HEALING PRESENCE

THE ESSENCE OF NURSING
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In addition to this edition of Healing Presence, Dr. Koerner has a number of related materials and resources available including:

- her book, Mother, Heal My Self
- Values Profile with Interpretation
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  - Group
  - Organization/Association
- On-line In-Sight! Classes
- Healing Presence Classes
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HEALING PRESENCE

The Essence of Nursing

Second Edition

JoEllen Koerner, RN, PhD, FAAN
This book is dedicated to the Universal Spirit that unites and heals us all.
CONTENTS

Foreword xi
Jean Watson, PhD, RN, AHN-BC, FAAN

Reflections of a Nurse Healer xiii
Julie MacDonald, RN, MSN

An Invitation xvii

Acknowledgments xxii

SECTION I
A HEALING STORY: EXPLORING THE LIVED EXPERIENCE

1. Nursing: A Sacred Work 3
   A Return of the Feminine Healing Energy 4
   Science/Art/Presence: The Triad of Compassionate Care 10
   Self-Knowledge: The Key to Healing Presence 18

2. A Healing Journey Between Two Cultures:
   An Experience of Wholeness 21
   The Context of Suffering 22
   Lakota Ways of Healing 24
   The Medicine Man 26
   Mother Nature Moves 33
   Giving Back 37
   Reintegration 42

SECTION II
A HEALING PRESENCE: THE POWER OF ONE

3. Vibrant Health: The Energetics of Dynamic Balance 47
   The Human Body Re-Visioned—An Integrated Field of Energy 47
   The Human Mind Re-Visioned—An Expansive Field of Consciousness 57
CONTENTS

Science of Energy Fields  63
The Human Being Revisited—Dynamic Body–Mind–Spirit Balance  76
Worldview Exercise  87

4. Healing Presence: The Path of Engagement  93
   Being With—The Spiritual Dimension of Nursing  95
   Science of Healing Presence  100
   Active Observation—Seeing Beyond the Obvious  105
   Active Intelligence—Knowing Beyond Concrete Thought  108
   Active Receptivity—Being Present With Authenticity  114
   Becoming a Healing Presence  124

5. Quantum Healing: The Power of Integration  131
   Health Beliefs—Living our Definitions  131
   The Healing Process—Reestablishing Flow  135
   The Healing Path—Stages of Integration  139
   Self-Care and Healing Exercise  163

SECTION III
A HEALING PATH: WEAVING A PURPOSEFUL LIFE

6. Balanced Living: The Path of Becoming  175
   Expanding Consciousness—A Shift Toward Authenticity  177
   Values Stage Model  181
   Practicing With Mastery—Personal and Professional Balance  186
   Healing the Profession—From Within  191
   Professional Development Analysis  194
   Discerning Essence Exercise  201

7. Ways of Knowing: Expressions of the Soul  205
   Shifting Focus—A Life Examined  208
   I—Information: The World as Mirror of the Mind  209
   II—Knowledge: Lived Experience as Teacher  215
   III—Wisdom: Present Moment as Guide  221
   IV—Mystery: The Unknown as Inspiration  226
SECTION IV
A HEALING FIELD: THE CONTEXT FOR NURSING PRACTICE

8. The Noetic Scientist: A Holistic World  239
   Expanding Our Science: Holism Versus Reductionism  240
   Enlarging Our Practice—Expansive Scientific Models  242
   Recreating Our Reality—Nurses as Noetic Scientists  245
   A Problem-Solving Checklist  249

9. The Creative Artist: Composing a Life  253
   Art—The Power of Perspective  256
   Pattern—The Power of Limits  261
   Expansion—The Art of Living  268

10. The Human Spirit: Unfolding Inner Potential  275
    Our Beginnings—A Slow and Solitary Journey  276
    Sharing the Path—A Convergence of Collectives  278
    The Possible Human—A Biology of Transcendence  284
    Leadership Development Analysis  293
    Discerning Essence Exercise  300

Afterword  305
Glossary  307
Index  311
JoEllen Koerner in her new edition of *Healing Presence: The Essence of Nursing* has a way with words, with images, with stories and their ancient archetypal connections to the deepest source of our humanity and our connections to ourselves, others, and nature across time and space. Her words instantly open our hearts, our souls, and our longings to a personal root connection with nursing’s purpose and the individual nurse’s contribution to healing at this evolutionary turn and time in human history. Her latest edition of *Healing Presence* takes us on a journey into the ancient and unknown, yet ironically known space and place, helping us individually and collectively to remember why we are here and what are we here to do/be for healing Planet Earth and helping humanity to survive/thrive toward a new life history.

Dr. Koerner invites us into this new space wherein resides the subtle feminine healing energy of life itself, the source for compassion and a caring heart. This work calls us to attend to that which we already possess—to bear witness to others with a consciousness of our personal human healing presence. In doing so, we open our hearts and minds for sacred space to simply “be with” another—the often unseen process of nursing practice. Yet this healing presence captures the essence—breathing in new life and breath of life to nursing and nurses. Here we can exhale, releasing that which no longer works and is dying away as part of humankind’s evolution toward new models of health and healing and health care.

In this potentiated space provided by this work, a new era of health is uncovered; scientifically, energetically, and otherwise; new images and ideals of medicine and nursing are fully recognized, integrated and invited to transform self and system and even society. JoEllen Koerner brings and bridges old and new, ancient and futuristic, known and unknowns, tapping into our collective and individual consciousness with new visions of hope and healing for us all.
Thus, it is an honor indeed to endorse, welcome, and affirm this important work as part of the Watson Caring Science Library; a library designed to highlight works in caring science—informeda by an authentic ethic, vision, philosophies, theories, and practical transformation of all of health care, toward models of caring, healing and wellness. This work of JoEllen Koerner’s is a testimony to a vision of caring science for nurses, for nursing and for our world. It is my privilege and pleasure to offer my foreword to this inspired and inspiring book.

Jean Watson, PhD, RN, AHN-BC, FAAN
Founder, Watson Caring Science Institute
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Distinguished Professor of Nursing
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All nurses, regardless of their career path, have at one time or another enjoyed the privilege of sharing our healing presence with patients. This opportunity to contribute to the patient’s health and well-being using compassion and empathy has been what most nurses would say drew them into the profession. This “call” to our work, acknowledged as timeless, has not really had the center stage it might, given its magnetic pull to the profession. In fact, in my 35 years as a nurse, I have seen the topic of the essence of nursing discussed more when the profession was near a drought either in recruits or in role satisfaction. Our cyclical conversations have been inadequate for such an important cornerstone of nursing work. It seems the energy so needed to fuel the profession lies deep in this aspect of our work. How we can collectively learn to use it more effectively is the key.

**DRILLING DOWN TO THE ESSENCE . . .**

I have often viewed and described the work of nursing in two dimensions: “doing” and “being.” All nurses understand the “doing” dimension of nursing. So much of a nurse’s preparation, socialization, and role definition lie in what we do. The “doing” skills and technical accountabilities are that which keep nurses running and busy. This dimension of nursing work has clearly changed, grown, and become more complex over time. “Doing” is clearly
more concrete, able to be measured, and generally what has been perceived to be valued.

The “being” dimension of the role of nurse is less about what nurses do and more about the how. The focus of “being” and how the nurse comes to the bedside receives less time in a nurse’s preparation, socialization, and even role definition. Admittedly, this “being” dimension is more difficult to describe, harder to measure, and although valued by nurses and those patients who benefit from it, has not always been at the center of what is rewarded. “Being” is what slows down the nurse so that space is created for an authentic, deep connection with the patient and healing. The work of “being” has remained constant over time. Embedded in the “being” dimension of the role lies the essence of nursing, and it is here that the call to the profession is actualized.

One might say, over my career, I have had a preoccupation and conversation around the essence of nursing. When years have passed since I have seen certain colleagues and we end up in conversation about nursing, I am certain they say, “she’s still at it.” I even bore myself at times. Nevertheless, bringing focus and language to this “being” dimension has been my lifelong work. Ten years into my nursing career while in graduate school, I fell deep in the study of the humanistic psychologists, particularly Carl Rogers. His theories and writings on *Becoming a Person* and *Person Centered Approach* brought me a new perspective on the “being” aspect of my bedside practice. The biggest shift was looking inward at myself first before looking at how I might be more effective in working with others. Rogers’ delineation of the conditions necessary for this deep connection with patients gave me a loom to weave the threads of my work around “being” into. These conditions of genuineness, acceptance, and empathetic understanding were fitting for the preparation of coming to the bedside to be fully present for the patient. One might even say, as nurses, these conditions are obligatory in occupying the space for healing with patients.

As nurses, we have been taught and have learned a fair amount about the importance of empathy. We have witnessed its effect on patients, learned from our experiences, and nurses have earned well-deserved credibility in its delivery. We have spent little time, however, on individual development of genuineness and acceptance. It is as if once we’ve received the call into nursing it
was assumed that these two later conditions were in place. Nurses, as great as we might be in the eyes of those we serve, are as human as anyone. As such, we come with our own individual work as we journey toward our potential. Seated so close to the patient in the practice of nursing, this individual obligation takes on crucial importance.

The condition of being genuine in our relationships with patients and others seems welcoming. What an invitation to be who I am, which is not as simple at times as it may seem. Besides acknowledging our humanness, being genuine implies a deep awareness and knowing of self. Moreover, it calls for an appreciation of self with all the beauty and bruises that our true self reflects. The acceptance of our self as imperfect creates the capacity to be more open, transparent, and vulnerable. This authenticity plays a key role in how we are seen and experienced by others. Being genuine is a necessary condition in order for others to be real with us.

I have found Rogers’ second condition of acceptance dependent on the capacity to be genuine. When I am accepting of my true self, I am more accepting of others and where they are. Just as self-acceptance implies being free from preconceived notions about myself, accepting others requires the giving up of any bias or predetermined perceptions about where others should be. This means no prejudice, labels, or judging of others. Only when we are fully accepting of our true self, we are able to be fully open to accepting others. The gift of acceptance is the nurturant space it creates for others to discover more of their true self.

One can easily see how development of nurses’ capacity for genuineness and acceptance influences their capacity for Rogers’ third condition of empathetic understanding. The ability to understand and to feel the patients’ journey, struggle, and emotions, as they are experiencing them, is the ultimate privilege of the role of nurses. This is not new territory for nurses. Capacity, however, will be enhanced, perhaps even transformed with a deeper self-knowledge, acceptance, and new awareness.

This journey with self opens one’s eyes to see new potential. We as nurses can, and will, imagine the impact it could have in serving patients. Can we imagine at the same time the new potential and energy that would be created with renewed wholeness in nurses and nursing? The answer lies in our individual and
collective willingness to claim, embrace, and become our essence, one nurse at a time.

Walk slowly with intent, courage, and a sense of inquiry through the pages of wisdom that follow. Joellen Koerner, one of nursing’s most entrusted friends and healers, is our guide to discovery and coming home.

Julie MacDonald, RN, MSN
Chief Operating Officer
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Our daughter, Kristi, was 29 and in the prime of her life. Young and beautiful, moving up the corporate ladder at Citibank, happily married with a healthy and active child of her own, Kristi was living the American Dream. Suddenly, a complex pregnancy laced with a series of medical errors threatened her very existence. I quit my position as chief nursing officer of a large health system and took her and the new baby into our home. For the next 9 months, we would live a life–death drama that changed our world forever.

What would you do if your child was injured by a profession that has been the source of meaning and purpose for all of your life? How would you respond as one error led to another, until suddenly the very existence of your beloved child lay in the balance? Where would you go to help reverse the situation when the health care industry, the seemingly obvious solution, was also the problem?

Living on the Midwest Prairie for my entire life, I have a special love and appreciation for the Sioux Nation who live in South Dakota. It was their loving support and kind invitation to take part in their healing practices that restored Kristi to health, and more importantly, both of us to wholeness. (That story and the series of e-mail messages from Wanigi Waci, a Lakota spiritual healer, which depict their “science,” were captured in another book entitled Mother, Heal My Self: An Intergenerational Healing Journey Between Two Worlds.) In that dance between both worlds, I came to understand the innate capacity for the human spirit to transcend adversity and heal not only the body/mind/spirit but also the issues and patterns that extend for generations within a family story. Most importantly, it was in that space that I learned what it means to be a healing presence in this world.

Kristi recovered over a period of 7 years. And it was during those years that I set out to “understand” what had transpired. All the models of science and healing that were such an
important part of my socialization into nursing were true but partial. I studied with a medicine man and a quantum physicist from MIT, comparing their mental models on “how the world works.” I read extensively in the fields of quantum science, psychology, philosophy, and metaphysics. I interviewed 200 RNs to understand what it is that makes their work difficult. When they arrive at work with the intent of providing quality care, what fosters a medical error? The understandings of this deep inquiry led to the writing of this book.

Through a long and rewarding career in nursing, I have been privileged to support and learn from many about the wellness–illness patterns that mark the human experience. It is frequently an illness event that slows us down, inviting us to step outside normal routines to reevaluate the beliefs and patterns that create the life we live. Cares of the day become insignificant when one is confronted with one’s mortality. The focus shifts to the deeper questions of the soul.

Occasionally when we are “ill,” we are fortunate enough to have the support and safety of a caring relationship in which we can ponder with vulnerability and reflect with candor on our fundamental beliefs, assumptions, and expectations for ourselves and others. We begin to sort through the panorama of lived experiences we have encountered and discern how we have used them to understand and ascribe meaning to life as a whole and our life specifically.

While the art and science of nursing have long been recognized as the hallmark of the health profession, it is the presence of the nurse that is central to the discipline. The intent and commitment that bring them to their vocation is the heart of their professional performance. When there is congruence between who they are and what they do, nurses bring their soul to work. This authenticity is experienced as a healing presence that potentiates the patient’s self-healing capacity. Both the nurse and patient experience meaning in their exchange and each becomes whole.

This book is designed to place 21st century nursing into a timeless paradigm, one that transcends the economic, political, and technological culture of the day. It is important to remember that nursing is a social mandate and has been part of the communal fabric since the dawning of civilization. Birth, death, and health–illness are a part of the legacy of humankind, which
requires the assistance of others. Exciting developments in science and technology have made the role of a nurse richer and more complex. We now have an array of tools and services to offer those we care for that were not available for our predecessors. However, the unifying, underlying essence of our work is the timeless and profound healing presence we offer, which enhances the exploration and creation of meaning in the inevitable health challenges faced by individuals, families, and groups whose lives we are privileged to serve.

The truth of that knowing is shared in the first section of this book through a case study of healing between two cultures: contemporary Western Allopath and Native Healing. Aspects of Kristi’s healing journey are shared through a series of exemplars and e-mails written by Wanigi Waci as he explained the science behind the healing paradigm used by a Medicine Man. This offers an opportunity for you to increase your awareness of other ways of knowing/healing practiced in cultures different from, but profoundly relevant to, the mainstream culture of healing in America today. Such awareness is central to nursing in the postmodern world, expanding perception that fosters In-Sight! Wisdom generated by intuitive creativity, as much as data gathered through logical analysis, must be the guide for clinical practice in the postmodern world.

Other sections in this book are grouped into various orientations that may best fit your particular interests or worldview. The second section explores new models for transpersonal caring through the lens of philosophy, spirituality, and complexity science. It examines the bioenergetic body—the “five bodies” that comprise the amazing human being. Ways to “assess the intangible” are also considered as we expand our work to be more inclusive. The physiology and philosophy behind healing presence are also examined, along with nursing practices that potentiate its power on behalf of those we serve each day. For those wanting a “quick” understanding, the tenets of healing are offered in summary boxes. Those wanting a deeper understanding of the science behind the precept can read the more extensive dialogue that follows.

The next section of this book explores authentic presence and ways of knowing. When we live the values that are central to our lives, we experience balance in our personal situation, mastery
in our professional career, and self-empowered leadership in managing our life path as an expression of our soul's destiny. From this centered space, we are open to multiple ways of knowing, seeing, and being, which foster creativity, innovation, and the simple joy of existence.

For the quintessential nurse scholar, the final section of this offering focuses on the unfolding discoveries of quantum physics and our understanding of health and illness from the new science perspective. It explores principles of art and how we intuitively apply them to the body beautiful as we assess its perfections/imperfections and the shifting patterns that guide our clinical practice. The grand “awakening” of the human race is also explored in a mini tour of the differing eras in our epic journey toward understanding what it means to be human.

The essence of “Authentic Presence” experienced by others in the service rendered by nursing requires an exchange of the human spirit; in the juncture of body–mind–spirit, a synthesis of wholeness is grasped. The underlying philosophy expressed in this book reflects an appreciation of, and a place for, all aspects of life and human endeavor. Because life is so big, and the world is becoming increasingly small, the beliefs and values of all we serve in nursing are asking to be recognized, respected, and honored in our awareness and our healing work.

Where theories come and go in just a few centuries or even decades, inklings of the mystical are found in the writings of great personalities the world over. People such as Einstein, William Blake, and Carl Jung have demonstrated that deep thought is always inspired from within. Their reflections are woven throughout the scientific exploration undertaken here as an effort to interweave the philosophical and spiritual into our predominant scientific frame of reference.

Growing up in a small rural community of 1000 people, I discovered the power of the written word. I quickly learned that, through a book, one could engage in an inner dialogue with people across time and distance. This book is not meant to be a comprehensive scientific review but, rather, an introduction to conversations with some of the finest minds in existence. It is a small effort to introduce you to my friends (as noted in the many footnotes inviting you to join their dialogue). It is an invitation to remember your call to nursing, to reengage with the passion and
commitment that inspired you. It is a statement of gratitude for all you have contributed to the life of humankind, in general, and mine, in particular. It is a celebration of the power of the human spirit that is manifest everywhere we practice. And it is a statement of gratitude to All-That-Is for the privilege of sharing the life journey with so many at this time in history.

Ask that I may be forgiven if my pen
has gone astray or my foot has slipped,
for to plunge into the abyss of the Divine
Mysteries is a perilous thing and no easy
task is it to seek to discover the Unclouded
Glory which lies behind the veil.

Al-Ghazali
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A debt of gratitude is expressed to all who have gone before, created the current path who have that is unfolding. I am indebted to Dr. Bruce Fisher and Donna Ehrenreich for their wisdom, insight, and candor in shaping the manuscript. Heartfelt appreciation goes to Allan Graubard for focusing and refining my voice. Deep admiration is extended to David Stirts for creating beautiful illustrations and tapestries that reflect the essence of concepts being considered. A renowned philosopher and graphics artist, David Stirts utilized principles of Visual Homeopathy to create the cover and illustrations for this book. His images are based on the principles of quantum physics (light, color and geometry) and metaphysics (images and metaphors) which evoke a ‘looking-seeing’ with the eye and a ‘recognition-knowing’ of the soul. Multilayered/ multidimensional images, and the use of light to direct the eye, result in an illustration with a vibrational impact that causes the whole person (body, mind and Spirit) to engage with the essence of the concept being depicted. Additional work done by David can be found on his website: http://platonicarts.com/. Profound respect and gratitude is held for Wanigi Waci and the Wase Wakpa community for their unconditional love and generosity in sharing their world with Kristi and I, and all of humanity. Finally, and foremost, profound appreciation and devotion are felt for my personal and professional families whose love, guidance, and unconditional support have been a sustaining and inspiring presence in my life.

A disclaimer: Many quotes offered in this book have been collected throughout my career from presentations, writings, and conversations with colleagues and kept in a small file in my desk called “Inspiration.” While I cannot always find the originating source of these encouraging messages, when possible I have provided the author’s names as an invitation to the reader to explore their wise and rich words.
SECTION I

A HEALING STORY

EXPLORING THE LIVED EXPERIENCE

You think we are human beings having a spiritual experience.
In our way, we see people as spiritual beings
Having a human experience.

Wanigi Waci
To possess the will that nurses our visions and brings us closer to the path of angels, that infuses us with compassion and makes us glow like a soft amber—that is the secret of sacred wisdom.

Henryk Skolimowsji

CHAPTER 1

NURSING
A SACRED WORK

The profession of nursing is a tribe, complete with its own culture, customs, and mores. Early tribal groups found strength and flexibility through the differentiation of task and orientation as hunter gatherers, artisans, and healers shared in caring for the needs of the community. So too, contemporary nursing is offered by practitioners with a bias for the rigors of science, the aesthetics of artistic expression, or the meaning of spiritual orientation. Individually and collectively, our differences converge on a shared mission: the support of healing on this planet. This book is an invitation to examine our world and our work from the multiple perspectives of our clan.

Diversity is the strength of our profession. On the vast Dakota Prairie, an interesting phenomenon is observed. The eastern part of the state is agricultural in nature with vast fields of corn, soybeans, and wheat covering the earth. In the heat of summer, rows of yellow sunflowers rotate their heads to follow the sun in days of endless succession. Divided by the Missouri River, the western side of the state comprises miles of unbroken prairie with multiple varieties of foliage blanketing the rolling hillside. Drought may wipe out an entire field of corn in a dry year, while the prairie hosts a specific type of cover. A wet year may drown that same field of corn, while the prairie hosts a completely different look as...
other grasses or flowers flourish in the diversity of that environs. The prairie is prepared for any occasion, while the fields with only one option often find conditions less than ideal.

One of the many joys of the profession is that our work is needed in areas of education, service, or research. We can express our skill and knowledge in tertiary care, in business, or in the community. There is even diversity in the timing of our job; nights or weekends anyone? Young professionals often move around to opportunities that expand their capacities. A mother balances children with a career, while an older nurse reduces hours to care for an aging parent. We can step in and out of the work as the demands of life dictate. But always and forever, the need for supporting the health of society remains. Our calling and the work it entails are perennial. It is a distinct privilege to be a nurse!

*Healing presence is the difference between safety and quality.*

Innovation and creativity are central to the quality movement. A nurse who is totally present sees the subtle, perceives the whole, and co-creates with the person—and the health team—a creative response to the uniqueness of the situation. The higher good of all is served.

**A RETURN OF THE FEMININE HEALING ENERGY**

We are living in a most extraordinary and opportune time as the world faces a crucial juncture in the history of humankind. The last Renaissance focused on the merging of art and science—the creativity and wisdom of others. However, this current awakening includes the illumination of our own personal artistic expression and philosophy, the embracing of our own capacity and wisdom. We are poised to come home to ourselves, embracing and expressing the authentic essence of our own “wholeness.”

As we continue movement into the new millennium, some of us sense that this is a major turning point in the long human journey. We are beginning to perceive the difference between the superficial and the substantive, to recognize what is being born while surrounded by what is dying. An alert mind will identify new potential as old things fall away. To witness life at this level, we must view the process from soul territory. Fortunately, we are no stranger here. This is the very center of the nursing domain.
The epoch of nursing began with the inhalation of the first breath of humankind. It is a story of presence and support, a story defined by witness and engagement, a story pregnant with compassion and caring. Ours is a story filled with ethos, intrigue, breakthroughs and setbacks, moments of beauty, and periods of darkness. It is a story of the feminine healing energy moving through the ages, a story that reveals the pattern of watchfulness, the practice of seeing and being seen by the Source.

Every being has access to both masculine and feminine energy. The feminine or yin includes such attributes as receptive, intuitive, inward, sensitive, delicate, emotional, and nurturing. The masculine or yang includes such attributes as outward, hard, firm, logical, strong, rational, rough, and loud. Although both yin and yang are essential to living a life in dynamic balance, the core of nursing practice lies within the subtle feminine healing energy of active receptivity—to see fully, take in, and support the whole with a compassionate, caring heart.

The ever-expanding field of health care has primarily focused on masculine qualities of medicine, which is nested within this oft unseen field of feminine energy—a most essential element in the healing journey. Bearing witness to others with a consciousness of healing presence creates a sacred space filled with nonjudging and nonscripted energetic expectation. It is simply “being with” the other. Our presence provides a “source of mercy that helps others untie their tangles” (Brisken, 2005). This is the ultimate, the primary but often overlooked function of nursing practice. By offering compassionate care in a deeply mindful manner, the healing potential that resides within the other is released.

This way of seeing and being requires a specific responsibility for watching over things of the soul. Such a witness plunges us into the farthest reaches of perception and consciousness. Seeing fully takes us to the essence of our higher selves, that which is our sacred connection point to All-That-Is. From this portal, we become fully aware that there is something we all know, which simultaneously deepens our identification with others and the very earth itself. We come alive with feeling, recognizing the unbroken field of energetic consciousness that creates a vibration of shared meaning, flowing as an expression of heart, mind, and will. This is the essence of wholeness, our sacred oneness.
Facilitating an open and safe environment prompts an apprehension of wholeness, which is the receptive feminine function in the universe. Reb Zalman observed (as cited in Briskin, 2005, p. 9):

The other thing that is necessary is to have women involved. Because it’s in the nature of the masculine vision to see the figure and ignore the ground. In other words that which is erect and that which enters and that which has power, and that which deposits sperm, and that which is active, and so on and so forth.

There is too often an ignoring of those who receive, or contain, or hold. Much focus is placed on the object, leaving little awareness of the field in which it sets. One sees the black letters on the page without conscious recognition of the white space that surrounds them. In health care settings, the doctor is the episodic visitor, while nursing is a 24-hour presence. And yet, it is medicine, without the inclusion of nursing, that society references when health care issues are debated publically. Zalman continues:

I can’t see the wind, but I see the flag in the wind. . . . Despite that I don’t see the wind, I see the flag moving. I understand that what I’m seeing is not just the flag, but its flag and wind. . . . In similar fashion when I look at a river, it’s the bed and it’s the water. But river is the bed and the water together; it’s the figure and ground together.

This sacred feminine function is the active principle of wholeness, a figure–ground dynamism that exposes this invisible half, the one that gives context and meaning to that which it gently uplifts and holds. And in this potentiated space, both are recognized, integrated, and often transformed.

Many nursing actions take place against a background invisible to the eye not attuned to its subtle presence. To be truly conscious of the essence of the total experience is to continually seek the invisible half of wholeness. The essence of nursing practice uncovers more information about what is transpiring within the dynamic nature of figure–ground relationship; the person and their whole being (physical situation, relationships, desires, disappointments, expectations, life demands, etc.) become visible to both the nurse and themselves. For those who truly offer a healing presence, figure–ground awareness is the key to helping the person identify and unite the human and the spiritual.
As we revisit the archetypal feminine, mythical stories hold a very different image from what is portrayed in our current reality of the feminine. From the Grail legends, Robert Sardello notes (Sussman, 1995):

The women of the Grail are representatives of the soul which houses qualities necessary for transforming the self, for realizing that true individuality lies in coming to know ourselves as human spiritual beings. None, absolutely none, of the women figures of the Grail are passive; they are all receptive, and a totally new, active sense of the quality of radical receptivity is recognized.

At this critical juncture for humankind, individuals are remembering these dynamic archetypal feminine qualities, and this is marshalling a new consciousness in the larger healing field. Both women and men are increasingly working with the feminine energies that interact directly with cycle, rhythm, resonance, reciprocity, and right relationship with all things, including “mother” earth.

Discoveries in neuroscience are exploring the capacities of the “new brain,” the neo-cortex, which demonstrates capacity for cooperation, problem solving, ethical behavior, and compassion (Villoldo, 2010). Simultaneously, the growing movement toward integral medicine is a spiritual revolution regarding what we can become as human spiritual beings. The essence of healing feminine energy promotes an instinct for cooperation and an embracing of diversity in its many dynamic forms. Moving into a place of prominence, it renews us while healing the communities to which we belong. Its open and honoring language fosters a sense of the possible, filling us with hope and the optimism to move forward.

Respect is the hallmark of this radically receptive field. Bordering on reverence, it is a simple personal respect for the patient, for colleagues, and for the self. It is also an impersonal awareness at a deeper level, a sensing that we share space on a sacred healing journey with everything in the universe. A Course in Miracles states that “we heal a brother by recognizing his worth.” As we bear witness for another, respecting and honoring what is observed, we provide the catalyst for their transformation and our own.

As the feminine energy is remembered, embraced, and once again consciously used in integral medicine, the outcome is nothing less than profound. The balancing of the masculine and feminine is a transforming work that is birthing a new world...
order. We are moving from an era guided by the Declaration of Independence where models of autonomy and power reigned supreme. Unfolding discoveries in science and art continue to reveal a deeper theme of cooperation and co-creation running through every aspect of life. We have come to realize that each of us is the earth, the air, the sun, and a deeply connected part of one another. Thus, our emerging new worldview holds the promise of the birth of the Declaration of Interdependence (Suzuki, 2002).

Worldview—Individual Perspective on How Life Works

Humanity in every era has struggled with two deep questions: How does the world work, and what motivates life within it? An existence lived on the prairie sees things in nature metaphors, whereas an inner city view is more concrete. Our interaction with all aspects of our world is guided by how we experience and view that world. Those with a partial view see the undoing of our “old story” and feel despair when examining “what is” from a limited viewpoint. Cynical vision leads us to see evidence of imperfection, often resulting in a sense of judgment against the efforts undertaken by others to navigate into the “new story.”

Soulful eyes, however, see a larger, more holistic, and more realistic picture. Subtle vision penetrates the materialism and reductionism of our times, noting that while old economic and political structures are breaking down, a new order is also emerging. By reaching into fresh scientific evidence while also relating to historical patterns, we gain insight into humanity’s continual unfolding toward a higher order (Rifkin, 2009). From this vantage point, we see the larger context without overlooking the details of the present moment. This perspective facilitates a tough optimism coupled with practical expectancy within the chaotic unfolding of our times. A sense of the optimism and hope, rather than despair and hopelessness, is fostered.

Nurses are quintessential knowledge workers; discovery and co-creation are the tools of our trade. Learning is our human birthright. We are born with the innate ability to imagine, wonder, invent, and explore our way into unknown territory, some of which holds paradoxical and perplexing questions (Vaill, 1996). From our first breath, we observe and sense, take things apart
and put them back together again, and wonder about the vastness of the universe and our place within it. The starting point of this awareness is awe and wonder. As much as we are an independent entity in the universe, we are also a partner with it. We are both thrilled and perplexed by our human condition. And in our irrepressible pursuit toward understanding, we create our world.

Many of us as individuals, and especially our large social institutions, still subscribe to an outdated worldview that is inadequate to deal with the larger issues of our changing reality. New concepts in physics have shifted our understanding of the universe from the mechanistic and linear worldview of Descartes and Newton to the holistic and interconnected ecological view fostered by discoveries in quantum physics, cellular biology, and neuroscience (Rasha, 2006). A gift of our profession is access to advances in science and technology, which enable us to observe emerging patterns and structures within the universe, giving us a new story of the natural world. Web-based social networks are mirrored in the globalization of business and finance, redefining relationships and exchange. Those unfamiliar with this new way of connecting and learning are limited in being able to fully see, integrate, and appreciate the emerging story of unity and wholeness, reciprocity, interdependence, and co-creation within the unifying web of life (Capra, 1996).

Just as the mechanical model of the universe is being dismantled, so is the disconnected model of our mind–brain–body system (Marshall, 2005). Your own unique perception shapes your reality. By examining the emerging networks of order within the ecological and human worlds, you can begin to recognize and experience the magnificently complex, pattern-seeking, living network of self-adjusting neuronal connections of your own mind/brain. Research is discovering that your thoughts have a powerful role in shaping your mind and brain, literally changing the physical structure of the brain. Human intelligence is not a fragmented and independent process but rather a biological and social one.

Feelings and emotions have been identified as the guiding force for the process of active engagement underlying the construction of knowledge and meaning. Meaning is created as we match new learning with existing patterns, developing new networks of understanding in ever enlarging and encompassing circles. As this awareness is shifting, so is our model for nursing practice.
SCIENCE/ART/PRESENCE: THE TRIAD OF COMPASSIONATE CARE

All health professions are being redefined as this new epoch unfolds. Nursing has traditionally been viewed as an art and a science. Our theories, curriculum, and practice models reflect this framework. Florence Nightingale observed that (Calabria & Macrae, 1994)

Along with our science, Nursing is an art, and if it is to be made an art, it requires as exclusive a devotion, as hard a preparation as any painter’s or sculptor’s work; for what is the having to do with dead canvas or cold marble, compared to having to do with the living body, the temple of God’s spirit. It is one of the Fine Arts; I had almost said the finest of the Fine Arts.

Careful examination on her reflection reveals a third principle: active receptivity—the feminine spirit that permeates the art and science of our profession. This is the essence of nursing: a healing presence.

As we come to understand this implicit dimension of nursing, we begin to comprehend the profession’s three-fold framework: science, art and, presence. When all three domains are present in the nurse–person relationship, a healing gestalt occurs.

Science: Nurses Are Scientists—Professional nursing is founded on a body of knowledge derived from science and research. Measured evidence forms a theoretical framework of the external physical world as the foundation, the object, or focus of our clinical practice. This is the “evaluator aspect” of nursing, which comes from the realm of concrete analytic thought. Facts, data, and logic guide our practice through evidence-based protocols and standards that point our observations and choices toward predetermined outcomes.

Art: Nurses Are Artists—Experience-based mastery leads to subtle pattern recognition from multiple perspectives, the field or ground of our practice. This “interpreter aspect” of nursing is from the realm of abstract perceptive thought. Intuition and active awareness of the understated fosters discernment and pattern recognition, which then guides synthesis of unrelated parts into a larger whole. Individualized personal care that supports the interior world of the patient is thus created.
Essence: Nurses Are a Healing Presence—An authentic and patient presence creates a space of active receptivity for the person (and their family) that potentiates their own inner resources. The feminine healing function of the “witness aspect” of nursing comes from the realm of no mind: pure consciousness. Guided by the intent to support what is in the highest good for the person and family, we create an empty space of open, nonjudging expectancy, which allows individuals to connect with their inner wisdom and innate power to heal. As we trust in the other to grow and ourselves to care, we have the courage to go into the unknown together.

Because there is simultaneous attention to the exterior world, the inner world, and the unmanifest Now, the soul is also invited to participate. When we include the numinous in our shared space, transformative insight and energy emerge, enlarging the experience for all. And in that shared exchange, each becomes more. Carl Rogers (1980) observed that, “The degree to which I can create relationships which facilitate the growth of others as separate persons is a measure of the growth I have achieved in myself.”

Although nurses bring science, art, and presence to the individual and family, nursing also serves as the heart and soul, the primary surveillance system for the health of society. Because of this fact, a crisis of major proportion is imminent. While political, economic, and environmental issues challenge society, the increasing global shortage of nurses offers one of the greatest hazards to the health and well-being of humankind.

Medical practices vary in different parts of the world, depending on the tools and healing models of the culture. Nursing, on the other hand, is a universal phenomenon. Daily, and nightly, in every part of the world, millions of nurses stand alongside people in need, helping them with maintenance of functional activities of daily living such as mobility, elimination, and pain management. Nurses also assist those who are well in maintaining their health status through educating the public about adequate nutrition and exercise as well as the power of good mental health practices. Finally, and most importantly, nurses also accompany people in their journey toward a peaceful death, supporting families and loved ones in the process. Helping individuals, families, and society manage their inevitable health challenges, while finding
meaning in the illness event, is at the core of what it means to be a nurse.

Nursing, as a global community, is in a unique position as midwife to help birth the “new story” for humanity. The Lakota Sioux say that “when the Grandmothers speak (the sacred feminine) the world will heal.” For this time in history, we have been preparing. Work of this magnitude must utilize all our resources available to creatively practice the science, art, and essence of nursing.

Science—The Foundation of Knowledge That Guides Our Practice

Today we stand on the threshold of a revolution as daring as Einstein’s discovery of relativity. On the frontier of science, new ideas are emerging that challenge everything we have come to believe about the world and how it works. Discoveries are being made that demonstrate what philosophies and religions have held as true: humanity is more extraordinary than a mere physical machine that lives in a self-determined world. Through a dynamic quantum field, we are ever changing and deeply connected to all that is.

Scientists in various disciplines have been carrying out well-designed experiments whose results transcend the beliefs of current biology and physics. At the core, what they have uncovered is the fact that we are not a collection of chemical reactions but rather an energetic charge. All living things are a coalescence of energy emerging from a universal, pulsating energy field connected to every other thing in the universe. This potent field is responsible for the highest functions of our mind. As an information source, it guides the growth and development of our bodies. It influences our brain, our heart, and our memory. As radical as it may seem, the Universal Zero Point Field, rather than genes or germs, determines whether we are healthy or ill. It is, in the end, the force that must be tapped in order to heal (McTaggart, 2002).

Conventional science is grounded in the idea that matter is the building block of all things. Life, mind, and awareness are held to be secondary phenomenon of matter. In the prevailing science, elementary particles make atoms, atoms make molecules, molecules make cells including neurons, neurons make the brain, and the brain makes awareness. The “theory of causation” holds that the interactions between the elementary particles create various
forms of matter, moving from smaller to larger objects in predictable fashion. Dualistic “either-or” and “cause-effect” thinking has been the hallmark of reason for more than 400 years.

Quantum physics uncovers a reality more dynamic and connected than that put forward by conventional science. Upon examining this evolving research, one learns that several discoveries have already determined that rather than a universe of static certainty, matter at the most fundamental level, and the world which it builds, is uncertain and unpredictable, a state of pure potential and infinite possibility (Hollick, 2006). Subatomic particles are not seen as solid objects but rather as vibrating and indeterminate packets of energy that cannot be precisely quantified or controlled. These energy packets can take on the quality of a particle and either stay confined in a small space, spread over a large region of space time in wavelike fashion, or do both simultaneously, that is, test out all possible new electron orbits at once.

Werner Heisenberg, an architect of quantum theory, established the Uncertainty Principle, which demonstrates that nothing is certain: there are no definite locations for these quantum energy packets only a likelihood or a probability that they may settle into a specified pattern. Based on this finding, cause-and-effect relationships no longer exist at the subatomic level, for stable looking atoms suddenly elect to transfer from one energy state to another in an unpredictable leap (Heisenberg, 1971). Suddenly, amidst the known and expected, we are aware of the startling and unpredictable “quantum leap” activity surrounding us. An unsettling quickening of activity and possibility is now the new hallmark of our times.

Quantum physics demonstrates that subatomic particles have a capacity for cooperation. They not only get in synch but are also highly interlinked by bands of common electromagnetic fields so they can communicate with each other, like multiple tuning forks resonating together. As they get into phase together, they begin to act like one giant subatomic particle, creating a single large wave. What is done to one then affects the whole. Coherence establishes communication and high levels of quantum order (Bohm & Hiley, 1993).

Traditional science defines relationship by geographic proximity. Now the concept of nonlocality shatters this foundational principle of conventional physics. Once in contact with another, a quantum entity such as an electron retains a connection even
when separated by time and space. Actions of one will continue to influence the actions of the other, no matter how far they are separated by time or distance (Nadeau & Kafatos, 2002). This phenomenon explains the power of prayer and meaningful relationships in the healing experience.

One of the most essential ingredients of this interconnected universal web of energy is the impact on the awareness of the person observing it. In classic physics, an experimenter is considered separate and apart from the experiment. The scientist is simply an impartial observer in the process. In contrast, quantum physics reveals that the state of all possibility is collapsed into a set entity when it is observed or measured. There is a strong relationship between the observer and the observed. In fact, the observer creates the observed object (Pribram, 1991). “In other words, actual “things” that are different from us, or distinct in themselves, enter consciousness by virtue of our perception and the sensibility that informs perception.”

Classic laws of science have been very useful for describing fundamental properties of motion such as locomotion and respiration and for explaining how basic body processes such as digestion and sensory input operate. But classic physics and biology have been unable to explain fundamental issues such as how we think, why arms and legs develop differently, how cells cure themselves of cancer, and how we know what we know. The emerging model of science begins to uncover a deeper reality, one that more fully explains the mysteries of the universe and our place within it (Villoldo, 2008).

Art—The Intuitive Skill of Pattern Recognition

Both art and science are unique forms of language describing the same reality, with art leading the way. Artists and authors, especially those writing science fiction, depict what is about to be born in society. Art begins with a vision. It is preverbal in nature and precedes abstract ideas as well as the words and actions that describe and explore them. Visionary artists (nurses) alert others that a shift is about to occur because their vision is a particular prescience. They mysteriously incorporate into their work features of a physical description that science later discovers or proves (Shlain, 1991).
Nurses walk between two worlds, the material world of a scientist and the creative world of an artist. Our craft depends on a well-developed sense of aesthetics: if it does not “look right,” it is not functioning properly. The intuitive capacity of the nurse is the heart of the sentinel function at the bedside, which notes a subtle shift heralding a potential crisis. Early identification assures intervention with the least amount of effort to restore balance.

Physicians most trust the nurse who lives in the realm of the aesthetic subtle. This nurse will call and report, “All vital signs are normal, but something is wrong; come now!” This nurse is sensing a faint shift in pattern that lies below the surface of articulation or measurement. Intuition and an appreciation for symmetry are guardians in the understated background of surveillance. Well developed, they are the gift a master practitioner brings to her or his profession.

Nurses rely heavily on the intuitive visual–spatial right hemisphere of their brain. At the same time, scientific rigor builds a deep repository of facts and data that figure into the logic and reason emanating from the left hemisphere. As a scientist, they break the nature of things into discrete parts to analyze their relationships in reductionistic fashion. As an artist, nurses synthesize varying aspects of the person’s present state through stories, symbols, and metaphors to explore emotions and generate new perspectives. There is considerable crossover in the skills and techniques used in both functions. Shuttling between the two spheres with grace, the active intelligence of the nurse integrates the complimentary function of both sides into a larger whole.

**Essence—The Authentic Healing Presence of the Nurse**

Systems of art and science are modified over time, creating and organizing new knowledge in terms of, and in response to, a specific set of issues or problems. The overarching evolutionary progress of humanity has always been toward higher order. In the past 300 years we have made vast strides in the worlds of art and science, learning to harness and distribute energy while creating new forms of machines, materials, and beauty. What has been slower in development is the subjective psycho/social/spiritual side of humanity. Our power to manipulate and control the “outside” world
SECTION I. A HEALING STORY

has advanced greatly, but we have not made similar advances in understanding our own behavior and our “inner” experience.

Current challenges facing society in general, and health care in particular, are pressing for a new way to comprehend and enhance the “inner world” of humankind. The lack of advances in understanding human behavior and inner experience has prevented us from solving pressing issues such as war, the world population explosion, and the poisoning of our planet. On a personal scale, we are experiencing the growth of lifestyle-related chronic illness at all ages and stages of the life continuum. Depression, mental illness, addiction, and obesity point to a culture deeply in search of meaning as old forms and processes fall away.

Conventional healing efforts have been focused into the past, trying to unearth the origins of patterns that do not serve us well. Health care professionals have traditionally helped people who are suffering to focus on contextual issues within their lives: family, career, social, and economic issues. However, the indigenous perspective in healing offers us a new and transformative approach to illness and crisis. Stepping out of our life situation—becoming witness—opens up the present moment, a larger context where resolution resides.

When our mind is filled with problems, there is no room for anything new to enter, no room for a solution. Whenever we can create some space, we will find the life that exists underneath the situation, the life that is our birthright. In most people’s normal state of awareness, they identify with their thought processes, reactions, desires, and aversions. Run by the ego, they are in a continuous low level of unease, discontent, boredom, or nervousness—a constant background static. This keeps them unaware and out of touch with the “being” side of their nature. They live in a state of inner pollution.

Becoming conscious occurs when we truly step into the moment. As we learn to witness our own thoughts and emotions, rather than being driven by them, we become surprised at the freedom in the world. Anything unconscious becomes conscious as we turn our focus toward it, and the light of our presence shines more brightly.

Nurses have long observed the spiritual dimension of healing, but little of this is captured in the medical record. Yet, we
intuitively recognize that the spiritual side of human nature is an essential aspect of the healing process.

There is a force that is unfathomable, omnipresent, unnamable and omniscient. This intelligent and loving force stands behind and guides the evolution of physical manifestation. Spirituality is the label used to describe what occurs when we connect with this source.

Unknown Teacher

The source of spirituality emerges from many names: Organizing Wisdom, Great Spirit, Creator, Christ Within, Atman, God, The Field, The Universal, The One. We connect to this source automatically and often when least expected. Understanding spiritual truth occurs as we remove blocks to its recognition. Just as opening the blinds in a dark room allows the sunlight to pour in, opening to our innate spiritual nature invites the new and unexpected to emerge. In their compelling book, The Spirituality of Imperfection, Kurtz and Ketcham observed (Kurtz & Ketcham, 2002):

Spirituality points, always, beyond: beyond the ordinary, beyond possession, beyond the narrow confines of self, and—above all—beyond expectation. Because the “spiritual” is beyond control, it is never exactly what we expect.

Tapping into the deeper levels of being where our true innate intelligence resides requires bringing the spiritual dimension into the healing process. As we integrate our inner rhythms into our life, we begin to experience a flowing interconnectedness around us, which eventually includes the entire human and planetary family. Holistic physician Hogben notes (Chopra, 1989):

Healing may be defined as a miraculous unfolding of consciousness for one’s being in the world. We learn who we are, what and who really matter to us, how to express ourselves fully and openly. Ultimately the healing journey leads to an intimate union with the One through the experience of the flow of Spirit within. It is a slow, arduous passage, unique for each individual, filled with danger and risk, triumph and joy, and finally, peace, trust, awe, reverence, love and compassion.
Healing goes beyond dealing with a health problem or crisis. It touches every aspect of life, facilitating a continuous movement toward wholeness and peace. In order to support the healing of others, we must also be on the path ourselves. Therefore, nurse and patient are partners in this expansive journey toward wholeness.

A health challenge creates an opening in time and space from which flow the inner feelings, hopes, intentions, expectations, memories, pain, and decisions that give depth and context to the person suffering. At this “edge of existence” lie the opportunity and the invitation to become more fully who we are.

Supporting the deeper soul work of healing, nurses assist people with physical and emotional challenges and fears in more authentic fashion. No longer do we analyze the event or look to the past or present circumstances for explanations. No longer do we foster resistance to weaknesses or deep feelings of sadness with “will power” or “discipline.” Instead, we help the person stay with their feelings and learn to observe them without reaction, description, or interpretation. In that open state, a relationship is created between the person and their true qualities or essence, opening up the possibility for real transformation and growth.

**SELF-KNOWLEDGE: THE KEY TO HEALING PRESENCE**

To offer a safe and open space for deep self-reflection, we must know our own authentic self. This may involve the process of seeing where we came from just so we can let it go and move forward. A lovely paradox is found: although fear is always directed toward the future, that which haunts us—that which is creating the fear—is derived from the past. The call to authenticity is not a call to perfection; that is an impossible goal.

Once a student of Carl Rogers, noted psychologist and founder of a “person-centered approach to life,” asked this noted therapist a question; “How is it that every time I see you with a patient, any patient, they immediately open up to you with such candor?” Dr. Rogers replied, “Before I go into any room, I remind myself that I am not perfect. I am human. Therefore, I am capable of any thought/emotion/act that has ever been had. Being perfect is not enough. I am called to be human, and in that space I am one with all I meet. (Rogers, 1980).”
Socrates encouraged us to “know ourselves.” Knowing our own self in this deep sense includes the past as well as our true potential, which represents the future. As we move toward truly knowing our self and our inherent qualities, we are released from being haunted by the past, which limits our freedom to “be.” Our true essence emerges, creating space for others to more fully touch their own.

Socrates was inviting us to have a relationship with ourselves, because then no one can haunt us or claim responsibility for who we are. True freedom comes through knowing our self, and this does not require a need to change anything. All that is needed is to see what has been, without reacting to it in any way. In so doing, we put an end to the story; we transcend patterns and expectations of our history to become the qualities, the real essence, of our being. This is wholeness. And, once acquired in our life, we can hold space for others to find their own way home.

Give us grace, O God, to dare to do the deed which we well know cries to be done. Let us not hesitate because of ease, or the words of (people’s) mouths, or our own lives. Mighty causes are calling us—the freeing of women, the training of children, the putting down of hate and murder and poverty—all these and more. But they call with voices that mean work and sacrifice and death. May we find a way to meet the task.

W. E. B. Du Bois

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