



A Village of Elders

by Diana Hughes, RN, BSN, PHN, HTCP

Imagine, having the opportunity to be nurtured and loved by a group of elders. As the years pass different elders appear -- continuing to nurture and forever loving -- as they gift you with their stories of life. All the while you flourish as they give meaning to your life. As each elder comes and goes they leave their loving imprint on your heart that you will carry with you all the days of your life. So goes the story of my life as a nurse in Long-Term Care.

By the time I got involved with Healing Touch it seemed as though it was a natural progression to provide care for my beloved elders. It was my turn to return the loving care I received from so many elders in a special way. Over the years I have become very astute in managing the clinical aspects of the elderly. In fact, as my gerontological knowledge base and clinical skills grew so did my responsibilities. However, in 2001 I was beginning to feel that something was missing from my work with the elderly.

When I completed Level 1 Healing Touch in April 2001 I knew that I had found what was missing from my practice. I found that Healing Touch filled a gap in my care of the elderly and allowed me to provide care that was heart centered and sacred. I had finally found a way to give the most loving care I could possibly

give to my elders through Healing Touch.

I have incorporated Healing Touch in my daily practice with the elders in my care at The Village HealthCare Center. I have used either one or a combination of *Ultrasound*, *Magnetic Passes*, *Hands in Motion* and *Hands Still*, *Pain Drain* or *Laser* techniques to help in pain management and incision site repair with recent hip or knee replacements. In addition, I use *Magnetic Passes*, *Hands in Motion* and *Hands Still* or *Mind Clearing* with those who are experiencing an increase in anxiety or agitation. The Healing Touch technique that I use is contingent on time, level of pain or anxiety the resident is experiencing and/or individual request for Healing Touch.

One of the most profound experiences I have had with Healing Touch was when I was performing a *Chakra Spread* with a resident who had become a friend. In Long-Term Care developing close relationships with the elderly is common -- such was the case with Glenda. Over a 10-year period Glenda had been admitted to The Village HealthCare Center numerous times. I watched her health decline with each admission and we both knew with her admission in January 2007 - it would be her last.

I vividly remember the day when my nurses came to inform me that Glenda was not doing well and had requested to see me. It was the second day of our annual survey with the Department of Health and a member of the survey team was in my office requesting various nursing policies and procedures. My

own anxiety at that time was very high and I remember thinking “*how am I going to calm down enough to be present for Glenda.*” I excused myself from the surveyor and immediately went outside to the garden patio. I breathed in the fresh air and

looked around at the dormant garden – and a thought struck me that even in death there is the promise of life eternal.

Once I felt grounded and calm I returned to the building and went to Glenda’s room. As I sat next to Glenda and held her hand we both knew what was happening. I asked Glenda if she wanted me to do Healing Touch and she nodded yes. By the time I completed the *Chakra Spread* she seemed to be sleeping very comfortably and not struggling to breathe. I sat next to her again and simply held sacred space for her. After about 10 minutes Glenda began to stir and started mumbling something I could not understand. I leaned in closer and asked her to repeat what she said and she stated very softly “will you hold me.” I gently got Glenda into a sitting position on the edge of the bed and sat next to her. I put my arms around her as her head fell onto my shoulder, holding her close to me for about 5 minutes before laying her back down. As I held her I knew that it would be the last time. Imagine having an opportunity to spend such a precious moment with someone you love. Glenda transitioned early the next morning.

About the author:

Diana Hughes, RN, BSN, PHN, HTCP, has been Director of Nursing at The Village HealthCare Center in Hemet, California for the past 13 years. Diana started as a nursing assistant in Long-Term Care in 1976, becoming a certified nursing assistant in 1977. Through the encouragement of her elders and their families she managed to put herself through nursing school and became a Registered Nurse in 1985. Her background includes extensive training in rehabilitation nursing. In her work with the elder community she feels that Healing Touch has added depth and dimension to her nursing practice in a very profound way.