

Comprehensive Cancer Care: Integrating Complementary & Alternative Therapies
Integrating Mind & Body Through Movement: An Experiential Workshop
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Presenter: Anna Halprin, PhD
Session 400: June 14, 1998

[Ed. Note: Ms. O'Shee's introduction and the beginning sentences of Ms. Halprin's presentation were not recorded.]

Ms. Halprin: I used to think it was because children couldn't conceptualize until they were a certain age, but then I realized adults were doing the same thing. The moment they started talking about their experience, something was lost. It somehow or other did not tap into what it really felt like. I began to say, "Draw," and it was wonderful the things that we all began to do. In one of the drawings that I did, I made a gray mass somewhere in this area of my body.

One of our rules is that when you make a drawing, you dance it, or the drawing comes from a dance. They need to be connected. There are three processes – movement, feeling, and associations or images. They all must be integrated and combined for a complete experience. They cannot be isolated. You cannot take a drawing and analyze it. It just isn't it. I did not dance this part of the drawing. That night, when my mind was quiet – do any of you have this experience? You wake up in the middle of the night and all of a sudden some solution comes to you, or somehow or other you become very clear? That happened to me. I woke up in the middle of the night and said, "Oh my God, why didn't I dance that?"

Some intuitive drive sent me to a doctor. I said, "I want you to examine me," and I indicated exactly where I wanted him to examine me. It turned out that I had a malignant tumor. I had drawn my malignant tumor. That was in 1972. I had a radical operation that altered my body forever. I have a colostomy now. Afterwards, the doctor, in between his puffs of smoke,

said, “You’re just fine now.” I said, “That’s funny. I don’t feel just fine. I’m traumatized. I’m frightened. I don’t know why I got this, and I don’t know whether I’m going to get it again.” He said in a reassuring way, “Well, if you don’t get a recurrence in five years, you’re scot-free.” I thought, “What if I do?”

I did. I had a recurrence in three years. This time I said to myself, if in fact everything is reversible in the body – in other words, if you do a movement like (rough sounds), you’re not going to say, “Oh, I’m so relaxed. I feel so comfortable.” Or if I made this movement (gentle soothing sounds), I wouldn’t say, “Oh, I’m so depressed.” Movement and feelings go together. If you’re like this (sound and movement), you’re going to feel like this. If you’re like that (different sound and movement), you’re going to feel like that. I thought maybe the mind works the same way. I had been very curious. I could never understand the connection of the mind to the body, except that I always knew that to talk about mind/body was wrong. The body is the mind, so why talk about mind/body as if they’re two separate things?

If you’re a dancer, and you’ve been using your body all your life, you know that that is your mind. Your mind is not your brain. Your brain is something else. Your brain is your brain, but your mind is a consciousness that takes place all over your body. I thought that must be reversible too. But what is it? Suddenly it occurred to me that it was the images. In the images were the symbolic associations that I began to think of as the consciousness, that which externalizes a subjective experience so that you become conscious of it in a way that you can use in your life. So I said, “Well, maybe I can reverse the process. I haven’t anything to lose. I’ll try.”

I did my self-portrait. When we come to it in the slides, I’ll tell you what happened. I drew myself as if I looked about 18 years old. I’m 79 now, and at the time I was in my 50’s or

something. I thought it was funny that I made myself look like I was a kid or something. I looked so happy. Everything was just so nice.

I thought, “What’s on the other side?” Some of you are nurses and doctors. You know what a colostomy is. What’s back there suddenly comes up here. I thought, “Wait a second. What’s back there that I haven’t been looking at?” I did a picture of my back side. When you get up in the morning and get dressed, do you ever look at your back? How do I look back here? Everything is front. You look at yourself. That’s fine. I look fine. But I don’t know how I look back here. That’s what I had to do.

I found the most intense rage. I didn’t know I had so much rage, and so much anger, and so much sadness. It was absolutely beyond anything I had imagined was conceivable. I had to dance it. When I danced that rage, when I confronted that rage, I felt something right here in my diaphragm just go “whew,” and my body began to stream with energy. I was shaking and trembling all over for about ten minutes. I couldn’t stop. Then I burst into tears. It was like a cascade, a waterfall. When I came out of it, I had gone through one of the most intense physical, psychological transformations that I thought was possible. I went into remission, and I’ve been in remission ever since.

That experience has been what I’ve been riding on all these years. That was in 1975. Since then, I’ve been trying to understand more about this process which I now call the PsychoKinetic Visualization Process. There’s always going to be a mystery in every aspect of my life. Yet within that mystery there are certain repetitive truths or principles that I notice. One of the things that I have noticed since I’ve been doing this research is that there is no way I can believe that anything you draw can be codified. I remember one time a remark was made in class about the color black being – what do you associate with black?

Participants: Grief. Death.

Ms. Halprin: Somebody said that. I might have said it. A black woman was in my class, and she said, "I'm black. Black is strength. Black is power, and don't you forget that." I didn't. Don Jose Mitsuwa is a Huichol shaman from the northern part of Mexico. They do gorgeous yarn paintings. How many of you have ever seen the Huichol yarn paintings? They use a lot of black. Somebody said in a very somber way, "Don Jose, what does black mean to you? Why do you use black?" He said, "It makes the other colors look better." American Indians – the Hopis considered the snake very sacred, a very good sign. It comes from Mother Earth. Snake is a symbol of nourishment. Great. The Pomo Indians live two miles from where I live. Snakes are evil. Don't even mention the word snake in my round house. That's evil. American Indians had different colors for different directions, but no two tribes had the same colors for the same directions.

Trying to analyze symbols or colors has little significance to individuals unless they themselves have defined or identified from their own experience what those symbols or those colors mean to them. The only way they can find out is by dancing them, by moving them. There is a mystery in our bodies that I call "no names." There is no name. The only names, the only words we have in our vocabulary are words that describe an experience we've already had. That's why we're able to give it a name. But what do you do with all the experiences that don't have names? How do you identify them? How do you externalize those experiences? In a dance experience you can experience a lifetime in five minutes. Maybe through some art

medium, through poetry, through music, through voice, through song, through drawings you can get at another language which can help you assimilate that experience and bring it into your life.

We're going to show some drawings now. I know you came here to move. I promise you we're going to move. I'm giving you a context for your movement before we start. When you see these images, remember that they always either have come from a dance experience or they are danced. Then they may find words that come from the experience. The words may be in the form of poems. The words may be in forms of stories. The words may be in the form of, "Oh, yeah, I remember," – maybe a memory. The words come from a different place. They don't come from a codified analysis.

Perhaps that's the main difference between working with the body as the teacher. My friend asked me, "Do you use the word 'dance' when you announce that you're going to do something, or do you say 'movement?'" It depends. Sometimes I'll say "movement" so I can get people to come, and then we dance. Sometimes, if I want to limit the people who come, I'll say "dance." Whenever movement is integrated with an awareness of the feelings that are involved or engaged, the movement becomes expressive. Once movement is expressive, it is dance.

I do something that I call the Life/Art Process. If you want dance to integrate into your life, then you let it go a little further. We can do this as an experiment. Put your hands together as a fist, and make it very tight. Jut your jaw out. Put your jaw up this way, and breathe between your teeth. What do you feel? Anger. You can go one step further and do this. "I'm angry because." Try that. If you did that long enough – did anybody get an immediate association? Does anybody want to share?

I'm angry because I've got cancer. That's a dance right there and it's a Life/Art Process dance. To tell you the truth, when somebody dances like that, I get chills. I want to cry out of sheer inspiration. It moves me more than seeing Nureyev. Dance is available to everyone. It's a lost art. It's not a new art. It's just a lost art that we've forgotten. Amongst indigenous people and amongst early people, dance was the means by which whole communities celebrated their life, healed the sick, initiated the newborn, sent the dead on a safe journey, mobilized their courage for a successful hunt. It was the form of expression for all important occasions. Everybody danced. The first time that I went to visit my Pomo friends, I told them how much I appreciated their culture. They asked me what I did. I said, "I'm a dancer. I'm a lead dancer." I was greeted with great respect.

If I'm at a dinner party, and somebody casually turns to me trying to make conversation, and they say, "What do you do?" How am I going to answer this? It depends on the mood I'm in. Sometimes I say, "I'm a ballet dancer," and that will just stop the conversation. Everybody knows what a ballet dancer is. Or I'll say, "I'm a tap dancer," or something. Do you think I could tell them what I am at a dinner table so they'd understand? Not really. It's a forgotten art. I'm here to help you rediscover what we have forgotten. I'm going to show you some slides. I promise you we're going to dance, because I'm interested in how it connects to cancer in its transformative powers. Dance is alive. It's a growing, living part of your system. It has the most remarkable capacities for change. This is what we're going to look at.

We're talking about cultural differences and differences between indigenous people and Western society. Here you see starting with the body. The body is so appreciated. It's so natural that the only thing the man is wearing is something around his pelvis that accentuates the movement, rather than hiding the body. One leads to a tremendous use of imagery on the body,

a connection between what's inside coming outside, very creative, very imaginative. Whereas the denial of body – the only movement you see is little furtive movements in the eyes. You can also see the use of imagery in terms of community. One form of society can be very hierarchical. Another form of society can be circular, unified – plants, animals, and humans all in the same circle. Imagery is not only working on an individual level. It works on a societal level as well, which we tend to forget.

The environment itself is part of your body. It's your collective body. We have this terrible notion that our body stops as if we were an envelope and our body is inside this envelope. There is not that boundary in the skin that we think. We're very connected to our environment. When you see water, don't you want to drink it, touch it, feel it? It's not something that's just an outside of your self-picture. Here you see a very natural tendency to get in the water and be part of that water. Here's water being used also symbolically. This is a group of dancers I was working with. There was a little boy hanging around and they decided to initiate him into men's group. They used water. If we were to remove all of our enculturation, we all would have the same instinct to receive our body, to move our body with freedom of expression, whether we're from this culture or from that culture. That's where we start – the body.

I'm going to focus on how this work with the body in relationship to imagery has related itself to cancer. Here is an image that this person came up to. She says it destroys and filters through the gills and scares away unwanted garbage, purifies and strengthens. She drew that, but it wasn't until she got down on her hands and knees and became that creature, with her tongue darting out, that she felt what that creature really was and could really do the job, because she was emotionally connected to it.

Here's another drawing that this woman made out of a meditation. I asked her if she could think that that turtle could be an ally for her, that that turtle would mean something very special for her in her life when she was in a crisis. They went off at the end of the class with the idea that next week they'd come back and share with the group whether they had been able to use their ally. She came back the next week and said, "My doctor told me that I should get my affairs together, that I really didn't have that much longer. I got so scared, I called my turtle." Everybody gives their ally a name, and her turtle's name was Herbert. "I called Herbert, and Herbert protected me with his hard shell from these harsh words. Besides, Herbert's a lot older and wiser than my doctor." This woman lived for another two years. This was the drawing that she did soon before she died. It was a beautiful bird, as you can see. She wrote under it, "Free." That was all. Just free. She couldn't move very much, but she moved her hands. She danced her free bird, and there was a smile. She just moved her arms.

Here's another bird. There are no two birds alike. He is a young man with AIDS. He'd get terrible pains in his body. Whenever he'd call on his bird, he said the pains would go away. He has the color of the rainbow in there, the heart, the circle. When I asked him what those meant to him, he said, "Well, the heart connects me to the part of me that can receive love and give love. The rainbow colors are symbolic for me of peace. The circle is that I feel the unity and the support of all of us together here in this group. They give me strength." He didn't tell me what some of those other symbols meant to him, those little gray things on the side, and those little gray kind of hidden things here. I've always been curious.

This is a nice one. That says everything. That's her snake facing her cancer cell, telling the cancer cell, "Get out of my life."

These are people dancing their images. You can dance anywhere. This is me dancing mine. This was the story I was telling you. This was the side that I was saying doesn't look like me. That doesn't look right. I turned it over, and this was the drawing I found. I really had to dance every single image in that drawing. It's almost like a Gestalt, if you've ever worked with the Gestalt therapy dialogue. It's almost as if I had to do a dialogue with that little rat, with the knife, with the blood, with the helmet. You have to dance every single image in the drawing.

After I danced that, I did this one. What I was working with as I was dancing this was the idea, the image of a waterfall. That just came to me. My breath was water. As I breathed I could feel the water flowing through my body and out. I did the whole thing with my eyes closed, imagining water running through every part of my body, with my breath, until I felt totally cleansed. I came back several years later and said, "It's time for me to do another self-portrait, because there's too much polarity. There's no connection between my front and my back. What's going on there?" I began to work with the dark side and found a whole lot of images that were connected to my belief systems. I had to dance them out.

One of them, as you can see, had to do with my colostomy and my whole attitude about it – my resentment, my self-pity, my annoyance – all the things I felt about this colostomy. I had to deal with that. All the ka-ka that we have. I had to dance that all out. I had to deal also with that which I could accept about myself, and develop my sense that I'm all right. There are good things about me too. I'm not a totally bad person. I had to deal with that as well. In that dance I was dealing with some life and death issues in my family. Then I did this one, which is as close as I've gotten to integration. I'm still working on what all of that means. That was done maybe seven or eight years ago, and I'm still working on it. It's time for me to do another one.

Now I'm going to go through some other examples. This young man did not have a test for AIDS. He did not want to be tested. He was in a dance we were doing that lasted for ten days. This was the first drawing he did of himself. In his words, he makes no mention of this little black figure that you see in his body. After the dance he was tested, and he was HIV positive. He must have had some intuition that something was going on. In the dance we looked at our dark side. He said, "You'll never be enough." That was the judge speaking to him. But the same energy that you can use for destruction – "you'll never be enough" – can be the same energy and the same dynamics that you can use constructively – "I fear you not." "You'll never be enough" is one energy. "I fear you not" is the same energy. It's just a shift in image.

His next drawing five days later looked like this. Do you remember the first one? It wasn't that he did this by himself. This was a community dance that involved 135 people. Half of them either had cancer or AIDS or another life-threatening illness. It was the support of the whole group that got to him. Many months later, when he and I were looking at these drawings, we both realized that the colors he used were the colors in the costumes that the people in the group wore. They wore blue, purple, red, yellow. Perhaps he was saying it was the group, the energy of the whole community, that enabled him to get to this point. Remember in the first drawing he didn't have any feet? He was kind of floating in mid-air.

Here's another idea about images that's very important. This is four stages. That's the first drawing of his face that he made. He danced that mask. He did the next drawing. He danced that. He did the next one. He danced that. He did another one, until he finally came to this one. What happened? Each time you dance an image you can go to another layer. You can go deeper and deeper and deeper until you get to a layer that is your essence. It is it. It doesn't always happen the first time. You just keep deepening and deepening.

Here is an example of how he has gone into several layers. This was his first drawing. That's the way he drew, and that's the way he felt. Those are the images that came up. His body is inside a tattoo and the dice. I asked him what the dice meant to him and he said, "My life is up for chance." He's a man with HIV. His second drawing six weeks later – he has identified a polarity. The front, the back, the up, the down, night, day, mother, father, good, bad. Get ready for this. Six weeks later, dancing every day, using the PsychoKinetic Visualization Process, he's transformed to this. Now you're beginning to see the transformative power that dance has. Go back one. Unworthy, low self-esteem, all that stuff on that monstrous side, and then tomorrow means hope.

Here are some more. This one might be useful to you because it describes what I call the five stages of healing. That's what I experienced going through my own healing process. This is her first drawing. She did not see that she didn't have any hands and feet. She didn't see it at all. This was her second, six weeks later. I'll show you a close-up of that. None of these people have had any lessons in drawing. This just comes intuitively. This is a close-up. Look at her hands and feet now. This is part of the Tamalpa training program. We train people in this process. When she was working on her relationship to her family, her mother came up. This was the drawing she did in association with her mother. The next day she broke her foot.

She did a set of drawings to help her understand. What was the mystery going on here? Why didn't you have any hands or feet? What's that drawing about your mother? And why did you break your foot the next day? She did a set of drawings. The first one is on the right. I call that identification. She identified where the pain was. She had broken her foot. The second one, on the left, is called confrontation, confronting that which you're denying. She said, "My cast feels like a prison. I'm on fire inside and the earth is breaking under me." After

confrontation came a release. Isn't it interesting that fire turns into three hands? This is all totally intuitive. She says, "Now the earth is solidifying under me. The fire has changed to water. I feel now my cast is a protector. The earth is embracing me and I feel the seed inside growing, fresh and new." This is the fourth stage. "I feel a change. The healing is beginning. My foot is moving." Even the quality of drawing is different. This is assimilation or integration, the fifth stage. Hands and feet unite. This is her last self-portrait. Remember the first one?

This is what we mean by transformation. You could read all kinds of things into that. You could say that those things going up and down her spine are like chakras, and the thing coming up out of her head is like a lotus, and she's holding the symbolism of water, of life, of nourishment, of tree, of growth. So what? Unless she experiences something out of those symbols, they're not going to assimilate. They're not going to help her. She dances them, and she finds her own particular life story. She finds her myth, her personal mythology, which she will spend the rest of her life developing and trying to understand.

I believe very enthusiastically in community healing. This is the new frontier that I'm exploring. I'd like to encourage other people to think of it as well. There is something bigger than life about community healing. We talk about support groups. Support groups are absolutely necessary, absolutely great. I have a support group that meets every week. But that support group becomes very isolated after a while. A support group is not part of the community yet. So I began doing community dances.

This is a dance that I talked about earlier – 135 people were in this dance. They're dancers, non-dancers, physicians, social workers, people with cancer, people with AIDS, people with all kinds of life-threatening illness. They came together for ten days to create this ritual. There they are. Here is the first part of the dance, which is identification. Each one with a life-

threatening illness announced to an audience of 1,000 people, “My name is (*their name*), and I want to live.” We had said in the narration that those who come down the aisle are people with cancer, AIDS, or a life-threatening illness. They did this in 1981, when to tell anybody that you had cancer or AIDS was really taking a risk. People didn’t like to be around people with AIDS at that time. People are uncomfortable being with people who are very sick. They don’t know what to say. They don’t know how to behave. This was a great risk. But it identified one of the problems, the problem of being separate and isolated and alone, lonely. I am Jane and I want to live.

This is the confrontation. The audience did not want to be separate. They wore masks, so they too were monsters. It’s monsters looking at monsters. The dancers didn’t know this was going to happen until it happened, which was great. This is release, that’s the third stage.

Participant: Who was in the audience?

Ms. Halprin: Everybody. Friends, family, people in the community. It wasn’t your usual dance audience. They were invited. They were told about it. There was no admission.

This is change. There was a woman who had this little six-month-old baby. The baby danced in this dance with her all ten days. We had little support groups within the bigger dance. The support group people became very close. With 135 people, it wasn’t intimate enough, so we had little support groups within. There was a young man in her group who had HIV. One of the problems that I’ve noticed in working with people with life-threatening illnesses is that we don’t have enough rituals yet for dealing with dying and death. He was in his final stages. Rosie is the mother, and Rafael is the child. He said to Rosie at the end of the dance, “I want you to come to

my home. I want to do a special ritual for Rafael. When I die I want to be Rafael's guardian angel so I will be with her all her life." That was so touching, that he had found a way through this dance to connect with this child that gave his dying meaning. That child was very special in the dance.

This is assimilation, bringing the whole experience into one's life, into the community, by inviting the community to come and dance with us at the end. We had over 1,000 people dancing together at the end in this huge gymnasium. That was one of our community rituals.

Another one was in the city, when Moscone was killed. I don't know if you know our mayor was murdered. That was a long time ago. The gay community started burning and turning cars and crashing. It was a regular riot. We did a city healing. We went to all different parts of the city and engaged people in moving and dancing together, celebrating. At the end they did visualizations. They picked up their paper, and they danced around, moved around the plaza. These are some of the things they said. These were just people who happened to be in the neighborhood where we went.

This is a dance that we do now every year. We do it at Easter time, not because it's Easter, but because that's a time when school is out and there's more time. We go to Mount Tamalpais, where there had been a killing of seven women. I don't know if any of you heard of the trailside killer. We did a dance to reclaim the mountain, because the mountain had been closed. About a week later the killer was caught. We always say we don't know whether we caught the killer, but we don't know that we didn't catch the killer. Every year we do a memorial and an affirmation to life that cleanses the mountain of the killer and renews life.

This year we dedicated our dance, called the planetary dance, to women with breast cancer. Groups of women with breast cancer participated. We start at sunrise and we end at

sunset. The dance is now being done in 36 countries around the world. It's the first healing planetary dance that I know of. We're very committed to it.

I'm ending my slides with nature, because this is another area that I want to encourage my colleagues to explore. When I did my dance, I called upon nature to heal me. I called upon water to heal me. I've been doing workshops in the natural environment for the past 30 years. Remarkable, bigger than life forces take over and nourish in ways that I haven't been able to find in any other environment. These are some pictures that show the power of the natural world. This is a drawing she made of herself. In the morning, we worked with tree. This is the drawing she made of herself the very same day. This is another drawing a person made that day of tree, herself in relationship to tree. Sand. Cave. Mystery. Woods. Darkness. A ritual with the whole group. Nature is a great healer. That's the end of my slide show. I want to ask you before we start our movement if you have any questions. Do you feel that you got a hit on the power of movement for change? Are there any questions?

Participant: What are the five stages?

Ms. Halprin: I think I gave them wrong the first time. Identification, for example, the tendency to not see what needs to be seen. The tendency to deny, not to see. Then confrontation. Look at it. Look at the fear. Release. By expressing the fear you release it. Change. Once you've released the fear there's a change. The fifth stage is very important. That's called integration or assimilation. How does that figure in your life? What are the connections in your life?

I've written this book specifically for professionals, people in the field, to give you some ideas of how you can actually begin to use this work. It's very simple. We're working with ordinary movement. We're not working with patterns. You don't have to be trained. This might be helpful. It's called *Dance as a Healing Art: A Teacher's Guide and Support Manual for People with Cancer*, but it could also be applied to other forms. This other book is a little bit more about my various projects over the past 50 years, and how my life's work as a dancer brought me to the healing arts and to community. I also have some videotape. I have a videotape of my own cancer dance that was done in 1975. There's a videotape of the AIDS and cancer dance with the community. Then there's another videotape of a support group and the dance that they did dealing with death. Those are all available. If you're interested, you can order them.

What about the music? I use music, and when my groups are more accustomed to working together we make a lot of our own sounds. We do a lot of sounding, a lot of chanting. We create a lot of music ourselves, which is the best, because you get the vibrations going inside your system. Any other questions?

Where am I from? I'm in Marin County, right outside of San Francisco.

Participant: Do you ever think about bringing your community dance to the East Coast?

Ms. Halprin: It has been. I have many students who have trained in this work. A woman by the name of Alice Rutkowski does the planetary dance every year in New Jersey and in Philadelphia. It's even being done in New York in Central Park.

Participant: Have you done anything around death and immortality?

Ms. Halprin: You mean life after death?

Participant: Yeah. Using dance to create an image for ...

Ms. Halprin: There have been several rituals that people have done. I remember one young man came in one day absolutely devastated. His best friend had died. We did a ritual where we all became part of a landscape and he moved through each of us with his eyes closed. As he came to each of us he imagined another memory of his connection with this person that had died. Then at the very end, he gets to the end, and there's no more. He has to break contact. He goes outside, releases a great shout and says, "I've let you go." That was one ritual.

Another one is in this videotape called *Carry Me Home*. It was about a young man who came to say good-bye to the group. After he left they started creating a dance about what it was like to say good-bye. When a person has a particular issue around death or dying we create a ritual for that person. I do not operate with any kind of belief system around death. It's a personal experience. Each person finds their own meaning. I take no philosophical position, but I encourage everybody to create rituals that will help them. Like Rafael, like Warren, who said, "I'm going to be your guardian angel." That was his statement. Everybody has their own. If you give people a chance, they'll find a way to express it. Something will come out that will be very resolving for them. I don't do it for them. They do it. I just allow the space. That's a big one. We deal with it every year that we go to the mountain, when we do our memorials.

Any other questions? One more, and then I know you're dying to start moving.

Participant: Do you find that all different kinds of people in the community are attracted to doing this – all ages, races?

Ms. Halprin: Oh yes. I had a multiracial company for 12 years, which was the greatest education in my life. I did a healing dance after the Watts riots. I had an all-black company and an all-white company, and the two companies came together after working separately for a year. They developed a dance based on their real life experience of how they could dance together, love together, respect each other. Then we had Asians and Latinos and Chicanos and American Indians. My grandchildren are half-Indian and half-Jewish, so multiracialism is built into my family. I have another set of grandchildren who are half-Persian and half-Jewish. It's very multi-mixed up.

One of the things that we forget in our healing process is that there are cultural differences that need to be respected. The only way you can do that is by being open to the creative process, allowing and enabling each person to find their form of expression. You can tell people what to do, but don't ever tell them how to do it. This will be a great enriching process to allow for cultural differences and ethnic differences. That's a very important part that is not being addressed enough. Any other questions?

Let's dance. Let's go for it. This little bell is going to be your cue when we want to change from one thing to another. Ordinarily in my cancer groups, when I just have people for a morning or something, I work in chairs. People are more comfortable, and I can do an incredible amount of movement in chairs. But we happen to have some space here. For those of you who would like to, we can pull the chairs aside. We'll start on the floor. There are two movements

that I want to work with today – movements that come from the breath, and movements that come from the pulse. Movements that we do alone, movements that we do as community.

We're going to do some imagery. I invite you to lie on the floor. But if there's anybody who is uncomfortable about lying on the floor, you can do whatever we're doing in a chair.

Now we're going to slowly roll down that spine and release some space. Go down a little bit further until your fingertips are touching your knees, and your knees are beginning to bend, so you can feel the spine. Good. Now your back is beginning to round, and there's more release and more space in your spine, between the vertebrae in your spine. We're going to bend the knees and begin to sink into the ground, until your hands are supporting you in front. Put your hands down in front and you won't fall backwards. Use your hands. Now you're on all fours. Your knees are on the ground. Keep breathing out. Turn your toes back so they won't hold you up, and bring your hips down to your heels. If you can't do this, this is something to remember. Now curl up like you were a little ball, with your forehead to your knees, and your elbows bent and pulled in. This you can't do on the chair unless you want to fall off of it.

Now I want you to take a deep breath into your back, and listen to my directions first. You're going to go in with it taking as much air as you can. Spread your back, and you'll feel that you're holding on when you breathe in. Then you're going to breathe out, and as you breathe out you're going to let your body open up and fall to the side on the floor. Breathe in, and now you're going to roll right over as you breathe out. Roll over, and let go! All the way over. Let go all the way. You've got the idea of this. I suggest that you do this every day until you are very much in the reality of what it feels like to hold on, and what it feels like to release. Do it all through the breath. If you haven't rolled all the way over, there's still part of you that's holding on. From a physiological point of view, you will fall out if your breath is in and then it

goes “hah.” The force of the “hah” will take you out. I’m just going to give you a little push. There you go.

Now you all are on your backs. Let go of your legs if you can. There you go. The floor is holding you up, and you let go. You’ve surrendered completely to gravity. I’d like you to warm up your hands because you’re going to put them over your eyes. Get them nice and warm. Then you’re going to cup your hands and place them over your eyes. Let your eyeballs sink back into your eye sockets. The palms of your hands, the healing part of your hands are going to sink right in there. As you breathe out, keep breathing out, and massage your face. Take the mask off.

Now place your hands on your chest and bring your breath into your chest. Keep your eyes closed. All this is internal movement. As you breathe into your chest also breathe into the floor, because the lungs are inside your rib case. As you breathe you want the rib case to soften so that there can be movement throughout the entire rib case. You’ll feel something expanding between your shoulder blades, as well as receiving the movement in your hands. Try putting your hands above your breasts. This is an area that needs nourishment. We tend not to breathe as high up into our upper lungs. Let the hands gently and softly slide over your breasts until they rest on your belly. Feel your breath coming down into your belly.

Now turn your feet in. We’re going to relax around the pelvis and the lower back. Turn your feet in so your big toes touch. Let go, so gravity will let your legs fall out. Do that several times. Now speed it up, so it’s in-out, in-out, and you warm up that hip joint. Now drag your knees up, just drag them up with the legs kept in an outer rotation. Pick the knees all the way up, so the legs are just dangling, as if you were a baby being diapered. Pick them up. Get the feet off the ground. Pick the knees up so you get maximum flexion in your hip joint. Pick them all

the way up. You feel this in your lower back. Let your knees go from side to side. Keep the legs open as you do it. I want to get you to open up in the crotch. This is a part we keep closed all the time. It affects your lower back. It affects the organs in your lower abdomen. Open up those knees. Don't be afraid. Just imagine you're a baby, innocent, being diapered. Open up. Now put your feet down on the ground with the feet under your knees, down on the ground. Keep your hands over your eyes. I want to take you into a visualization.

Float your tongue. Imagine that you're looking at a vast blue sky. The clouds are coming and going, passing by you. Let any thoughts, any concerns, any obligations, float away with the clouds as they come and go. Breathe in through your nose and pause, and let go of the breath. Breathe out, and linger in the emptiness, until the breath will return of its own accord. Now place that vast blue sky, clear, inside your rib case. Imagine this vast clear blue sky inside your rib case.

Place your hand on your belly, and begin to imagine an ocean, a deep green, blue, purple combination ocean, deep, endless, with waves that rise up, peak, and drop and dissolve into the back of the ocean, just like your breath. Feel the movement with your hands.

Now imagine a warm, yellow, orangeish, reddish sun, its warmth and its rays, and place that warm yellow, orangeish, reddish sun right inside your head between your eyes. Let the rays of the sun reach through the sky, right on to the ocean, sparkling with life, vibrancy. As you breathe, just like the waves, the ocean, the sky, and the sun all move together as one inner landscape, all connected with the breath.

Begin to imagine that in this landscape – this breathing landscape with the ocean rising, peaking, dissolving, disappearing into emptiness – you begin to invite some living creature that lives in the sky or in the ocean. You invite a new part to be included in this landscape,

something that lives in the ocean or in the sky. When you find that creature, I want you to embody it in movement in your hands. Begin to be that creature and move like that creature in your hands. If there's a sound that that creature makes you can make that sound out loud, or to yourself. Then let the movement include your arms, and it can take you off the ground. It can move you now as freely as you wish. It can move you standing or sitting or moving through the room. Play with it as freely as you possibly can. Keep your eyes closed so that you can remain in this imaginary landscape.

Begin to bring your creature into a sense of completion. Perhaps you can say good-bye, and watch it in your imagination disappear into the ocean or into the sky. Thank your creature for coming and being with you. Thank your creature, and let your creature know that you can come together again. When you have said thank you, shown your gratitude in some way, you're going to make an image of this creature. You're going to draw it on a piece of paper. Do this very spontaneously and very quickly. Make clusters of three or four in a little circle so you can share a box of crayons.

Suppose you were to have some need in your life that called upon some higher power, something that's beyond your capacity at the moment to deal with in your life, some crisis, some trauma, some question. How would this creature become an ally to you, just as our friend found a turtle? You may not know the answer to that question. She didn't know the answer when she drew it, but that week something happened. She called her turtle, and it gave her an answer. You may know. Right away you may recognize this ally.

An ally in traditional cultures is some part of yourself represented, symbolized as some kind of an animal. Carl Jung called it the bush soul. He said we all have a bush soul. You may not know what it means to you right this minute, but it came to you for a reason. If you hang it

on your wall, sometime during the week something will happen. You'll call upon this fish, and it will give you an answer. What are the characteristics of the fish? Get to know it. Become friends with it. What are its characteristics? What can a fish do? What can a bird do? Does anybody have an instant recognition that they want to share with the group?

Participant: I chose a dolphin. I think what I'm trying to do is to communicate with myself at a level at which I've never allowed myself to communicate. I perhaps really now face the fact I will die if I'm not willing to come to some communication with myself, that I've never been able to do.

Ms. Halprin: And your dolphin?

Participant: The dolphin I know has fantastic powers of communication.

Ms. Halprin: It does.

Participant: We don't understand yet, and that was my instant moment when you started to ask the question. I said this is telling me something about my need to communicate. I think it's with me that I have to communicate.

Ms. Halprin: Right. Thank you. I'm sure that as time goes on the dolphin will become your best friend and will tell you many things.

Participant: I don't know if dolphins have teeth, but I'm going to give him teeth.

Ms. Halprin: Maybe the teeth are there to...

Participant: Chew.

Ms. Halprin: Chew what?

Participant: Pain.

Ms. Halprin: Chew pain. What else could the teeth chew?

Participant: Food, nurturance.

Ms. Halprin: Maybe even some of the cancer cells?

Participant: I didn't think of that, did I? I must be resisting that idea.

Ms. Halprin: Not necessarily. You would have thought of it tomorrow. You don't think of everything today. That's a very good example. It's there for each of you. I wish we had time for each of you to share that together, but I want you to share it with a primary relationship. It's very important that you share it with a primary relationship in your life, whether it's a sibling, a

parent, a lover, your husband, wife, brother, sister. Share it with a primary relationship in your life.

We have run out of time. I am furious that we lost 15 or 20 minutes because we started late, because I do want to do one thing with the pulse. I want to send you out with your energy up. We're going to run five minutes overtime so that you can get the blood moving and the pulse moving. I want you to do writing. You know the way I use writing? Let me tell you the technique I use, because I have found it very successful. I ask people to write in single words, not sentences. Write single words, feeling words, action words. Then when you get a whole cluster of words, put them together in a story or a poem. That will speak to you from your intuitive self. It will bypass that tendency to analyze.

Write to me anything special that you've discovered. It doesn't even have to be special. I always love to hear stories from people. When you have a story, write to me. I have my calling cards, where you can write to me, on the chair. Also the book, *Dance as a Healing Art*, has a tape that goes with it. The tape and the book together are \$25. The tape will take you through some of these kinds of exercises. Put your things away and we'll do one more movement together.

Participant: Do you get starved after you do this work, or is it just me?

Ms. Halprin: You've gotten relaxed, that's why. You're good at this, sister.

Participant: I love it. I love movement. My little bird – I feel so grounded, I feel so not myself. I'm so glad to be here. Thank you.

Ms. Halprin: That's why we've got to do some pulsing movements right now. Make a circle. Hold hands.

Visitor: We're going to do some videotaping, just so you know.

Ms. Halprin: Does he have to stand right in the middle? Are we doing a God dance to you, standing right in the middle? Weird. Please! Can you get over by the post or something, or are you looking for light? Let's turn him into something. Let's turn him into an ancestor that's sending our messages of hope and glory to the world. (Music begins, participants begin sounding "Hah!" together. Sound changes to "Ho!") We've all got the same pulse, but within that pulse, you can move any way you want. You can find little steps anyway you want. Woooohahawoo. Now begin to incorporate your ally in your movement. It's time to stop because Effie has her 12:30 group. You can go right on dancing with Effie. One more thing. Hold hands, and we're doing one more thing. One, two three, and Whoaaaaa!