

Dance from the Heart

To observe a performing artist express from the heart can be an enriching and satisfying experience. A heart felt performance often requires the artist to express genuine emotion that reflects a natural authenticity. To generate this depth of feeling as well as an ability to express it into a performance setting, can be an effortless process for some, whereas for others it can be a real challenge. Through examining the heart centre and considering various approaches to opening and healing this centre, I hope to inspire and assist others in the process of enhancing their expression through emotional freedom.

In my opinion, some of the main elements that deliver an accomplished dance performance, involves the ability to balance precise technique, creative interpretation, an understanding of the music, as well as an expression of love and emotional honesty, thus the ego is surrendered. When a dancer performs with physical technique as the dominating focus, there can be a deficiency in the emotional content of such a performance. Therefore, it is through tapping into the emotions and allowing these energies to be expressed, that we can be rewarded with a more genuine and often a more powerful dance experience. When the heart is open, it is not only open to love but to *all* emotions. It is by acknowledging and accepting these myriad of emotions, that we can often free up creative energy. Joyousness accompanies new energy, and this fresh infusion of energy can then permeate every stage of the creative process, rather than solely focusing on the end result (ie. the performance itself). Rollo May suggests that “to love, means to open ourselves to the negative as well as the positive- to grief, sorrow, and disappointment as well as to joy, fulfilment and an intensity of consciousness we did not know was possible before”.

So, in order to heal and open the heart centre, lets first look at what it is and how it can become imbalanced. The heart centre is an energy chakra located at the centre of the chest and is concerned with thoughts and beliefs around love and relationship to the self as well as to others. Common emotions associated with this energy centre can include love, compassion, respect, joy, forgiveness, jealousy, anger and hatred. Some traits that may indicate that the heart centre is imbalanced can include fear of rejection, being judgemental, fear of intimacy, depression, codependency, poor boundaries, jealousy as well as loneliness. Hence, experiences such as betrayal, grief and sexual and/or physical abuse may all lead to the heart centre being imbalanced or blocked. When trauma or abuse has occurred, some may choose to deal with the accompanying pain through dissociating from the event and the resulting emotions. This protective mechanism can consequently cause a “numbness” to develop around the heart centre. Thus, an important aspect of healing is to allow our selves to feel the emotions that have been suppressed. Through accepting and integrating the entire sphere of our feelings, we become more whole and capable of loving the self as well as others. As Anodea Judith mentions, “the whole of the person gains beauty and stability as more and more parts become integrated. We become more complex more mature and capable of greater and greater possibilities”.

Let us now look into some of the approaches that may assist in healing and opening the heart:

1) Meditation

- By regularly meditating and through being “in the gap” (a term used by Wayne Dyer meaning that space in between thoughts), we are more able to connect to the source which is our unlimited supply of unconditional love.
- Read through the following meditation exercise and find a quiet space to engage in the following visualisations. Now, close your eyes and begin to relax through engaging in some slow deep breathing. Visualize yourself looking into a full-length mirror and see the colour of your choice emanating from your centre and surrounding your entire body. This coloured light makes you magnetic to joyful and loving experiences and also enhances your vitality. Notice your image beginning to move and dance, your body is free, flexible, sensual and vibrantly healthy. Any imbalances within the body are safely dispersed by the movement. As your image dances, see the coloured light spiraling out from your body. Feel your heart centre glowing and radiating an inexhaustible supply of positive energy that keeps you protected and makes you magnetic to people, places and situations that are in alignment for your highest good. Now, slowly bring your awareness back to the space you are in.

2) *Self reflection*

What is your usual way of coping with uncomfortable emotions as they arise? In today’s society there seems to be many forms of addictions that can act as a way of filling the void and denying the silent cry of the inner world. Addictions can take many forms, some of which can include work, drugs, excessive exercise, cleaning, constant drama or unhealthy relationships. Now ask yourself: what is your addiction and how does it serve you in avoiding deeper issues? I suggest that next time a difficult emotion arises, try sitting with it and accepting the emotion without judgement or distracting the self with such addictions or other unhealthy coping mechanisms.

3) *Forgiveness*

When the heart is closed and unforgiving, the resulting blame may create a barricade around the heart, which often stops us from receiving love and may also inhibit the likelihood of healing. Anodea Judith mentions that “forgiveness uses the compassion of the heart to understand situations in terms of the forces that were acting on both ourselves and others”, and through forgiving we set ourselves free. Who do you need to forgive? Write a list of every person that you feel you need to forgive (some may have even been in your grade 5 class at school!) Make a commitment to explore some of the many processes that may assist you in forgiving.

4) *Psychotherapy/Spiritual healing*

A psychotherapist or spiritual healer may be helpful in healing various aspects of your traumatic life experiences. For example, through working with you in releasing grief, dealing with betrayal or even inner child work.

5) *Creativity*

Expressing yourself creatively may help in balancing the heart centre. I suggest that you make a commitment to express your creative side through activities that you enjoy such as gardening, cooking, painting, dancing, sewing, building, decorating etc.

6) *Yoga*

A balanced yoga routine can also be helpful through focusing on postures that open the heart eg. The 'fish pose'.

7) *Call on Support from Goddess or Archangels*

Call on *Mary Magdalene* for forgiveness and opening the heart, *Aphrodite* for passion and love, *Kuan Yin* for purity, nurturing love and gentle power, *Archangel Michael* for releasing fear and for protection or *Archangel Raphael* for healing and receiving love.

8) Finally, utilize the power of flower essences such as Bluebell, Mountain devil, Pink Flannel flower, as well as the gemstones Rose quartz, Unakite and essential oils such as rose, lavender or neroli.

In conclusion, opening the heart to love requires an intimacy with the self that can be developed through an understanding of your own fears, wishes, needs, boundaries and hopes. Through accepting and assimilating the many aspects of the self, including our emotions, we are then more capable of self-love and can therefore be in a better position to love others. When love flows, so do the many facets of our emotional energies, all of which can be harnessed and used to enrich a heart-felt performance. When you dance with heart, you not only share the creative expression of your soul but also the love and authenticity that is yearning to be expressed within everyone. It is up to you to change your view of the world and be willing to open your heart and release the fear that can often prevent us from being all that we can become.