

## **Re-Considering Our Mission, 2003.**

In June 2003 The Whole Health Center will enter its twenty-third year, having touched and changed the lives of many people as it evolved with the times. It was founded as a nonprofit education and treatment organization committed to making available the largely unknown wealth of understanding and natural tools – the inheritance of both ancient and modern wisdom – that can support each human being towards fundamental health and wholeness.

Our priority was to teach about wellness, and to introduce to the community many modes of natural healing that were still little known in Maine. Most of our energies went to meet the needs of individual clients in the areas of counseling, stress management, nutrition, herbal and physical therapies. In addition, our various community support groups were at the heart of the Center's vitality and growth, providing a climate for community building as well as for individual support and healing. Always at the leading edge, we were quick to address emerging issues, such as the growing awareness of child abuse in our society. We founded the first support group for incest survivors in Maine. We taught tai chi, breath work and meditation, and hosted nationally prominent teachers in community events that drew hundreds of people.

Many of the specific practices we helped pioneer have become mainstream. More practitioners are showing up to serve the growing public interest in these areas. And we have naturally matured in the focus and formulation of our own programs. Hence it is timely to reassess our mission, with the perspective gained from two decades of practice, and to ask:

What are the fundamental needs of people at this time?

What are we uniquely suited to offer?

The underlying theme that then emerges from all of our work at The Whole Health Center is the calling to address the spiritual and emotional needs of our time. We find that behind all our search for healing, even physical healing, are the questions:

\*How do I live a life that liberates the healing potential of my own body and psyche?

\*How do I live a life that serves my underlying longing for wholeness, love, service and self-knowledge?

\*How do I stay open to the mystery and rewards of the essential and deep inter-relatedness we all share -- in a world that appears so much to be driven by violence, greed, separateness, and fear?

We don't feel these questions are too vast for the attention of The Whole Health Center. We all live with the consequences of the aforementioned negative forces as they have impacted our own growth and our environment. Yet, we seek to be human beings at peace with ourselves, truly present in our relationships, and capable of making creative and life-giving choices. This is the "whole health" that people are truly seeking. And they deserve practical tools of support, if they are available at all.

This brings us to the second of our earlier questions: What is The Whole Health Center's unique contribution? Our contribution is in the very depth and integration of our approach, which incorporates the spiritual, emotional, mental, physical and energetic realms, and brings a wealth of practical tools to our work in each of these areas.

Our vision and our capacity is largely due to the particular training and experience of our Director, Paul Weiss. Aside from his graduate study in counseling psychology and clinical health education, Paul's unorthodox training has included almost four decades spent in the study of Zen and other meditation

processes, Buddhist psychology, tai chi, qi gong, and other ancient energetic arts. He has resided in both Christian and Buddhist monasteries and made multiple trips to India and China for further study. He trained for several years in deep emotional process work; and studied as well the dyadic communication work of Charles Berner. He has studied and practiced herbal and nutritional healing for three decades and is nationally certified in massage therapy. He has brought all of this training together on behalf of workshops, groups, and individual clients for twenty-two years at The Whole Health Center. Over these years he has developed a truly holistic understanding and vision of the multi-level integrity of natural healing and personal growth. Equally important, he has brought together practical therapeutic tools that reinforce each other, but are seldom integrated in one context, and that transcend the current overly materialistic and reductionist view of physical and mental health.

Accordingly, we want to present to you here, as briefly as we can, our current mission as it expresses itself in four focus areas, and to suggest the professional expertise we bring to each area.

**Emotional Integration** – the healing of our feeling life – has never been given adequate attention in our cultural idea of health, and in our current mental health models it is given less than ever. The emotional wholeness that eludes so many of us – and that awaits on the far side of shame, depression, denial and the various dramatizations of emotional negativity – cannot be achieved by talk therapy alone, nor by medication, but only by a willingness to “re-feel.” That is, we learn to relocate, re-identify, re-experience, re-express and re-grieve our earliest hurts at the feeling level (while incorporating our new adult strengths and support systems), leading to a natural release, reintegration, and freedom. This process can be very gentle and also very challenging. It can only happen at the right time for each person. There are relatively few settings capable of providing skilled therapeutic support for this kind of work, but we are committed to making this available at The Whole Health Center.

2. **Spiritual Integration**, in a generic sense, is a path of openness to mystery that may continually redefine our experience of what it means to be alive and to be a human being. It allows us to outgrow our mind’s or our ego’s narrow labels and categories or fixed points of view. It is an openness to the infinite dimension of being that permits an evolving sense of union with life and with others that is an antidote to the rigidities, greed, hatred, and prejudices that destroy our world. Emotional healing (see above) naturally supports the maturation of the spiritual qualities of awareness, joy, compassion, and surrender.

Spiritual and emotional healing complement each other and have proven to have a profound impact on our energetic and physical health as well. Hence, all our teaching and therapeutic work at The Whole Health Center reflects this spiritual context. At the Center we are able to offer a strong foundation in the practical psychology of spiritual transformation – processes of meditation, visualization, and contemplative awareness; of self-observation, self-responsibility, and self-surrender – that are not divorced from the practical and emotional truths of everyday life.

We have come to believe that the work of emotional recovery and re-integration goes hand in hand with the work of spiritual awakening and maturation. And both are at the root of the cultural transformation we all fervently desire: from self-destructive ignorance, fear, materialism, and violence to a sustainable, reflective, humane, and compassionate world.

3. The third foundation of our work is **Energetic Integration**. As ancient Chinese science teaches, there are natural energetic pathways, and a natural energetic integration in the healthy mind/body system. Spiritual, emotional, and physical health allow the flow of vital energy in the body.

Conversely, the deliberate cultivation of this flow of vital energy helps to resolve toxic congestion on all levels and clears the path for spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical health. The Whole Health Center devotes much of its energy to promoting and teaching the classical Chinese science of “qi gong” (energy work) – to special needs groups, to school children and to the general public, drawing on all of its capacity to integrate spirit and energy, mind and body. Qi gong offers long-proven therapeutic benefits to those with specific disease symptoms, as well as self-care benefits to all who practice it.

Finally, **Authentic Communication** is the basis for healthy relationships, intimacy, problem-solving, and even self-knowledge. Since its founding, The Whole Health Center has focused on teaching and promoting authentic communication to individuals, couples, and groups. The whole cycle of authentic communication – accessing experience, speaking without attack or projection, listening without reactivity or defenses, acknowledgement – and the healthy boundaries this entails – are skills that can be taught. They are fundamental to our work at The Whole Health Center and we are committed to teaching these skills more widely in the community, as they are needed everywhere.

We hope it is clear from this enumeration that the vision and the unique expertise The Whole Health Center offers the community is a rare commodity. We need your support to continue and to increase our potential to reach more people.