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Introduction

*“There is a quiet light that shines in every heart . . .
It is what illuminates our minds to see beauty,
our desire to seek possibility, and our hearts to love life.”*

—POET JOHN O'DONOHUE, FROM *TO BLESS THE PLACE BETWEEN US*

All of life is imbued with energy, the nonmaterial life force that is dramatically absent when life ends. Science is showing us that we humans are indeed energy beings with a vibrational field that communicates information within the physical body as well as within the creative mind. Allowing ourselves to sense the “quiet light” within is a natural human potential. We can extend this inner light to express caring for others and to alleviate suffering, as we’ll explore in this book.

My own life story has always been closely intertwined with sensing the life essence of other people and living things. On reflection, I think this sensitivity was my best response to handling the vast, incomprehensible forces that surrounded me. No one could make sense of the horrors of life and death with which I grew up in the midst of the massive world war in Berlin, Germany, during the time of saturation bombings and the death of my mother.

I had to trust my inner knowing, which was undoubtedly enhanced by my five-year-old fanciful imagination. As a child, I noticed that some people seemed

to have brightness, vitality, or a quality of “light” surrounding them. Based on this quality, I chose my substitute caregiver from the many wandering refugees passing by our house. I also noticed the diminished lights in many of the refugees. One woman particularly had no visible life force. She was brought to our front door. While other refugees attempted to help her, and while I ran to get a glass of water, she died on the doorstep.

When the magnificent trees on my street were felled for post-war winter firewood, a neighbor brought several little fledgling birds for me to tend. I intuitively put my hands over the frantically jumping, helpless birds. Surprisingly, this calmed them. I then invented ways of feeding them with medicine droppers, and by watching their “lights,” I could tell which ones were going to live and which ones would die. Those that died became part of little burial rituals my older sister and I dreamed up. As for the living, in a few days the little nestlings would fly off on their own.

As the famine after the end of the war progressed, more helpless chicks were brought to me. As before, I used my hands over them and added heartfelt prayers of good wishes for either outcome—whether it be life or death—to help them along.

Years later, while traveling on extended sailing trips, I was to encounter lost, frightened birds at sea and found that again I could assist them with the “hands and heart” methods I had discovered in those war-torn times. Of course, I also added gentle touch whenever needed to help my four children and their many pets with their injuries. In these instances, I always felt calm and fully present to the moment, as if this work were exactly the right thing to do.

In my early teens, I read about Florence Nightingale, “the lady with the lamp,” who brought nursing out of its dubious past into the forefront as a valid profession for physical and emotional healing. Fascinated by her ideas of creating supportive environments in the midst of war, I plunged into a traditional three-year nursing diploma program after a lonely year in musical studies at college.

Encounters with traditional nursing educators in the late 1950s were, needless to say, a bit bumpy when I asked about hands-on healing. I was promptly directed to learn to give injections, make well-mitered corners on patients’ beds, and, above all, to follow doctors’ orders. On the quest for learning more about

real healing, as well as to lessen the causes of illness, I pursued public health nursing to the master's level, enjoying its focus on prevention and practitioner independence. To this end, I worked as a public health nurse for the extremely poor in Boston's South End and used my hands to soothe the areas above my patients' wounds in addition to giving prescribed medical interventions.

After my return from years of public health explorations in Singapore, and upon graduating from a doctoral program in educational psychology in the 1970s, I started hearing about a new movement in nursing called Therapeutic Touch. It was to become known as the first noninvasive program that could bring about pain relief and relaxation by using awareness of the human energy system. I traveled to attend several workshops with its founders, Dr. Dolores Krieger and Dora Kunz. Meeting them was a thrill. Their divine and human natures shone throughout their hands-on demonstrations and descriptions of the scientific basis of the work. They cited recent developments in quantum physics and the applications of these concepts to human caring, the social sciences, and nursing. I was immensely heartened to hear Dr. Krieger say, "Anyone can learn this . . . it is a natural potential we all have . . . it does not require being clairvoyant or unusually intuitive."¹ Perhaps, I ventured, I too could become a nurse/therapist who could help to heal others.

There was no doubting the effectiveness of Therapeutic Touch to help patients in hospital settings. The many stories of patients achieving accelerated wound healing, lessened anxiety, and pain relief without more medication were astounding. I was a bit taken aback by the apparent rigidity of Dr. Krieger's training course but have since come to understand her desire to keep the work as free as possible from intrusions or misuse by establishing strong parameters around her program. Therapeutic Touch remains the "first" of its genre and set the stage for a number of other energy-field modalities to surface.

In the early 1980s, after presenting a program at one of the Therapeutic Touch conferences, I joined the American Holistic Nurses Association and served on the board of this fine new organization for nearly ten years. As a psychologist and the association's education chair, I was always looking for new courses that could be developed. When I heard about Janet Mentgen, an energetically sensitive nurse who taught work to other hands-on practitioners, I eagerly signed

on and helped develop what eventually became the Healing Touch Program in 1989, with Janet as its designated founder. Since that time, Healing Touch has grown from its humble beginnings to reach thousands of practitioners worldwide, as we shall see further on.

My writing career began in 1996, when an agent from Delmar, a large social sciences textbook firm, asked Janet for a textbook about Healing Touch. In her usual, direct way, Janet pointed her finger at me and said, “You will write our textbook!” I was taken aback. I could not even imagine writing a book, let alone one about the subtle energies we worked with in Healing Touch. A new language about the framework of hands-on practice had to be developed. *Healing Touch: A Resource for Healthcare Professionals* came off rather well in spite of my misgivings, and it evolved into a revised second edition in 2002.² In 2009, an entirely new book called *Healing Touch Guidebook: Practicing the Art and Science of Human Caring* was released to celebrate HT’s twentieth anniversary, authored by myself and other HT colleagues; it was published by the Healing Touch Program Press.³

As my practice of psychotherapy evolved, I found new applications for HT in my counseling sessions. After teaching HT for ten years under Janet’s leadership, I was able to cofound a new organization, the Association for Comprehensive Energy Psychology (ACEP), with the help of supportive colleagues. ACEP is now a thriving international group of therapists who integrate work with the human energy system into their practices to bring about relief from emotional distress.

Over the past twenty-plus years, my love and respect for the work of HT and my connection to its wonderful practitioners has continued to expand. When I was approached about writing this book for the general public, I paid attention to my intuition for hints about how Janet might respond to the idea. Since she had passed on in 2005, I went to my sense of Janet’s energy. The strongest memory I had of Janet was repeated in a recent dream, which showed me her steady support for my continuing to write about Healing Touch. “Yes, sure,” she would say to me, “just stay with truth as you see it.”

Janet was always positive and receptive to new ideas. We’ll learn more further on about her and the magical work she brought to a whole new generation of practitioners.

At present, more than twenty years later, Healing Touch continues to be a vital program of hands-on healing, and its courses are available to interested people from all walks of life. In this book, we'll explore some of the basic concepts of HT, caring theory, and the most relevant research. You'll also learn several of the most practical methods for helping friends and loved ones as well as yourself.

It is my privilege to be an ambassador for Healing Touch. It is my hope that reading this book and using its ideas will pique your curiosity and interest, enlarge your "inner light," and activate the caring outreach that is so needed in our world at this time!

About This Book

In *Healing Touch: Essential Energy Medicine for Yourself and Others*, I have attempted to demystify the practice of Healing Touch and to ensure access for all who wish to learn. While many practitioners report having a strong sense of wholeness or a connection to universal love while engaging in HT, no particular belief or mind-set is required. Each practitioner finds his or her own way of conceptualizing the changes they see in themselves or others within the practice of HT. Despite my nearly thirty years of directing what feels like an energy flow to help those in need, I am always surprised at the outcome of each intervention.

As we explore the world of HT, the terms “practitioner” or “caregiver” will be used most frequently to name the person giving an intervention while “client” or “patient” will identify the receiver. Other terms for practitioner will include “healer,” “helper,” “facilitator,” or simply “student of HT.”

Although helping professions are most frequently seen as feminine vocations, many men are also active as nurses, caregivers, and healing practitioners. Therefore, gender pronouns such as “he” and “she” will be used interchangeably for caregivers and clients alike.

PART I

THE ADVENTURE OF HEALING TOUCH

