

Body, Mind & Spirit

Bringing Touch Into The Family



Isaiah Williams enjoys a nurturing massage from Portland Licensed Massage Therapist, Ginger Hope. "It releases tension from working during the week," he says. "And I really feel more in tune in my body. It's a spiritual cleansing for me." Photo by Sharon DeBusk, LMT, Portland OR

by Rosie McLaughlin, LMT

If you were born in India, it's more than likely that you would be massaged daily until you were about 6 months old with either diluted mustard oil or coconut oil, depending on the season. Women in India learn to do this from their mothers and it is considered a sacred art.

If you were born into a Nigerian, Ugandan, Balinese, Russian, or Maoran family (societies where infant massage is a custom), you are taught massage at a young age and practice it on those around you for the rest of your life.

Chances are, if we had been massaged as babies in this country, we would have a healthier attitude toward touch. In the book, "Infant Massage, A Handbook For Loving Parents", author Vimala Schneider McClure points out that studies done cross-culturally on the subject have shown that in societies where infants are held, massaged, rocked and carried, people are less aggressive and violent and more compassionate and cooperative.

Diana Moore, who founded the International Loving Touch Founda-

tion here in Portland, sees a greater and greater need for parents to start touching and massaging their babies in this country.

Infant massage actually stimulates all five of the baby's senses because it is done in close enough proximity to the baby that she can hear, smell and see the person who is touching her. Stimulation of the five senses has been shown to help rapid neural firing in the brain, which aids brain development.

Infant massage teaches parents to better understand their child's cues which makes them feel more confident about parenting. Massaging at the very start of life is a way to teach a child how to regulate incoming stimulus and let go of unnecessary stress. Parents find it to be a particularly useful tool for getting their kids to sleep and for treating colic.

Your infant should receive massage everyday until she is six months old and after that whenever you can find a time when she will stay still long enough. The massage can last anywhere from 15 minutes to half an hour depending on your baby and what she wants. Watch her cues. The

best time to massage her is during the Quiet Alert state. If her body is relaxed and her eyes are bright and can follow an object, these are signs that she is ready to engage with you. Make the massage part of your child's routine. It should be fun and relaxing for both of you.

Children as well as adults need healthy touch modeled to them as well as given to them by those they trust and love.

Ashley Montague writes in the preface to his book, "Touching": "The communications we transmit through touch constitute the most powerful means of establishing human relationships, the foundation of experience." If this is true, then massage should be part of our daily lives, given to and received by whoever we consider to be part of our family.

Oregon School of Massage has Massage Basics classes in both Swedish Massage and Japanese Shiatsu that anyone can take. Call 244-3420. If you want to take a class in Infant Massage at the International Loving Touch Foundation, call 253-8482.

THE CO-CREATIVE INTELLIGENCE OF LIFE

BY TOM ATLEE

Having trouble with your neighbors? A farmer in Indiana was bothered by his neighbor's dogs who were killing his sheep. The traditional way that sheep raisers counter this problem is with lawsuits, or barbed wire fences, or even with shotguns as a last resort. This man had a better idea. He gave his neighbor's children lambs as pets. The neighbors then tied their dogs up voluntarily. In the process the families became friends.

When there is a problem or a conflict, we often create distance or walls between ourselves and the trouble so it won't disturb us—or we fight it in an effort to overcome or change what we don't like. We shut our doors, we turn our heads, we call the cops.

Co-intelligence, on the other hand, has a bias towards building relationships, towards cooperation, towards greater life. The farmer may well have asked himself, "How can I get these folks to join me in protecting my sheep?" Notice how different that is from: "How can I stop these folks from killing my sheep?" This difference - a spirit of cooperation rather than resistance or domination - is an important feature of co-intelligence. It usually requires a good deal more creativity and courage to put into practice. But it builds bonds that will make future problems much easier to solve - and makes life more deeply enjoyable, as well.

One day as some family system therapists in Cambridge, Massachusetts, watched an acrimonious TV debate, they recognized some of the same patterns they saw in their work with dysfunctional families. They decided to do an experiment applying their therapeutic insights and processes to the polarization of political discourse.

They gathered together some pro-choice and pro-life citizens who were willing to try some real dialogue.

First, over a buffet dinner, participants took a few minutes each to say something about themselves that did not disclose their stance on abortion. Then, after agreeing to some communication guidelines (like "no interrupting"), they gathered in a circle to tell their personal stories about abortion - how they came to think and feel and act as they did, what their histories were, what the heart of the matter was for each of them personally. Then, speaking as individuals rather than partisans, they shared what they weren't sure of; what they struggled with, their own grey areas and mixed feelings about abortion. When the circle was done, they had come to know each other as unique human beings, not as stereotyped embodiments of political po-

sitions.

And the full complexity of this issue, in the unique lives of real people, was much clearer to all of them. And with that came a respect for the unique ways each of them had struggled with that issue.

Co-Intelligence is the capacity of all living systems as well as ecosystems to work creatively with the diversity and aliveness that exist in their environment and in themselves.

Developing our Co-Intelligence involves:

- Learning to replace force with collaboration and understanding, including the proper role of force.
- Learning to engage the intelligence, viewpoints and motivations

of all stakeholders.

- Learning to weave together diverse human capabilities - reason, emotion, intuition and all the rest.

- Learning to open ourselves - not only to each other, but to sources of wisdom higher and deeper than our everyday selves, and of bigger ways of looking at things.

- Learning to notice the patterns that shape our lives - the environments, institutions, processes, cultures, habits, media and so on - and to notice our own roles in shaping them.

You can find out more about Co-Intelligence from the Co-Intelligence Institute web site (www.best.com/~cii).

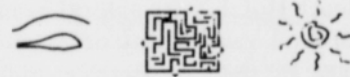
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HOMOWO FOUNDATION

The Homowo Festival is the largest cultural festival of its kind in the Pacific Northwest. It is a free, community-wide event that features African and Caribbean music and dance presentations, food, arts and crafts, storytelling, a summer arts camp and other workshops. The Homowo Festival however is not just about having a good time. It is about building our community and fostering respect and understanding for each other. There is a spirit of tolerance and reconciliation which is a part of Homowo in Ghana that is also a part of the festival here in Portland. The Festival plants seeds of brotherhood and sisterhood which, when nourished, will bear fruit for us and our children.



Obo Addy, Master Drummer from Ghana, Africa. He is the founder of the Homowo Foundation that promotes African Arts and Cultures.

The Homowo Festival of African Arts takes place the third weekend of August every year and has seen success for the past eight years.

On August 15 and 16 of this year, we will once again celebrate our heritage and our place within the rich fabric of Portland, Oregon. Cathedral Park, under the St. Johns Bridge, is home to this event. The Homowo Festival has

been an exciting event for Portland area residents for the past few years and we know that this year will be no exception. There will be a great variety of music and dance from several African countries, arts and crafts, children's activities, and food. In addition, we will also offer a four weeks of classes through our African arts daycamp for children in com-

munity centers throughout the area.

The camp incorporates Ghanaian music, dance, arts and crafts, visual arts, and storytelling and we offer scholarships to children from low-income families.

With the move to a two-day event, we expect attendance numbers to reach 10,000 people over the weekend.

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