

Healing Through Sacred Attention

By Richard Harvey

As time went on I met others, beautiful monks, wise gurus, spiritual teachers, gifted psychologists, highly skilled psychotherapists, inspired guides, original thinkers, serene martial arts masters – all centered individuals manifesting something much greater than themselves through a quality of presence, a sense of inner wholeness, and a heart recognition of the other in them and the Divine within us all.

This attitude of presence, authenticity, and visible peace heals. It is itself the remedy. We know it intuitively when we encounter it. Listening with our whole body, as healers and therapists and friends, we can impart this model of love to our pupils, our clients, and those of our friends who are also searching. We listen and transmit a great acceptance of that person, that life form just as they are. Without judgment or criticism, we attend to them. Between us is a great sacrificial fire as we engage in a ritual which is as old as human communication, as old as life itself.

For as inner states, conditions, feelings, emotions, thoughts, and energies are expressed in the outer world, they die as they are heard and received. And people need to talk; here in the modern world you notice how much they need to talk. People need to talk so much they are tripping over themselves to do so. With no consideration whatsoever, no regard for what they are saying, no awareness of who they talk to, at, and about each other.

But you may have noticed that the enthusiasm to talk and express is not matched by the enthusiasm to listen and hear. Hearing and listening are in very short supply, because people need to talk so much. The words inside them, the feelings, the emotions, the stories and the thoughts whizz round and round, without ceasing, without ever clearing or dissipating into some sense of order and peace and allowing inner silence and contentment. An enormous backlog of unspoken material has accumulated inside most people. When they discover a listener, a counselor, a healer, a guide, the attention they receive gives great relief. At last someone who listens, someone who cares and pays attention... to me!

I have coined the phrase sacred attention to describe a healing modality that is relevant to our present predicament, which heals and dissolves the movement of the unreal, of fear, of ego. Importantly, sacred attention can be taught to not only therapists but also to those who care and want to learn to listen, heal, and be of service to humanity. Sacred attention – the kind that Ramana Maharshi awoke to in his sixteenth year when he transcended the fear of death – must become our primary mode of awareness, through which we can attend to the soul of the world, so that healing can take place and wisdom can be practiced and Love can reign again at last.

One way to get in contact with the quality of sacred attention is the practice of whole-bodily listening. This exercise strengthens and supports the practice of sacred attention in the world as you learn to listen from an inner place of stillness.

Whole-body listening is not merely an intellectual activity, but an emotional, physical, energetic process of opening and letting in intuitively and instinctually. Music, poetry, and, in particular authentic spiritual teaching should be received using whole-bodily listening. This kind of listening involves not merely your ears but your whole body. You allow the words, the sounds, the intonation, the cadence, and the spaces,

the ever-present silence between the words to revive the hidden openings in you, as you allow your soul to increase in wisdom, and become capable of deeper sacred receptivity and discernment. Spiritual teaching cannot be understood in the intellectual sense; it must be imbibed through the heart-center, through the higher intuition and developed instinct that you access through whole-body listening.

The practice of whole-body listening is best learned formally, at first. Begin by sitting up straight with your feet on the floor and your knees comfortably apart to form a strong base. Relax your body in the chair and make sure you have no restrictions to taking a full abdominal breath. Breathe fully into your chest and tummy. Release your shoulders and place your hands comfortably in your lap. Let your head and neck extend upright and be continuous with your erect spine. Tuck in your chin and gently close your lips. Rest your tongue on the roof of your mouth. Now, take three further deep breaths. Slowly revert to normal breathing, as you sit loose and open, relaxed and alert. Allow your body to move or sway sometimes and respond physically and spontaneously, both inwardly and outwardly. Let your body respond emotionally and energetically.

Now, locate yourself in your heart-center and feel and sense the communication (whether it is in form of music, poetry, spiritual teaching or another human fellow talking to you) verbally, energetically, and spiritually. Listen with your whole body, listen with your whole being, not just the mind. Sitting relaxed and loose, you experience the whole body, spirit, energy, heart response which comes from whole-body listening.

In time you can start to practice naturally and informally in any life scenario and you will see how sacred attention will become part of your being and affect the people around you.

Whole-body listening has two applications. First, it may be used in receiving and helping another (or yourself) to process emotions, dilemmas, and achieve release. In this way it is an aspect of applied therapeutic method encouraging the one you are listening to, to acknowledge, express, and heal. Second, it may be used in receiving spiritual transmission, surrendering to spirit and divine wisdom and allowing a full body sense of receptivity and surrender in order to obtain and deepen in spiritual understanding.

This article is an excerpt from Richard Harvey's book [Your Divine Opportunity](#).