



Giving Back: Volunteering

As the Executive Director of the Healing Touch Professional Association (HTPA), I have the beautiful pleasure of participating in events, calls, trainings and intimate one-on-one conversations with our amazing community of healers. A recent conversation ebbed into a discussion around the role of volunteering in our practices. There were a few different perspectives that I want to share.

Healing work should only be volunteered because it is a gift from Spirit. This perspective is validated by the opinions that the work of Spirit is a gift — that we, as healers, work to share the gift of Spirit.

Healing work must be compensated because it is a service, a benevolent one, but a service that requires compensation. The items that require compensation are your time, your education and training, and to help you pay your bills (office rentals, massage tables) or support a family.

Healing work needs to be compensated because individuals who 'get things for free' are not invested the same way. This is another opinion that I hear around the debate of volunteering versus charging.

Volunteering does a disservice to those who charge. This is another opinion that I heard because those who charge a fee are often working in areas where the modality is provided by volunteers.

I want to share how I came to understand the role of volunteering over my (close to 12) years in the field of Energy Medicine. Recently, volunteering has become an active and important part of my professional practice. While I will intimately share the role of volunteering in my practice, I acknowledge and honor that this might not be the same for you.

I have had a fee-based practice since I started my private practice. I had to pay for my office rental and even though I was working an additional job at a large corporation, it felt important to me that having a private practice was not an aspect of my financial life that made me uncomfortable or stressed. I have always worked hard to be financially independent and stable. At certain times in my life, I have had to really dig deep and make some big changes in my employment and my professional trajectory to keep myself feeling stable and supported.

Each year, I struggled with my pricing model, but did resolve to raise my fees a small amount. I justified the personal raise by considering the thousands of dollars in training that I had invested, the hundreds upon hundreds of practice hours I was accumulating and the results my clients were creating for themselves. I have always felt comfortable asking for sustainable compensation because of the effort, dedication and time that I poured into supporting others on their wellness journeys.

I thought I was emotionally and mentally prepared to leave my corporate job, but was actually terrified. My now husband, then boyfriend, asked me to marry him — which felt stabilizing. However, having been married once before, perhaps I entered into this new contract wounded. (See, I told you this was intimate!) I was wounded, excited, afraid. I had a fee model for my practice that I knew could pay my office bills and make enough sustainable income from my “on-the-side” healing business. This gave me some faith that if I continued on, regardless of the future, I would be okay.

My discomfort around pricing, including personal fears about creating a sustainable practice and allowing the work to support me, were gifts that allowed me to be more flexible and compassionate as I defined my fee requirements. This continues to be an ever-flowing process of honoring needs — balancing the needs of others with my own needs.

Sometimes individuals come into my life and practice that do not have the funds to pay my rate, but there is something in my heart that lets me know it is important to



work with them. I have always followed that inner “something.” Just like everything in this work, there is a deference to the cosmic unfolding – the ebb and flow of the tides of benevolent work. As individuals come into orbit with my work, there is sometimes the message, “Yes! You have to work with him or her.”

This is my volunteer work. It is not formalized. It is not consistent. A client or case may last days, months or years. Right now, I am working with a male pediatric oncology case. I had the pleasure of working with him for months while he received chemotherapy treatments, supporting him through a surgery and continuing through his rehabilitation and additional chemotherapy. To be honest, I could not see my practice without him. He connects me to the work in an amazingly rich and unique way. His story has been a teaching story for me. There are others—a young nurse who is working on a new healing journey of her own, a woman in Australia who is looking for information about speaking with stones and then there are the burn survivors who come to the events where I volunteer. My work would not be complete without these individuals.

I look out at the world and I see that we, as healers, are needed more than ever. The political climate is difficult, the amount of illness and stress is growing, and the conversations around the economy are rather disheartening. But what is amazing to me is our capacity to give back and the different ways that we show up to support others in our community. I celebrate this, and us. Whether charging a fee, volunteering part time or volunteering full time, I celebrate our contributions to the betterment of the people of this planet.

I invite you to think about ways in which your practice supports you financially and spiritually, and the ability that we have as practitioners to choose the perfect models for supporting those who cross our paths. I think flexibility and “following the energy” are tenets of our work. These tenets can blend effortlessly with the unique design of our practices, our fee models and our alignment with our virtues. We can be empowered and creative as we stay open and balance our needs with the needs of those we support. This flow and creativity in our compensation models allow us to give the gift of service in a fully supportive, yet receptive and fair way. €



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