

The Healing Dance:

A Fusion of Massage & Asian Healing Arts

By *Grace Sunga Asagra MA, RN*



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Dedication

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Paghahandog

TO THE VILLAGE

In memory of my father Miguel “Mike” Asagra, sister Ruth “Ruthie” Asagra Stoos,
brother Raul “Yoyi”, brother Jose “Joe”, my grandparents, and my friend,
Herbert “Herbie” Tuchman and

To my mother Josefina, aunties, uncles, and cousins

To my sister Edna, sister Patty, brother Timmy, and families

To my son KwaseKhemwer “kk” and family

To African Nganga (Shaman), Akinyele Onisegun Karade, whose indigenous
wisdom guided me

To seekers of indigenous-integrative-complementary holistic healing

To friends

To all

To LIFE



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Disclaimer

Pagtatatuwa

1. This manuscript does not substitute for any study with a Filipino *Hilot* or Thai Massage teacher.
2. This manuscript does not substitute any competent instruction, particularly when it comes to anatomy and physiology.
3. This manuscript does not guarantee safe practice by just reading it.
4. Each receiver is different. Approach can only be customized if the giver is competent and confident as a practitioner.
5. Caution for some techniques must always be observed.
6. Information from this manuscript does not substitute any consultation from physicians.
7. This book serves as a cultural expression of cultural healing.
8. No one owns the truth.



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Elements



An effective nurturer goes beyond the attainment of knowledge of techniques and motions. A good nurturer is the embodiment of health, discipline and compassion. How good you are depends upon how much of yourself you give during a never-ending training process.

Many elements beyond technique can be taken into consideration. I have listed seven of them below, along with some Filipino idiomatic expressions and proverbs that help me to remember that these elements are key.

KALAKASAN (VIGOR for Stamina and Endurance)

Magtipon ng lakas. (Gather your strength)

Vigor is the driving force to have the stamina and endurance. This work is very physical and could give the nurturer a feeling of fatigue and exhaustion. A healthy lifestyle contributes to not just the physical strength needed but to the unwavering inner strength grounded in truth and principles of healing.

INSPIRASYON (INSPIRATION for Confidence)

Ang nakikinig sa sabi-sabi ay walang tiwala sa sarili. (When you listen to hearsay, you have no confidence in yourself.)

The inspiration coming from your instructor, your clients and your techniques will help you in what you are doing and gain confidence. But above all, the inspiration (in-the-spirit) from within, will give you confidence, and with it humility.

KATATAGAN (STABILITY for Coordination)

Tinimbang ka, ngunit kulang (When weighed, found wanting)

Stability through harmony of mind, body, emotions and spirit will lead you to balance the weave of every motion you decide to do, whether it is a pattern or an addendum to the routine. It is important to spend time and energy tending to all areas and aspects of compassion that matters for the individual.

PAGLINGAP (NURTURING for Refinement and Style)

Nasa tao ang gawa, nasa Diyos ang awa. (In a person who works, God has mercy.)

Nurturing can bring out the best in oneself. Without the Divine's omnipresence, omnipotence and omniscience in our being, techniques will remain techniques rather than instruments of healing. Your own style and system unfolds with God's grace and through diligence and practice.

SIMBUYO NG DAMDAMIN (PASSION for the Work)

Buhos na kalooban (Unconditional commitment)

Passion for growth, for success, for excellence through one's determination and love of the work can only come from belief in oneself, leaving no room for any doubt or fear. Doubt and fear can only lead to lack of commitment and focus. When you love something, it brings about transformation and unity with yourself, your clients and the spirits of the ancient healing arts. Yearning leads to the desire for knowledge to understand the interrelationships of techniques, patterns, things and events in the dance as it's woven in the web of life.

PAGIGING ISA (ONENESS for Sensitivity and Awareness)

Ang taong hindi marunong lumingon sa pinaggalingan ay hindi makakarating sa kanyang paroroonan. (If you don't look at where you came from, you will never be able to reach your destination.)

Everything is medicine wrapped in gratitude. Our past, our present and our future come with medicine needed at the right moment as we look into our habitual patterns that may cause joy and sufferings. They are the roots that keep us growing. We cannot deny events that have happened, or emotions felt in our life's journey. Understanding and appreciating all moments help us to be one with ourselves, our clients and all our surroundings. Being one increases our keenness and sensitivity to forces in nature. It gives us clarity and direction. It sharpens our listening abilities beyond what we only want to hear. It helps us notice things to which we normally would not pay attention. Our senses become a source to protect ourselves from harm's way. To be one is to listen with our hearts as compassion unfolds healing. Be grateful, relax your whole body, stay calm and be alert. Be ready to attune yourself to the unfolding dynamic.

KABANATAN (RESILIENCE for Patience, Trust and Faith)

Kapag may tiyaga, may nilaga. (When there is patience, something is brewing.)

Resiliency is empowered through patience, trust and faith. We are called to give way to master plan of diwata. Be harmonious with the forces in nature. This will allow us to enjoy a delicious dish of health and well-being. Be like the water. Transform as you flow. Helping others calls us to re-shape ourselves in many ways necessary to create harmony and yet remain true to our being.



These elements and cycles contribute to ongoing exchanges of energies for balance and harmony with every being. Simply put, these elements, these interactions, these processes are taking place inside and outside of our bodies following transformative cycles of conception, birth, maturity, reflection, and back to conception. Take for example the butterfly that goes from an egg to a larva to a cocoon and to birth. When we understand where we are in the cycle, we have a better understanding of what we need to do next that is in alignment with what's next. It is also worth remembering that these stages in the cycle occur every moment in our lives.

Our stories are the manifestations of the elements like threads that weave patterns that could either be helpful to us or destructive. Just as the diwata are there to help us, within us lies the ultimate creator of our stories.

We can dance through our uncertainties to weave and design our lives. What, how, when, why and where we weave our woven patterns will determine how strong or how long it will last. Will it get through the hard times? This is crucial to keep in mind when looking for solutions to our health conditions or when we want to change our realities, to evolve instead of revolt, and to grow and be humble. This is the dance that reveals the pattern of the tapestry of our lives. This is how nature works. This is how diwata works.

To understand further, I had to ask the question on diwata and its origin from my teacher and healer, African Nganga (shaman) Baba Akinyele Onisegun Karade. This is what he said:

Traditionally, diwata (forces in nature) are part of our folklore and cultural experience that's beyond history or mystery "my story". It is "the story." They are the stories made up of characters, forces or electromagnetic energy that our ancestors were very aware of. These forces or superheroes as told to children in nature, represent or make up our very existence. Our ancestors understand the massiveness of Creation and set forth the expression "the creator."

This expression represented the whole of its parts called Creation and in this expression we can experience all of creation through the creatures. These creatures, maybe as small as an invisible organism or as big as a very visible hurricane, are all the different expression of the created life on plants. The power or key to our existence is how we define this reality. It's like a fish in the ocean. Do you think that a fish can know the massiveness of the ocean and all that's in it? This is why as children the elders encourage creativity, imagination, adaptability, strength, fortitude, compassion, balance and harmony with a gentle character. A child hearing the stories of these forces or superheroes would become motivated, excited and imaginatively behave like one.

The stories of these superheroes are mostly told by respected elders or initiates in the culture who have earned the rites of passage to infuse the imagination, creativity and wisdom.

Children embrace the stories of superheroes and forces in nature wanting to become the respected elders as well as respecting elders who embody this great power and responsibility. This motivates and prepares them for the rites of passage, a process of intense training to become a respected elders or initiate in the culture.

These superheroes or forces were said to live in, around or about us. Helping to identify our reality, get through hard times and make us aware of how to use our strengths to overcome our weaknesses, building a balance and gentle character, harmony (not dominion) but respect for ourselves first, and then with that which exist in, around and about us. Out of that respect and conditioning comes great power. It is only then that you can truly identify and understand the dualities in nature and how to make balance and call on our strength to overcome our weakness.

Those who become respected elders or initiates have the power to teach, call on or embody wisdom of these forces or superheroes. They live and exist in everything: plant, animal, insect, earth, water, air and fire. All that exist all that Is: visible or invisible.

In some areas of the world like the Philippines, they are called diwata. In other places they may be referred to as angels, deities, gods (guides) or even saints. In the western hemisphere of Africa, the cradle of creation, the identification of these forces or superheroes are extensive. They are identified as Orishas.

Orisha is a combination of two words: Ori (spark of human consciousness) and sha (potentiality of that consciousness). Orisha symbolizes human expression of a particular consciousness and its potentiality. It is a manifestation of divine power in human essence.

You can imagine it as the electromagnetic dance like weaves in fabric that holds it all together. That Divine Presence is what the Kongolese call Simbi: that energy that holds everything together or holds everything up. This dance opens up to infinite possibilities and potentialities. Maintaining Iwa-pele, another West Afrikan practice, means a balance of characters and attitudes – the connection between one's consciousness (Ori) and awareness to one's behaviour.

In Southeast Asia, this dance is identified in the chakras in yoga. Chakras are electromagnetic fields that exist inside the body and coordinates with the electromagnetic field in and around mother earth, 'That holds it together or that holds it up'. This process is influenced by how we respond to our environment, an environment in which children

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About Grace

Tungkol kay Grace

Grace Sunga Asagra MA, RN, HN-BC, HC-BC, is a traditional Filipino hilot (indigenous health practitioner using joint-muscular manipulations, bentusa, cooking and herbal foods), holistic health coach (nutritionist-counselor-life coach-health advocate), author and speaker on “Who and What’s the Matter with You.” A seasoned nurse with over 20 years of critical care nursing, she was a barefoot nurse in Legaspi City, Philippines, organizing and empowering locals to use natural resources for sustainable health solutions.

Currently, her practice as a hilot is the dance co-created with mga diwata (forces in nature/deities/angels) and mga ninuno (ancestors). She guides individuals to change the course of their health from chronic conditions to healthy aging through understanding the dance between their inner and outer selves.

Grace specializes in optimum health and wellness programs in partnership with clients who want to weave authentic, integrative, functional, ancestral and traditional health solutions into improving overall holistic health. Some of the success stories that inspire her include a nine-year-old girl in the Philippines with history of cerebral palsy who was able walk again after series of hilot sessions, a sixty-year-old female business owner who lost thirty pounds with improved clinical changes and was able to discontinue her blood pressure medication, with her doctor’s approval. Also a seventy-six-year-old male college professor who experienced healthier prostate conditions without prescription medications and a fifty-six-year old female with history of colon cancer who chose not to have surgery and became cancer free to much surprise of her oncologist.

Grace’s caring ways and healing embody respect for a person’s bio-individuality, authenticity and wholeness through healthcare programs that support an environment for optimum healthy gene expression founded on her relationship with her clients and diwata, bringing about awareness and responsibility to her clients’ health and well-being, as well as holism embodied in cultural ways of knowing and being to express inherent healing ways. She honors all experiences and trusts the process as medicine and healing in collaboration with those who join her in this journey. Learn more about her at her websites, www.graceasagra.com and www.filipinhilot.com.

