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## RETURN TO THE *HELD-BACK* *PLACE OF GOODNESS*

**SEPARATION, INITIATION, RETURN—THESE ARE THE THREE CLASSIC STAGES** of initiation in the hero's journey. When veterans return to their former lives, they often do not fit back in easily. Their nervous systems are trained to be on alert and to respond with deadly force to solve conflict. Their nervous systems reflect the culture into which they have adapted. Then they leave military culture and return to their original culture, but their nervous systems are still trained for a different set of parameters. Civilian culture is based on peace, not war. Problems are solved diplomatically rather than through combat. In order to fully return, veterans need to retrain their nervous systems for peace. This inner work is difficult, but it leads to identity change and acculturation. Any time there is a crossing of a liminal threshold, a person's identity must change in order to live in the new world, the new culture they have entered.

In Joseph Campbell's studies of the hero's journey, the hero crosses the threshold from the known (civilian) world into the unknown world (military). He or she has mentors and challengers and ultimately passes through some abyss of internal and external darkness. What the hero learns there can eventually heal and transform his or her identity. However, this often happens through events that are traumatic to the former identity. In this "abyss" of darkness, the hero also finds the "boon," the gift of wisdom. The challenge, then, is to cross the threshold back into the known world, carrying this gift. How can it be that something traumatic can also be a gift or have a gift in it? Each individual must go through this work to find what their gift is that they bring back. The story of "The Wizard of Oz" follows this hero's journey. Dorothy crosses a threshold and is "not in Kansas anymore." She has her loyal dog Toto, meets friends and helpers along the way, and has challengers. Each of her new friends, the Scarecrow, Lion, and Tin Man, feel they lack something, and yet through their trials they find that they had these things all along. The Wizard of Oz gives them a gift that symbolizes their own inner gifts—a medal for courage, a ticking heart, and a diploma.

Dorothy gets to go home, a power she had all along. All she had to do was wish and click her heels.

For the returning veteran, however, he or she faces society's suspicion of anyone who has *gone where they should not go and seen and done things that normal humans should not do* (to paraphrase the Navajo tale of *Where the Two Came to Their Father*). The returning hero has to go through purification work to leave the world of death behind. This path takes the hero through the inner work of bringing the masculine and feminine energies back into balance. Through atonement, the veteran moves into at-one-ment with society. Both Joseph Campbell and Joseph Rael, use this variation, *at-one-ment*, to signify a process of moving from a state of separation back to a state of oneness.

Returning veterans are also suspicious of civilians. They come back with trained and traumatized nervous systems that need care, love, and rehabilitation. Rehabilitation means re-learning the skills they once had. Veterans also bring skills that society needs as well. That is the arc of the story of the hero's journey. Veterans bring back a sense of brotherhood and sisterhood, and are ready to die for anyone in their tight in-group. The civilian world is not lived on the edge of life and death the way combat is, but we could desperately use more brotherhood in the world. The civilian world, as viewed by the returning veteran, appears selfish, with no one caring about another person. Civilians seem focused on materiality and status and they want to get ahead, whether in line at a store, on the roads, or in the work world. Veterans often miss the sense of brotherhood and camaraderie that comes from being part of a team doing something for a larger purpose. The risk is that instead of bringing the gift of brotherhood and sisterhood back from the service, the veteran becomes separated or marginalized from civilian society and he or she only finds brotherhood and sisterhood within the smaller tribe of veterans. Sebastian Junger worked as a war correspondent and spent time embedded with the Battle Company of the 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne in the Korengal Valley in Afghanistan. After his experiences, he wrote the book, *War*, and made the documentaries "Restrepo," and "Korengal." Most recently, he wrote *Tribe: On Homecoming and Belonging*. Junger writes that what the soldiers miss about the war "wasn't so much combat as brotherhood" (Junger, 2010, 275).

As defined by soldiers, brotherhood is the willingness to sacrifice one's life for the group. That's a very different thing from friendship, which is entirely a function of how you feel about another person.

Brotherhood has nothing to do with feelings; it has to do with how you define your relationship to others. It has to do with the rather profound decision to put the welfare of the group above your personal welfare. In such a system, feelings are meaningless. In such a system, who you are entirely depends on your willingness to *surrender* who you are. (275-276)

Here, Junger writes that “brotherhood . . . has to do with how you define your relationship with others.” This means that brotherhood is a function of identity and culture, as these mediate our relationships with others. The attributes of brotherhood that Junger illustrates also sound like the very same factors that would make someone a good citizen in a democracy—putting others and the group before your personal needs, regardless of your personal feelings toward the person. This would help create a civil society in which everyone is respected and accepted, regardless of whether or not you “like” someone. It is a high level of morality in which the common good is placed before the individual good, and unfortunately, this is often missing in today’s society.

Junger’s description of brotherhood calls to mind the path of the spiritual hero—the person on a mystical quest to transcend his or her own ego and “*surrender*” to something even larger than society. The quest of the spiritual hero is to surrender into spirit, into *Wah Mah Chi*, Breath Matter Movement. Joseph sometimes says, as a *Planetary Citizen*, “I am my brother’s keeper.” This is a statement of brotherhood toward all people of the earth. After Cain killed his brother, Abel, in the first murder in the Bible, God asked Cain where his brother was, Cain replied, “am I my brother’s keeper?”<sup>1</sup> In killing his brother, Cain fractured the sense of brotherhood. This is why Joseph will often say, “I am my brother’s keeper.” He is honoring the sacred relationship between all beings and reversing Cain’s denial of affiliation.

Many veterans return to the civilian world having intensely bonded with their unit during the service, particularly if they were in combat. The sense of brotherhood that veterans return with would be quite a gift if, instead of marginalizing them, we could learn from them how to live in brotherhood and sisterhood and how to extend this beyond the narrow tribe of fellow veterans to all people of the earth. From a Native American perspective, this would extend even beyond all human beings and to all living creatures, including even the earth itself. “*Aho Mitakuye Oyasin*,” say the Lakota Sioux, which translates to “all of my relatives” and extends into the non-human and

<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version*, Second Catholic Edition, Genesis 4:8, 3.

non-organic realms. This is what veteran Marty Martinez would shout each time he brought new hot stones into the American Lake VA sweat lodge. We would greet our brothers and sisters, the heated stones who brought their healing and purifying energy into the circle of the lodge, into the center of the heart of medicine wheel that the sweat lodge is.

The medicine wheel is a way of life, a way of walking in the world. We offer this framework to all veterans who are seeking a path of healing from their service. Service is a noble sacrifice and a noble work. Work is worship, so service is a sacred duty. American society is largely oriented to the Black Road of mental ideas and materialism. Walking the Red Road of the medicine wheel adds spiritual and emotional depths and dimension to intellectual and physical material life. The Red Road orients us to why we are here and what is really important. Ultimately, walking the medicine wheel is about finding the one direction in the four directions. This is the direction of *Wah Mah Chi, Breath Matter Movement* unfolding in our lives. We can view the pain and suffering of war and PTSD as a rite of passage in an initiation process. By doing spiritual work/worship, pain can be transformed into wisdom.

#### **RETURNING HOME: RECONNECTING TO HELD-BACK GOODNESS**

***One night Joseph called me as I was walking out of work to head home*** for the day. I had woken up that morning thinking that we needed to add a chapter on Home, because this is such a big focus for deployed veterans, and yet upon their return they are frustrated at being physically home and still not feeling home in important ways. In the Hero's Journey class, we have generated a list of different things that home can mean to veterans, including a physical place, a point in time, a physical building, family, connection to self, a job, a sense of purpose, or a spiritual connection.

What Joseph called to tell me about was a vision he had. He said that in it he saw that God holds back a place in our heart, a place of *Goodness*. For veterans who have to learn how to kill and who experience trauma, there is still a *held-back place of Goodness*, but they lose touch with this place and they need to find a way to reconnect to it. Maybe this is why veterans struggle upon their return to their physical home; they are still not home in their heart, where Joseph says this "held-back" place is located. Maybe it is true that you cannot be home until you find that place within you that remains innocent and good, that you lost touch with while doing your job in order to protect your country.

I madly scribbled down his words in a notebook. In talking about this *held-back place of Goodness*, Joseph spoke about how the sweat lodge can help veterans reconnect with this hidden place. He says that this goodness is hidden within the “cloak of Divine Energy,” and that, through the symbolic rebirthing of the sweat lodge processes, it can be brought back into a person’s life. Joseph describes how, in the sweat lodge, you sit on the ground in the darkness. At the end of the ceremony, you move from sitting to crawling on your hands and knees out through the flap of the sweat lodge door, moving from darkness and re-emerging into light. We do not remember our original birth, but this recreates our birth, crawling on hands and knees, struggling to our feet, and then staggering in our steps. I can attest to this sense of “learning to walk again” from my own sweat lodge experiences. There is always someone just outside the door, lending a hand to help those emerging from the sweat.

Joseph used to perform the sweat lodge ceremony for at the hospital and clinics with the Indian Health Service. He worked a lot with addictions. In the sweat lodge, there is first “placement,” in sitting, then crawling out into the light, the re-birthing process. He says that this is a “going back to Goodness, to the Source of Renewal.” This is the pathway to our inner home, which has been waiting for us and for veterans as they have journeyed forth into the world of war and trauma. We have to “repeat what we did as a baby” and this helps us reconnect to our inner home, to that place of *held-back Goodness*.

Joseph reminds me again to put in the book that he uses lava rocks for the sweat lodge and that these are “from the core of the Earth, the Mother of all of us. We reach through the center of her to her heart to heal.” The Earth’s heart, Mother Nature’s heart, our heart, are all the same. In connecting to Mother Nature’s heart, we can reconnect back to our own heart and heal. Joseph then said of veterans that the “Divine Mother loves them, and can wipe away their pain . . . all that is needed is a second or one or two seconds, or even no seconds, and just instantly we are forgiven.” Joseph reminisces that when he was growing up, he would meet people from many different tribes, but the Native American people were always the “most nature-oriented people.” He says that we must “Understand that we all belong to Mother Nature. We look like a beautiful man, or a beautiful woman, or a beautiful child, but still we are all Mother Nature’s children.”

## HELD-BACK GOODNESS IN THE HOUSE OF GOD

*I immediately had a lot of resonance with Joseph's vision* as it applied to my own life and work. When I was going through my medical and psychiatric training and education, I was very concerned with preserving my humanity. I felt that the training program and the process of building a professional identity, along with the exposure to death and illness and the frailty of the human mind and body, encouraged a deadening or numbing of emotions and threatened to eclipse an important aspect of myself. Another way to say this is that I felt I was becoming dehumanized and losing my soul. Another way of saying this is that I lost connection with my *place of Goodness*. This was the start of my *counter-curriculum* and *compassion revolution*—trying to reconnect to this *held-back place of Goodness*. I presented a paper called, “Learning to Save the Self: Samuel Shem’s Portrayal of Trauma and Medical Education,” at the annual meeting of the Institute for Traumatic Stress Studies in 1998. Shem wrote the book *The House of God* (which was the name of a teaching hospital) about a kind of hero’s journey of young Roy, a medical intern who learns to be a proficient technician, but loses touch with important aspects of himself in the process. In my paper, I focus on how Roy loses his humanity (self) as he gains a professional identity. Roy notices a tension within him in which, “one side of me was filled with the horror of human misery and helplessness; the other was exhilarated, king in . . . [a] . . . diseased kingdom, competent to run machines” (Shem, 341). Roy becomes a technician, a well-functioning machine, but he loses his humanity. He learns to love and be fully human again, not through his official teachers who can only teach medical techniques, but through other people who have not lost their connection to love and connection. One doctor who is a kind of *liminal being* is “Fats,” an older medical resident who at first seems to be a “bad” doctor because he does not buy into the official rhetoric, but in the end is a mentor and champion for human kindness. In the story of Roy in *The House of God*, we have a classic hero’s journey story. He goes through separation, initiation, and return. He leaves the world of the lay public for the world of medicine. He is initiated into the world of medicine—yet realizes that he has become *over-initiated*, this would be the acculturation strategy of assimilation, he has been assimilated into medical culture, but he lost touch with his previous human, non-medical culture. He, thus, embarks on an initiation within an initiation. He does not want to return to the world outside of medicine deadened and emotionally disconnected, and so he goes



through what I call a *counter-curriculum* of re-humanizing himself. He does this through apprenticing himself to his girlfriend, Fats, the kindness of nurses, and a couple of wise guy security guards. He recovers his humanity while maintaining a medical identity (strategy of acculturation of *integration*) and he goes on to become a psychiatrist.

Roy's journey in the *The House of God* is similar, in some ways, to the structure of the veteran's journey home. Sometimes to be effective in a new culture, you need to fully immerse yourself in it and learn it through living and breathing it. However, there comes a time where you find that the new culture you have assimilated to interferes with your cultural adaptation to the larger culture of humanity. What Roy loses is his connection to his inherent goodness. However, it is not forever lost because there is a place of held-back goodness in his heart and he is able to reconnect to this through inner work and through relationship and community.

What I write about in my book, *Re-humanizing Medicine*, draws on this basic story of dehumanization and re-humanization. Perhaps through the story of Roy it is more apparent why I feel that we need a *counter-curriculum of self-care* and a *compassion revolution* in health care. The need for these is just as necessary, if not more so, for returning veterans. We can think of the counter-curriculum and the compassion revolution as a kind of CPR (Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation) to get the heart of goodness pumping again. My view is that our hope and humanity are precious and vital resources that we need to actively work to preserve and grow in the face of institutional pressures and exposure to death and illness on a daily basis.

#### HELD-BACK GOODNESS IN TRAUMA WORK

**After talking with Joseph on the phone about his vision** of the *held-back place of Goodness*, I went home and grabbed a pile of books that speak about this concept. What follows is a brief survey of other authors' search for something like *held-back Goodness*. Lt. Colonel Dave Grossman has written about people's inherent, natural resistance to killing. In his book, *On Killing*, he documents the high rates of troops not firing in battle, dating from the Civil War to the present time. He writes about ways that the military has tried to over-ride this innate goodness within themselves. Karl Marlantes, in his book, *What it is Like to Go to War*, also writes of the spiritual cost of learning to kill and comes up with ways that we could support veterans after deployment in a kind of spiritual and moral initiation.



Peter Levine writes about recovering goodness and a sense of felt aliveness in his book *In An Unspoken Voice: How the Body Releases Trauma and Restores Goodness*. His view is that trauma disconnects people from their bodies and emotions—they become *disembodied*—and the healing of trauma involves getting back in body, becoming *re-embodied*. He also has found that people have an “innate self-regulating and self-healing processes” (348). Similar to what Joseph’s vision shows, goodness is not lost, it is just buried. Levine writes, at the end of this book, that he plans a future book on *Trauma and Spirituality*. He describes his planned book as follows:

In the course of working with trauma for over forty years, it has become clear to me that there exists a welded, parallel and interwoven relationship between the transformation of trauma and various aspects of spiritual experiences. In this book we will show how both effective trauma healing and authentic spirituality are part of an embodied developmental process and discipline that draw humans toward greater presence and put us in touch with the numinous experiences that are often attributed to a god, soul or spirit. (358)

Jungian analyst Donald Kalsched has written two books on trauma and the soul, *The Inner World of Trauma* and *Trauma and the Soul*. In *Trauma and the Soul*, he writes that we can develop a “dual allegiance” or dual citizenship between the “ordinary” and “non-ordinary reality,” (1-3). These are the same terms that Joseph uses in describing the everyday and sacred worlds. Kalsched writes of a defensive “self-care system,” which fragments consciousness in an attempt to separate traumatic experiences from the innocence of the pre-trauma self. He sees that there are also forces within the self that promote wholeness and healing. For instance, he quotes Jung on the healing function of circling back around to an inner place of wholeness.

Hence the regression . . . goes back beyond . . . to the prenatal realm of the “Eternal Feminine,” to the immemorial world of archetypal possibilities where, “thronged round with images of all creation,” slumbers the “divine child,” patiently awaiting his conscious realization. This son is the germ of wholeness . . . In the darkness of the unconscious a treasure lies hidden, the same “treasure hard to attain” which . . . is described as the shining pearl . . . the “mystery.” (Jung, quoted Kalsched, 15)

Kalsched reviews a number of therapists’ views on a similar concept of what Joseph is calling a “held-back Goodness.” Winnicott writes of a “sacred

incommunicado center,” which he often calls the “true self.” Guntrip writes of the “lost heart of the self.” Neville Symington writes of the “lifegiver” and Grotstein writes about a core of innocence that is the “*crucial element of a person’s spiritual nature*” (14). A focus of Kalsched’s book is how we can learn to live in two worlds and he uses the terms “ordinary” and “non-ordinary” reality—which are the exact terms that Joseph uses. Kalsched writes of Jung’s personal and professional work to bridge these two realms.

In this struggle we witness Jung trying desperately and successfully to preserve a sacred “secret”—an innocent true self, at the very core of his life—and to protect it from further violation by the “spirit of the times” (Jung, 2009). He came to understand that this eternal child was his very soul, and Jung realized that his soul could be lost for a while, then found again. (16)

Richard Miller has developed iRest, Integrative Restoration, a Western adaptation of an ancient Hindu practice of *yoga nidra*. He has been working with veterans and has a number of research studies listed on his website, Integrative Restoration Institute.<sup>2</sup> He writes of this non-duality and non-separation between the individual and others and the source. “Separation doesn’t exist, except as a projection of the mind, whose job it is to pretend that the One is actually many” (Miller, 2010, 71). Richard defines the concept of the “inner resource.” I had the privilege of talking with Richard one morning when he was in Seattle for a conference.<sup>3</sup> I asked him specifically about the “inner resource,” because I think it is such a wonderful concept for healing PTSD. In fact, he has written a book called *The iRest Program for Healing PTSD*. In PTSD, people often feel cut off from their inner goodness and from a sense of innocence or purity. The idea of an inner resource upon which we can all draw is a healing gift. I asked Richard if the inner resource was part of the Hindu yoga traditions he studied. He said that it was not part of the yoga tradition; it was something that he had added to the iRest program. He leaves it open for the individual to come to a relationship with this inner resource. I imagine for some people it may take on a religious

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.irest.us/research>.

<sup>3</sup> Richard also gave me a reading list and it is through him that I came across the concept of the *spanda*, the Divine Creative Pulsation, in the book by Jaideva Singh, *Spanda-Kārikās: The Divine Creative Pulsation*. This concept has significant similarity with Joseph Rael’s views on reality and we will discuss it more in our next book, which will focus on developing mystical and visionary abilities.

element while for others it could be a spiritual element and for others it may be a connection inner vitality. I think the inner resource is similar to what Joseph is talking about when he says that everyone has an internal *held-back place of Goodness*, no matter what happens in his or her life.

You possess within yourself an *inner resource* that's designed to empower you to feel in control of and at ease with every experience you have during your life. Your inner resource is a place of refuge within you. It provides you with inner support on every step of your healing journey . . . Your inner resource is already hardwired into your central nervous system. It's a positive force that enables you to counteract any negative experience you're falling prey to. (Miller, 2015, 53-55)

I love the idea of this “inner resource” and I think this is what Joseph is speaking of as the *held-back Goodness*. The thing I like about the term “inner resource” is that it can be adapted for people of any spiritual or religious belief system. It could be thought of in religious terms as God, or as a guardian angel. It could also be a more secular place of innocence and purity in our hearts, a place of love and compassion that is inherent to the heart, much like Mencius' view of human nature. From a psychological or spiritual perspective, the inner resource could be seen as a Jungian archetype or Symington's “lifesaver.”

Native American traditions also have this sense of an inner healer, a place of spiritual connection within the self that is also a connection to all of creation.

The foundation for healing among indigenous cultures is the recognition that you are the healer. At age one hundred, Navajo (Dineh) healer Thomas Largewhiskers told physicians at a medical conference that he didn't know what they had learned in their textbooks, but he knew that a mysterious part of us lives deep within ourselves, and that this part is necessary for healing. I call this mysterious part the inner healer. (Mehl-Madrona, 2003, 65)

We find the idea of the “inner healer” in many spiritual and therapeutic traditions. This is consistent with spiritual teachings that we have a divine aspect within us. The inner healer can also be a connection back to the Divine Source, or a connection to the All. For instance, there in the Hindu tradition of the “cave of the heart.”

The rishi seers, the mystic founders of Hinduism, also experienced continuity between the divine presence encompassing the entire cosmos and the inner depths of their own hearts, the *guha* or cave of the heart, the deepest point of human subjectivity and freedom, a 'place' uncorrupted by time and external actions. In India, the *guha* is a metaphor for that hidden, transcendent place within us that is totally transparent to the divine . . . the deepest center of ourselves is one with the deepest center of the universe. All beings and reality are united with the Brahman.<sup>4</sup> (Teasdale, 53)

In connecting at the deepest level to ourselves, we connect to the cosmos. This is also a source of healing. To go back to the point of creation unleashes new healing energies. In Joseph's ceremony that we discussed at the beginning of this book, the warrior, prior to leaving for war, takes a cup of Earth which the sun has been shining on and pounds the cup on the Earth, saying the Earth's name, *nah meh neh*. Then he or she pounds on his or her own chest, hearing the similarity of the thumping sound with that on the Earth, *nah, nah, nah*. This is also the name of the Infinite Self, so in saying *nah meh neh*, we are saying Infinite Self "in goodness and forward movement" (*Being & Vibration*, 82). This is like saying *Wah Mah Chi*, or God, the Vast Self in Breath Matter Movement. In pointing out the identity between the substance of the human being and the substance of the Earth, we enter into a state of healing. Pain and illness come through separation from our connection with our hearts, which is the same as connection from our brothers and sisters and our Mother Earth and Father Sky.

This inner resource or inner healer is a place, a movement, a force inside of us that has healing properties. Using Joseph's terms, when we connect at a deep level to ourselves as *Wah Mah Chi*, Breath Matter Movement, and we are attuned to the vital force of life within the universe and ourselves. There is wisdom within our bodies, the same wisdom that is within the Earth and the cosmos. It is what Joseph says about becoming a True Human being. To be a True Human Be-ing, we must become good listeners to the vibrations that are continually manifesting us in this life.

Inner listeners . . . are true humans because they are picking up vibrational messages. . . . In that process of inner silence [of listening], the voice of guidance is found. . . . A true human is a person who knows who he is because he listens to that inner listening-working voice of effort. Once he knows that, he knows the direction that he is

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4 Brahman is the ultimate Consciousness.

to go because the inner voice will tell him exactly what he needs to do. (*Being & Vibration*, 12)

Listening to our inner healer, our inner resource, what we must do as we walk the healing path of becoming True Human Beings. I hope that this review of many different authors' concepts concerning the *held-back place of Goodness* validates that we have a source of healing within each of us, no matter how dark things have become in our lives. Many sense it and many are reaching for it, even as they call it by different names. In the end, Joseph says that many people dismiss him as being crazy or making things up. He says, "I experienced these visions, you don't have to believe them, but I know they are true. Just remember, though, I come from a people of the verb language and from a noun-pronoun language things might look different." He continues, "In my childhood, I was taught to be a visionary. Remember how I told you about my Grandfather going through the wall in winter and he came back with a plant and he made a tea, 'So you can have visions,' he said. A medicine man once told me, 'You are going to have visions, but some people will not like you.'" Joseph continued, "Just look at Jesus and what he taught, and they crucified him. Not everyone is going to believe what you and I are doing in this book and don't take it personally when people don't believe you. We are here for a reason and that reason is why we are here. That is why I keep telling you that we are both crazy. Just tell people, 'I think we have a gift here that is being given to us.'"

We can look at things from the Black Road perspective, which is the flatland world of mental ideas and physical materialism. We can also look at things from the Red Road perspective, which includes emotions, heart, and spirit. When we add the Red Road to the Black Road, it adds depth, spirit, love, and humanity to life. The Red Road is the road of re-spiritualizing, re-humanizing—it is on the Red Road that we will inevitably find that *held-back place of Goodness*, our inner home, without which we will always feel incomplete and partial.

#### HOME COMING & COMING HOME

**Martia Nelson, in her book, *Coming Home: The Return to True Self***, writes about this process of coming home to our true, inner natures. She sees the split as being between our personality (ego) and spirit. She writes that, "true self is the material intelligence of all creation, including us, it connects us with all creation and offers us everything we want most, including unconditional

love and unlimited well-being” (18). Finding our way back, coming home to true self, and rediscovering our held-back Goodness is the spiritual journey of all mystics throughout time and across religions. Those who have made this mystical and spiritual “secret journey” describe a sense of universal love, light, bliss, and joy as our true spiritual heart, which at its innermost depths is connected to (and identical with) the heart of Vast Self/God. Joseph and I will write more about this process of becoming a visionary in our next book, *Becoming Your Own Medicine*. To close this book, let us look at what *home* means for returning veterans.

Laurie Sloan and Matthew Friedman have a chapter on “Homecoming” in their book, *After the War Zone: A Practical Guide for Returning Troops and Their Families*. They describe the many myths around homecoming and write that, “it is safe to say that your life will *not* be the same as it was before you left for deployment” (43). They give the good advice that the “reality is that coming home from war can require as much readjustment as going to war” (48). This is something I say to veterans all the time, that they need to think about how much time and energy they put into becoming “combat-ready,” and then compare it to how much time and energy they have actively put into becoming “civilian-ready.” Sloane and Friedman write that, “The best way to overcome feelings of detachment and confusion is to recognize that it will take time to reconnect. Remind yourself that you need to relearn how to feel safe, comfortable, and trusting again” (53).

In addition to the nervous system retraining and reconditioning, as well as the social and cultural readjustment time, Joseph and I are saying a spiritual journey is also required. It involves walking the Red Road, *walking the medicine wheel*, to reconnect to the *held-back place of Goodness*. This is the place of our inner home and we are not truly home until we can connect back to this place. Let us start with the word, “home.” Using Joseph’s understanding of sound being and vibration, we have the following sound meanings.

- H**—lifting, unchanging, arms
- O** (Ohh)—Innocence—Direction of the North, Spiritual Body
- M**—manifestation
- E** (Ehh)—Placement—Relationship, Direction of the South, Emotional Body

Home is found/manifested when we pick up, with our arms, and draw to our hearts the spiritual innocence of our held-back place of Goodness and



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manifest that in the placement of our relationships and emotions. There is also the concept of “unchanging,” which tells us that, although we may feel separated from home, there is an eternal and unchanging place within us in which home is to be found. We also see immediately that we come through walking the Red Road, since **O** is the Direction of the Spiritual North and **E** is the Direction of the Emotional South, which maps out the Red Road traveling vertically back and forth between North and South, through the heart of emotion and spirit. Within the sound of the word “home,” we have a journey. **H** is about “picking up, lifting” and **E** is about “placement.” This tells us that home has qualities of picking up and setting down. We know this is true as people often pull up roots, move somewhere, and then set down roots. Particularly in the military, troops and families are continually



moving “home” from place to place. In the end, the physical setting of home is not as important as that placement in the heart. The old saying says it best: “Home is where the heart is.”

### SEEKING THE HEART CEREMONY

If “home is where the heart is” and the veteran is trying to return home then the journey must seek not just the physical home, but also the emotional and spiritual heart in order to heal the wounds of war and to move from being war-ready to being peace-ready. This requires inner work, what Rilke called “heart-work on all the images imprisoned within you.”<sup>5</sup>

We started the book with Joseph’s *Nah Meh Neh* ceremony, in which reminds the veteran that they are one with the earth before going to war and upon returning from war. This grounds and anchors the veteran into a particular place. By smoothing out the peaks and troughs of the disturbances we have created on the earth, we return back to our innocent nature. The peak experiences of trauma are leveled out and returned to the earth. This brings the body back home.

Another part of coming fully home is to reconnect to that *held-back place of Goodness in the heart*. This means that in addition to physically coming home there must be a seeking heart journey, which is an inner journey. As we have discussed many places in this book, being able to kill another requires a deadening within one’s self. Parts of the heart appear to die off, to blacken, and to lose function. What we need is a kind of emotional and spiritual CPR to get the heart of goodness beating again. But how can veterans re-find the goodness in their hearts when they have disconnected from those places? If we turn to Joseph’s visionary approach of working with sounds and words, we find that seeking heart can be broken down into *hear + t see + k*.

**Hear + t = Heart**

**See + k = Seek**

This gives us a hint—we find the held-back goodness of the heart by seeing and hearing. Joseph writes that the sound, “**t**” has the energy of “time,” and “**k**” has the energy of “soul, planting” (*Being & Vibration*, 89). This means that when we take what we hear and we put it in time, we have the heart in the motion of giving and receiving. Joseph writes that a “true human being,” is a listener, and so this is the way we create our heart and bring it into the world, by hearing with sensitivity.

<sup>5</sup> Rilke, *The Selected Poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke*, “Turning-Point,” 135.

To see something, like a vision, we must first seek it before we can see it. We do this by planting our soul in what we see so that we can see. This also reminds us that the vision that we see is like a seed and it is our responsibility to plant this in our soul, which is the same thing as our Mother Earth. First, we listen. We spend time patiently listening, which is investment in healing. Next, we see the seed and we place it in the soil of the soul (which is the same as the soul of Mother Earth) and then we attend to it and care for it and it sprouts and grows into that which we are seeking—the heart.

#### COMING HOME CEREMONY

*Close or relax your eyes. Begin by taking three deep breaths. Already you are coming home to your breath and your breath is in harmony with your heart. Our lungs are very thin tissues, filled with dense patterns and networks of blood vessels, dropping off carbon dioxide and picking up oxygen from the lungs and our hearts are the organs that accept the depleted blood high in carbon dioxide and then receive the blood that is rich in oxygen. Remember how the heart is about acceptance—it neither rejects the “bad” nor clings to the “good;” it accepts everything with love and transforms the “bad” into “good.”*

*Begin to chant the sounds of “H-O-M-E.”*

H. H. H. H. H. H. H. H. H. H.

O. O. O. O. O. O. O. O. O. O.

M. M. M. M. M. M. M. M. M. M.

E. E. E. E. E. E. E. E. E. E.

H-O-M-E

H-O-M-E

H-O-M-E

*Trust, believe, and imagine your held-back place of Goodness, a place that is your “inner home.” See. Hear. Seek Heart. Speak these sounds aloud into your heart:*

H-O-M-E

S-E-E

H-E-A-R

S-E-E-K

H-E-A-R-T  
H-O-M-E  
H-O-M-E  
S-E-E  
H-E-A-R  
S-E-E-K  
H-E-A-R-T  
H-O-M-E  
H-O-M-E  
S-E-E  
H-E-A-R  
S-E-E-K  
H-E-A-R-T  
H-O-M-E

*As you pick up and place down the seed of the sound of home, allow the unconditional love of home to resonate out through your being. This is the truth of your essence, it is your “lifesaver,” it is your “inner resource,” it is true self. You may feel disconnected from this source because of the trauma and pain of your life, but this source is always there, sending out pulses of light and love. You have your own lighthouse within you, sending out continual pulses of love and compassion, sending out the being & vibration of home. This Divine Energy is continually coming into being, being born as the Divine Child of every moment. Joseph teaches that the name of Vast Self, of God, is Wah Mah Chi. This means Breath Matter Movement. Breath. Let yourself Matter, become embodied in Matter. Move—this means connect to your held-back Goodness, your inner home and bring yourself into the world. If you feel lost, come back to Breath Matter Movement, come back to Wah Mah Chi. That is where you will find again your held-back place of Goodness that is your home.*



Divine Healing

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