeutic Touch this occurs as the therapist gives her full attention to the task at hand, bringing a sense of deep peace and equanimity to the healing milieu. It is in this still ambience born out of unconditional love that The Call from within, as a higher human function, can reach the critical level required to effectively project healing energy. It is as if the welling up of compassion from the depths of the individual resulted in the release of an inner sound or vibration. My sense is that this inner reverberation sets up a "silent mantra" that can progress to set into motion fine levels of subtle energies in one's own chakras. Since compassion is a necessary state of consciousness for the TT therapist, in this case it is the heart chakra that is energized by the intentionality of the therapist's surge of compassionate regard for the needs of the healing partner. The point being made is that by deeply engaging the powers of compassion and then doing something with that force of benevolence to relieve the needs of someone ill or in trauma, the TT

therapist (her engaged subtle energies conceivably propelled by an altruistic desire to help or to heal the person in need) harnesses her inner “mantric” or resonant powers in the service of healing. It is because this act of compassion as merciful power is one of the natural “tools of the trade” in the mature expression of Therapeutic Touch, that without compassion, as I have previously noted, whatever else one may do, it is not Therapeutic Touch.

Fundamentally, Therapeutic Touch is natural and instinctive, arising out of the essential perceptions and basic knowing needed to help or to heal living beings in need. One irrefutable basic assumption states that healing is a natural potential that can be actualized under the appropriate conditions. Because of this you will find that, if you get it right, the universe is behind you and, even from the early stages of learning TT, the success rate of helping/healing others is high. However, we want you to be conscious in the practice of Therapeutic Touch; that is, be self-aware of what you are doing, the meanwhile reaching a bit beyond your grasp even as you simultaneously learn to use the fine-energy systems of your chakra complex in the service of those in need. It is because Therapeutic Touch is a well-defined, compassionate and transpersonal healingway that I have called it “yoga of healing”, and like yoga, the mindfully cultivated practice of TT is an in-depth exploration of the active relationship of the TT therapist with her inner self, whom we playfully call “Issie”.

Compassion as power thus drives the inner work of Therapeutic Touch. It maintains the fire-in-the-belly, the imperative that presses the TT therapist towards a conscious relationship with Issie. This is the enactment of the “heroic leap” of mythology, permitting the self-awakening into a new territory that is personally demarcated for the individual by her Issie. It is because of this centrality of compassion to the Therapeutic Touch healing process that, modeling after M. Eliade, the contemporary authority on shamanism who coined the term describing the essential shaman as technician of ecstasy, I have dubbed TT therapists “technicians of compassion”.

It is often during the TT healing session that these technicians of compassion have the opportunity to bestow a most enduring gift upon the healing partner. The encounter is very moving, and in a deep study of compassion over the past 20 years I have often intently reflected on its astounding powers during the healing

moment. It is a happening that is difficult to put into words adequately; however, with the aid of a dollop of “clairvoyance-lite”, I often have noted that it appears to me as if something like the following can take place: Most healing partners like, are even fascinated by, the subjective inner experience of the Therapeutic Touch process as a TT session gets under way. He often is as deeply attracted by the interior effect of the TT process as by the subtle interactions with the TT therapist. After noting his interest, often the therapist will teach him about the TT process itself as the healing session progresses, and so the healing partner with even minimal knowledge about TT quickly learns that its most basic assumption is that healing is a natural potential that can be actualized under appropriate circumstances. He knows, therefore, that whatever the therapist is doing, he can learn to do, too. Especially if his condition is improving under TT treatment, he admires the therapist. She may become his teacher or mentor in reference to TT, for he can envision that one day he might be able to do for others in need what she is doing for him now.

The dynamics of the healing interaction between the healee and the Therapeutic Touch therapist is deep-seated, often more profoundly so than either may recognize at the time. However, the parameters of this therapeutic human field phenomenon might be glimpsed by describing an example of what has come to be called peer therapeutics. Peer therapeutics is an offshoot of Therapeutic Touch in which a healee who has been healed and intentionally taught the basics of Therapeutic Touch as part of his on-going healing program, voluntarily proceeds to do TT with another healee who has the same illness as the first healee had. The purpose of peer therapeutics is that in doing TT to the second healee, the first healee (now neophyte healer) very frequently in his compassion to help or to heal another, gains profound insight into his own original problems as he empathizes with another who now has problems similar to what he, himself, had to endure.

A peer therapeutics group was founded in the recent past by one of the current group of “Krazies” (my students call themselves “Krieger’s Krazies). This group is made up of men who are bilateral amputees and have phantom pain, which can be relieved by Therapeutic Touch. After class one day, Eileen, one of the TT therapists showed me photos of these men doing Therapeutic Touch to each other. The beautiful sight of one of these men, the healer, working in the invisible subtle energy field of another man whose physical leg was no longer there, had a stunning

effect on me. From the intent look on his face, there could be no doubt that he was purposively interacting with a reality of an energetic nature and was confident of the therapeutic outcome for the healee. They were both seated in wheelchairs facing each other. The healee's gaze seemed absorbed in his own experience in this interaction. He was in a state of relaxation, his face reflecting a freedom from anxiety and pain, a slight smile playing about his lips, and his "soft eyes" seeming to express approval of the actions of his friend: together the two helping and being helped by each other.

Compassion is only recently becoming fashionable, supported by strong cross-cultural teachers, such as Thich Nhat Hahn, the Dalai Lama, and Archbishop Tutu. What is being called upon is a self-awareness of our essential self-worth as a humane being who, having answered a universal appeal to love one another, concomitantly would be working towards the fulfillment of the concept of the fully human being, a boundary state toward which we are continuing to evolve. This Call is to actualize the potential of the human stature, and in so doing, to have compassion for self and other, for "other" is our brother/sister in the context of the intangible continuum of our inner self, the matrix of Issie who is the essential source and inspiration of compassion as power.

To exercise this laudable state of compassion and kindness, a few years ago the following affirmation arose to consciousness and I pass it on to you:

I breathe in the powers of prana;

I pause to appreciate its vital presence.

I breathe out the grace of compassion;

In quietude I offer gratitude.

In closing I want to thank the Therapeutic Touch International Association for providing an incisive platform which brings to attention in our time a most noble concept of one of human beings' higher functions, compassion as power. I am honored to share that insight with you. Thank you so much.

Reference: D.Krieger, P.Cole and S.Matheny. LOOKING OVER MY SHOULDER: A Study of Mindfulness during Therapeutic Touch. Therapeutic Touch Dialogues, Inc. Whitefish, Montana 2012.