



# THE HEALER'S ART

An *ishi* program: The Institute for the Study of Health and Illness at Commonweal

## KEEPING AN EVENING JOURNAL

*"The voyage of discovery lies not in seeking new vistas but in having new eyes." -Proust*

Finding a greater meaning and satisfaction in your work is often not about doing things differently, it is about seeing familiar things in new ways. Most medical students and physicians lead far more meaningful lives than they know or appreciate. Sometimes our habitual ways of seeing things, or even our expertise can make us blind to the meaning present in our everyday work. Finding new eyes can reveal the unsuspected depth and blessing in work we have done for many years.

This journal exercise is an adaptation of the wise work of Angeles Arrien, the author of *The Fourfold Way*. The Journal has been kept by many hundreds of students in The Healer's Art course across the country as well as many hundreds of physicians. Keeping this journal requires only 15 minutes a day. It is suggested that you use a bound book in which to write.

### INSTRUCTIONS

Find a quiet place to sit for 15 minutes where you will not be interrupted and sit in silence for a few minutes.

Now review your day backwards, going from dinnertime to the time that you awoke in the morning, recalling the events you've experienced, the people you've met and the conversations that you've had. Imagine watching your day as if it were a videotape. You will be reviewing your day backwards in this way three times.

The first time you review your day, ask yourself the question:

#### **WHAT SURPRISED ME TODAY?**

As soon as you find ANYTHING that answers this question stop your review, take up your journal and write it down. It is not necessary to write a great deal; the thing that is important is to build the capacity to see your day from a new perspective, not how much you can write about it.

Then review your day for the second time, this time asking yourself the question:

#### **WHAT TOUCHED MY HEART TODAY?**

As soon as you find ANYTHING that answers this question stop your review, take up your journal and write it down.

Then review your day for the third time, this time asking yourself the question:

#### **WHAT INSPIRED ME TODAY?**

As soon as you find ANYTHING that answers this question stop your review take up your journal and write it down.

You are finished for the day!

We suggest that you write in your journal at the same time and place every evening. At first you may only be surprised, touched and inspired by the events of your life while doing this exercise, several hours after you have experienced these events. However after a while, you will begin to notice that the events of your life will surprise you, touch your heart and inspire you *as they happen to you* during the day. When this occurs, notice any changes in your attitude towards your work and towards the people around you.

You may want to meet together for an hour once a month with other students who are keeping this journal and share some of what you have written. This may give you an even deeper sense of the meaning of your work and the work of your community.