



GENERAL ACUPUNCTURE

Saying Goodbye To Healing

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I was recently laid off from my acupuncture detox job at the county hospital after 19 years. I am far from alone in this experience in the acupuncture detox field. Over the last 10 years or so, I have known at least eight acupuncturists that have left the detox field due to the bad economy. Their positions were defunded or the whole program was closed or they were stringing together two or three part-time acudetox jobs and just could not make a living. It feels like a trend to me. At one point, I thought I might be taking it personally.

I emailed a few people associated with NADA (National Acupuncture Detoxification Association) to see if I could get information about the diminishing number of acupuncture detox services. If you take my very limited findings into account, it is a trend and a very disturbing one. This is a small list of places that have reported closings or reductions in services: a drug court in Sacramento County in California, three community clinics in Portland, Ore., a recovery clinic in Hamilton, Ohio, and clinics in Hawai'i and Nova Scotia.

The most upsetting info came out in a *GuidePoints* (the official newsletter of NADA) article stating that the funding to keep St. Vincent's Hospital in lower Manhattan open had dried up. The acupuncture clinic in St. Vincent's Hospital, as I understand it, was the oldest and largest NADA training site.

For myself, the loss of my job was emotionally difficult. I am old enough to get Social Security payments; add that to unemployment and health coverage through the Veteran's Administration and I am not going to be struggling. I will miss the work. I will miss the clients. Most of all I will miss the sense of community. I am getting over the ego blow, but what I feel the worst about is the clients who would be sitting outside my clinic door on Monday mornings waiting for acupuncture because of a "bad weekend." I feel bad about them and all the clients who will not get to use the services of acupuncture detox because that part of the clinic is gone.

Yesterday, I ran into an ex-client of the clinic who did not make it through the whole program. He was "spare changing" in the parking lot of a coffee shop in my neighborhood. That was the fifth or sixth time I had seen him in the last six months or so. Everytime he asked me if I am still working at the detox clinic. This time I said, "No, they laid me off." He asked who was taking my place and of course I had to answer that the acupuncture part of the clinic was just gone. He looked down, then raised his head, looked me in the eye and said, "Well, that's just not right." I shrugged my shoulders. He asked for money and I gave him a dollar. I told him that next time I might only be able to give him 50 cents, to which he said, "Times are hard everywhere." I replied, "So, they are." But, he looked healthy; he looked clean and when I asked he replied that he was sober.

In the 22 years that I did this work, there are many people like him who have remained clean, who have bettered their lives by fixing the derailed parts. I take solace that I have played a small part in this. I also take solace that I have a small part in this immense legacy that the NADA protocol

continues to spread across the globe.

So, how do you say goodbye when the leaving is forced? I could fall back on the skill I learned when I was drafted - the shut it all down, close up your emotions and try not to hurt abilities. But, I think I will just say thank you to all that I have come in contact with over the last 22 years who have made my experience so rich and full - the clients and their families, fellow staff, teachers and mentors and even some bosses. I especially want to thank *Acupuncture Today* for letting me share these times with so many acupuncturists and I want to thank the acupuncturists who responded to my writings. Shutting down worked many years ago, when I was stuck in a war machine. It quit working when I returned to the civilian world and I had to get a lot of help to heal. Thank you to acupuncture, especially the acudetox work for giving me a chance to pay it back.

One form of therapy that I did was with a psychic who did hypnotherapy. We accessed past lives (I believe in reincarnation) and she once told me that I had been involved in war in many lives and had much karma to burn off. I sighed. She said, "Oh, no, let me explain. It is the accruing the karma that is difficult; the killing and injuring and dieing a gruesome death. But, paying it back was the good part. Look at you now," she continued, " You are an acupuncturist, helping people heal. Isn't that better?"

I hope she is right. It sure feels as though she is.

DECEMBER 2011