

Raging Water, Raging Fear

By Donna Snow Spears, LMT, NCTMB

Little did I know what lay ahead as I packed for my first advanced CranioSacral Bio-Aquatic workshop in the Bahamas. In hindsight, I believe my journey to self-discovery in the waters of the Bahamas was well choreographed by my personal angels - not one thing was by happenstance - and although I did not know it at the time, the universe would teach me many lessons.

At the small airport in Daytona Beach, I saw the twin-engine plane as it glided up the tarmac with its proud face slanted upward toward the sky.

My plane! An hour later, I was in Freeport. All of my preconceived expectations were blown within the first hour of my arrival, one of which was the unpredictable and temperamental weather that would ultimately set the brutal stage for my process of self-discovery. Only later did I realize that the stormy water was divinely prepared to help purge the fears lodged deep in my subconscious. Oddly, I do not remember thinking that the threatening weather and rough water would be a deterrent to me.

Bio-Aquatic Therapy (Day One)

The captivating "swim with the dolphins" began with a car ride to Port Lucaya, then a relaxing boat ride over clear "glass-like" water. In groups of six, we spent 20 minutes "playing" with trained dolphins. The sweetness of these beings still resonates in my thoughts. A morsel of fish rewarded and promoted their favorable behavior and, notably, the disposition and happiness that radiated from the dolphins indicated their true enjoyment of our company. I believe we are no different as humans in our need for our "morsels."

Unmasking the Fearful Unknown - Ocean Therapy (Day Two)

I eyed the storm clouds on the horizon as we approached the dark, churning water. Once in the water, my footing was uneven because of the coral rock ocean floor; still, I felt unreasonably secure about proceeding into the world's largest washing machine.

Twelve of us were divided into three teams, and we looked at each other in procrastinating apprehension. Fool that I am, I volunteered to participate first. I kicked my feet up and lay back into the water, explaining that I don't float well. I floated for a moment, but not before stinging saline water drenched my face and sped up my nose and into my mouth. The fierce ocean had started its obnoxious therapy and did not wait for the rest of my team. A heavy arm plopped down and rested on me, and I felt heavy hands pushing me down. I cursed and flipped the hands off my body, repeating that I don't float well. My breath came quickly and without control; I was having an anxiety attack.

The sting of salt in my nose and eyes was overwhelming. Seeing my flailing, Dr. John [Upledger] shouted, "If you'll just try, you'll probably find that that is embryonic fluid going up your nose." Birth Trauma, I thought. With all the trust and respect that I have for this dear gentleman, at that panicky moment, I could not help my reaction. I quickly stood up and pushed the hands off of me. I withdrew from the session and asked somebody else to go.

I tried again a few moments later. I tried to lie back into the unrelenting waves but when the water hit my face, panic reared its ugly head again. I could hear my teammates telling me they were holding me up and it was my body that wanted to sink. I wondered what was happening and why I was so afraid. Then I became aware of an electric current generating from my solar plexus and surging to my

heart; I felt it connecting with the sea, discharging from my solar plexus and heart, down my arms and out of my hands. The sensation grew with such intensity that I felt I was clinging to an electric eel in each hand. Its crescendo was accompanied by more energy shooting from the lateral aspects of my calves. My team immediately backed away and held a space. Bit by bit the energy discharged until it was gone. It was only minutes, but it seemed like an hour. I could not figure out what had just happened to me.

Later, during the afternoon discussion, I shared my experience everyone. I mentioned that I felt like my energy was balanced and peaceful, and that the shell that once separated my soul from the universe had been dissolved.

Facing Death (Day Three)

Standing on the beach, I studied the menacing clouds full of rain and lightening that loomed all around. With our sensory antennas at full mast, most of us went on into the raucous mocking waters. With my full (fool) mental regalia, I plunged right in, intending to face the part of myself that, prior to the day before, had been locked in my subconscious.

My breath became ragged as the familiar panic sunk into every cell in my body. My team knew me by now and grabbed onto me with a kind but unrelenting resolve to help get me through the moment. I begged Dr. John to help. Suddenly, I felt my head being pulled back into the water. I tried not to fight as the ocean washed over my face. The salt stung my sinuses and the water pounded its way down my throat. I tried to let go, but I felt that to do so would have certainly invited death.

"How much (expletive) water do I have to swallow?" I shouted, knowing that my real question was, "Do I have to die?" I knew that to let go would invite drowning.

"I don't (expletive) know!" Dr. John hollered right back.

I didn't know what to do! Give in and drown? "Why am I under the water?," my brain screamed at me. Throngs of hands were hanging on to me, trying to help, and I wondered again if I had to die. Then a voice behind me said, "Donna, you died in another lifetime. You don't have to die in this one. Just let go!" Those words made the difference. I let go and let the water own me. Fear loosened its grip, and the moment was over.

After several moments, the abundance of seawater that I had gulped made its presence known. Nausea. Suddenly, a therapists' palm was firmly planted in my stomach. I yelled in pain and began retching repeatedly. When I was done, I released an angry, primal roaring scream from the center of my soul; a force that had been pent up in my spirit was released. I had heard classmates release by screaming loud enough to curl your hair, but I had not felt compelled to do; however, it was incredibly satisfying and grounding, and I sensed, it brought closure to the session.

"How do you feel?" Dr. John asked at the discussion later that afternoon.

"My energy feels very smooth, not the 'core' tired like I had at the beginning of the year where there seems to be no reserve from which to draw. I couldn't feel better, aside from a very tender stomach," I added.

Salt water, it seems, helps cleanse us on many levels with a conductivity that speeds the process.

Sweet Resolution (Final Day)

There were no threatening clouds, and the ocean was more peaceful, though it still offered up buffeting waves. I welcomed the sun, and I was determined to know if I had completed my process. It was my turn.

I asked my team of seasoned therapists to let my body sink - if that is what it wanted to do. To do so would allow me to be sure I had completed my process of facing my fear of water in this particular lifetime. I floated on my back peacefully and surrendered to the water, my team, and whatever the universe wanted of me. I sensed my body balancing and releasing in ripples, while the therapist's hands worked intuitively. I thought about how amazing my teammates were and marveled at the body's desire to make itself right.

My thoughts were guided gently to an old, mysterious undercurrent in my soul where loneliness - an ancient longing within me - had been a driving force that I could never control or understand. I connected with this elusive phantom and ever-present demon. Suddenly, I felt gripping heart pain! I jerked my consciousness into the center of the nauseating and breath-robbing constriction in my upper chest. "I'm dying again," I thought. I could not breathe, and my heart felt heavy and sick.

In my mind's eye, the pain appeared as a corpse. I felt my scoliosis strain in its position and with it, I saw tissues and cords of light pulling together, choking my heart. I realized I had perished in one lifetime of a broken heart! Upon realizing this, the tension in my left side began to subside. I felt my spine release! My tears flowed and blended with the motherly sea that caressed me in her bosom. Gratitude overcame me at this self-realization; emanations from this death - a longing for someone or someplace that was wrenched from me - were free from my subconscious. Another memory from a past life would no longer be a driving force in this life. I opened my soul to the universe again.

In my mind's eye appeared a great spirit, a great orca. The vision floated before me and our thoughts blended. He allowed his great body to list slightly as though relaxing in the support of the water and his message came to me: Cease resistance to the water. In a few seconds, the boundary that was once my skin vanished, and the saline current blended completely and peacefully with my blood, mind and soul. I was aware of every nuance that is the ocean's whim. Every ripple and splash was inside of me. I perceived my transparent aqua body and saw the sunlight dancing, piercing through to form its undulating patterns on the sandy ocean floor. I sensed the plankton, the minnows, and invertebrates; every living thing was communicating to me through the salty matrix. I sensed my team's energy as they began to withdraw from me. They backed away, gently holding a space, and I floated peacefully in the company of the universe to freedom.

Transformation

Why would someone go through such a process? Well, it was not a tribulation, and the existential value is directly equal to the results. For me, the results are lucid thoughts and a peaceful soul that has somehow blended with the vast universe.

The intrinsic value of this endeavor was moving closer to the real person I am and discovering a powerful inner being - the kind that exists in all of us. At the same time, I feel as though I have been "promoted" to a newborn, learning about a new world.

To quote my mentor's parting words to this class, "There is a lot of good in every one of us." In that process, I learned of a new and better way to live in the universe.

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