

The Voice of Healing

by Catherine Carlisi

During the recent Academy Award presentations, many recipients expressed love for their spouses as part of their acceptance speeches. But when Tom Hanks told of his love for his wife, both she and the audience were profoundly moved and many eyes filled with tears. How did his words, so often expressed by others throughout the long evening, elicit such a deep response in the weary listeners? Tom didn't merely say "I love my wife." Through his voice, he opened a window into his soul and conveyed his deep sense of gratitude, reverence and joy in their union. We responded because Tom touched in us a yearning we all have to be known by another and loved for who we are.

Many of us as practitioners of healing arts invest time, effort and money to develop our technical expertise. Yet we may be virtually unaware of a hidden asset lying dormant within ourselves that could enable us to create "magic" with the raw materials of our chosen healing methodologies. This hidden asset is our awareness and cultivation of the human voice as an instrument of healing. I will be sharing with you what I know about this valuable tool and how it can profoundly affect your ability to facilitate positive change.

Research has shown that only about 7% of our communication is verbal. We derive most meaning from the facial expressions, gestures and voice tempo and tonality which accompany the words. These nonverbal indicators comprise what is sometimes called the "meta-" message, or the message about the (word) message. To illustrate this concept, I recently had a group of people simply say "hello" to each other, using voice tones that reflected different emphases, according to instructions they had been given privately. The participants were amused to note how a common phrase could convey virtually unlimited variations of expression from coy to critical.

Imagine for a moment what your last conversation or client session would have sounded like without words. As you replay

the sound portion of your memory, notice what you can learn from the experience. Do the two voices form a duet of matching tone and tempo, as often happens when people are in rapport? Or is there an element of discord, a mismatching of one element or another? As you recollect the events of the meeting, does your voice tone seem to detract from, obscure your intention? Or does it support and amplify the meaning?

Because our culture operates primarily in the visual mode, auditory input is often processed automatically, without conscious analysis. While this makes the auditory channel uniquely receptive to influence, it also explains why so few of us are truly aware of how we sound to others. The first step in expanding our V.P. (voice potential) is to "tune up" our auditory acuity. I was fortunate to have had a speech impediment in my childhood years that gave me the opportunity to learn from a therapist how developing awareness, experimenting with ways to enhance flexibility, and then practicing, practicing, practicing can produce dramatic changes in our V.P.s.

Begin by listening to voice tone and tempo in others, and notice your internal responses, ignoring the words. (This will also increase your sensitivity to nuances in others' voices and hone your "intuitive" abilities.) Now try matching others' voice patterns. How does doing that affect your internal experience? Tape record yourself speaking or reading a poem or short story. Listen to the playback objectively by imagining you the listener as someone else (or a detached form of "you"). Do you like your vocal style? As you integrate this information, consider what adjustments you might make to communicate your intention more effectively (e.g., compassionately, authentically, powerfully).

Pioneers in the field of healing through sound are very aware of the influence certain tones have upon the human system. Deep meditative levels or other mental and emotional states can be elicited by specific resonances, according

to cultures which use sound as an integral part of ritual and ceremony. The absence of essential tones in an individual's voice is thought by some researchers to suggest an imbalance in the system, which leads to disease. The introduction of "healing" tones may have a positive effect on health.

Now it's time to "tune" your instrument. Shifting awareness to an unfamiliar perspective can provide insight and body level learning, more effective for tuning purposes than a linear thinking process. The following exercises are designed to develop flexibility. Try them or create your own

Voice as "Violin"

Consider as your model for this exercise a musical instrument of beautiful tone and timbre. Begin shifting your awareness (or pretending with an open attitude of expectation) until you "become" the instrument of your choice. Hold a vivid awareness of the tonal qualities of the instrument in your auditory memory (or while listening to a tape or cd), and let yourself feel the sounds resonating through your body as your music emanates effortlessly from within. When you are comfortable, begin to hum or sing, consciously matching your voice ever more closely to the essence of your instrument.

Where in your body do you feel the resonance? What changes to your normal voice style are needed to more accurately emulate the tone and timbre? By "moving" back and forth between the "instrument consciousness" and the "you as instrument," you can obtain the additional information to make the necessary adjustments.

Over the next days and weeks, practice by re-accessing the experience of "yourself as instrument" and intentionally allow some of those qualities you discovered to infuse your vocal style with new depth and richness.

The Time Machine

A well-modulated voice, while pleasant, is not sufficient to support the kind of healing process that is possible for the practitioner who develops his V.P. It is the "ensouling" of

that well-modulated voice that creates the bridge from one human being to another at a profound level of integrity and compassion. By infusing your voice with reverberations of your own deepest life experiences, you can convey volumes to your listener about the essential "you".

One way to begin is to allow your client's words or emotions to take you to a similar experience in your life and feel the resonant emotion just enough to remind yourself of what it's like to feel that grief, anger, or confusion (without losing your own resourcefulness or objectivity). Switching to the perspective of the "present-day you" who has survived and grown beyond that painful time, consider what form of support from someone at that time made (or would have made) an important difference to you.

Did you need comforting, encouragement, someone to help you regain objectivity by challenging distorted thinking with gentle humor? Adapt this information to what you know about your client. Then allow your voice to be gentled by the shared human experience and infused with the qualities that will eloquently convey the meta-message you wish to express.

Chakra Power

Tapping into life memories is an effective method to practice "ensouling" your words. Eventually, you may be able to go directly to that deep place of knowing within and bring forth instinctively the aspect of you that most closely matches the needs of your listener, in response to your desire to help.

Here is one way to begin: As you speak with authenticity in various situations, locate within your body the source of impetus, or energy, behind your words. Intensify the feeling to "memorize" it and, later, to increase expressiveness. By learning about "chakras", the energy centers within the body described most vividly in Eastern traditions, you may consciously direct a flow of life force from the energy center associated with the quality you wish to express.

For example, most of us are familiar with the warm feelings associated with expressing

sentiments originating in the heart center. Expressions of power are generally supported by solar plexus energy and intuition is felt as arising from the "third eye" region between the eyebrows. Inspiration from "higher sources" is often experienced as a flow of energy into the top of the head (crown chakra), which may subsequently be expressed through the throat chakra, most often associated with communication.

If you wish to enhance your ability to express the quality represented by one of the chakras (e.g., love, intuition) you can do so by imagining a stream of pure white light washing through the energy center, purifying, invigorating and revitalizing as it passes through. You may feel a tingling sensation or increased sensitivity in the area for a time after completing this exercise.

The new sciences are discovering indisputable evidence that all creation is comprised of vibratory energy moving at different rates of speed, and that all life is connected at this vibratory energy level. By augmenting the sound waves of your voice with the energy vibration from the appropriate chakra, you

will be delivering a powerful encoded message that communicates, at a primal level, complex layers of meaning that will be decoded subconsciously by the listener.

For some of you it may seem strange to "microanalyze" the processes associated with your speaking voice which you'd probably never considered. Do you remember when you first learned to drive a car? You painstakingly studied and practiced each component behavior of your new endeavor. As you got into your car today, did you think of each step necessary to set the machine in motion? Of course not, because car driving has now become a skill which no longer requires your conscious attention.

With practice you will also integrate, as part of your "natural" abilities, the learning presented here today. For unlimited beings attempting expression through limited channels, the voice is one of the most potent media by which you may be known. May it be a true reflection of who you are (or wish to be) in the world.