

A Brief History of The Whole Health Center

The Whole Health Center was launched as a non-profit corporation in 1981 by Paul Weiss and Alexandra Lounsbury with a strong community of local support that became our original Board of Directors. It was a pioneer in the state of Maine, offering a broad array of services that these days are referred to as ‘complementary health care.’ They are, in fact, services that support, at the foundation level, the body’s immunologic and regenerative activities: that is, its natural capacity to stay well. The Whole Health Center sought to address the fact that today’s exploding health care costs are almost entirely directed to treating stress-related illnesses or degenerative conditions brought about by various life style factors and choices.

Our educational activities included classes and workshops, and talks in the community on issues of holistic health, nutrition, stress management, etc. We hosted many prominent teachers, including pioneering cancer surgeon Bernie Siegel, who addressed the psychological aspects of healing in successive conferences that filled the MDI High School gym and the Hancock County auditorium to overflowing. We were quick to address emerging issues, such as the growing awareness of child sexual abuse in our society, and we founded the first support group for incest survivors in Maine. Most of our energies went to meet the needs of individual clients in the areas of counseling, stress management, nutrition, and physical therapies. Yet our various support groups, as much as the individual clinical work, were at the heart of the Center’s vitality and growth, for they provided a climate not only for individual support and healing, but also for each participant to discover his or her own natural skill or capacity to offer help to others.

We have also promoted the study of qi gong – a traditional Chinese science of working with the healing energies of body and spirit that is very relevant to modern holistic approaches to healing. Paul’s study of qi gong stemmed from his study of tai chi, beginning in 1967, and led to the first of his eight trips to China in 1994 to train and bring back knowledge of qi gong principles and practices. On the last five visits the WHC invited a growing number of Mainers along for the China experience. And we have also hosted prominent teachers from China to visit our local community. In 1998 the WHC was declared an affiliate by the Chinese Taoist Medical Qi Gong Hospital in Beijing. Paul has taught widely in Maine and has also given free talks and ongoing classes to hospitals, schools, and other groups.

In 1989, we moved from our large building in downtown Bar Harbor to our smaller and quieter location in Town Hill. And in 1991 much of the individual therapy practice was made separate from the corporation and the educational activities of the Wholistic Health Resource Center, Inc. Meanwhile our educational activities took some new directions in the nineties. We began a series of professional trainings for therapists, transmitting Paul’s growing expertise in the areas of stress management, meditation, mind/body integration, and deepening communication within couples and groups.

The 2000's were characterized by very active teaching, here and elsewhere, including our *Foundations of Spiritual Psychology* series for therapists, and later the *Evolution's Edge* series for the public. These were complemented by regular retreats, including our extended zen meditation retreats; our qigong meditation and healing retreats; and our evolving program of *Compassion, Integration and Healing*, which adapted the ancient Tibetan practice of *tonglen* meditation to serve a broad therapeutic and spiritual model. Through all these years, from 1983 to the present, we continued to offer, two to four times a year, our powerfully transformative True Heart/True Mind Intensive, which has promoted the marriage of honest self-inquiry, contemplative insight, authentic communication, and self-realization.

And the most recent incarnation of our vital Monday night support group ran continuously from 1996 to 2016.

Many of the therapies, and the understandings, on which we were founded have become increasingly mainstream. And the cultural landscape is continually evolving with new sources and new technologies of information sharing; and two new generations of practitioners in the community since founder Paul Weiss first began offering an integrative approach to mind/body/spiritual health. Meanwhile, we have evolved a deepening coherence of spiritual outlook and understanding that offers an integrative and transformational vision – based on our personal experience and on the confirmation of all of the wisdom traditions – regarding the evolutionary journey and developmental needs of the species, and of each human being, growing in harmony with the web of life.

While we have still remained a resource for many of these therapies -- nutrition, herbs, breath work, massage etc. -- the underlying mission and primary focus of the whole health center is, increasingly, to address in an integrative way the spiritual and emotional need of our times. Or, as Paul sometimes says, the task of human maturity. This holistic task today naturally integrates psychology, neuroscience, emotional integration, whole body health, precise mind/body/spirit technologies of mindfulness, meditation, and personal development, and even deep historical and cultural perspective.

Our work after so many years has increasingly integrated these to the point where one holistic curriculum is ready to be created. This is already occurring informally in the sum total of our current teaching and therapeutic work. It is on the verge of assuming a more formal structure as we begin to design one integrated and extended program of study. We have hesitated at the brink of that for a couple of years, wondering, in our small corner of the world, if the interest is there, or if we had the resources to promote it and bring it to fruition. The answer is not in yet, But, with the support of our own Board of Directors and our community advisory council, the next energy wave seems to be coming.