



Spiritual Eldering Through Healing Touch

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Healing Touch is a program of self-development and self-care. A curriculum of healing arts concepts includes techniques to modulate the energy field, meditation, journaling, mentoring, and books about energy science. Universal spiritual principles of compassion, non-judgment, non-attachment to outcome, unconditional love and acceptance, and power of intention underlie all, enriching beliefs already in place in some instances, or raising questions about the nature of spiritual beliefs. It is a journey; a journey of transformation. Healing Touch changes lives. It is a spiritual journey in a world of potential and possibilities. Students of Healing Touch move through progressive levels of instruction, work towards certification and, most important of all, they do “the work.” In the process, they grow and many become Spiritual Elders.

According to Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, founder of the non-denominational Spiritual Eldering Institute and author of *From Age-ing to Sage-ing*, Spiritual Elders function as wisdomkeepers, evolutionary pathfinders, and pioneers in consciousness. Eldering is a process of transmitting that wisdom to younger people. He sees the difference between elders and elderly as one of growth versus stagnation and decay. Culturally and sociologically, we are experiencing a paradigm shift from geriatrics to gerotranscendence, a developmental stage that occurs when individuals living into old age shift their perspective from a materialistic and rational view of the world to a more

cosmic and transcendent one; from Newtonian to Quantum physics in scientific terms. This is usually accompanied by an increase in life satisfaction.

Physiotherapist, Rochelle Graham, was one of the first instructors of Healing Touch in Canada. During that time, she introduced Healing Touch into the United Churches of Canada and co-authored the book, *Healing From the Heart; A Guide to Christian Healing for Individuals and Groups*. Rochelle relates that through the Healing Touch coursework, “I was profoundly introduced to the wisdom of the Universe, however your heart names that. The spiritual journey continues and the love pouring through me just grows bigger and deeper.” She is now studying for a Masters of Divinity at the University of British Columbia.

Gerotranscendent elders remove their “masks” as they grow into their authentic selves. They accept the mysteries of life and delete, as the late Brugh Joy put it, “the need to understand” everything. What constitutes old age is not defined: 70’s, 80’s, 90’s? A practitioner of Healing Touch, for example, has the potential to transcend spiritually before others in their age bracket because of their practice of service. Service occupies the highest place in most religious traditions.

Bernie Clarke, Healing Touch Instructor emeritus, has actively served her retirement community with Healing Touch since she and husband, John, moved there in 1996. She was highly influenced by the work



of Eric H. Erickson and his wife, Joan M. Erickson, a nurse educator who began her career in 1950. Now in her mid-eighties, Bernie is pursuing Gerotranscendence, the 9th stage of the expanded version of the Erickson's Life Cycles, as well as Wisdom and Peace of Mind, the 8th stage. "Joan Erickson," Bernie writes, "speaks of not limiting ourselves to withdrawal related to transcendence but for gerotranscendence, to rise above, regain 'lost skills, including play, activity, joy, and song and, above all, a major leap above and beyond the fear of death.'"

comes to help with my anatomy classes with his wisdom and humor, as does my school teacher mother, and my daughter. And sometimes it even feels like Janet Mentgen, the founder of Healing Touch Program, comes." Sue says that Healing Touch really helped her with prayer and afterlife considerations. "After a lifetime of being active in Protestant churches, it was through Healing Touch that I finally and truly learned how to pray and connect with the Divine. Every time I work with clients I ground, center, set the intention for the highest good (as we are taught), connecting

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Rabbi Schachter-Shalomi writes that "A major task in Spiritual Eldering involves acknowledging our fear of dying." Sharon Robbins, Executive Director of the Healing Touch Professional Association, found that the "intimate heart to heart connection was a tremendous help" during her husband's transition. "We both benefitted on many levels. I was not prepared for the depth of loss I subsequently experienced after his passing. If it had not been for my Healing Touch peers and friends who sent me long distance healings and others who gave in-person healings, I am sure that I would have sunk into the black hole of depression." She heard from many practitioners regarding their own losses and need to share their own grieving process. While many practitioners provide comfort and end of life care to others, the work on their own mortality issues often needs support. As healers, we can Spiritually Elder one another through our grief.

Sue Hovland, Founder and Director of the Anatomy for Healers Program, HTCP/I, shares that she has met several healers that have had a near death experience including the tunnel of light and this "helped me connect with family that have passed. My surgeon father

to Spirit or the Divine in a profound prayer. I get a feeling of Spirit working with me, even sometimes angels or guides." Sue believes that her experience is a common experience for most people in Healing Touch work.

People become sages, according to Schachter-Shalomi, by "undertaking the inner work that leads in stages to expanded consciousness." Those who knew her personally knew that Janet Mentgen did her inner work. Janet fit the description of a sage. She built the framework of Healing Touch into stages so that by Level 4 most participants were introducing themselves saying, "Healing Touch changed my life."

In our ego-driven Western culture, we need look no farther than the Healing Touch Program for a psychospiritual model of development that enables us to complete our life journey, harvest the wisdom of our years, and transmit a legacy to future generations. €