



Katrina Dreamer



Holos Institute

Finding our selves in nature's patterns

By Craig Chalquist, PhD

HERACLITUS SAID that "all is flux," and the Buddha, Rumi, and others have observed similarly. On the other hand, Plato, Goethe, and Jung saw self-organized order behind the flux. Is it possible that being attuned to this order might give us pause before we impose obtrusive lines and grids on an intelligent world?

Go outside and take note of all the natural patterns you see repeated. Basic forms abound because Nature's creativity relies on recycling useful shapes. Even rough, uneven forms—coastlines, edges of leaves, irregular creases in bark—reveal themselves as composed of tiny, relatively regular shapes fractally repeated at many scales of magnification, buoyed up on an ocean of invisible quantum foam.

Although you can probably imagine many of these forms while indoors, looking for them outside shows your eyes, your mood, and your body the order that emerges spontaneously from apparent chaos. You will see that curves, nets, points, branchings, circles, star shapes, spirals, snake-like meanders, arrowing V-shapes, layers, arches, rises and slopes, peaks and dips, and various geometric shapes are everywhere repeated in a variety of abundant arrangements. Each fulfills multiple purposes: arcs and arches to bridge and support, nets to order and contain, layers to build present upon past, star shapes to radiate, circles to contain....

After spending time considering these forms, look and listen next for rhythms. Plants blooming now mark the transition of seasons. Sun, moon, and stars time the day; animal sounds repeat regularly; patterns shift in fog, cloud, wind, and rain; rocks and sand mark runnels and erosion channels. Archetypes are not things so much as basic motions, and the entire world is moving through many cycles and velocities, sounds and odors, gesturing continually. Spend some time sensing its local

rhythms, and feeling them in your own body. "In the beginning," said conductor Hans von Bülow, "there was Rhythm."

Finally, put your back to a tree or rock or sit on some sand or grass, breathe for a few moments, and ask the nature you're in contact with to send a living image into your mind. Watch intently for it to appear. Entertain the possibility that whatever image surfaces is how what you touch sees itself.

Deepening questions:

"In the beginning, there was Rhythm."

— conductor
Hans von
Bülow

• Pick a movement, rhythm, or animal near you and ask yourself: *If this were a dream image, what might it mean? If I ask this landscape a question about my life, which motion would symbolize a response?*

- What functions or purposes can you guess about the forms you encounter? What makes them successful enough to repeat?
- What branchings of your life still feed you? Which are dried up, vanished, or broken? What branchings seem to be opening just ahead?
- What are you circling around? Where would you like to meander?
- What feels chaotic in your life? Find some randomness outside—swirling wind, choppy water—and watch it for a moment. What forms of order are emerging from it?

The fork of the stream lies at the foot of the slope like hammer and chisel laid down at the foot of a finished sculpture. But the stream is no dead tool; it is alive, it is still at its work. Put your hand to it to learn the health of this part of the world. It is the wrist of the hill.

—Wendell Berry

The morning wind forever blows, the poem of creation is uninterrupted; but few are the ears that hear it. Olympus is but the outside of the earth everywhere.

—Henry David Thoreau

Ecotherapy? What's that? Huh? You do what?

Holos Institutes' Second Annual Applied Ecopsychology Conference Addresses this Question

By Kristi Kenney

Over Earth Day weekend, the San Francisco based Holos Institute (www.holosinstitute.net) hosted its second annual Applied Ecopsychology Conference: Re-Visioning A Psychology That Embraces The Earth. In opening the conference, Jan Edl Stein, Holos Director, addressed the often challenging question that those of us in the field frequently get asked: "What does ecotherapy or applied ecopsychology look like?" Jan followed with her four-fold way of answering such questions. To her, ecotherapy or applied ecopsychology is

- 1) A widening awareness of psyche where we consider the environmental context of the client
- 2) Bringing in the clients awareness of place and their relationship to place.
- 3) Facilitating contact with the natural world
- 4) Understanding and merging with the natural world to embrace a larger sense of self; understanding that we are not separate from the natural world and that our struggles are the world's struggles and vice versa.

This is a surprisingly multifaceted topic with many possible ways to interpret the questions and answer it. How do YOU describe your work in ecotherapy or applied ecopsychology? Send ideas to nickboer@yahoo.com.

Kristi Kenney is a certified ecotherapist with an MA in Integral Psychology focused on the intersection between psychology and activism. Please contact her via her website at www.thecounterbalanceproject.wordpress.com.

Future ecotherapists face challenges that loom large for us all

By Karen Jaenke, PhD

IT IS AN HONOR to teach in and direct the Ecotherapy Certificate program at John F. Kennedy University. This leading edge program emerged in response to the long-standing human dissociation from the natural world that afflicts Western civilization, today manifesting as our global ecological crisis. The program addresses the myriad ways humans are affected in the depths of their being by the most all-encompassing challenge of our times, the ecological crisis, as well as practical ways to take creative action in response to this unprecedented challenge. By taking creative action in response to this global crisis, the otherwise paralyzing despair lifts, and transmutes into a joyful participation in our unique evolutionary moment.

The persons drawn to this avant garde program are situated at the leading edge of the culture. From time to time, I receive glimpses into the elements that stir them to embark upon this alternative, visionary path. While much of the culture lumbers in denial and apathy, even debating the reality of this looming crisis, the two dozen individuals who have entered this program in its first two years have embraced the ecological crisis as central to their life path. I'm curious about their defining characteristics and sensibilities that led to the decision to commit a year of their lives to training in order to become part of the change that needs to happen.

A recent assignment asked students to compose their spiritual autobiography. The assignment was inspired by the awareness that spiritual perspectives profoundly shape and inform our attitudes and behaviors toward the natural world. Also, since the curriculum implicitly asks students to engage in eco-spiritual work, explicitly articulating their spiritual biographies allows the eco-spiritual work to happen in a more conscious manner.

One quiet morning I sat down to read uninterrupted the essays that had trickled into my mailbox. I became spell-bound, in rapt attention, as if a great secret was being revealed. It was as though I was being given a rare glimpse into the spiritual stirrings of the most pioneering slice of humanity, at this precarious precipice in our collective development as a species, as we journey headlong towards the threshold of unprecedented planetary upheaval.

Several distinct themes recurred across the pages of these essays. First, there were early signs of childhood dissatisfaction and unrest with the dictates of conventional religion, often underscored by an unrelenting sense of being strangely different from one's family or peers. While initial efforts were made to believe and behave according to the dictates of said religion, to be the proverbial "good girl," still a persistent inner voice seemed to whisper other, deeper truths, not so easily reconciled with consensual religious teachings. Then there appeared a series of numinous experiences in nature, experiences that tickled the senses, awakened wonder, inspired awe. Ever so gradually a divide began to set in, then widen—between the stale and sometimes nonsensical dogmas of conventional religion, and the immediacy and vibrancy of the sensate natural world. Mysterious secrets associated with the elemental life force became unveiled in quiet moments of encounter. The sheer vitality transmitted by di-

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rect engagement with nature's wonders gradually gained authority and ascendancy in the heart and soul, displacing conventional dictums. Mother Nature was engaged in a subtle, steady seduction of the deepest affections of these individuals, making Her appeal not through the hard logic of the mind, or through the sweep of consensual reality, but in quiet moments of encounter, in the potency of embodied experience.

Without ever setting out to worship nature gods or goddesses, these individuals were touched and awakened at the core of being by the effervescent spirit of nature. The spirit in nature beckoned, calling out across the manifold man-

made structures erected by civilization and the even more imposing man-made strictures of the modern mind. Reaching across asphalt and concrete, highways and high rises, the fecund spirit of nature climbed like a vine into their hearts, claiming their deepest sensibilities.

Through a numinous snorkeling encounter with the vibrancy of undersea tropical life in adolescence, a seed was planted in one unsuspecting soul about the bizarre contradiction of growing up on a tropical island, barricaded from nature by pavement and high rises stretching in all directions, reinforced by a barrage of fear-based messages of distrust towards the natural world. For another, it was the childhood wanderings alone by the riverbed during fishing outings with her father, that sowed the first seeds of awakening to nature's wonders. For another, it was the annual visits to the lake, and outdoor worship during summer camp when the early bond with nature formed. Again and again, Mother Nature broke through the prison walls of civilization.

With very little encouragement from the wider culture, but by a simple practice of noticing that which awakened the senses, bestowed vitality, or stirred the soul, the grip of conventional religion and the weight of cultural perception were loosened, making a space for the effervescent spirit of nature to take root in the soul. Eventually these seeds grew into trees of life and a stalwart commitment to align the spine of one's existence with the creative life force that surges alike within the backbone of nature.

With no more geographic frontiers to explore, the frontier of humanity's future now lies on this planet largely within the landscape of consciousness. Our frontier no longer resides in outer, quantifiable terms, but in the quality of the relationship we forge with our fragile, living planet. The handful of students in the Ecotherapy Certificate program have made a decision to turn towards—rather than away from—our looming ecological crisis, embracing it as central to their lives. While currently small in numbers, the symbolic import of their choice is exponentially much greater. For they have pioneered the radical turn in consciousness that every human being who walks this planet now needs to make. In rejecting collective denial and apathy, they stake a claim as pioneers of the future, casting their fate with the fate of the Earth. They embody the change that needs to happen.

Students take on role of animals in ecotherapy

By Karen Diane Knowles

Although I have been teaching only a couple years, I have been so impressed with the ecotherapy students I have had the honor to teach and to learn from. Their insights are reflected by student Elia Ballesteros who wrote that we have a moral obligation "to provide a better life for all non-human beings and that this in turn will provide a better life for us and for the entire planet." The following selections are student excerpts from this year's final exam essays in "Healing the Human-Animal Relationship," a course I teach in JFK University's Ecotherapy Program.

My students were asked the following:

"Explain what you believe animals and the human-animal relationship have to do with the study and practice of ecotherapy. Include a discussion of why understanding the human-animal relationship is necessary for eco-centric consciousness."

Elaine Alyson

Healing the human-animal relationship is as important to our mental and spiritual health as healing the relationships with our fellow humans. When we live in discord with family or community, we suffer; and when we abuse others we harm ourselves in the process. The same is true when we use or abuse animals. As we come to recognize and to acknowledge that all animals have feelings and souls, we realize that we cannot treat them without respect without harming our own psyches and our own souls. We shudder at the thought of cannibalism, but think nothing of eating other animals who likely suffered terrible deaths. I tend to think da Vinci was right when he said, "...the time will come when men such as I will look upon the murder of animals as they now



Jackie Jordan

Having a healthy relationship with nature is the only way that we can survive on this planet. Our cells are of the planet, as are the cells of all species that call Earth home. We are inseparable and if we do not care for the environment and all living beings then we destroy the very thing that we need to survive.

Ecotherapy seeks to heal the separation that humans have made with nature. This includes the separation that humans have



See **STUDENTS** on following page

created between themselves and animals. We can no longer think of animals as creatures that are here to serve our needs. Humans who view animals without compassion create in themselves the ability to be uncompassionate towards other humans as well. This can lead to a rise in violence and apathy. On the other hand, having compassion for animals reduces stress, combats loneliness, helps people recover from illness, and brings wholeness and balance to our lives and our planet. We all deserve the right to live on this planet harmoniously. Only when we have compassion for animals will we truly have compassion for ourselves. Living in service of the animals instead of seeing animals as serving us will heal our souls, connect us to nature, and bring joy and harmony to our lives.



Teresa Shattuck

Human-animal relationships have everything to do with ecotherapy as animals are our kin. They are present, authentic, honest individuals who have a great deal to teach us. They live through all of their senses, an ability that enables them to be fully vigilant, mindful and aware. Relational, socially adept creatures, animals interact in the world with a pureness of heart. They trust their instincts and thus are wise enough to know when and where they are safe and when they need to take cover or defend territory or tribe. The study of ecotherapy is about healing with nature in mind. Animals are our reminder of our own animal nature. Like us, they are brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers, aunts

and uncles, sons and daughters. They have challenges, joys, loves and losses much like ours. And, on the whole, as long as they have the space and respect they need, they live from a place of truth, always centered, always ready to guide. Internalizing and living in respect of human-animal relationships is not only necessary for an eco-centric consciousness, I think it creates an eco-centric consciousness. When we see animals as individuals and not 'its'—we see ourselves. That reflection affords us greater sensitivity and passion to do right by them, which in the end, ties us to our true nature.

Sage Abella

Ecotherapy is all about humans reframing their relationship with the natural world, from the perspective of domination and control into co-existence and the web of mutual benefit. Ecotherapy teaches us to heal our belonging to the natural world. The way we heal this belonging is to understand that we are linked in relationship to all living creatures as well as the terrain and elements of earth's environment. Indigenous cultures wove their existence into deep relationship with animals by understanding the attributes of each in a totemic way and relied on this relationship to feed their people (both physically and spiritually). Our culture has shifted animals into



the place of being another material object to be handled, sold and used in commerce. Even as we bond deeply with our pets, we disconnect completely to the realities of the commercial meat industry. There is no way to have an eco-centric consciousness without nurturing and engaging in the human-animal relationship.



Amaurita Kanai

Ecotherapy must have an animal component to make sense. As animals, we must learn that our very survival depends on the survival of our fellow animals around us. Animals provide both mental and physical support. Animals allow us to ride on them, support our disabilities, and keep us safe by defending our lives. What have we done to repay those animals who work for us everyday? And for those who eat animals, what have they done to respect the places where those animals live their lives? Where is the humanity for our pigs, chickens, cattle, and other food animals? People, we are very disconnected

from where our food is coming. People may not pay respect to the animals that give their lives for us. This leads to overconsumption, mass production, and downright greed—all at the expense of our animal neighbors. I believe if people were more connected to animals, many of these ills of society would disappear, and we would begin to take only what we need.

Courtney Pankrat

Animals have souls—there is no question about that. For some reason, many human beings have decided that the soul of an animal is not as important as the soul of a human. This is faulty thinking. We are all animals living on this planet. Just because humans have figured out how to take over the world, doesn't mean that animals are less valuable. The human-animal relationship is necessary for eco-centric consciousness because animals are part of the ecology and the planet. Having a planet with animals is instrumental to the well being of this planet. Humans often forget that animals play a vital role not only in our survival but also in our wellbeing and the planet's wellbeing. Many humans treat animals horribly and this is unfair to them as well as unfair to the planet. Animals are part of the world. It seems ridiculous to have to make a case for their existence. But we do, sadly. And the things animals do for humans and for the planet are countless. Animals do a lot for the Earth but even if they did nothing, they were put on this Earth just as humans were and they do not need to be productive in order to have a place on Earth. Simply being is enough of a purpose. It seems more likely that we humans should have to defend our place here on Earth. It seems that humans do more harm to the Earth than good.



Jihan "Gigi" Amer

Ecotherapy includes not only connecting with the environment but also non-human animal relations. Indigenous cultures understood that the individual was not separate but connected to the whole: that we are influenced and influence the environment around us; that the suffering of others, including animals, is part of our psyche. We feel it as well. A healthy, balanced individual and society needs its environment and animal counterpart to be healthy and in balance; a connection that connotes relationship. Any relationship should have an equal exchange of give and take, re-

ceptivity, listening, respect and honoring of the other. In some native belief systems there is recognition that an individual human soul has an animal counterpart. Hence, when an animal goes through an ordeal, so does its human. Animals are respected, honored and seen as teachers in these cultures. Modern times have lost connection to this ancient bond between humans and animals. Part of allowing our communication with animals as guides and teachers is building awareness that they are our equals in intelligence, ethics, feelings and culture. There needs to be a dissolving of boundaries between species and the resulting hierarchies which keep us separate. Learning or even listening to

Jamie Donnelly-Shores

As our spiritual partners, animals assist in accessing nature spiritually as well as physically and mentally. We learn from animals and as a result gain a new consciousness. This consciousness goes beyond the awareness of the environment around us; it demands recognition that we are a part of the whole environment. Progressing from an anthropocentric consciousness to an eco-centric conscious is crucial to our species survival, and by understanding the powerful healing aspects of animals and the relationship we have with them will aid us in this transition.

what animals have to say requires an honoring their individual characteristics, personalities and souls.



Karen Diane Knowles, MA is an interpreter at UC Berkeley and a faculty member of JFKU's ecotherapy program; she authored "Tuning In to Terra through Our Animal Kin" in "Rebearths: Conversations with a World En-souled" (2010).

What's in a name? A way to know a mountain

By Laurel Vogel

RAIN FALLS softly as I walk this morning on the slip of a trail among the robust spring saxifrage, fringe-cups and piggyback plants. The uncoiling fronds of spiny wood fern brush past my hands, tenderly clinging and coaxing me further into the woods as my sense of separation unwinds. My dog revels in the smells, pushing his nose into rotting leaves and under nettles, snorting at banana slugs and beetles. This hill was called Kyllonen Hill by the heavily arrived settlers, named after Swedish immigrants who lived in a farmhouse nearby some years ago. As I travel her circumference, I feel that this is not her real name.

Our fledgling community, or *sangha*, hosted a prayer circle where we experienced the *Si.si.wiss* (sacred life, sacred breath) practices of a local tribe, honoring ancestors, cedar trees, and earth. The leader of our group mentioned a movement underway to change the name of Mt. Rainier to Ti'Swaq (pronounced *tea-swawk*). I recently discovered that this mountain, sacred to the indigenous tribes, was given its current name by Captain Vancouver, a British explorer who named it after a naval officer who had never touched North American soil.

In the same 2010 KOMO news interview, available at www.komonews.com/news/local/95230584.html, I read: "There's so much investment in the present name, it's hard to think of people agreeing to change it without a lot of kicking and screaming... There's a huge economic incentive in keeping the name as it is... Think of all the signs, the maps, the businesses. It's not only Mount Rainier National Park, it's Rainier Beer. It's on our license plates."

Circumambulation is a practice sacred to many cultures, and involves mindful journeying around a mountain, with stops for ceremony and chants

Red Cedar Zen Community of Bellingham, Washington, is planning to circumambulate the mountain in September, following in the footsteps of traditional Buddhist practices brought to this country by Gary Snyder and others. Circumambulation is a practice sacred to many cultures, and involves mindful

journeying around a mountain, with stops for ceremony and chants. I practice this way with our local hill, and I hope one day to join in the circumambulation of Ti'Swaq Mountain. Those who want to change the name of the mountain say this about the land:

"This beautiful and sacred land is our Mother. She feeds, nurtures, shelters and teaches, all her children. The elements of Mother Earth form the sacred vessels of our Spirit—our bodies. If we take time to listen to the land, we can feel the voice of our Mother resonate in our hearts, and know her language. This is why we believe in the importance and meaning of sacred names."

I have read some unsettling descriptions recently where nature is referred to as a cognitive tool that therapists can use to help those with mental illness. I'm coming to believe that this way of talking about nature as a "tool" does not counter the problems we face. The othering of nature has been with us in various ways for a very long time. Language like this creates the false split of subject from object; it shows how strongly the perspective of dualism is embedded. Our current level of unhappiness about



Photo by Christopher Diggins,

THERE'S A MOVEMENT afoot to change Mt. Rainier—named after a naval officer who had never touched North American soil—to Ti'Swaq (pronounced *tea-swawk*).

the state of the world already tells us that our psyche is the same as the world's psyche. This is happening to us and in us.

This is why such visceral and ceremonial practices as circumambulation and full immersion in nature may no longer be optional. We are the mountain. We are the glaciers melting. We are earth warming, her skies darkening, her storms growing more violent within and without—we are not saving the earth to save ourselves—we are saving our *selves*. A practice that undermines my sense of dualism feeds my work in ecotherapy, breathing life into my activism, supplying me with vitality and energy. Sacred practice gives me a language that speaks to what I want to cultivate. Our ecotherapy language ought to awaken us and show us how earth is enticing, lovely, full of both delight and peril. Then we will recover our love for her.

Indigenous people have traditionally taken care of the earth, and are often a driving force behind movements to save natural places. In Western culture, caretaking has been devalued, relegated to the feminine, thought of as less than, or derided as codependency. Because of modern industry, we no longer need to care for or respect the animals we eat, we no

longer need to care for the vegetables we purchase, and many of us no longer care for the places around us. And yet, often when we care for something or someone, we come to love them. If we don't have our hands tending the earth, our feet walking the mountain, and our backs warmed in sunlight, we tend to care in unrelated and abstract ways.

I suspect nothing will change until I am able to root myself in a community of care, where each one of us, individually and together can go back and do right by the land and the people. The way to know a mountain is to be intimate with it. This means going by foot along her skin, going for a long time, going with others, and together asking the questions: what does it mean to love this mountain? What does this mountain have to teach me? How is this mountain expressing herself today? Then, perhaps, the mountain will tell us her true name.

Laurel Vogel, M.A is a writer and is founder of holdingearth.org. More information about Red Cedar Zen Community's circumambulation can be found here: redcedarzen.org.

Essential ecotherapy skills for the outdoors

No. 1 – emergency medical training

YOU ARE AN ECOTHERAPIST, out for the afternoon with eight clients on an easy, three mile hike. You have almost returned to the trailhead when Mark, one of your clients, is stung by several bees. Within 5 minutes, his face becomes swollen and flushed. He sits down, struggling to breathe, and soon collapses on the ground, his tongue protruding from his puffy lips. There is no cell phone coverage in the area; the nearest pay phone is at the trailhead, at least ten minutes away, and it is an additional 20 minute drive to the hospital. Mark is in immediate mortal danger.



GREEN HEALING
Rain Sussman

How would a competent professional respond to this scenario? As ecotherapists, we must take such questions seriously, as the welfare of our clients and our profession is at stake. In outdoor settings, our responsibilities include two distinct professional roles: healing work and outdoor leadership. At present, there is no set standard for our healing work as ecotherapists; some may practice psychotherapy, others deep cultural work, ritual healing, and more. However, the professional standards for outdoor leaders are clearly established; if we choose to work in the outdoors, it behooves us to adhere to these standards.

While there is no one definitive credential for outdoor leaders in the United States, there is widespread consensus regarding the “industry standard” in any given setting. Even as volunteer trip leaders, we are legally and ethically responsible for abiding by these standards. If we aren’t sure what the standards are, we should seek training from a reputable outdoor school or program before leading outdoor activities.

Fortunately, such training opportunities abound at every level of practice. A vast array of schools, colleges, and programs offer instruction in outdoor leadership. Foundational texts, such as Ford & Blanchard’s *Leadership and Administration of Outdoor Pursuits*, Priest & Gass’ *Effective Leadership in Adventure Programming* and Buck Tilton’s publications on wilderness medicine are major contributions the field, and serve as essential references for this article. We can advance our skills through attendance at conferences such as the Wilderness Risk Management Conference (www.nols.edu/wrmc/) that of the Association for Experiential Education (www.aee.org/conference/list) and more.

Among the various skills we may obtain, emergency medical training is essential. Our level of certification will, of course, be appropriate to the activities that we lead. According to Bobbie Foster, founder of Foster Calm First Aid Training (www.fostercalm.com) the following guidelines are recommended:

- For outdoor settings accessible by car and reasonably close to a hospital, Basic First Aid and CPR certification is recommended;
- Wilderness First Aid certification is advised for day hikes away from roads, or any setting in which travel to a hospital could take 1 hour or more;
- Wilderness First Responder certification is appropriate for overnight trips in the backcountry, or any setting in which it might take 4-6 hours to reach emergency care.

These guidelines are designed for healthy adult clients; work with other populations may require additional training. It is important to be aware of any medical conditions clients may have, and plan ahead for how they will be managed. Prior to the activity start date, each participant should complete a health disclosure form to identify relevant health issues and provide health insurance, physician, and emergency contact information. As leaders, we should carry these forms throughout the activity. We should also carry first aid kits appropriate to the activity being conducted, and be familiar with their contents.

With appropriate medical training, an outdoor leader will know immediately how to respond to Mark’s life-threatening condition. However, emergency medical training is but one of many skills necessary for competence in outdoor leadership. Upcoming articles will address trip planning, documentation, liability insurance, permitting, and more. And please remember—these articles are not substitutes for hands-on training; for a list of outdoor leadership and wilderness medical training programs, visit www.greenhealingconsultants.com.

Scenario Response: Thanks to your Wilderness First Aid class, you recognize the signs of anaphylaxis, an extreme allergic reaction. Fortunately, Mark had mentioned his allergy on his medical form, so you obtained medication from him in advance and reviewed the written protocols for its use. You pull his Epi-Pen Auto-Injector out of your first aid kit, and inject epinephrine right through his jeans into his leg. Within 30 seconds, Mark begins to breathe more easily, and soon regains a normal level of consciousness. You knew from your pre-trip planning that there would be no cell phone service in the area, so you are carrying a satellite phone. You call 911, and an ambulance is dispatched to the trailhead immediately. Mark is now able to sit up and converse, so you give him two Benadryl tablets with some water, and help prepare him for transportation to the hospital.

Rain Sussman, LCSW has taught climbing and wilderness skills for more than 15 years, guiding for both therapeutic and adventure-based outdoor programs. She holds a certificate in Ecotherapy from JFK University, where she is now a teaching assistant. A certified Wilderness First Responder and graduate of the National Outdoor Leadership School, she currently works as a clinical social worker and wilderness instructor in California. She is founder and principal consultant at Green Healing Consultants, helping mental health professionals bring nature-based therapies into their work. Contact her at rain@greenhealingconsultants.com.

Rain’s photo: Aaron Pincus



Creating sanctuary in your own backyard

By Shanti Mayberry, PhD

GOING ON LONG nature hikes or retreats may not be available to many of us on a daily basis, but we can create small nature sanctuaries in our backyards or on our porches to replenish our energy and renew inspiration. Having such a special retreat in your home space provides a daily dose of eco-therapeutic self-help and a reminder that our human life with all its dramas is just a part of the Earth’s greater field of life.

After tuning into the Earth’s guidance, I came up with a very simple design that seemed to enhance what was already present. By consciously creating a nature sanctuary for the purpose of restoring your perspective and vitality, you endow it with healing power and a touch of what I call Eco-Zen. Such a space is also a great place to share an enlightening cup of tea with a friend or consult with clients. Several of my former clients have created such a space for their on-going healing. Of course where you live puts limitations on how often or when you can be outside, but there are numerous ways to create peaceful and protected nature-meditation zones in the form of covered porches, conservatories or sanctified room corners with some green plants, flowers, shells or stones.

When I searched my canyon backyard for a secluded and meditative spot, I found a tiny area tucked away behind a giant aloe-vera plant and a rocky hillside. After tuning into the Earth’s guidance, I came up with a very simple design that seemed to enhance what was already present. To the hillside, I added a Buddha statue, a Zen stream of pebbles with a water fountain and statue of Aphrodite at the bottom, a small patch of grass, a reed fence and a row of drought tolerant, native plants (bottle brush, white daisies, yarrow and rock rose) at the top of the little hillside for privacy. The flowering natives also attract hummingbirds and butterflies and the garden is now abuzz with many adorable hummers. These garden enhancements were inexpensive and quite easy to put in place, only a bit of mindful effort was needed.

Now I have a place to retreat, rest and commune with the Earth’s presence, and the hummingbirds also have a sanctuary space for bathing and refueling on native nectar. I feel blessed to enjoy frequent mini-nature vacations at home, a practice I highly recommend to clients, students and friends.

Clients need their space, so take it outside!

By Katrina Dreamer

WHEN I BEGAN as a shamanic healer, I conducted client sessions in living rooms and offices. While I saw many changes in my clients after these healings, I felt something was missing. Then one day, while sitting in the shade of redwood trees next to a creek, I had my breakthrough.

I needed to do shamanic healings outside.

After all, nature is where many shamans around the world do their work. Whether it's on a vast plain or deep within a forest, shamans everywhere heal directly on the earth, next to water, or even in water. Their tools come directly from the natural world and their power often comes from nature as well.

I've discovered that doing these healings outdoors adds exponentially to the work's transformative potential. When we're not separated from nature by walls and traffic noise, amazing things happen. After all, the outer landscape is often a reflection of our inner state and it has many gifts to offer. It is not unusual for my clients to be drawn to a particular spot outside where they feel the most comfortable. Often it is because that location has special medicine for them.

So far I've worked with clients in two locations: a meadow in a park in the Berkeley hills, and on the beach. In both places I let the client wander until they find the spot that feels right. In every case, the chosen spot has played an instrumental healing role. And there's another advantage to healing outside: it's not just the land that adds energy to the healing. Many times the local nature spirits, elements, and plants have a role to play in the healing as well.

One client I worked with at the beach chose a sandy spot in the middle of a group of rocks with quartz inclusions. We both noticed that the rocks were adding energy to the healing—and so was the surf pounding at her feet.

During another healing, I noticed two huge trees sending streams of energy to my client as we cleared a deep ancestral wound. In the same field, a different tree sent healing energy to a client as I cleaned out her fifth chakra, helping her reclaim her voice. Additionally, I've witnessed energy flowing up from the earth and streaming down from the sky. On a few occasions, I've seen nature spirits assisting

I let the client wander until they find the spot that feels right. In every case, the chosen spot has played an instrumental healing role



Katrina Dreamer

me with a healing.

I'm not the only one noticing that immersion in nature during a healing makes a difference. My most recent client had her healing at Rodeo Beach in the Marin Headlands. I chose the location, but she selected the spot at the beach that called to her. She said afterward that she couldn't have imagined doing the healing anywhere else, even

another outdoor location.

"Water is very healing for me," she said, "and it was perfect that I had the ocean right there as you did the healing. The energy would not have been the same in a grassy field."

Another client told me after her healing that she tried to picture what it would have been like if it had taken place on a table in a room.

"Even with the most beautifully decorated, soothing room, it would not have been as powerful," she said.

As I consider the impact this change has made on my own work, I wonder what it might be like if therapists began offering sessions in gardens or parks or if masseuses brought their tables outside. How much better would our healing modalities be if offered outside?

Of course, there are privacy matters to consider: not all clients will be comfortable with working in an open space with less (relative) privacy than is offered by a

closed door in a room (I say relative because I have heard private conversations through doors while waiting for a practitioner). And the weather does not always cooperate either (I've done some rather chilly healings in the Berkeley hills).

Even so, I'd love to see a world in which more healing modalities are offered outdoors.

Katrina Dreamer, MA, is a healer who helps people uncover their true selves and live to their fullest potential. She penned the chapter "Embodying the Power of the Storm" for the terrapsych anthology "Rebearth: Conversations with a Spirit Ensouled." She is also part of Birthing Women's Wisdom, a portal for helping women embrace their inner wisdom (birthing-womenswisdom.com) and the DreamTribe, a site dedicated to bringing back a dreaming culture (dreamtribe.com). Find her at www.katrinadreamer.com.



Annalisa
Barelli

*The heart says
yes
again and again
over
and over
with each living
beat*

*Walking
the green path
to
let earth in
sun for food
roots for feet*

*On the wings
of the air
through the song
of the seas
the elements give
birth inside*

*As a seed
to a sprout
As a leaf
as a bloom*

*The heart grows
and life
gives the room*

The earth is hungry

By Sage Abella

I'M WALKING WITH my friend, Jennifer. She lives in the upper story of an historic white building with a covered boardwalk porch that goes around the inner sides of a courtyard. Long wooden stairways lead up to the three levels of the old building that used to be a popular California hot springs for tourists in the late 1800s. We're walking her cocker spaniel pup, Cara Mia, and catching up like old friends do.

Suddenly our conversation is sliced in two as a huge, bald eagle screeches from behind us and lands, all talons and wild whirling wings at my feet. It's an eagle like I've never seen, every feather pure white. The bird lunges for Cara Mia. Jennifer drops to her knees to try and grab the dog. The dog runs, the eagle chases. It's only a couple minutes of wings, yips and screeches and the eagle eats the dog.

Jennifer and I stand there completely stunned. The eagle has flown way and all that's left of the tussle is a couple stray eagle feathers resting lightly on the tops of bushes down in the center of the courtyard. Still shaking, I walk down to gather the feathers and when I pick each of them up, they speak to me in a gentle hiss like an exhale or a snake. They say, "You carry our medicine now. Tell the woman how hungry Nature is, tell the people."

As a child I was taught we have five senses, our ability to see, hear, touch, smell, and taste. As a woman, I've learned the most important sensing organ I now have is my dreambody.

I wake up and get out of bed. What is Nature hungry for? In the last few months my dreams have left me with many simple and deep questions, all of them having to do with the earth. As a child I was taught we have five senses, our ability to: see, hear, touch, smell, and taste. As a woman, I've learned the most important sensing organ I now have is my dreambody.

There is a larger, magical part of my physical experience where my consciousness has the ability to lead the way. My dreambody is that consciousness who can travel anywhere without a car, fly without wings, meet with friends who live miles away, commune with long dead ancestors, visit high mountain lakes after scanning the

territory from above like a bird, have conversations with animals and landscapes as if they were speaking English, receive physical healing with tangible physical sensations, and meet to learn from wise elders (some who show up as trees instead of humans).

Dreams are calling to us more than ever. Last week I lived in a cabin I thought was at the edge of a lake until I stepped off the front porch into neck deep water. Behind the log cabin was a small marsh where men were riding quads and motorcycles through the high tule grasses. The marsh called out to me, "Save us!" I spent the whole next day, awake, going through my life, taking kids to school, cooking dinner, wondering how I could save the marsh.

The earth is dreaming into me. That night I was walking through a tall, old growth pine forest. Many of the trees had fallen like giant's toothpicks because beetles ate them from the inside, at their core. I knew the trees were all one species, planted the way people plant things, not the way the forest seeds herself—a monocrop banquet for the beetles. The trees leaned down and said, "You can heal the trees and the path, just collectively



US Fish and Wildlife Service/Mike Lockhart

What is the earth hungry for? She is ravenous for us to be in relationship

love us."

I woke up to an answer that is easy. It doesn't involve a big mediation plan. It doesn't take an understanding of biology or science. It doesn't need machinery or moving earth and paving a new road to get there. It doesn't take a council. What it does is invite us into conversation. What is the earth hungry for? She is ravenous for us to be in relationship with her; appreciating the way our eyes love the textures of the trees, the way we breathe deeper beneath wide open arms of a blue sky, the way gentle chattering of the birds calms us (birds who know how to be in conversation both with each other and with humans). We are biologically designed to be intimate with earth. When that intimacy is present a whole new set of choices and lifestyles can emerge both on an individual and collective level.

This morning our little red hen followed me down the hill to the car to take the kids to school. I opened the door and she hopped into the driver's seat. My dreams have also taught me to read the symbols and the signs in my waking world. Animals of the earth, a wind who shows up from the west, and a rain storm—all are part of the larger consciousness I move around in; they are both wider and more cellular parts of my own consciousness. I don't think it was a mistake that this hen, who usually only moves around with her own flock, energetically followed me at my heels and hopped into the driver's seat for the day.

Earth is talking with us. Can we listen? Will we respond before the white eagle comes to take our little dog away? Nature is hungry for an active relationship with humans. Can you hear it in your dreams? Will you have a conversation with a friend and start calling up that collective love of a pine tree in the forest or tomato plant in your garden? Can you spare five minutes each day to sit in nature and learn you belong in the midst of nature's wise web? Today I choose to listen to my Guru Hen and to act on what it means for her to be in the driver's seat.

A narrow window

By Nicole Rease

Imagine for a few minutes that your view of the world is restricted to a 3-by-5-inch rectangle (Place your pointer fingers and thumbs together in two L shapes to make a frame of a rectangle, and then close one eye to get the right perspective). Hold up the rectangle in the room you're in, moving it close and then far away. Make sure you do not look outside this shape just yet. Now take this shape outdoors and look to the horizon, a tree, a bush, some grass or even the sky. Next hold it up to a person and try to talk to them only by looking through this rectangle. Is the view a bit narrowing? Now check to see what is beyond this shape. Very important here: Notice how there is a much broader perspective outside of the rectangle, especially outdoors!

As funny and awkward as this brief experiment may be, it would feel different if this was someone's perspective for the majority of the day. This 3-by-5-inch size is larger than most cell phone screens today. A large percentage of children are spending a vast amount of time looking at the world through this lens, or ones slightly larger. On average, children spend seven hours of screen time—cell phones, computers and/or televisions—per day.

The words alone in some of these devices are unsettling. "Cell" phone—Is it a prison, a cell that locks away children's imaginations? "Tele-a-vision"—Something replacing the child's personal vision? "CBS"—See the B.S.? As humorous as some of these signs may seem, there is a deeper sadness here that needs addressing. These convenient devices—designed to make life easier—may be slowly crippling children. Many children are addicted to these little machines and their internet games. Better they go outside to explore nature and build their own *inner net*. They may discover that a spider's web to be as absorbing as the World Wide Web.

Continued focus on a space the size of a notecard may keep kids from thinking big. Perhaps children are becoming frightened of nature—not because of physical dangers—but because the outdoors is so expansive. They are becoming conditioned to fast moving images on a tiny screen. Nature encourages the eyes to constantly track a broader world, helping to build connections between the brain's hemispheres.

This lack of interaction with nature most certainly contributes to our confusion about who we are. Many of us have forgotten that we *are* nature. Nature is inside of us, guiding us, and desirous of a recognition of nature as self.

Nature speaks the language of interrelationships, with an emphasis on the heart. When in nature, we naturally tune into this language. In time, a felt sense of the bigger picture unfolds. But unless children are encouraged to put down their cell phones and spend more time outdoors, how will they ever discover this joy?

Nicole is a certificated ecotherapist who envisions joyfully reconnecting children with their spirit through nature. She holds an MA in Consciousness and Transformative Studies through JFK University. She also attends the school of Foundation of Spiritual Development.

Nuzzle a horse (That's doctor's orders!)

By Lynnea Brinkerhoff

RECENT RESEARCH indicates that interaction with nature reduces stress levels, improves memory and gives us a sense of belonging to the larger ecosystem. This research is often related to the emerging field of 'Ecotherapy', where we are invited to engage in nature-based activities to restore our sense of wellbeing. In Western Europe, Ecotherapy is already integrated into the health care system. Doctors may require patients spend time at a farm, take walks, swim in a mountain lake or work with animals or flowers. Imagine receiving a written prescription like that from your physician!

Bringing together the wisdom of nature's restorative capacities, the strong results found from animal-assisted work and the unique skills of coaching, practitioners are now engaging in Equine Assisted Coaching. While it stands alone, it is often recognized as a component of the broader field of Ecotherapy. Equine Assisted Coaching provides a perfect backdrop to more deeply embody the learning provided from more traditional coaching approaches.

It is said that horses are 'emotional prodigies' who have the ability to sense what is foremost on our agenda, emotionally, intellectually and even spiritually—usually way before we can. This can be intimidating or profoundly comforting, depending on what each of us brings to the horse's round pen. Some say it is a place of metaphor that has direct translation to the workplace, our primary relationships and to our own hopes and dreams. I have seen it myself and am humbled time and again by the feedback that these animals offer us as we interact with them to bring about a particular result.

In equine-based coaching the horse might become agitated in response to someone's own unacknowledged fear level or they might act bored and proceed to distract themselves, often revealing a lack of focus on the part of the client. Acknowledgment is key. If we try to mask our own animal nature, the horses offer us immediate, often less than desirable feedback. If, on other hand, we are authentic about our sense of wonder, awe, terror, anxiety, etc., the horse usually proffers tireless effort and patience in the direction we lead him or her.

As practitioners, we care equally for the client and horse's well-being. We are therefore attentive to setting up safety guidelines, creating body awareness (termed 'arousal levels'), raising emotional agility and increasing sensory perception or mindfulness. Horses respond to proximity, pressure and permission, not unlike our clients or us. As coaches, we are charged with consistently exercising the competencies of:

- Setting the foundation
- Co-creating the relationship
- Communicating effectively
- Facilitating learning and results

To miss any of these coaching steps risks not creating a safe container for your client to do the work. And so it goes with the equine-based work. This was evidenced in a recent Professional and Personal Development intensive I helped facilitate in New Haven, Conn. One client, Cathy, protested at the start that she didn't feel welcomed. The horse working with her,



"Pavarti is the hairiest coach of all. The troubled teens consider him a teddy bear and find much save in his company. He tolerates no arrogance as he has the sheer power to dish it right back. He is deep, soulful, loves his biscuits and loves you through to your greatness."

— Equine Assistance Coach Lynnea Brinkerhoff

Coach Beatrice, would soon give Cathy an expanded view of how she had rendered herself unwelcome before arriving. I invited Cathy to remain open to new options and insights; she appeared to be hiding behind her quick wit and social and professional adeptness. The horse itself seemed to struggle with intense disinterest, at times chomping at the gate and sniffing the corners of the barn. When Cathy failed to feel the welcome she so depended upon, she lost her ability to extend herself and express her leadership. The dilemma of having been downsized many months before and losing her sense of direction and purpose became pal-

The Indian Scriptures describe how the Sages captured their mind and turned it into a bright horse—a horse which leads its rider to the right destination.

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pably present. In order to get Coach Beatrice to move—to remain interested, to complete a task—Cathy had to dig into the least exercised muscles of her persona. She became increasingly apologetic for her existence, shrinking, and minimizing her mission of sacrifice for the comfort of another.

It was going to be important for Cathy to relate to this unfamiliar situation, showing up as Coach Beatrice's disinterest. Cathy, a self-proclaimed relationship expert, found herself without a real relationship to the horse, which stood so prominently before her! I had given her a small whip that she refused to use. The horse and I tested her repeatedly by walking toward her, asking that she use the whip to draw a boundary when she felt pressed in by us. Cathy, however, allowed us to walk directly into her and even push her backward. Amid her continued protestations, there still seemed little internal or external movement. I said "please end the activity in your own way when you are ready."

At this moment, I noticed that she dropped her fixation about how it was to be done and took charge of herself and Coach Beatrice with clarity and ease. To Beatrice's delight, she finally had genuine guidance and a task to perform. She accommodated utterly. Cathy beamed. With the help of Coach Beatrice, Cathy became aware of the subtle energies that were controlling her. She found this freeing. Through this process Cathy gained renewed confidence that she can now use to pursue her future.

For a free e-subscription to this newsletter contact lbuzzell@aol.com. Publisher and executive editor Linda Buzzell, M.A., M.F.T., founded The International Association for Ecotherapy in 2002 as a virtual organization of psychotherapy clinicians, counselors, healthcare professionals, coaches, guides, students and educators who are practicing or teaching in the emerging field of ecotherapy. (Also known as applied ecopsychology.)

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