



ANNA HALPRIN OFFERS THE WISDOM OF HER LIFE EXPERIENCE AS A DANCER, TEACHER AND FACILITATOR FOR HEALING. SHE TELLS HER OWN STORY AS A CANCER SURVIVOR AND THE STORIES OF MANY OTHERS WITH DEEP COMPASSION AND CLARITY. FROM HER OWN UPLIFTING PERSPECTIVE, THIS BOOK SERVES AS A GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING THE EMOTIONAL PROCESSES OF A HEALTH CRISIS, AS WELL AS GIVING CLEAR GUIDELINES FOR HOW TO WORK WITH THESE INSIGHTS.

RETURNING TO HEALTH

WITH DANCE, MOVEMENT AND IMAGERY

ANNA HALPRIN



RETURNING TO HEALTH is a powerful tool for anyone who wants to find joy in living with an altered body, a book of wise and healing words from one of America's greatest dancers who personally embodies the potential of celebrating life after cancer.

—Rachel Naomi Remen, M.D.
MEDICAL DIRECTOR, COMMONWEALTH CANCER HELP PROGRAM
AUTHOR, "KITCHEN TABLE WISDOM: STORIES THAT HEAL"

ANNA HALPRIN, Ph.D., is a pioneer in the field of dance as a healing art and has been teaching and performing with people with cancer, AIDS, and other life-threatening illnesses for the past fifteen years. She is co-founder of the Tamalpa Institute in Kentfield, California and the founder of the San Francisco Dancers' Workshop. Her numerous awards include the prestigious American Dance Festival Award for Lifetime Achievement in Modern Dance. She teaches in her Mountain Home Studio in Kentfield, California and tours the U.S.A. and abroad. She is the author of *Moving Towards Life*, *Movement Ritual*, and *The Circle the Earth Manual*.



C O P Y R I G H T

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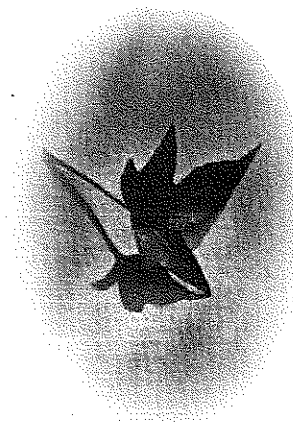
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D E D I C A T I O N

TO ALL THOSE LIVING WITH CANCER AND THEIR LOVED ONES

WHO HAVE LEARNED TO COPE WITH THEIR FEAR,

ENDURE THEIR PAIN, AND FIND THE

COURAGE TO CONTINUE.



Anna Halprin dances with a man playing the harmonica.

I N T R O D U C T I O N

As I continued teaching, it became apparent that the experience of movement connected to feelings generates long-buried and unknown emotions and images. When these emotions and images are expressed through movement, we dance. And when these dances are connected to our lives, they bring about dramatic release and change in our will to live. — A N N A H A L P R I N

B R I E F H I S T O R Y

I was born in Winnetka, Illinois in 1920. I have danced for as long as I can remember, and I have also had cancer and survived. So in 1980, when my friend and former student Maggie Creighton asked me to join her staff at the Cancer Support and Education Center in Menlo Park, California to offer a movement and dance session for people living with cancer, I did not hesitate to say yes. Turning to dance as a healing art had helped me, and healed me, and taught me some of the greatest lessons of my life. I remembered my own struggle with cancer and was happy to have a chance to share what I had learned with other people experiencing the same illness.

Dance as a healing art is traditional in many non-Western cultures, but this application of dance has been obscured and ignored in the Western world. I think this is a great loss and I believe we must reclaim what has been forgotten as we learn more about healing, illness, and death. When Maggie asked me to teach at her center, I embarked on this quest of reclamation. At that time, I didn't know why dance healed, I only knew that it did. The ways I had used dance in my own healing process were derived from a largely intuitive source, so I knew that if I wanted this work to be useful to others, I would have to find simple and direct road maps to lead the way. This book is about some of the maps I have discovered so far, and how I have applied them in practice.

The Cancer Support and Education Center's approach to healing cancer is to engage the whole person by emphasizing psychotherapeutic techniques, guided imagery, meditation, and other mind/body-based therapies. In keeping with this approach to the body, in my workshops I introduced sensory awareness exercises, and expressive movement and dance to the people at the Center. I knew from their first responses that this approach enabled us to go deeply, to a level beyond and below words. Insights into primary life issues and illness were revealed through dance in profound and unique ways that stretched past rational thought. And despite the difficulty of people's circumstances, we had fun! Participants were able to laugh as well as cry. They were pleased with their creativity, and quickly understood that movement and dance was accessible to them. In addition, they felt better and their life force was heightened. These early sessions encouraged me to continue exploring the healing power of dance. I very much wanted to reclaim this forgotten art and explore its enormous possibilities.

M O V I N G T O W A R D L I F E

While still teaching at the Cancer Center, I furthered my explorations of dance as a healing art in a series of ongoing classes sponsored by the Tamalpa Institute. The Tamalpa Institute, co-founded by myself and Daria Halprin-Khalighi, is a center for expressive arts education. Beginning in 1986 and continuing up to the present time, Tamalpa has been sponsoring a program called Moving Toward Life for people living with cancer, their caregivers, and health professionals in the field. These classes are accessible to men and women of all backgrounds and economic status. No one is turned away for any reason and over 500 people from all walks of life have taken part in these programs. The results have been inspiring. There is a very high record of cancer survivors and people in remission among the people who have taken the class.

I do not claim that dance can cure a person with cancer, but through these classes, I have seen that dance has the power to heal. Healing is intrinsic to one's outlook on life. Someone with a strong will to live, someone who is willing to believe in the power of dance, someone who is determined and will not give up has a better chance of surviving cancer than someone who blindly follows the advice of her doctors and does not participate in her own healing. People who take an active role in relationship to their doc-

tors, who consider many factors, including diet, prayer, existing complementary therapies, and lifestyle itself, have a better rate of survival. People who survive cancer often have a creative and holistic approach to living, and a sense of adventure. I have found it very stimulating and inspiring to teach people who have this attitude.

D A N C E A S A N I N T E G R A T I V E T H E R A P Y

There is a distinction between "curing" and "healing," which is useful when we approach dance, or any of the arts, as a healing modality. To "cure" is to physically eliminate a disease. In the case of cancer, this is usually done through surgery, chemotherapy, radiation, or other treatments aimed at the physical body. To "heal" is to operate on many dimensions simultaneously, by aiming at attaining a state of emotional, mental, spiritual, and physical health. Healing also addresses the psychological dimension and works with belief systems, whether they are life-enhancing or destructive. It is possible, therefore, that a person with a terminal diagnosis may not be cured, but can be healed, and inversely, that someone can be cured, but not healed. Taken together, the healing process and the curative efforts of standard medicine support both the expansion and extension of life.

It is, of course, our greatest ideal to be both cured and healed. I recall how, after my operation for cancer, my doctor said to me, "You're just fine now. You are cured of cancer. You can live a normal life as before," and I answered him by saying, "That's funny because I don't feel just fine. I'm scared. I don't know why I was stricken with cancer, or what kind of life I can live right now." I had been cured, perhaps, but not healed. For this reason, I personally encourage people to follow an integrated approach to health that is inclusive of Western and so-called "alternative" medicine. I am very careful to make no claim that the work described in this book should be used as one's sole treatment for cancer, or even that it extends life. I am certain, on the other hand, that it does expand or transform the quality of life. There is also intriguing evidence that in some cases, (people who undertake healing processes that make sense to them can extend their lives as well as expand them.)

In the 1970s, Carl O. Simonton, M.D., and Stephanie Matthews-Simonton, psychotherapist, pioneered the use of visualizations with meditation and therapeutic techniques in their treatment of people with terminal cancer. In 1975, this approach to the mind/body connection was not taken seriously. The idea that visualizations could affect the course of an illness was considered ridiculous. Since then, additional research has more than substantiated the validity of their pioneering work. Dr. David Spiegel did a research study in the 1980s at Stanford University that has done much to prove the importance of the mind/body connection to illness. He wanted to disprove the theory that there was a connection between psychotherapy and health, and was amazed instead to find a definite and convincing correlation. His study showed that cancer patients who joined a support group as a adjunct to their medical treatment doubled their survival time.

Dr. Spiegel's study, coming from within the established medical profession, gave credibility to the important link between the way our attitudes and emotions influence our health, an idea I had been exploring through dance since the early 1970s. The acceptance of expressive arts therapy, and dance in particular, as a healing modality is gaining momentum. On December 5, 1996, the *San Francisco Chronicle* carried an article on new directions in the medical scene stating, "Dr. Laura Esserman, a surgeon and co-director of the University of California, San Francisco Breast Care Center, is planning to lead an 'integrated approach' to breast cancer treatment that mixes conventional treatments such as surgery, chemotherapy and radiation with meditation, yoga, dance and art therapies." (*Emphasis mine*). This is progress, indeed.

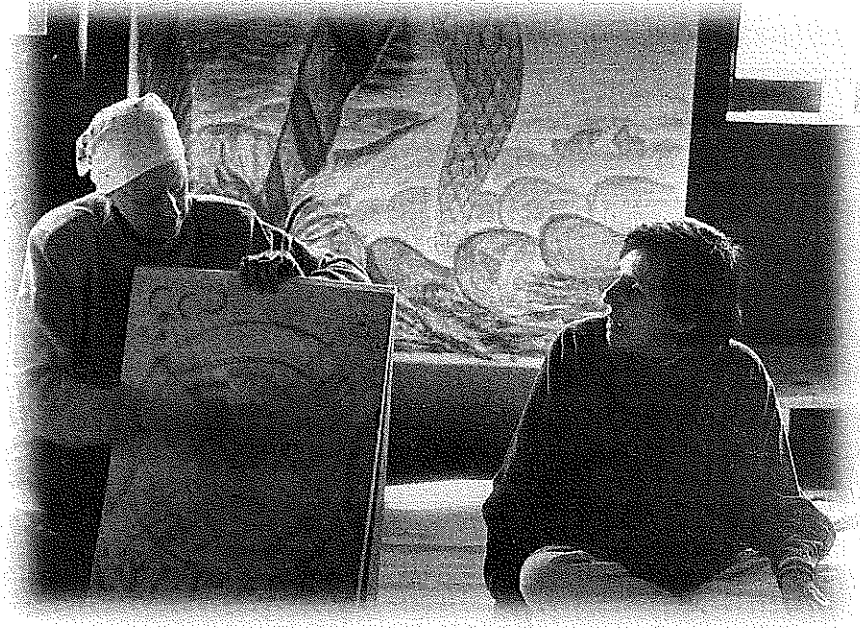
I had been using a combination of drawing images, writing about them, and dancing them with children since 1945 as a method for generating creativity in my children's dance classes. I found the process so intriguing that I began to use it with adults. In 1972, I did a drawing of myself in one of my classes and drew a round gray mass in my pelvic region. Partly because I resisted dancing this image, it struck me that there might be something wrong. It turned out that I had drawn my own malignant tumor. I had an operation and three years later a recurrence. This time, I drew a self-portrait to heal myself and I danced the drawing. Afterwards, I went into spontaneous remission. This may sound strange and unbelievable, but in recent years more and more doctors and therapists acknowledge this phenomenon. The late Dr. Brendan O'Regan, who did his research through the Noetic Science Institute, reported 800 cases of spontaneous remis-

sion. It can and does happen; I do not believe anyone knows exactly how.

The new acceptance of the mind/body connection in the healing process builds a bridge between the fields of expressive arts therapy and Western medicine. This bodes well for an integration of both our intuitive and rational knowledge about healing. It is also a way for expressive arts therapies to become more widely accepted and used by people in this culture, who have mostly been conditioned to believe that the mind and body are separate entities which do not reflect upon one another. The history of cancer research reminds us to appreciate the immensity of what we have yet to learn about the impact of the mind/body connection on the course of illness. The next frontier is to begin to explore the impact of expressive arts therapies, especially dance, in the treatment of illness. Dance seems particularly important because it can engage all the arts: movement, drawing, writing, music, and drama. Dance has a highly integrative nature. Exploring this expressive art modality is a beginning step toward reclaiming the healing power of dance.

As a result of my experiences, the road maps I discovered have taken many new turns. This book represents what I have learned so far. I hope you will be inspired to work in your own way with these materials. I want to encourage you to always engage your own creativity and powers of perception in the creation of classes for people with cancer. I offer a road map to the territory but not the territory itself. To arrive there, you must remain alert to what is unfolding in front of you, and use all your resources to respond to that moment. I want to encourage you to remain sensitive to the central inquiry of this work: How can we create change? How can we use dance to facilitate our healing? How can we access the power of dance to heal? The following chapter will give you background in the basic components, and a theoretical basis of this approach to creative movement.

T H E A P P R O A C H



THE QUALITY OF SHARING IS
RESPECTFUL AND SUPPORTIVE.

When I first started working at the Cancer Center, I didn't know what to expect or how to specifically shape my material. I was encouraged by the responses I got to the movement exercises I presented, and I quickly began to research different ways of using the healing potential of dance. As I began to teach dance sessions in a number of venues, for varying lengths of time, and to different sorts of people at various stages of wellness, I noticed that in spite of the differences, a common thread ran through the classes. I was able to identify the four components I believe are intrinsic to this approach to movement, and which were included in each session I taught. These are the realms of sensation, movement, feelings/emotions, and imagery. Although material regarding all of these aspects will be presented separately in this book, it is important to remember that these components function continually in a mutual feedback process. They cannot, in truth, be separated. Movement affects the way we feel; the way we feel affects the way we move. This in turn feeds the images evoked. In working with dance, a holistic art form, our intention is to help the participant understand herself in an integrated manner.

D E F I N I N G T E R M S

Throughout this book, I make a distinction between the words "sensing," "feeling," and "emotion." The dictionary gives a broad definition of "sensation," including "sentiment, emotion and passion." It also refers to sensation as a way to think of feeling. You might say "feel" this and mean "touch" this. The interchange of these words can be confusing. For our purposes, I would like to define the words as follows:

"Sensing" refers to the physical sensations of the body.

For example, you might ask questions like these to help people bring awareness to their bodies: What do you sense at this moment? Do you sense any tightness anywhere? Do you sense heat or cold in any part of your body? Do you sense your eyelids trembling when you close them? Do you sense your shoulders lifting? Do you sense the difference when you let go and drop them?

"Feelings" refers to moods, such as grumpy, romantic, upset, impatient, or vulnerable.

"Emotions" rest behind "Feelings."

They are deeper layers of feelings, such as love, hate, fear, grief, ecstasy, etc. They are the deepest responses we have to our life experiences.

L I F E / A R T P R O C E S S

A direct type of movement that anyone can do is the basis of this approach. Therefore, the material in each class is accessible to everyone. A larger purpose of this work is to use simple movements that will generate immediate and personal responses. This direct approach to movement enables each person to connect to her own creative experience, rather than trying to imitate someone else's. (It is the purpose of this work to integrate physical movement with feelings, emotions, personal images, and spirit.) It is, in essence, a holistic approach.

When our dances are connected to our real-life issues in this manner, it is called the Life/Art Process. This method of working with dance seeks to access the life story of each person, and then use this life story as the ground for creating art. This is based upon the principle that *(as life experience deepens, personal art expression expands, and as art expression expands, life experiences deepen)*. I have found this interactive process to be especially effective when applied to people living with cancer. This book is about a way that everyone can discover a healing dance of their own through this Life/Art Process.

S E N S A T I O N S

Dance is a medium of the body and our instrument of expression. It helps us become present in many ways. Our first step with this work is to enter and inhabit our bodies. We do this through our senses. Our sensations are the pathway leading us into the body.

Before you read further, make a list of the senses.

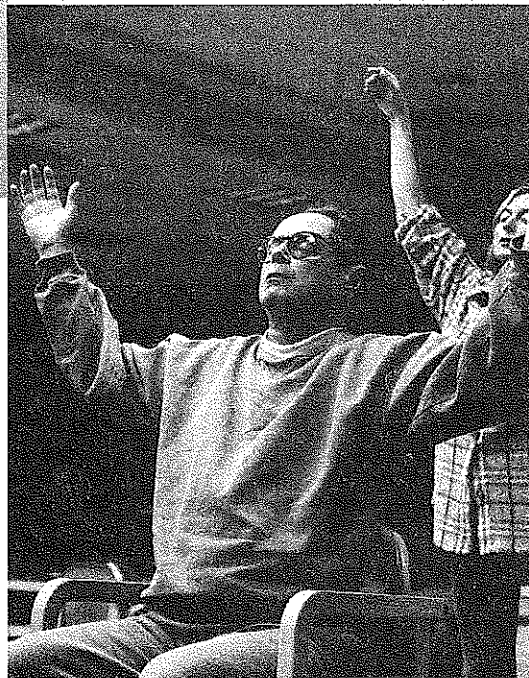
They are: sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste. There are also motor and kinesthetic senses. Invariably people tend to forget these last two. Did you remember them? If you did, you are the exception. Most people do not, although the kinesthetic and motor senses occupy the largest part of our brains. Perhaps we forget this because these senses have been dulled by the way most of us live. Our lives are dominated by sitting in cars and driving, sitting and watching TV, sitting and working at desks or drafting boards. Sitting, sitting, sitting... When we walk, it is usually on cement. We wear confining shoes for protection and lose the touch of the earth and the sensations of our feet. In urban centers we must protect ourselves by shutting out the overload of the noise and smells that surround us.

Almost everything in our modern industrialized society denies the life of the body and rewards the life of the mind. Fritz Perls, innovator of Gestalt therapy, had this well-known saying: "Lose your head and come to your senses." Our usual response to the over-stimulation in our lives is to tune out our senses. When we do this, we leave our bodies and in a way, we leave home, set adrift from the rich world within us. This inner world houses our feelings, our emotions, and our spirit. It holds the memories of our ancestors, our past, our present, and our future. Each of us lives in a body that has taken millions of years to evolve and which will continue to evolve as we pass from one generation to the next. Each of us has a unique body; there is not another one like it anywhere in the universe. And this body is intricately designed to survive. It has wisdom, wonder, and magic in it to perform the great dance of life. Our personal and cultural abandonment of our bodies can create illness, and a void in understanding how to regain our health. When we become ill, we may feel that our body, which we have taken for granted, has suddenly betrayed us. At this time, it is crucial to return to our bodies, to return home and reawaken our senses, so that the natural healer within can renew its strength and power.

Take a moment to open your ears and listen to the sounds around you. What do you hear? Then, look around you with fresh eyes as if seeing for the first time. What do you see? Smell a bay leaf, touch the rough bark of a tree, go for a blindfold walk in the woods, walk outside in the light of a full moon, roll in the warm sand or the cold snow,



*"Please let people in the group
know I am doing well."*



"My hands are an act of loving."

go for a plunge in the ocean, grow a garden and get your hands in the dirt, take your shoes and stockings off and walk barefoot in the grass. The next time it rains, take your clothes off and let it rain down on your naked body. Be wild, have fun, enjoy your sensations; inhabit your body and all its wonder. This is something children know how to do, and something adults have often forgotten.

The other day after a heavy rain I was taking a walk and passed a little girl who was stomping her feet wildly in a puddle of water. She was giggling as the water splashed all around her. She wore bright red shiny boots that made a clapping sound as they hit the water and her whole body was filled with joy. Her smiling parents stood patiently waiting until their little girl had finished her stomping water dance and then they all walked on, their pace a little brighter.

M O V E M E N T

When you think of dance and movement do you think of ballet, a modern or jazz dance, or some other form of stylized movement? Many people are shy about dance because of this association. This is not the way I think of dance movement at all. Dance can be approached as a direct and natural way to move without any personalized aesthetics imposed from an outside authority. Dance is not necessarily graceful, pretty, or spectacular. Dance can be grotesque, ugly, clumsy, funny, frightening, and conflicted. It can stomp, fall, attack, clutch, and reach. It can open, close, tip-toe, crawl, twist, turn, pound, jump, run, or skip. We can move together, or alone. We can move backwards, sideways, up and down. Movement is happening everywhere all the time. It is the motion of our cells, the pulse of our blood, the rhythm of our breath. It is, as well, the ocean waves rising and falling and the alternating patterns of night and day. Movement is life and movement is the source of dance. Any body, no matter how old or young, in whatever physical condition, has a capacity to move, even if it is just your little finger or a movement carried as an image in your mind's eye.

A woman in the advanced stages of cancer shared an experience in class which illustrates this point. She said she had just gotten an audio tape I sent her of guided movements. She wanted to follow it but felt unable to move because she was so weak. She told us

she put it on anyway, and just moved her eyes and her hands. She had a deep experience. I know a man who was in a brutal automobile accident and lay in a hospital bed for months in a cast up to his neck. A healer came to visit him every day and guided him through imaginary kinesthetic activities, such as walking along the beach, or riding a bicycle. In his mind, he went hiking and swimming. He rode a horse and played tennis. They did this for months. In defiance of his doctor's prediction that he would not walk again, when the cast was removed he threw his legs over the side of the bed, stood up, unsteady but determined, and he walked. Movement can exist in the mind's eye and have a powerful effect. No matter what physical condition a person is in, it is important to remember that there is still a possible connection to movement.

T H E F E E D B A C K P R O C E S S B E T W E E N
M O V E M E N T A N D F E E L I N G S

When movement is liberated from the constricting armor of stylized, pre-conceived gestures, an innate feedback process between movement and feelings is generated. For example, try throwing your arms into the air above your head with vigor and say out loud, "I'm so depressed." Now cross your arms over your chest and double over, saying, "I feel so happy." The movement and the emotional feedback between these two things is so incongruous that it seems absurd. Throwing your arms in the air is uplifting. It can inspire a feeling of victory and celebration. Doubling over is more congruent to pain or fear.

This feedback process between movement and feelings is an essential ingredient of expressive movement. When you understand this, movement becomes a vehicle for releasing feelings which are essential in the healing process. Repressed or incongruent emotions shut down the immune system, causing pain and illness. We are working toward expression and congruency, and understanding movement and feelings in a constantly circulating feedback loop facilitates this process.

Keeping in mind the connection between movements and feelings, you will need to expose participants to a variety of movement qualities because they will then give rise to a variety of emotional responses. Flowing, jerky, strong, soft, expansive, contracted,

reaching, retreating, fast, and slow movements are but a few examples of movement qualities. Each one will arouse a different feeling or emotional response. It is important to explore as many of them as you can. A particular movement may reveal a feeling or emotion never experienced before by a participant. It might reveal itself as an important aspect in someone's personal story which needs to be expressed and heard. Since there are infinite ways to move, we have the wonderful possibility of experiencing an infinite number of feelings and emotions.

Sometimes we may block ourselves from certain movements because unconsciously we are afraid of the feelings that will arise. For example, I have seen strong women go limp when asked to execute a forceful beating or kicking movement. This is usually because they are afraid to experience their anger. I have seen men experience soft, flowing, and lyrical movements which trigger off new and exciting feelings for them. One of the greatest values in working with the feedback process between movement and feelings is that it allows us to explore a wider range of movement qualities. Once we are able to experience an unfamiliar movement, it will often provide us with new emotional resources.

We each have our blind spots when it comes to how we move, and these same blind spots are apt to exist in the way we live our lives. For example, one woman in class discovered, after some hesitation, that she could move with force and strength even though it was difficult at first. She came back the next week and reported that when she was driving in the car with her partner, she began to feel anger welling up. For the very first time in her life she was able to express it without fear. She was amazed that this was acceptable, and that she felt so good. Since so much of our ability to experience and express ourselves fully lies in this relationship between movement and feelings, as teachers we need to be careful to offer a broad spectrum of movement possibilities. Remember that it works the other way as well: as we develop a broad vocabulary of movement, we have greater freedom to express the way we feel.

F E E L I N G S A N D E M O T I O N S

It is important to keep in mind that in this work, movement is the key player. Our feel-

ings and emotions are channeled into movement. It is vital that the participants have a safe place to express their own experience, be it fear, envy, tenderness, love, sexuality, or passion. It does not matter. All judgment and moralistic behavior is suspended. Here is an example of emotions being channeled into movement. One day when we began class, a woman began to talk very fast, and in between sobs, she became hysterical, and somewhat incoherent. I asked her to shift from verbalizing and to start moving how she was feeling. She began dancing her feelings, which shifted gradually into another state. As she stopped speaking and began moving, I noticed she was holding her breath. "Breathe," I said, and every time anyone else in the group noticed something strained in her body, they would give her a signal to pay attention to it. In a few minutes, she had calmed herself. Her tears turned to a smile. This came to her by shifting her emotional expression to a movement expression. She was not guided to cut off her feelings, but rather, to go deeper into them through movement; this helped her find release and move on to the next phase in her process.

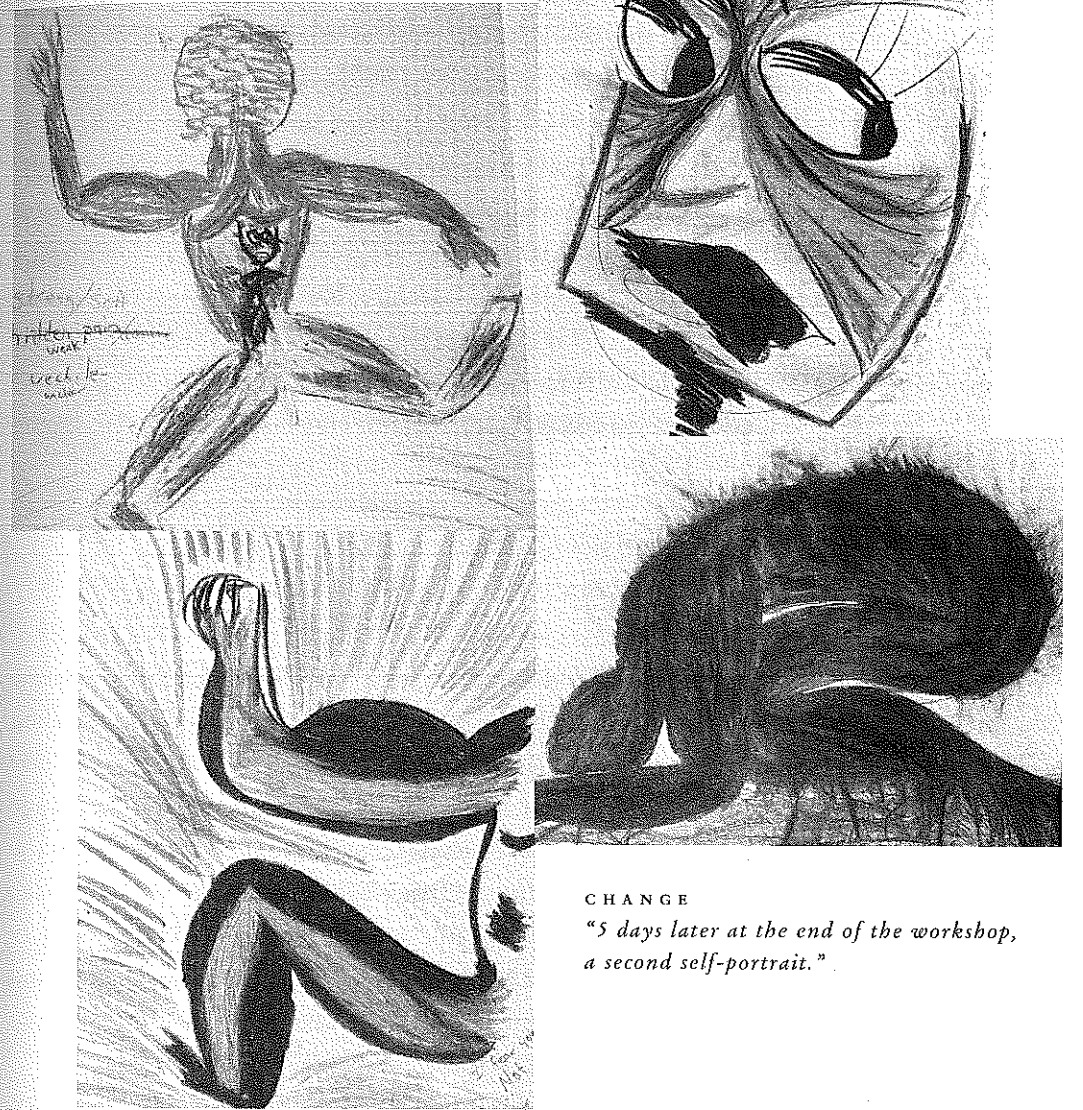
 I M A G E R Y

"One of the things about people who are sick is that they have no control of physical reality. Their body is changing without them doing it. So taking a blank piece of paper and putting the image down is the first step towards controlling the rest of their life. They are controlling the outer-world." — MIKE SAMUELS

The feedback process between movement, feelings, and images operates on a level below words. It is not always possible to understand the content of what we feel, where our feelings come from, or how to apply the feelings that arise to our personal lives. In trying to understand the messages our body is giving us, rather than analyzing or interpreting in a cognitive way, participants make drawings of the images in their mind's eye in response to their movements and feelings. When we draw these images on paper or canvas, they are called visualizations. When we connect these image to our movements and feelings/emotions through dance, I call them Psychokinetic Visualizations.

CONFRONTATION
"You're not good enough."

VISUALIZATION
Visualizations depicting four stages of healing.



CHANGE
"5 days later at the end of the workshop, a second self-portrait."

RELEASE
"I fear you not."

The Psychokinetic Visualization Process has three parts. We go inside to find our personal image; we draw it on a piece of paper; and then we take this image into movement, we "dance" it. When doing this process, participants draw on a piece of paper that is 18" by 22," big enough for them to draw freely, but not so big that the empty space is intimidating. It is amazing how easily people draw in spite of their initial hesitation and lack of confidence. It is as natural to draw as it is to move. A professional, skilled ability as a visual artist is not necessary in this work. In fact, it can sometimes be a barrier to a more spontaneous and real expression.

Sometimes, while activating this process, an image may come first and then the embodiment will follow. For example, a young man made a drawing of a powerful warrior. When he tried to dance the warrior, his legs were like spaghetti. He just couldn't find a powerful movement in his legs. With his partner coaching him, urging him on, repeating back to him the words he wrote: "I fear thee not," he finally found the power behind his movement, and a conviction in his voice. Through the image he discovered a part of himself he had never experienced before, which gave him enormous strength in facing his fears.

D A N C E

We have looked at movement, feelings and emotions, and imagery under three separate headings. This is misleading because actually the three levels of awareness just described cannot be separated. They function together, though we can focus on one aspect over another when we are teaching. This artificial separation helps us cultivate a larger range in each level of awareness. Ultimately, however, these aspects are integrated. When the three levels of awareness unite in our bodies and through movement, we will make dances with the power to heal. These dances will be special because they are uniquely our own. They come from our direct movements, feelings/emotions, and images, and because of this, they are unique and representative of our lives.

This integration of the three levels of awareness is a process that generates creativity, through the act of dancing. Dance and the creative act are stunning in their application to healing for many reasons:

- Cancer cells are manufactured in our bodies; they are not a foreign invasion from the outside. Just as there are no two people in the world exactly alike, no two bodies are exactly alike. Because of this, cancer cells are also unique to our bodies. This makes cancer difficult to treat: there is no one treatment which works for everyone. Treatment needs to be targeted to the specific needs of the individual. This is a powerful indication that the dance experience needs to be approached as a creative process enabling each participant to express herself, rather than following a pre-conceived formula or pattern imposed from the outside. When we do our dances and they come from ourselves, they are unique and will adapt to our needs. We can create dances that work for us because they come from our bodies and our particular illness. Dance that is approached creatively allows for and encourages this perfect adaptability.

- Dance as a creative act reaches an important state of objectivity. Over and over, I hear the pain and suffering that participants arrive with when they come to class. When they leave, there has been a great transformation. Something has changed. Through an experience of our creativity, we have the opportunity to break the chain of identifying ourselves with our suffering. We are often released from our identification with our suffering by the creative act of a dance which reveals, externalizes, and clarifies our experience for others to witness. This does not imply denial; it implies a new perspective. I like to think of the act of creation as giving birth to a myth—a primary, life-giving act. Since in creation myths we are all created in the image of God, the great spirit, Allah, Buddha, Shiva, the stars, the earth, the life force—whatever that great mystery is that connects us all to each other, all living creatures and the earth herself—when we dance, we are the mystery and the creative principle.

- Dance engages our whole being. It is, in my opinion, the most powerful of the arts because it is holistic in its very nature. Our body is our instrument. It is immediate and accessible, holding our wisdom and truth. We use all of our senses when we dance. We move, make sounds, sing, chant, draw, write. Perhaps this is why the anthropologist Kurt Sachs said, "Dance is the mother of the arts." In dance, all the arts are engaged. By experiencing this integration through dance, we can also experience the artist as a whole, integrated person. We are all artists by nature and do not need years of specialized training to be dance-artists. We all move, respond, feel, and create. This is the basic belief in this approach to expressive movement: it is inclusive. Everyone can do it.

S U M M A R Y

God guard me from the thoughts men think

In the mind alone.

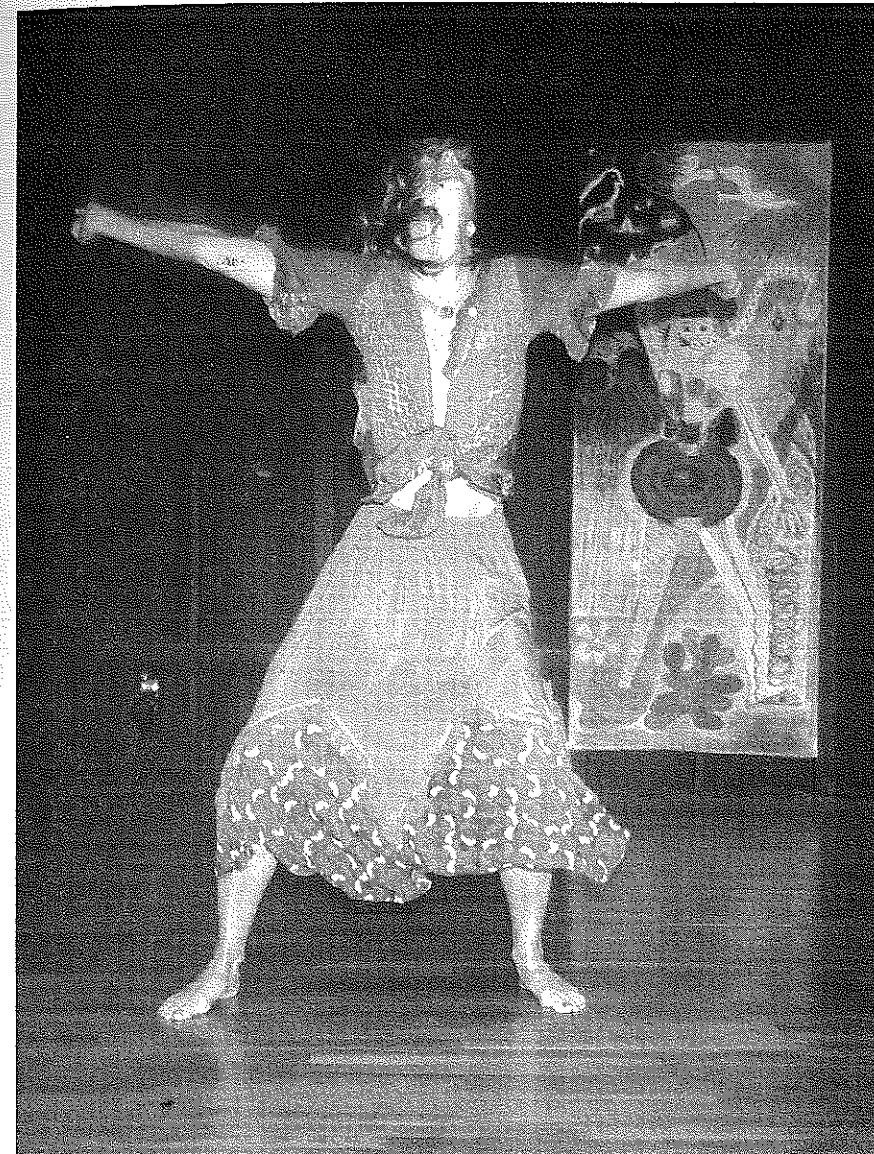
He that sings a lasting song

Thinks in a marrow bone.

— WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

This approach to teaching movement is based on the belief that when we begin to use the language of movement rather than the language of words, a different kind of image and emotion arises, which bypasses the controlling and censoring mind. Words label what we already know; expressive movement reveals the unknown. Sensations, feelings, emotions, and images that have been long buried in our bodies are revealed through movement. This is also useful for shifting old patterns, habits, and destructive belief systems. In this book, I will describe some of the methods and activities that help participants enter into a dance that can lead them to a personal transformation.

At the time of this writing, it is ten years since I walked into the Cancer Support and Education Center to explore the ways dance and healing are connected. I have learned much from listening to those who have participated; by responding to their fears and terror through dance; by witnessing their anguish and tears through dance; by supporting their confusion and anxiety through dance; by experiencing their grief and loss through dance; and by rejoicing in their courage and victories through dance. I have learned much about the power of groups where everyone coaches and urges a member who falters or is depressed, where each person shares their story and by doing so, adds to each of our stories. There is power in community when people take great risks to show themselves and their illness, and the community responds with loving support. I have done my own dances when I felt saddened by the death of another person in my life, or the excruciating joy of one more person's triumphant survival. Through it all, I have always remembered to return to dance as an affirmation of my will to live. I believe this is the strongest lesson I have to impart to people who participate in this work: dance and renew your life force.



Affirming a will to live.