Bridging the Gap Between Curing & Healing:  
The Role of the Wounded Healer  
In Oncology & End of Life  
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Concepts of the Wounded Healer

- Universality of brokenness
- Dual nature between psychic and somatic wounding
- Healing as a shared process
- Interplay of humility, vulnerability, compassion, joy and love in holistic care
- Wisdom and Understanding; making meaning out of suffering

Brokenness

Much of life is like a mosaic; it is created out of brokenness. Have you ever wondered why we cut a ribbon to inaugurate a new building or smash a bottle over the bow of a new ship or cut the cake at a wedding? It is an age-old understanding that new life is formed out of brokenness. In fact, a common theme in many creation stories, from the Bible to the most remote tribes of Borneo, begin with a break. Even in science we call the beginning the “Big Bang.” A sperm breaks into an egg in order to begin conception. A green shoot breaks through a seed’s shell in order for growth to happen. **So what is the relationship to brokenness and new life?** How can such awareness help us live more meaningful and mature lives?

Rev. Martin Lavanbar
Archetypes

• Can be seen as a potentiality which can be activated
• The story of Asklepios
• Asklepiean healing vs. Hippocratic curing
• The story of Chiron the centaur
• Role of the shaman as healer in hunter-gatherer cultures

Difference between Western Culture and Eastern Culture

• Western Culture sees as separate:
  - good and evil
  - joy and pain
  - psyche and soma
• Eastern Culture lives with duality:
  - Yin/Yang

The “I and Thou” of helping

• Rachel Naomi Remen, MD
  - fixing – service - BELONGING
• Henri Nouwen
  - loneliness – hospitality – COMMUNITY
• Martin Buber
  - the “I” of “I and Thou” is different from the “I” of “I and it”. The “I” of “I and it” lives within roles, tasks, and preoccupations that define us as separate individuals. These markers of individuality often function defensively, protecting us from a full awareness of our dependencies and interdependencies as human beings. The “I” that speaks to a “Thou” has moved out from behind those barriers and – at the moment – lives in openness and vulnerability of relationship.
Wounded healers today

• Balfour Mount’s journey as physician and healer
• Michael Kearney and his encounters with death and dying
• Carl Jung, Adolf Guggenbühl-Craig and the wounded-healer
• Danger of the split archetype in its various forms
• Implications for the clinical encounter

Two case examples

• The Lost Sons
  - healing through the sharing of wounds (group work)

• The Destitute Dying
  - wound as portal to compassion (individual and systems work)

Final thoughts

• Wounded healer as a wise healer
• Revisiting the name of Chiron and the role of touch
• Importance of self-care for the wounded healer
The gift of giving

- Adherence to strict boundaries leads to:
  - compassion fatigue
  - burn out
  - dead ends
  - isolation ("I and it")

- Shared suffering leads to:
  - meaning
  - wisdom
  - understanding
  - reciprocity in healing (both poles, wounded & healer, present in both parties)

Self care

- Tools along the journey
  - mindfulness
  - good supervision
  - professional education
  - psychotherapy
  - prayer
  - exercise

I slept and dreamt that life was joy.
I awoke and saw that life was service.
I acted and behold, service was joy.
- Rabindranath Tagore

Summary and questions

- Jung and the union of opposites
- Embracing our dual nature to become a balanced clinician
- How do you see yourself as a wounded healer?
- What experience or experiences in your life were initiatory?
- Did your life experiences lead to a choice of a health care career?
"Goodbye," said the fox. And now here is my secret, a very simple secret: It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

The quotation is part of the author’s gentle comments about love and responsibility. One can see much with one’s eyes; but it is with one’s heart that one sees, feels, and perhaps understands love.

Bibliography


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