

When I first came to Arthur, as I have said, I was looking for simple relief from neck pain. I had worked on this pain for some time via massage, chiropractic, acupuncture and supplements (SAmE, glucosamine, MSM, etc.) Numerous remedies had been attempted in the eight years since I first noticed this particular pain.

At the time I was in Australia, driving on the "wrong" side of the road. (Notice how dexter-centric I am: that a steering wheel on the right side of a car and the convention of driving on the left side of the road have morphed into moral judgment. Anyone whose car has a steering on the right side of their car and drives down the left side of the road is somehow "wrong.") Turning my head in the opposite direction that I had looked for 45 years to look over my shoulder before merging into traffic or backing up was not only a mental adjustment but required serious reprogramming of my body. Unfortunately, I discovered, I could not move my head very far in the "opposite" direction without experiencing extreme stiffness and acute pain. My neck was frozen. I am not suggesting that having driven on the right side of the road for 45 years froze my neck. I am only saying that when I needed my body to turn to the opposite direction, it could not accommodate me. And so I set out to "fix" the problem.

It began in Australia with "physical therapy." In Australia, PT mostly consists of TENS treatments. That is, of electro stimulation of contracted muscles to obtain release. It works in some cases and makes sense: by pulsing the muscle with an electric charge, the muscle nerves fire and release, causing the muscle to contract and release. Presumably, this action enables the contracted tissue to let go, thus relieving muscle 'cramp' or tightness, though why it should do that I have no idea.

In any event, it did provide some marginal and temporary relief for my stiffness but did not really release my neck from the stranglehold my shoulder and neck muscles, especially on the right side, had on my head. And so I tried other avenues. I put orthotics in my shoes to correct a leg imbalance that was, perhaps, throwing off things in my neck. I worked with an American chiropractor who cracked the hell out of my neck and gave me a 12 pound lead ball to hang around my head while dangling my head off the end of the bed with a foam roll under my neck. This supposed to restore lost neck curvature. Then there was Chinese massage. This involved a very energetic Chinese doctor climbing onto my back with his elbows buried deep in my muscle tissue. To keep from screaming required all my effort. Aromatherapy massage, a much gentler treatment, Indian heat cupping, acupuncture and an occasional yoga class all followed. Throughout it all I popped ibuprofen at about 600 mg per day and continued my stiff driving and flying all over the place with a heavy computer case hanging from my right shoulder.

Five years later I was back in the USA, my neck no looser, but driving now on the "right" side of the road again. The pain was now chronic and, given that I was "retired" and had more time on my hands, I could devote more attention to finding relief. Again, I sought out the usual suspects - acupuncture, deep tissue massage, chiropractic. There were some signs of relieve at times, and the treatments were pleasant enough. The practitioners were all professional, dedicated and solicitous. But within a few hours of a treatment, or at best a day later, the stricture would be back and the pain, which was now concentrated on the right side of the neck and upper back along the band of muscles between the shoulders. I was also struggling with depression. The transition into retirement was not going well.

I had taken a massage class at the local massage school, The Monterey Institute of Touch, in Carmel Valley. I was actually thinking about becoming a certified massage therapist, but my right hand and arm were slowly losing functionality due to an advanced case of Dupuytren's contracture and some sort of bursitis in the ligaments. When I wanted to find a trigger point practitioner -- not that I knew exactly what a "trigger point" was -- I called the Institute and asked for a referral. They gave me Arthur Munyer's name and number. Arthur had apparently taught classes for MIT in the past. He lived, I was told, in Carmel, just a few minutes from my home in Pacific Grove.

During our sessions, Arthur was dressed in loosely fitting cotton clothing with a yogi prayer bead necklace around his neck. Barefoot, he sat on a sheepskin cloth draped over his chair. I sat opposite him about a foot away. His hair was graying at the temples and swept back over his forehead. His features were pleasant and avuncular. The room we sat in was warm, sunny, and filled with paraphernalia --- rocks, statues of Buddha, a small fountain, pictures of yogis, drawings of chakras, crystals and singing glass and metal bowls. The smell of namchampa incense seemed to permeate everything.

Arthur was lively, quick witted, a bit like a friendly leprechaun might be. We connected quickly; he seemed very comfortable with me and I with him. As I have said, we talked the entire first session, over an hour. I was slightly nonplussed about that, but, he said he had occasionally worked with people and obtained "release" without physical touch. I was not at the time clear about how he could do that. Over the next year, however, meeting 20 to 25 times, I came to understand and better appreciate "The Munyer Method."

It soon became clear that my neck problem was really symptomatic, or perhaps referral, rather than organic. The contraction in neck and shoulder muscles and the connecting muscles in the mid and lower back were my body's reaction to "trauma." The only way, according to Arthur to release these muscles in a lasting way was to go into wherever the trauma originated -- in any of my four bodies -- and release it. By this, Arthur did not mean going back into the stories of my trauma. A recounting of events or circumstances that had been traumatic (hurtful, frightening, or distressful in any way) would, more than likely, re-trigger, even reinforce the original trauma. What Arthur wanted to do was to locate where the trauma was lodged now and allow it to release. This was of necessity to be a gentle, non-forced or invasive search and release process, since any effort to expose or treat the trauma would be met with resistance, compaction and fail to allow the body to heal itself.

Arthur's premise, and the premise of somatic experience healing, is that the body knows how to heal itself, if given the opportunity. A broken bone re-knits itself, cut skin rejoins. So too for the nervous system where psychological trauma resides. However, the key is providing a healing space, and environment for the body or the soul to do its work of release.

But first there has to be a discovery process that opens the door to healing. With Arthur, this process always began with here and now orientation. "Take a look around the room. Let your eyes go where they want to. What do you notice?" This exercise pulls the attention into the present and allows or encourages the mind to let go of whatever it may be obsessed with. You

would think that those thoughts and feelings would be where Arthur would start looking for the trauma. This is where, for the most part, talk therapies begin: "Tell me how you feel," or "What's on your mind?" and out comes the stories about how bad the marriage is, how horrible the boss is behaving, how much finances are a problem, or how sad one is feeling over the loss of a pet or a loved one.

But Arthur wants me to let go of these surface level tapes -- after all, since they are on the surface, if they had anything valuable to contribute to the healing process it would be readily obvious. Instead, after bringing the mind and attention into the present and allowing it to focus on something it finds interesting and presumably pleasant or at least non-confrontational or non-threatening, Arthur wants to know about what has happened during the past 24 hours that was enjoyable or pleasant, that brought joy or pleasure.

Given my generally depressive state at the start of my work with Arthur, it was not all that easy at first to find anything to recount about the past 24 hours that was joyful or pleasant. Sitting with the question was a bit confronting; but after a few seconds of silence, I was usually able to come up with at least one thing that had happened that I felt good about.

Whatever it was, Arthur fastened out it like a dog playing with a tasty bone. "Nice. Tell me more about that? How did that make you feel? Where in your body did you feel that? Have you ever felt that way before? When? Tell me about it." Etc.

After a few minutes of recalling whatever I could recollect that was pleasant, I found myself relaxing. Arthur's inquiries, his encouragement to dwell on the positive and his playful deflection of my attention away from my troubles or complaints had a generally soothing effect, though in the beginning, I still had trouble letting go of my stories and recitations of woe and grief.

At some point, usually a few minutes into the session, he would interrupt whatever I was saying and point out a subtle movement I was making. "Do that again," he would say. Usually, I had no conscious awareness of the particular movement or motion. It might be a shrug of my shoulder, an extension of my neck, a gesture of my hand or a shake or twist of my foot. He would replay the movement for me and then have me repeat it. "Slow it down," he would say. "Way down," until I would be barely moving at all. "Close your eyes," he would instruct, "and see if anything comes up when you do that. Any images, thoughts, feelings? Anything at all."

Frequently I would sit silently moving my arm or leg slowly in repetition of the movement he had focused on. My mind would wander seemingly aimlessly from memory of the past to situations in the present. After a while, he would ask again, "Does anything come up for you as you do that (the micro movement)?" I would, after a pause launch into something that had come to my mind. It could have been about my first marriage which had ended in divorce and which shook me to my roots. Or about my current feelings of depression or anxiety over financial security or marital conflict. These were my primary concerns at the time: Where was income going to come from now that I wasn't working, and the lack of congruity and harmony I felt in my marriage.

Usually the process followed the same path: whatever I mentioned, the question would be asked:

"What does that feel like?" or "Where do you feel that?" At first I had trouble identifying feelings. I knew only extremes of negative feelings: despair, rage, frustration, anxiety. But I was much less aware of positive ones.

Arthur kept insisting that many of the things I named, confusion, or hopelessness, were either not really feelings or were subcategories of the five feeling states, like the five primary colors: fear, anger, sadness, joy or love. Eventually I learned to penetrate the intellectual labels I attached to my feelings and identify them in these terms. Mostly they were fear, anger, and sadness. Very little of the positive feelings seemed to be active.

Arthur dismissed medical labels (i.e., depression) as unnecessary and unhelpful. I tended to agree with him and saw how putting a diagnosis on one's mental state, while it might be useful for insurance purposes, served to lock one into that particular condition. Rather, Arthur argued, go ahead and feel the feelings without judging or labeling them. These feeling states, especially the negative ones, seemed to be indicators of the presence of traumatic material -- like the clicks of a Geiger counter register the presence of radioactive material.

Once we were into a space or area with a charge, the process was in general a diffusing or decompressing of the trauma site. Having been led to the site through an unconscious body movement we would simply sit with it, allowing whatever came up to come up. Sometimes this could be more intense feelings which might lead to tears, shouts or laughter. This phase of the process was the discharge. It was usually very subtle with no cataclysmic release complete with extreme emotional demonstration. Usually the discharge was so subtle that at first, I hardly recognized it as such. Perhaps yawning or a tremor of the hand, or a feeling of heat or flush on the face. At the beginning, I thought it was the room temperature that had changed and did not realize that instead it was my body releasing some stored compacted energy.

The concept of discharge and of movement of energy is crucial in the Munyer Method. Distress of all kinds is a function of stuck energy. The fixation might be physical -- a muscle network in spasm or constriction, mental -- a belief system or thought pattern that has lodged itself in the mind and controls or impedes freedom of thought; emotional -- a fixation or obsession that has attached itself to some person or event in our lives and lives on in a cluster of feeling states associated consciously or unconsciously, with that person or event. The Munyer Method aims to dislodge such fixed points, release the bound up energy, resulting in more flexibility, empowerment, and freedom to live in the present moment with positive feelings (joy or love).

My own work with Arthur took us into all these places. While my initial symptoms had been the stiffness in my neck and shoulders, I discovered many other areas of stiffness and contraction in my feelings, mental and spiritual being.

My feelings about my mother are perhaps a good example of what I am talking about. One day, through a series of associations linked to a particular movement of my body -- I believe it was a slight lifting of my foot -- I was led to recollect my mother.

I have carried a great deal of bitterness toward my mother. She has seemed to me to have been

(she died in 1995) a controlling, manipulative, self-pitying martyr, someone never satisfied with anything, hyper critical, unable to enjoy herself or her life. For about as long as I can remember, my feelings whenever I thought of her were a blend of guilt and anger: I know I'm supposed to love my mother, and at some level I'm sure I do, but my initial thoughts and feelings are all negative.

For some reason, Arthur asks me to tell him about Mother. I start off down the negative track, about how hard she pushed me and my brothers, how nothing was ever good enough for her, how she complained bitterly of having no friends but did nothing but criticize the ones she had. About how she nagged my father all the time. He interrupts me: "I don't want to hear about that," he says. "Tell me something you liked about your mother."

For a moment I'm stuck. Nothing comes to mind. I go blank, numb. I take a deep breath, sigh, and close my eyes. I feel hopeless: I can recollect nothing positive about my mother? Then I remember a photograph of her as a young woman. She is very pretty. Her hair is full and curly, her skin lustrous, her eyes dark and romantic. She looks a bit like Ingrid Bergman in *Casablanca*. I feel myself soften in the shoulders a bit. I tell Arthur about the picture. "That's nice," he says. "What else?"

I remember once when she accompanied me and a group of my junior high school friends in a production of *Peter and the Wolf*. It was for Spanish class so we called it "Pedro y el Lobo." I was the conductor, Mother played the piano. It was great fun: my friends Terry on the French horn, Robert on the clarinet, Danny on the oboe, and Eric dressed up like a wolf. I'm starting to smile remembering it. The theme song comes into my head: Daa daa de dum ta da, de dum ta da da dum ta da da, daa da da daa, da da daa daa daa. I mention it. Arthur says to hum it. I do. Next thing I know I'm smiling, warmth is filling my chest; there is some joy in my heart.

"Tell me more about your mother," Arthur urges. I now recall what a great cook she was, especially fried chicken (at least before she started taking off the skin). And tiny fresh river shrimp, lightly flowered and quick fried. We ate them head, tail and all. And how she was a genius at managing money. And how she bought me new clothes when I went off to college. And how she comforted me during a time of marital crisis.

Now I'm weeping in gratitude and love for my mother. What had been a black hole of anger and bitterness has become a soft, warm, loving cluster of recollection. The field has shifted, energy has begun to move, and something locked and blocked has opened up.

After a few minutes I open my eyes and reorient to the room. We move to the table and Arthur begins to work on my neck, shoulder and arm. He works deeply and smoothly, finding points and knots of tension, holding them, smoothing them, pressing them until there is a release. I am letting go of things I didn't even know I was holding. We have moved from the emotional body into the physical and the transition was natural, connected. It's not all about my Mother, but she was a portal into a place of fear and anger. Now there has been some light brought into that place, some cleansing energy and breath. I feel lighter, less rigid, softer. My neck is more flexible.

According to Arthur, what we were dealing with in this session is a compaction of emotional residue, a trace of un-discharged emotions from the past, a past in which my reactions to my Mother were not expressed or released, probably due to guilt or simple fear. To criticize or even think poorly of one's mother – surely that is unacceptable for a young boy raised in the 40's and 50's in the rural South. Mother knew best in those days; the South was, after all, a matriarchy after the Civil War first claimed and then decimated the adult (and not so adult) males, leaving women to fend for themselves. When they noticed that they were quite capable of fending for themselves, they were, understandably, reluctant to hand over the reins to surviving men folk, many of whom were, if not crippled, shell-shocked and ignominiously defeated. And so, even though the war had ended more than 100 years earlier, women still held dominant family if not public roles. Men were tasked with making a living and looking after civic activities; women ran the home, including child and financial management.

My mother was probably typical of women of her generation: bred to take charge of situations, make the best of limited resources, make practical decisions, avoid disaster and disgrace at all costs, and, most importantly, raise the children.

I was the eldest; therefore it was my job to be perfect. I had to set the example, toe the line in every area, be polite, be clean, be tidy, get good grades and never, never, never do anything to embarrass the family. Pictures of me as a child show a well scrubbed, hair slicked down, very serious young man, standing beside his mother as if to say "This family is my job too." (My father, a musician and much too impractical to know anything about anything except music and fishing had bowed out of the scene, leaving the raising of three boys and all financial management to my mother.)

It is certainly natural to suppose that I harbored not a little outrage at the expectations that were being ladled into my plate, and a lot of resentment that I couldn't be bad without getting a good switching, with a switch, by the way, that I had to fetch myself from the cherry tree outside. I'm sure Mother meant well. She had, after all, a big job to do: enculturate three unruly boys. There was no "abuse" with a capital "A." No alcoholism or obvious addictions and traumas. Just a subtle and not so subtle atmosphere of expectation. A pressure to be good, if not perfect, and fulfill all the expectations of malehood: good grades, athletic prowess, musical performance skills (in my case), socially adept, and, to top it off, "a good Christian" (Protestant, in my case). And throughout it all, there was an understanding that boys don't cry, boys don't feel hurt, boys don't play with dolls. In short, a mold that no authentic person was ever meant to fit into, but into which Mother felt obliged to squeeze me.

All this was aggravated by the fact that my little brother, three years younger, was a complete and utter failure at everything. He was thought to be retarded, or schizophrenic, or worse, a pervert. His divergences made my conformance all the more important: It was up to me to do it right. To carry the family honor.

This systemic oppression took its toll on a free spirited, intelligent, sensitive boy. He came to believe that it was all about him – maybe he was even responsible for his little brother's deficiencies; maybe he was responsible for the financial tightness that permeated the home; maybe he was responsible for his mother's loneliness. The residue of those feelings was a

negative emotional charge focused on and directed at my mother, though NEVER expressed directly. I'm sure she felt my resentment and impatience, but she probably never realized it had to do with her. I probably didn't either. The inner conflict created by my hostility and anger compared to what I was "allowed" to express or act out was lodged in my body and in my mind. No warm and nurturing images or feelings for me around my mother; just anger and resentment, coloring everything, clouding everything.

Arthur helped me shift the field, to bring from background to foreground those positive things about my mother that I had blocked from my mind in order to reduce the inner conflict. The mind hates conflict. It will do almost anything to resolve it. In my case, it resolved it by painting my mother black, all black. Her positive qualities, her beauty, her musicality, her frugality, cooking skills, sense of humor, were all pushed aside by the negative tilt of my selective memory which left me with a very one sided version of my mother. Arthur's prompting allowed me to enter an alternative version, one in which I could have positive feelings toward her. By leading me into positive images and memories, he helped me release some of the emotional debris that I had piled up over Mother's memories. Now I can see her as a whole person, flawed, but beautiful, brilliant in her way, ingenious, resourceful, adaptive, committed and willing to sacrifice anything and everything to her family. I could still feel sadness for her loneliness and bitter spirit. I could regret all the failed opportunities to share love and joy with her; but I could also celebrate the life she lived and the opportunities we had in which we did laugh together, struggle together, weep together over some potential or actual catastrophe facing the family.

When we moved to the physical body, there was a new openness. The rigid muscles of my neck and shoulder were beginning to soften, the knots of tendon or fascia seemed a little less enflamed or tender, the bands of muscle a little more open to stretching. This is what four-body body work is about: being able to work in the mental, emotional, or spiritual bodies and unravel complexes and knots that have their counterpart in the physical. I could have spent years in talk therapy unraveling the mysteries of my feelings about my mother and how they may have been contributory to chronic depression; I can also practice anger discharge through psychodrama and release; I can also go to a chiropractor or masseuse and have my neck cracked or smoothed. But that day, in one session, we had opened a channel for healing, reoriented my thinking to allow for love where there had only been anger, and then gone into the physical body to reinforce the unraveling and facilitate the undoing of cumulative low-level but debilitating trauma. Not bad for a single session.

Another time we explored my religious experiences that had led me to spend 18 years in a fundamentalist cult. This time the inner imaging was directly connected with my body: the pain in my right shoulder presented itself in my mind as if it were from a hook lodged there. The hook, it turned out, was a belief I was carrying from that experience, a belief that God had hooked me and would not let me go. The hook became a meat hook and it was lodged in my back. The session started with me complaining about my shoulder again. "There is a sharp pain," I said, "just over the top of my right collarbone, below and to the right of my neck. It feels," I say, "as if there were a large fish-hook or one of those meat house hooks lodged there. It almost burns." Arthur follows normal procedure and has me center myself by glancing around the room, letting my attention fall where it may. "What do you notice," he asks? I cite a Buddha statue, a bell, and the red-green of the leaves outside. "Tell me about something pleasant that went on for

you during the past 24 hours.” I sigh, close my eyes. “I read a good article in The New Yorker,” I say.

“Oh?” says Arthur. “What was it about?”

“About Bonobos,” I say. “About studying Bonobos in Africa.”

“What made it pleasant for you,” asks Arthur.

“Just the idea of these amazing creatures living in trees and acting pretty loving to each other. They French kiss, you know.”

“No, I didn’t know,” says Arthur. “And how does thinking about that make you feel?”

“Well,” I say, “they say we’re descended from the same ancestor, Bonobos and us. And so it’s just nice to hear about a loving ancestor instead of a violent, survivalist killer ancestor for a change.” I smiled and shrugged my shoulder.

“Do that again,” says Arthur.

“Do what?” I say.

“Move your shoulder like you did, only more slowly.” I hunch my shoulder up toward my right ear. “More slowly,” says Arthur. I move my right shoulder up and down in slow motion, My concentration shifts inwards to my soma. “Any feelings or images come up for you when you do that?” Arthur asks. I sit quietly for a few seconds, my shoulder still moving minutely up and down, my eyes closed, a serious frown on my face.

“Yeah,” I say, “it’s like a damn hook or something in there, tugging away at me.”

“What’s the hook?” asks Arthur.

“Religion,” I say. “It’s got me hooked. I can’t shake it off.”

”Do you want to shake it off?” asks Arthur.

“Yeah, I’m sick of it. It’s such a pain! Literally!” I say, with emotion.

“Well,” asks Arthur, “who put it there?”

“I donno,” I say, morosely. “My parents, I guess. “

“Your parents put this religious hook into your shoulder” says Arthur.

“Yeah,” I say. “Ever since I was born – always talking about God and Jesus and Joseph and Mary – and about sins and going to hell....”

“So they’ve got this hook in you now?” asks Arthur.

“Well, not really. They’re dead. But I’ve still got the hook...like a splinter of the true cross, stuck in my back.”

“Why don’t we talk to this hook, or splinter, or whatever it is. Ask it what it’s doing there.”

I hesitate for a moment. I realize that we are now doing some gestalt roll play visualization process. It takes me a minute to get into the idea that I can actually speak to an image of some part of my physical or emotional body. Then I speak to the hook. “What are you doing there?”

“Trying to keep you from getting away,” says the hook, or rather I say on behalf of the hook.

“Getting away from what?” I ask.

“From God. From your spiritual path,” says the hook.

“So did you ask for help in staying on your spiritual path?” asks Arthur.

“Yeah,” I say, “I guess I did.”

“Do you still want this help?” asks Arthur.

“No!” I reply emphatically. “It’s not helping any more, if it ever did.”

“So who put the hook there,” asks Arthur again.

“I guess God did,” I say.

“Why don’t you ask him,” says Arthur.

“Ask God?” I say.

“Sure,” responds Arthur.

“But what if He doesn’t answer me?”

“Then you’ll have to answer for Him, I guess,” says Arthur.

“OK,” I say. “Ah, hello God – I got a question for you. Did you put this hook in my neck?”

“No, I didn’t,” answers God.

“Then who did?” I ask.

“I’m afraid you did,” says God.

“I was afraid of that,” I say, and laugh. “OK,” I say. “So how do I get rid of it?”

“Why don’t you ask it to go,” says Arthur, “or even better, tell it to go. After all it’s there because you invited it there – so you can tell it to leave.”

I ponder this for a moment, sigh and slump back into my seat.

“What’s that?” asks Arthur. “What’s going on?”

“It’s just not that easy,” I say. “I’ve tried and tried to get rid of this pain; I’ve rebuked it and exorcised it and massaged it and acupuncture it – and it still won’t leave.”

“Why not just tell it to?” Arthur suggests.

I sigh again, close my eyes, and take a deep breath. “Good,” says Arthur, “breathe into it.” I sit quietly for a few seconds and then speak to myself in a soft, gently almost mournful voice.

“Look, I think I know what you’re doing. I know you think you’re protecting me – saving me – from all sorts of bad shit. And I appreciate your intentions – there were mine, after all. But, but now,” I hesitate, “I don’t want you to be doing that any more. You’ve done your job as you saw fit – they best you could, I’m sure – but now it’s time to go.”

“Are you sure?” asks the hook.

“I’m sure,” I say, my voice calm and peaceful, secure and informed. “So leave. Now.”

We sit together silently for a few moments.

“So what are you feeling? Any sensations? Images? Thoughts?” asks Arthur.

“Just heat. My face is hot and my palms are sweating,” I say.

“Discharge,” says Arthur. “Energy moving. Releasing. Fantastic!”

After a minute I open my eyes and look at Arthur who sits opposite him smiling. “Look around the room Let your eyes notice what they want to. Do you notice anything different?”

I allow my glance to move around the studio. The sun has moved from the top of Buddha’s head into his lap. A crystal swings gently in the breeze and from outside comes the sound of a wind chime and a barking dog. I breathe in deeply, blink and smiles. I hunch my right shoulder.

“Let’s go to the table and do some work on that shoulder,” says Arthur.

In the course of my work with Arthur, I began to have migraine headaches. They had appeared before and been diagnosed by a neurologist as cluster headaches, a particularly brutal sort of

head pain that come in clusters over the period of ten days or two weeks and then stop. Six months or a year later they return. They generally occur in the same physical location and, during their period, at the same time of day. Mine came in my right temple, and the only way I can describe the pain is to say that it was as if an ice pick was being driven into my skull. The devilish part about cluster headaches is that they come on quickly, with no warning, and no pain remedy works quickly enough to reduce the pain before it naturally dissipates. During the headache I am virtually incapacitated, unable to function, totally blinded by the pain. My first experience of these headaches had occurred when I was twenty one, and they had returned at least once a year ever since. The only remedy medical science could offer was a dose of prednisone, a powerful steroid, which broke the cycle and stopped the headaches at least for that particular attack cluster.

When I described these headaches to Arthur he suggested that I try connecting with someone at the moment of the headache. Physical touch, he said, is a great healer. Usually all I want to do when one of these headaches hits is crawl into a hole and die. Extreme compaction. Arthur had used this kind of touch -- not body work -- at several times when I had become emotionally overwhelmed during a session. He would reach out and take my hand and say "Look at me." It always brought me out of whatever overwhelming emotional state I was in, and as if the charge was drained out of me by the connection with another person. I had never thought to try connecting during a headache. But it was certainly worth a try, since the only remedy medicine had to offer was a dose of steroids. I never had a headache during a session with Arthur, but I did have occasion to put connecting into practice.

One night I was at a play with my wife when the headache began. We were sitting with friends toward the front of the theater. As the headache came on, I began to writhe in pain and contract into my seat. Then I recalled Arthur's suggestion. It was impossible to explain what I was doing, but I simply reached over and took my wife's hand and put it on my temple where the throbbing pain was. She looked at me with surprise but must have thought it was some sort of gesture of affection.

I pressed her hand against my temple and closed my eyes. The pain throbbed for a moment longer, then slowly subsided. In two or three minutes I was pain free. The next night the headache returned while we were at home preparing for bed. I asked her to put her hand on my temple. She did, and in a minute or two the pain receded. I have not had a cluster headache since.

Touch, loving, caring touch, creates a space of calm. Tense muscles relax, allowing blood to flow through formerly constricted vessels and arteries. Oxygen reaches cells that were formerly deprived. This psysio-chemical process probably underlies the healing effect I experienced. I later learned to administer the healing to myself but in the beginning, when the mind believes such healing is impossible and wants to take a drug to obtain relief, the physical presence of another who communicates through the touch loving concern and comfort seems to be a requirement.

In a deep and profound way, relaxing is a core element of the Munyer Method. Relaxing the constricted muscle tissue on the physical level; relaxing the emotional tangles and intellectual knots we have acquired or created along the way. Arthur works as a coach first to identify these

compactions and then to shift energy away from holding them in place to a release and discharge of energy that leaves one in a more flexible, joyful or loving state.

One session sometime after the work we did on the “hook” in my shoulder, we continued our work on the spiritual level. I had spent most of my adult life as a spiritual seeker. In and out of various spiritual practices, including a relationship with a spiritual master who lived in India (Meher Baba), various new age practices (especially Actualizations, the est spinoff) all of which stemmed from the Mind Dynamics of L. Ron Hubbard (though I was never a member of the Church of Scientology) and a 18 year experience of charismatic Christianity (which unfortunately evolved into a fundamentalist cult with sociopathic leadership). Launched into these pursuits at first by some transcendental experiences obtained under the influence of psychotropic drugs (LSD, mescaline, marijuana) I had sought enlightenment, god-realization, and a spirit-led life, only to find myself frustrated, disillusioned, despairing of spiritual fulfillment. By the time I came to work with Arthur, I had almost given up all spiritual practice, having concluded that my goals were unreachable. Part of my depression clearly related to this state of mind. Hopelessness and a deep sense of failure lay not too far beneath the surface for me, and though I still longed for spiritual fulfillment, I was pretty certain I would never find it.

This particular session Arthur took an unusual track and directly asked me about traumatic moments in my past. I told him the two most traumatic events of my life were the disillusion of my first marriage (which we had already talked about) and the prolonged experience of being in the Christian community. He asked me why I felt so bad in that experience. I told him it was because it seemed to me that everybody else was getting it and I wasn't; that my own deepest beliefs were at odds with what I avowed and participated in on a daily basis; that all the effort I was putting into being a good, spirit-led born again Christian were of no use. I was a hypocrite, a fraud, and lived in horrible conflict with myself, outwardly conforming to beliefs and following leadership while inwardly feeling alienated, alone and totally compromised.

He asked why I had joined the group in the first place and I told him in essence because I was miserable, on the verge of a second divorce, and the group provided emotional comfort and support. He asked me if there was any time at all during my time with the group that I felt good about. There were many good times, I said, fun filled and spiritually uplifting. But then I remember one particular incident.

This had occurred several years into my involvement in the community. Much had happened -- some good, so not good -- and my commitment to the church and its current leadership was deeply conflicted. In those days, I felt this conflict was more about my relationship with God and the Christian faith than about the particular personalities who ran the community. I assumed that they spoke for God and their interpretation of events and application of scripture was God-inspired and God-led. The doubts I felt, therefore, were not at that point about the leadership but about my own capacity to "keep the faith." I was actually quite deluded about this, but at the time, it seemed to me that I was the problem: if only I had more faith, was stronger, more committed, or less selfish, I would not be in turmoil over what was happening. (I have recounted the particulars of this experience in a book called "From Community to Cult: A Cautionary Tale.")

On this particular afternoon, on my way home from work, I felt such desperation that I decided to confess my doubts and fears to the leadership and invite the rebuke and correction that I anticipated from this revelation. I drove to the home of the pastors, a wife and husband, and literally threw myself on the floor of their living room, wailing and crying. "I can't do this," I said. "I have too many doubts about what is happening. I'm just not worthy to be here." They listened in silence for a few moments and then, with what seemed to me to be great compassion and love, embraced me and comforted me. "You are doing it," they said, and Pastor Gloria quoted a scripture that affirmed that I was accepted by God even with all my fears and doubts. I was dumbfounded with relief. I had expected to be expelled and judged (as others had been) but instead I was accepted and comforted. I wept with joy and was filled with a sudden peace. (Unfortunately that state did not survive long, and the conflict and doubt returned, eventually leading to a break with the community.)

I told Arthur about this episode. He listened and asked if I had ever felt that way before or after. I said the closest I had ever come was once years earlier when I was active in a New Age practices. I had attended an Enlightenment Intensive led by a friend at the time who was an ardent yogi. The intensive was a weekend affair at which a group of 15 to 20 people spent three days in sequential sessions in which we sat facing another participant who asked over and over again "Tell me who you are," after which we responded with whatever thoughts or feelings came up. This was endlessly repeated, the questioner giving no response whatever to our answers. Eventually I reached a frenzy of frustration -- anger, fear, despair -- all because I was unable to respond definitively to the instruction "Tell me who you are."

All the stories, autobiographical, career histories, personal self-descriptions seemed empty, false and hollow. My partner patiently repeated the request after each attempt to answer it: "Tell me who you are." Finally after hours of this ritual, I simply broke. "I'm just me," was my final answer, and with it came a flood of tears and a huge release of energy, followed by a high of joy and peace. I had had, it seemed, an enlightenment experience.

After listening to me tell these stories, Arthur directed me to look around the room. "What do your eyes notice?" he asked. My eyes fixed on a large crystal singing bowl that sat opposite me. "The bowl," I said.

"What about the bowl," he asked

"It's luminescent, almost glowing, with a soft, frosted white glow."

"How does that make you feel," he asked.

"Cool and warm," I said. "Peaceful."

"Where?" he asked. I touched my heart region.

"Can you imagine that bowl within you?" he asked.

"Yes," I said. "I can see it welling over with a mist like smoke, or water. A crystal well."

"A bowl of enlightenment," he said.

"Yes," I said, "The bowl of enlightenment."

"Why not take that bowl and put it inside yourself," he said. "Imagine it there, glowing, overflowing with water. "

I closed my eyes and visualized the bowl floating over to where I sat and entering into my body, into my chest area. It felt cool and warm at the same time. There was a peace about it. It seemed to hum quietly inside my chest.

"Now," Arthur continued, "you can always find your enlightenment just by going to your bowl."

When I first started visiting Arthur Munyer over a year ago, I had been looking for "trigger point" massage. During our first session we had talked, but there had been no massage or body contact of any kind. When I later asked Arthur what he had observed about me on our first meeting, he said he had noticed immediately that I was "in my head" a lot, a comment I have heard often before. He also noticed that I exuded an air of defeat or discouragement. When he later did work on my neck, he saw how contracted and stiff it was, and sensed, he said, that I was willing to take more pain that was necessary. He encouraged me to say "Stop!" if his manipulations were painful. In general, he said it seemed as if I was carrying a heavy weight on my shoulders; that there were traumas being carried in my body derived from something in childhood, a failed marriage or career, negative feelings about my current situation, including my marriage, financial worries, and some grief over the death of a good friend. He also sensed a high level of spontaneity and intuition in me, and a deep interest in spiritual or religious things. He also sensed my openness to new things and willingness to work in new ways to find healing and grow spiritually.

In the course of a year of working together we developed a friendship based on common interests and values. I became interested in understanding the theoretical nature of his work and he was eager to share the theory and practice of "The Munyer Method". During the year of sessioning, we covered a great many of my life issues and explored a wide range of topics. I learned more about the medical origins of trigger point release work as developed by Travell and others. In Arthur's hands-on physical body work he sought out "trigger points" of contracted tissue and palpated them, looking for referred pain to other parts of the body which might reveal the sources of the pain point. He applied deep tissue pressure to my neck, shoulders and middle and lower back in order to stimulate release of contracted muscles. He stretched my neck through various degrees of stretch in an effort to loosen the stiffness.

But from the beginning the emphasis was more on the internal trauma release work that Arthur was pursuing. He shared with me the materials from the courses he was taking with the Somatic Experience Institute under the direction of Peter Levin [6] . This method uses the body's involuntary or unconscious movements to unearth trauma; but it is not focused on the physical body per se, only as a means to an end: release of the buried trauma.

One of the major themes that emerged for me from our sessions was the importance of connection in my life, whether through family or extended community, as a necessary component in healing and personal growth. We explored my own family in depth, dealing with my parents, siblings, wives and children. Spirituality was a large theme on our work, and it came up in both negative (as described in writing about the "hook" in my back) and positive dimensions (e.g., the work on enlightenment). My financial anxieties, passed on through my parents, were a frequent topic, as well as matters of sexuality, drug use, and stressful family circumstances.

After a year, it was obvious that I was in better shape. I was more confident, less moody, less depressed (I had stopped taking anti-depressants), more relaxed and, in general, happier. Overall, I felt better about myself. There was more joy and less worry. My neck was still stiff, though the pain center had moved down into my shoulders and I did have a wider range of motion. I came to feel that Arthur did not seem all that interested in dealing with my physical body. And so I began to explore other forms of actual body work: "Somatics" as presented by Thomas Hanna, a student of Moshe Feldenkrais, and Feldenkrais methods themselves. I also began to work with the healing mode of Marian Rosen, or the Rosen Method. My deep involvement in the Breakthrough Men's Community of Monterey has contributed enormously to my healing on many many levels as well.

A radical change had taken place in my financial life, and how this happened seems to me to illustrate in an unusual way, the essence of The Munyer Method, though, paradoxically, it had nothing to do with physical body work. Through inheritance on both my side and my wife's side of the family, we owned several properties. However, we had little or no income, and the properties did not generate enough to cover remaining mortgages and expenses. All of the properties had sentimental and historical value, but were obviously financial burdens. And yet I had a lot of resistance to selling any of them. We had come close in a couple of cases, but for some reason, could not complete the transaction. Housing prices were falling, and negative amortization was cannibalizing our equity. And, there was no income to pay day to day expenses.

One day I came to a session with lots of worry about my finances. After the usual orientation process, Arthur asked me how I was feeling. Fearful, I responded. (By now, I had learned to identify my feelings in terms of the five feeling states that Arthur says compose all feelings:

Love, Joy, Fear, Anger, or Sadness.) "I'm feeling really afraid that I'm going to be poor, not have enough money to pay the bills, travel, pay for my kids' education."

"But what about your houses? Why don't you sell one of them?" he asked. This was a rather rare example of Arthur actually giving advice. What he was doing, however, was attempting to shift my thinking out of the particular mental cul-de-sac in which I found myself.

I told him we just couldn't get a good offer on one, had taken one off the market because prices in the area had fallen so drastically, and I was worried about the reaction of my brother if I sold our family home which I had bought from him after our parent's had died. "He will be upset," I said, "if I make a lot of profit on the property. He says he sold it to me at a 'discount' so I could eventually retire and live there, not so I could make a lot of money."

"So you're really stuck here, aren't you." he said. "But don't you see you could go ahead and sell one of the properties, even if you don't get top dollar for it, and that would give you a huge financial relief? And if you're worried about your brother, why not give him some of the profit"?

It all made good sense, and I could see how he was trying to untie a mental knot I had got myself into. Selling one place for a few thousand dollars less than it might be worth and sharing some of the gains from the other with my brother would be a small price to pay for the relief of having the equity from these properties available to spend or generate income. That equity was "frozen" in those properties, and not only was it not a benefit; it was actually a liability, emotionally and financially.

Soon after this session, my wife and I agreed to sell one of the properties a bit "below market", and not too long after that, I negotiated a very favorable sale of my family's home; and I sent my brother a check for \$100,000, a "gift" that both relieved my conscience and made him very happy. We are using the cash to generate a very comfortable income through investments.

My sessions with Arthur have become much lighter and happier occasions. We enjoy each other's company very much. If I am burdened with something, he is quick to spot it and we explore where the compaction or "stuckness" is, usually obtaining release in the course of the session. If I ask for physical work, on my neck or shoulder or hip, he is ready to apply his 30 years of massage practice. We talk about our Apple Computer stock trades and laugh a lot. I consider myself to be in a maintenance mode, and value my relationship and connection with Arthur a great deal. I am extremely grateful for his compassion, attention, and skill in helping me discover my own empowerment and releasing the blocks that were lodged in my body, mind and spirit. Arthur and The Munyer Method have been a wonderful stage on my own search for healing.