

Heart/Mind Connection: Finding Right Relationship

I remember how touched I was in 1997 when I first read the translation of the eulogy on Dr. Usui's memorial stone. The text, talking about the Reiki method, says: "Its true purpose is to correct the heart/mind, keep the body fit, and live a happy life using the spiritual capabilities human beings were endowed with since birth." My intuitive response to whether my heart/mind needed correcting was, yes. But what did that mean?

The first thing I learned was that the kanji for "heart" and "mind" in Japanese is the same. With further research I learned that the word "mind" represented by this kanji is not what the typical Westerner would think. This became totally clear to me when I asked the young Japanese exchange student who lived with us about this heart/mind translation. She said, "Yes, mind." while tapping the heart area on her chest. The typical Westerner, myself included, would tap their head when referring to mind.

I learned later that there is another kanji for "mind" residing in the head, which translates as something like: place of ten thousand thoughts. Now that's the mind I can relate to! At the same time, I met a Korean man (same root language) in Brazil who told me that the heart/mind kanji refers to conscience, the inner knowing about what is right or wrong that lives in the heart. Again, he touched his chest and acknowledged the heart as possessing intelligence.

In the book, *The Biology of Transcendence*, the author talks about recent research into the physical make-up of the heart. He tells us that what we thought was just a muscle is actually more than 50% neurons clustered in ganglia as in the brain. The heart produces more electrical/chemical energy than the brain and gives off the same magnetic field pattern or torus (electromagnetic field) as the earth. A new field of medical study has emerged, neurocardiology, to explore the brain in the heart. We now have physical data to support what many have known for eons, the heart has intelligence.

In the developing embryo, the rudimentary heart is formed first, then the brain, then the body. The embryo is then held in the

electromagnetic field of the heart, which in turn is held by the em field of the mother's heart. An interesting thought to ponder; we first grow our heart, then our brain.

A unique neural network connects the brain and the heart. Heart and brain are constantly influencing one another. One difficulty is that the heart is blind, it relies on the mind to form the picture of the world we are in relationship with. The heart goes along with and supports whatever "reality" the mind is in. Feeling unsafe, unprotected in whatever way we imagine? The heart supports the reptilian part of the brain and marshals the resources of the forebrain, all its creativity and cunning to keep us safe and protected through attack, camouflage, retreat, or plotting revenge in the name of justice. When the mind projects a safe and abundant "reality," the heart supports the forebrain to stimulate wonder, appreciation, feelings of universality and transcendence. The basic question then is: "What are we thinking?"

Often when I receive a Reiki treatment, I experience a "calm awareness." The qualities are stillness, calmness, safety, and connection. I'm fascinated by the picture of "reality" that Reiki offers me.

In addition to being blind, the heart also seems to speak softly. Many spiritual teachings indicate in their own way that "the language of the heart is silence." How do I nurture the heart/mind connection in the face of a quiet heart and a very loud mind?

I think we agree that Reiki often brings us to "a heart space." But when I get up off the Reiki table after an experience of calm awareness and being in that space of connection, safety and calm - the heart space - then what happens? Well, I maintain that vision of reality for awhile and then my thoughts bring me somewhere else.

Twice in the memorial stone translation, we find the phrase "cultivating the mind." The statement that follows the listing of the Principles is, "These are the most important teachings in cultivating the mind."

Now I understand that cultivating the mind means doing something with these thoughts because they are creating the picture of reality

that I then live in. I just have this tiny problem with my “ten thousand thoughts” mind.

If I imagine that I have a piece of land that I cultivate as my source of food, then I will invest a lot of time and energy in that plot of land, a work of a lifetime. Cultivating the mind as a practice to bring me the life, the way of being I want, is the call of the Principles.

Practicing the Principles, really working them, changes the world we see or more accurately, changes our seeing of the world. Now I understand more clearly the Buddhist antidote for feeling you don't have enough. You practice gratitude. Or in Hawayo Takata's words, count your blessings. Going back to the gardening analogy, we need take the time and effort to work on the very roots of our worry, our anger, our disinclination to honor parents, teachers, and elders, our dishonesty, and our ingratitude. Then we find and nourish the antidote, the new plant that we want to flourish in their place: trust, kindness and understanding, honor, honesty, gratitude.

Commitment to this work is what some have called “the narrow path” or “the road less traveled.” I like to think that those who practice “the Reiki method” are choosing this path.

Let's pay attention to what we are thinking, knowing how our thoughts and feelings influence our heart. Remember, *in utero* we were first a heart before we were anything else.