

Giving and Receiving: Two Sides of the Same Coin

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At the end of each year, as the holidays arrive and we prepare for the challenges of the year ahead, reflection on life seems to be in the wind. Why have we chosen this profession? What does our work give to our community and to ourselves? Are we doing enough to help those who suffer? Am I getting enough of a reward for my efforts?

These questions, and others like them, are both important and timely. We can't give adequately when we feel burned out, unfulfilled or out of balance. Our profession demands tremendous amounts of time and effort to maintain a high level of service to our patients. We have the responsibility to keep up with our own profession, and to be aware of the interactions of Western medicine as well. In addition, most of us run our own businesses, and we need to be aware of all that this entails. Family, friends and community also demand certain time of us. How do we balance all of these demands?

One way to achieve balance is to work on our receiving ability. Healers usually are better at giving than receiving. Practice some of the receiving meditations listed at right, even for just a moment or two. Try and attach an image to your meditation, and visualize this image during the day when you start to feel overwhelmed or fatigued. Understand that in order to give, we must first receive.

Another way is to offer your services in a different medium to a different group of people. For example, if your practice serves mostly middle-class people with insurance, try and offer your services to a community project or clinic that serves the indigent. If you constantly are dealing with issues of pain, try and offer your services to a clinic that treats patients with addiction issues or infertility. Acupuncturists Without Borders is a unique organization that offers us a different way to give back using our skills. I also have started a program, Compassionate Care for Caregivers, in Santa Barbara, Calif., that offers free treatments to caregivers of people with life-threatening illnesses. Hospices usually are open to volunteers assisting patients as well as staff.

As a profession, I think we need to be more concerned and organized about offering our services to the community for reduced fees or for free. The colleges have been doing this for years, and there have been some good efforts in the area of substance abuse, but overall I think we can do better. By giving to these efforts, we replenish ourselves. Many practitioners give free or discounted treatments to their patients, yet this community effort is a different way to give. It sometimes feels more rewarding, and bears significant results in improving community awareness of our profession and our generosity to those in need.

Approach the year with some new ideas and enthusiasm for both giving and receiving. We all need nurturing, and now is the time to start. Please feel free to contact me with your ideas and comments.

Tips for Receiving Meditations

- Breathe in and see the face of a loved one smiling at you. Breathe out your happiness that they are in your life.
- Breathe in and smell a favorite cooking aroma (cookies, apple cider, coffee, etc.). Breathe out and allow the taste to fill your mouth.
- Breathe in and feel the sun warm you. Breathe out and feel the warmth extend to your fingers and toes.
- Breathe in and see your favorite flower. Breathe out and see a field of those flowers moving in the wind.

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