

## Quest for Healing

### The Wounded Healer

There are a number of books in my library that I have not read. I bought them because I was captured by the title. I have not read some of them because the titles are so clear that just living with the books has taught me many things. One of these is *The Wounded Healer*.

The title simply describes a healer in need of healing. Does this sound familiar?

Years ago I read about a study that revealed that a significant percentage of people who go into the nursing profession come from abusive or alcoholic families. We often hear of therapists who choose their profession because of their own inner pain. What would we learn if we did a study of those who choose to do Reiki?

I have come to the conclusion that many if not all of us are drawn to this healing art out of our own deep longing for healing. Yes, we want to be of help and service to others, but that is only part of the picture.

When I first read the title of this book, I saw the image of "wounded healer" as a negative thing. Now I don't. I see it as just the way things are. All of us in helping, healing professions are wounded. Is that a problem? I think it can be when the woundedness is unconscious and denied.

I have always wanted to help people—from an early age I saw it as my life path. I began by studying for the ministry at age fourteen. From there I became a school teacher, and then a Reiki practitioner and master. Unaware, I was a "wounded healer." It was much easier for me to work with the pain of others than to acknowledge and work with my own pain. I guess I hoped (unconsciously) that in helping others to heal, I would heal myself as well, but without the discomfort of seeing my own woundedness, feeling my own pain, anger, resentment, or sense of being a victim.

Beneath my helpful exterior lay a poor self image, seeing myself as tragically flawed. I was compeled by a deep inner fear that I wasn't okay, worthy of being, worthy of love. There was a big empty place inside. My redemption came with being of service, in helping others. If I was doing good for others, then I must be a good and worthy person.

I am not the only person who has this experience. If I thought I were, you can be sure I wouldn't be writing about it here. But I see it everywhere. Nice to know that I am not alone.

I have heard that, statistically, the most effective method for helping alcoholics is the Twelve-Step Program used by Alcoholics Anonymous. I am sure their success comes from many factors. I am also sure that one of those factors is that the participants come to see themselves as wounded healers. They acknowledge their own pain, work with it, and are able to say, "This is my experience." They don't just know things from their heads or even their hearts, but from living their own struggle. This is what they offer one another—their own vulnerability.

I have come to understand this vulnerability as the power of the wounded healer. It is my woundedness and my own healing journey that gives me some substance to offer those who I am privileged to help. Accepting and wrestling with my own places of emptiness and doubt gives me

something to teach, to share. In accepting my own woundedness, I am able to connect with others from a place of humility and solidarity.

I think we all know that the best teaching is through example. I have come to love the concept of Wounded Healer—those of us who have some healing gift are also in need of healing. In the end, the questions seems to be: Are we in balance? Am I a compulsive helper/healer? Do I always put others' needs first? Am I most secure when I feel needed? If the answer is yes, then I would say that it is time to work on one's own healing. How do I know this? I have been there and still have to watch myself.