

Evolving Shamanism: *A Piece of the Healing Puzzle*

By Mara Bishop, MS, THM, CSC

Shamanism has survived for tens of thousands of years because it evolves to suit the culture it is in. We live in a time of remarkable scientific and medical advancements, of which we should take full advantage. Practitioners can and should have specialties, but we create optimal healing environments for our clients when we are open to methods that are outside our domains, and even outside our personal preferences. Tending to our health holistically means discerning how and when the best tools come from allopathic medicine, energy medicine, or other forms of therapy. Ideally, they work in concert. The possibilities for the evolution of the relationship between different healing philosophies are myriad and exciting as the links between mind, body, and spirit continue to grow.

The benefits of mind-body medicine are well documented. To work shamanically is to engage the third aspect of the classic mind-body-spirit equation. In shamanic healing, the spiritual body is the root of health for the whole being. The spiritual body infuses and connects the mental and physical bodies. By helping us understand and navigate the interrelationship between spirit and matter, shamanism provides a link between our physical, mental, and spiritual bodies.

For my thesis on shamanic healing, I conducted an experiment related to how spirit could affect matter. I tested whether people could affect their body temperatures by asking for a change while they were in a shamanic journey. To a statistically significant degree they could. Intentions, states of mind, even visualizations can directly affect measurable characteristics of our physical bodies. Shamanic practitioners engage the spiritual level; however, the end result is often that clients feel better mentally and physically as well.

ADDRESSING TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES

One important aspect of my shamanic practice is helping clients reframe their traumatic experiences by understanding the nature and the needs of the spiritual body. When the physical body experiences trauma, the mental and spiritual bodies react in varying degrees as well. When we have mental or emotional trauma, our bodies have corollary reactions. The spiritual body responds to the stimuli received by the physical and mental bodies. With a deeper awareness of this interrelationship of mind, body, and spirit, we are better able to thrive, regardless of what situations we face.

Sometimes, when the effects of trauma have built up in the energetic system, a threshold is reached, where even relatively low levels of stress read to the body as high-level attacks. I regularly see clients who have had years of intense stress and have functioned well, with varying degrees of personal and professional success, until they hit their limit. Then things changed and became unmanageable.

When this trauma threshold is reached people respond in a variety of ways. Because our physical and nonphysical bodies are integrated, a combination of physical and emotional symptoms surface—such as headaches, gastrointestinal issues, muscle aches, or chronic fatigue syndrome. Sometimes anxiety, depression, anger, or grief sets in. Confusion, lack of focus, or difficulty making decisions can become problematic. When stress builds to such an uncomfortable level the pattern can be hard to break.

Shamanic energy healing can provide a “pattern interrupt” that allows the physical, mental and spiritual bodies to reset themselves and begin to recalibrate. When I see people who have reached this “full” state I know we need to start with some energetic balancing that will help channel some of that built up energy off in a healthy way. Many new clients report that after the first session of this kind they feel more relaxed and in less mental and physical pain than they have in a long time.

Once the systems start to unwind, each of the three bodies is generally more receptive to moving into deeper work. That work may take the form of energetic healing, but the openness created by working on an energetic level can

also help pave the way for results in other modalities. This typically leads to a greater sense of health and satisfaction with life, as we’ve tended to our clients as whole beings rather than disconnected parts or constellations of symptoms. *hkh*

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