

Healing the World Within by Alberto Villoldo, Ph.D.

Imagine that you could change anything on Earth. What would your world be like if anything were possible? Would you end hunger in Africa? Stop the killing of the whales? Bring peace to the Middle East? Whatever you wish to do, it's something you need to heal within you; that is, you must embody healing, peace, abundance, harmony, or whatever quality you desire to experience in the world.

Let's say that you want to save the whales. Well, you don't have to leave your job, your family, and all your responsibilities, board a Greenpeace boat, and stop a whale hunt. In fact, if your passion becomes zealotry, it may be a sign that your intent is not actually to save the whales, so you probably won't get very far in helping them. When your true intent is to heal the wounded creature within you, you become blind to how you can actually help those outside of you. You become self-righteous and refuse to consider any options that might result in something less than a 100 percent victory. You close yourself off to creative solutions, compromise, and negotiation, and reach a stalemate . . . while the whale hunting continues.

It's much better to address your unhealed nature. Rid yourself of your "inner Ahab," who has become an obsessive predator, and stop "harpooning" others just because you feel that you've been hunted and trapped and someone needs to be punished for it. Whenever your passion is out of sync with your effectiveness, consider whether the discrepancy is a result of your needing to heal a struggle within you rather than projecting it onto the world. When what's inside you is free, what's outside you can be liberated as well.

The opposite of zealotry, which is rooted in the unhealed parts of ourselves, is apathy. Instead of seeing the possibility of healing within and opening themselves up to dreaming something new, too many people feel overwhelmed and give up. Apathy is rampant in the world today because so many of us have allowed ourselves to fall asleep. I believe that this apathy is a side effect of the collective nightmare that makes us close our eyes, drift off, and ignore the need or suffering of others—along with our own ability to make a difference.

It's our job to co-create reality, partnering with the divine. In the Western story of creation, on the seventh day God finished making the world, and all that was left to do was the naming of the plants and animals. In the story of creation for the Laika, on the seventh day the Great Spirit told the humans, "For I have created the planets, the stars, the butterfly, the eagle, and the whale. Truly, they are things of beauty. Now you finish it." For the Laika, creation is not complete: We have to not only be the stewards of all life, but we must also finish the process of creation. Dreaming the world into being is not only a gift, it's a calling and a responsibility. If we don't answer the call, who will?

Working with the Intelligence of the Universe

When you let your ego rule and insist that you must control events, you end up in a constant struggle against the universe. Yet you can choose to simply be with that butterfly in Beijing—not pushing it or willing or visualizing it to do anything other than what it's doing. Your very presence will create balance and healing; and you, the butterfly, the wind, and the storm become one.

It's difficult for us in the West to trust that we can achieve peace and happiness if we're not doing something active to bring it about, but embodying peace and happiness does bring it about. Our egos don't want us to believe that we can have infinite power by immersing ourselves in the wisdom of the universe, but it's true.

For example, many young people today are fascinated by witchcraft because they think it might give them a chance to have a greater influence over what happens to them. They want to believe that if they follow a spell's instructions to the letter, they'll be able to stop a bully from picking on them, make a popular kid like them, or magically become as physically attractive as a movie star. They don't realize that real magic doesn't come from chanting incantations or mixing together herbs with a mortar and pestle, but from shifting one's perception and embodying confidence and grace. The Laika certainly don't have to wear clothing that indicates their power and position—when they enter a home, food appears without their having to ask for it, and blessings are bestowed without having been requested. Their presence has a radiance that others respond to, and words or symbols of power are unnecessary.

I remember hiking through the Altiplano with don Antonio years ago and arriving at a village where it hadn't rained for many months. The high mountain lagoons, which stored the town's water during the arid summer months, had begun to dry out. When they saw us coming, the villagers greeted us and asked my mentor to call the rains. The old Laika asked for a hut where he could fast and meditate; for four days, he had only water to drink.

I was starting to get concerned when he emerged in the early afternoon of the fourth day. Don Antonio started walking to the edge of the village, to where the mountains began a precipitous drop to the Amazon basin, and told me that he was going to "pray rain." I corrected him, saying he must mean he was going to pray for rain, and he said, "No, I am going to pray rain."

He came back two hours later, and there were great big thunderclouds overhead. Within minutes, the rains broke out. All the villagers were dancing with joy and thanking him, but he explained that he had done nothing—it had simply rained.

At that moment, I understood what my teacher had done. He had stepped into eagle, and dissolved. He had ceased to exist for that instant, which was infinite. There was only Spirit there, and thus no one to pray to. He simply prayed rain. And it came.

Later on I asked him why it had taken so long: Did he always need to fast and pray for four days when he wanted to enter the level of eagle? He answered that when we arrived at the village, he noticed that it was out of ayni. It was so out of balance, in fact, that he became out of balance, too. He couldn't do anything until he went back into ayni—when he did, so did the village, and the rains came. The old man knew that everything is healed from within.

Dr. Villoldo is a medical anthropologist who comes from a long line of Earthkeepers from the Amazon and the Andes. In his latest book, [*The Four Insights - Wisdom, Power, and Grace of the Earthkeepers*](#), he reveals the ancient technologies of the societies of Earthkeepers, the medicine men and women of the Americas.