

## **Magaretta McIlvaine: Transcription of Sacred Touch Talk at the William James Society in Virginia**

I'm really very honored to be here to talk about a subject that is so very dear to my heart. It has been my passion to do this work for many years. I started out my career as an English teacher for ESL students and loved working with people of different cultures, talking about communication skills and interestingly enough, I feel in a sense I'm doing a very similar thing in my healing work today.

Every person is a culture of his/her own in a sense and how to communicate and work with people is a very important piece of this work. There were many milestones that marked my path to healing and it was really my spiritual search that prompted it all. I always had a hunger for the invisible world and a longing to be in communication with it. And it has all been a wonderful journey although a difficult one at times.

I'd like to address some basic topics in this talk – when I first became aware of sacred touch, major milestones that propelled my development, how this journey has changed me, and my perception of reality and the universe. I'll describe what a session can be like in my work with sacred touch and share some feedback that I've been given from clients and I'll leave some time at the end for questions.

I would say that more than sacred touch at the beginning, I had the ability of sacred perception which then led me to sacred touch. It started out when I was a child. I believe that all children are open. I had many friends and of course I spent time with them but I remember how much I used to love playing alone because some of my favorite times were with invisible ones. I distinctly remember being aware of feeling watched. It was not an uncomfortable feeling. And I remember feeling that trees and stones had different personalities. It was a very animistic view and a very rich world to me that extended beyond the five senses.

This was rather punctuated by the presence of a ghost in my great grandfather's house. I spent quite a bit of time there. He died when I was 12. It was a benevolent presence, but a presence nonetheless. I never saw anything but was very aware of a presence on the third floor of the house and would often hear my name called when there was no one around. A college student lived on the third floor after my great grandmother died and he would awake in the middle of the night to find the figure of a woman dressed in period clothing standing at the edge of his bed. I think he was embarrassed and quite unnerved by it all but ended up calling someone in who was familiar with such things. When my grandfather died, Scott came back with his friend and they both felt that the spirit was gone.

I think one of the major experiences that propelled the development of my

sensitivities at this early age was growing up with an alcoholic mother. There was a lot of trauma and confusion and abuse involved and I learned very early on to feel the feelings of others, knowing when it was safe or not. I developed a kind of hypersensitivity to all those around me. Belleruth Naparstek said in *Your Sixth Sense, Unlocking the Power of your Intuition* "...over three-quarters of the initiatives that she interviewed had experienced some sort of trauma in their lives. Many intuitives have grown up with irrational, temperamental, alcoholic or violent parents. As a result they learn as children to develop a kind of hypersensitivity to moods and temperaments around them in order to stay one step ahead of danger. This adaptive alertness becomes a forerunner to their strong psychic skills." This indeed was the case with me. I lived in these surroundings until I was 13, then moved to my grandparent's house. It was certainly a better situation, but they had problems with alcohol as well so I was still constantly scanning the environment.

When I was 16, I started to practice transcendental meditation. Again, I was always well liked and popular but I also always felt very different and craved time alone. This really assisted me to deepen my connection with myself. I moved to Northern California when I was 19 to begin a master's degree in teaching English as a second language. While I was in San Francisco, I met Tamara Diagelev, an incredible teacher from Europe to whom I owe so much of my dedication to healing. It was during one weekend with her that I had the experience of having my third eye open which frightened me at the time. As I mentioned above, sacred perception was the forerunner to sacred touch. I remember seeing in my inner vision the deepest purple light getting brighter till I could hardly stand it and then I saw just one huge eye. For weeks after when I closed my eyes I would see this one huge eye.

Nothing was quite the same after that. I continued to see the eye over and over and I drew many many pictures of it. It wasn't until I read the *Autobiography of a Yogi* that I began to understand what had happened to me; this experience was the beginning of clairvoyance. Before that I was mainly what is called clairsentient, which means clearly feeling the feelings of others which was quite unpleasant as I would pick up on the heavier emotions of others and think they were my own. My teacher Tamara assisted me in creating clear boundaries of what was mine and what were others. I was very grateful for this as I moved to Tokyo, Japan, one of the largest cities in the world and at times did get quite overwhelmed.

In 1988, I was offered a wonderful teaching position in Tokyo and moved to Japan, staying there for six years. I began studying Buddhism and was introduced to Vipassana meditation. I attended 2 ten day silent retreats. I experienced myself as beyond the body and mind. It was a direct experience of feeling myself as energy. Here I was teaching English which I loved but was becoming more interested in energy healing and ki exercises. I loved being in a place where it was not new age but very much a part of the

culture thousands of years.

We had eight weeks of vacation at my work which enabled me to travel all over Asia experiencing different healing modalities, which included energy work, massage, acupuncture, acupressure and shiatsu – but the most remarkable was the work I did in the Philippines with the psychic surgeons.

There was a little place called Urdaneta, about five hours north of Manila by bus. I had been given a list of healers in the countryside by a friend in Tokyo who had been the year before and shared her experiences with me. I worked with four healers. Each one went into a state of prayer before they began and one moved into a full trance state and remembered nothing when she finished. They worked just with their hands and one hand became almost burning hot and stayed in one place while the other hand actually penetrated the skin to remove blood clots and diseased tissue.

I had the opportunity to assist one healer with translation for a Japanese photographer I'd met in the little chapel where she worked so was able to watch very carefully. I must admit at the end I had to get to the back of the little chapel because I nearly fainted. It defied third dimensional natural law. I was cured of a condition I'd had for years. These healers asked for no money. It was all done on a voluntary donation basis.

That experience needless to say certainly influenced me and I knew that doing some sort of healing work was my path. I felt very committed. Later that year, I went to New Mexico to spend a week at The Light Institute where certain kinds of touch are employed in guiding one into past lives. The work there was profoundly life changing.

We did a fire walk at the end of the week, which certainly caused me to question my sanity and I really thought I'd gone much too far this time. Much to my amazement, all went well. I walked across the hot coals three times and only got one small blister on my right foot.

When I returned to Japan, I discovered through a group I was involved with called the Circle of Light that a woman named Cia Criss who studied with Chris Griscom would be doing sessions in Tokyo. I immediately signed up. We worked together and at the end of the sessions, she said I would probably be very skilled at this work and she was giving training in Santa Fe. I signed up right there on the spot and she said she'd never seen someone make a decision so fast in her life. I feel though that I had been making that decision for years.

I went to New Mexico after I left Japan to study the work she learned at the Light Institute in assisting one through touch to recall past lives that have some connection through theme/repeated patterns/ people/souls that we meet over and over. On the last

day of the training I had a very significant experience with sacred touch. Cia was coming downstairs in her stocking feet. I had the oddest urge to touch her feet but was of course a bit embarrassed to ask. We sat having tea. It was a cozy adobe house and at one point she put her feet up and hugged her legs. I could hardly resist the urge to touch her feet. It kept getting stronger and stronger. We were certainly close by then and had gone through a wonderful training. Our conversation was getting more and more interesting about the work we had done and people we had worked on that finally I just had to say to say, “ Cia, I have to touch your feet. I have the strangest and irresistible pull to do so. I’m not sure what this is about.” She agreed and I had no idea what would happen but I put my hands on her feet and my hands became quite warm and pictures ran through my head like on a movie screen, very quickly. Then I physically felt great pain in my own foot, heat and as if my foot was breaking. I kept seeing glass. I began sharing this with her and her mouth dropped and she said, “You are seeing the accident.”

She had a terrible accident in South America. She was cooking something in a pyrex dish and when she took it out of the oven, it dropped on her foot and the hot glass shattered and severed her tendon. Then our relationship as teacher and student shifted and she asked me to help her. I didn’t know exactly what I was doing but I knew the pain had to be removed. I began literally pulling the energy off her foot. I felt as if I was totally guided. The energy ties had to be cut which were somehow connected to the accident. Using nonlocal mind I did so with intention. Then I smoothed the energy out and kept my hands softly on her feet and finished. We both just sat there amazed! I had studied Reiki in Japan and had a similar experience but not as intense. After we'd had our attunements, we were partnered up and I saw my partners bicycle accident in his leg.

So as the journey continued, I moved to Charlottesville, Virginia, enrolled in the Virginia School of Massage and The Barbara Brennan School of Healing, a four-year program to train to heal through the human energy field simultaneously and began my groundwork training for my new career. In addition, I completed my Reiki training and did a month long Yoga teacher training course in Mexico, affiliated with Satchidananda’s Ashram in VA. I opened an office at the Virginia School of Massage and started my practice.

*How would you describe a representative session or encounter with sacred touch?*

In a typical session, before the client arrives, I create sacred space. I aline myself with the light and ask for help and assistance with the healing. Before I start to work I must clear, calm, and still the mind. I move out of the third dimensional world into a different frequency. And I feel by connecting to my own higher frequency I can then be at a place to connect to this higher guidance.

Sacred touch has so much to do with surrendering yourself to the help of guidance.

The deeper my ability to surrender, the more effective the work. I expand out and move up a few levels with my intention. I move into my energy body more, the fluid, timeless, body that traverses time and space and is connected to all reality. I do my own ritual of protecting the space, connecting to my client, calling in my own guides and beings of light that would like to be present, and thanking them for their presence. And I open my heart. I set my intention to communicate and receive.

When the client comes into the office, we talk for about 15 minutes. I explain the work as best I can and let the client know that I see myself as the facilitator and them as the healer. In this time while the client is speaking, I am attuned to my high sense perception and pick up and receive cues from the client on many levels. Sometimes what the client says he or she is in the office for is not the case at all and in the interview, the real reason comes out. We really begin connecting then and I feel for the charge in their energy field as they are speaking. We complete that and it is time to get on the table. Often it is clear what the intention of the healing is and we set that. Setting an intention helps to invoke awareness. But it is intention without striving. I begin with a few minutes of light massage to relax them and assist them in deepening their connection with themselves and entering into a bit of an altered state.

I then aline my energy system with the clients even further which assists in the gathering of information. I become aware of my guides and the client's guides. I ask for the person's full name, maiden if they are married and somehow am able to connect with them even deeper by this energy signature.

I then move to the foot of the table and begin chelation, a running of energy from my hands starting at their feet and moving up the body and the energy centers to the head. During this time, with their permission of course, I am reading their field. I merge with the client's energy field just for diagnosis purposes, expand my field so I can feel my higher self, the non-ego aspect while reaching in the client's field and allowing my higher self vibration to jump start in a sense theirs because I have gone to a place in my mind that feels like a hologram. I move beyond the linear, logical mind to a mind that feels whole, circular, expansive, beyond ego, a higher self, unbounded, connected to the Universal mind in a sense. I most certainly feel the presence of guides and invisible helpers who guide me, move my hands, show me what I need to see to assist the client. The deeper my ability to surrender to them, the more effective the work.

I often feel what the client is feeling, see visions, sense blocks or stagnation in the field and just get a sense of their life. I sense their energy flow, their field, blocks, feelings, emotions, and their past. The information comes in pictures, feelings in my own body, and words. I often pick up on childhood pictures, parents or their own children.

I still have that strange ability to read feet just as some read palms as I mentioned above. In the right foot I seem to read how the client moves forward in life and in the left, I seem to read their relationship with themselves, self-esteem, childhood. After I move up the field, I scan the energy field just above the body. I check for blocks, how the client utilizes or misdirects the energy, sense the main issues, causes of the presenting complaint and then I share everything with them.

Often here there are tears for they feel as if they have really been seen. On some level, the client knows he or she can let go and get in deeper touch with themselves. In that sacred space, it is as if the infinite spirit of my clients can be seen. I do my best to stay focused in my heart, on compassion as then the rest of my body entrains to that which affects the client I believe even at the cellular level.

Once I've shared everything, at this stage, I give myself over to guidance even further and ask for assistance to show me where we need to go from there. When I work I am in constant communion with my spirit guides for in fact it is they who are doing the work. and I often feel my hands being guided to the area in need of assistance. It becomes clear quite quickly where work needs to be done. I often get the answer before I've finished asking the question. Here every session is totally unique to the individual. I always check the energy centers to clear and balance them and often they are clogged with emotional debris. Using a certain technique, the client and I work together to cleanse and restore the area to balance. Often color and sound are incorporated. Often the client receives insights that enable him or her to release faulty belief systems that hold energy configurations in place as energy follows thought. As the thoughts are aligned and balanced, so is the energy. This is what meditation is, purifying the mind which then purifies the energy field, which then purifies the emotions and the body.

I have at times felt an energy slip into my body through my hands and work. There is dialoging during the work at times. I will share what I'm seeing or doing. The client also shares pictures he or she is seeing, and sensations felt on the body .

Sometimes feel as if I am walking through some very difficult places with the client. At times we go into the darkest aspects of themselves, areas in their psyche they most fear but we go in together and we go in safe. I have total trust in that. There is something in this work that I feel is divine and divinely protected.

At the end of a session, I ask for some specific guidance for the client in terms of diet, advice, work or anything else that needs to come in. I close the client's aura make sure we each have our energy back as there is a bit of an exchange, and protect us both. We finish with giving gratitude to the client for doing the work and to all who assisted. Then I close the sacred space and we do some grounding work. It is good to leave some time to debrief and I give them little homework sheets to journal with.

## A CASE HISTORY

I would like to describe some work I did with woman I'll call Mary. She had been diagnosed with breast cancer eight years before and had to have her left breast removed. Now the cancer was back and she wanted to do some healing work before going into surgery again. I was asked to accompany her as her energy healer and it was an extraordinary experience.

Three years ago Mary came to me for treatment of depression. I scanned her aura and saw dark, thick energy turned inward. I felt great heaviness and a sense of burden around her. I saw images I sensed were her mother and sensed the same heaviness about her. There were feelings of defeat, injustice, loneliness, sadness, repression, and burden. I felt her mother's burden on her to take care of her pain and felt that it had been the same for her mother.

In Mary's field, there was a deep sense of responsibility to care for the burden. She did not receive the nurturing she deserved. There was a sense of anger and feelings of defeat. Themes of self worth and self-love came up over and over. I sensed that Mary defined herself by this pain and there was a fear of loss of identity if she gave it up prevented her from getting free. She began to have feelings of suicide.

As we worked, I was guided to honor her ability to experience pain at such deep levels, and sensed she was holding her mother's and her grandmother's pain as well as her own. We asked for lesson her soul sought from this experience and we sensed that now she can help others with a deep degree of compassion she had not had before. This was her training. Bringing meaning to the suffering enabled her to make a tremendous shift in her belief system.

We cleared stagnant energy with breath work, visualization, color, lots of coughing, and sound. The room at times had a strange odor. So many heavy emotions were coming out and being released. The energy release gave her full body sensations, tingling, with the rush of moving energy. She released the burden, the anger, the depression. There is a quote from Aminah Raheim from *Soul Return*, "As we work directly on the body, the personal history and actual personality structure will emerge naturally. The release of body armor in muscles and tissues helps to reveal the layers and patterns of the personality, which can then be processed and understood in consciousness. [This enables one to gain] a free body and a personality liberated from personal history."

I went to surgery with her and worked with her energy field. The surgery started at 8 and she was home at 4 o'clock same day having only taken two Advil before bed. She did not have the severe depression as she did after her first surgery 8 years ago. There

was an extraordinary difference between the two surgeries. She now has a successful practice in South Carolina working with breast cancer survivors, doing lymphatic drainage work, lecturing and leading small groups.

*Describe some of the feedback you have received.*

It varies so much with everyone as every session is so unique because everyone is so unique. Some have said they have never felt so connected with themselves, their inner selves, their guides and their real feelings. Others feel empowered, free, clearer, stronger, lighter, happier and more at peace. It seems like writers start writing, artists start painting, some are able to call a partner into their lives. Another woman was able to change her career. One man who had a wound on his leg that hadn't healed for three years was able to walk with ease. Lives can really change but it is different for everyone. Mainly it is an issue of balance – sacred touch helps bring people back into balance and since everyone is out of balance in his or her own way, the details vary but the end result is the same.

*How has your perception of the universe and of human nature changed as a result of such experiences?*

My perception of the universe and human nature has changed dramatically. I see the levels of existence, the parallel realities, the illusion of time and space, the energies of thought forms and parasitic energies. I understand that people are far more than their physical bodies. The nature of reality is far more complex than I'd ever imagined and yet at the same time beautifully simple once we raise above our own illusions. I see very clearly that it is faulty belief systems held in place that keeps so many unhealthy patterns active. And the release of the belief systems that no longer serve us or protect us so freeing. Energy follows thought. Shifting our thought patterns shift the energy in our bodies and in our fields. Holding supportive, positive thought does way more than just make us feel good. It affects every cell. Medicine, health, healing and well being – what all this means is dramatically different now.

Dr. Larry Dossey states in, *Reinventing Medicine*, that many studies reveal that healing can be achieved at a distance by directing loving and compassionate thoughts, intentions, and prayers to others, who may even be unaware these efforts are being extended to them. These findings reveal the ability of some part of our mind and consciousness to escape its confinement to the brain and the body to act anywhere regardless of distance. He states that all these studies venture into Era III medicine and nonlocal mind – the capacity of human consciousness to function outside the confines of the individual brain and body.

As we move forward with this, we may embrace the spiritual aspect of ourselves in

profound ways and more of us will be able to, not just the few enlightened masters. Years ago I certainly saw the mind as separate from the body. I accepted Newtonian physics, the Cartesian split. I then moved to see the mind in the whole body and as a major factor in healing. I began to understand the intelligence in each system of the body and get a sense of the nonlocal mind. I see now that each of us affects each other in profound ways. I see and feel our oneness and our intimate relationship and connection with the universe and all of nature, the interconnectedness of all things. I see the deep effect we have on each other. I see how important it is to be conscious of all our actions and thoughts and that they matter and affect a person deeply. I see a hoop, the sacred hoop. It is a circle, not a line. We are all embraced by the hoop. We are inside creation and creation is inside us. The inner and the outer are not separate. Everything I learned in a traditional setting must be put aside. There is relative reality and ultimate reality.

*How have you changed as a result of such experiences?*

I am not the same person. I am not so self-centered and selfish. My perception has expanded to include humanity. I understand that we are all in this together. Everyone is at a different stage of evolution. I see time differently and seem to be experiencing time differently. As Deepak Chopra says in his book, *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success*, "...the past, present, future are all properties of consciousness. The past is recollection, memory; the future is anticipation; the present is awareness. Therefore, time is movement of thought. Both past and future are born of the imagination; only the present, which is awareness, is real and eternal."

As I grow in perception, I feel myself more and more a part of ultimate reality. Thus I am not so quick to judge or feel judged. I do not live my life so based in emotion anymore. I realize more that another's anger, for example, says so much more about that person than it does about me. My world feels much safer because of this. We are multidimensional beings traversing many pathways for many reasons. I respect the divine order in another's life as I accept it in my own. This requires a daily surrendering of judgment.

When I first started doing this work, I wondered from where I was getting information about the client. They would come into the office, I'd never met them before, knew nothing about them and then as my hands touched their body information about them, their innermost thoughts and feelings, information about their family, their dreams and their fears just came into my field of perception. I now feel that there is a field of energy and information that exists everywhere in nature, like a hologram and each of us has access to that hologram.

*How would you define sacred touch?*

Sacred touch is a merging with the divine, of letting your little self go, becoming empty as Sioux medicine man, Fools Crow said, a hollow bone. Sacred touch is allowing spirit to work through you having no agenda of your own, except for the highest good for all.

When I work I keep my mind singular mindful in a relaxed but focused and alert way. This focused attention alters brain wave patterns and releases serotonin into the bloodstream, leading to a quieting down of ego activity (environmental scanning, decision making, assessing, worrying, analyzing.) Once the ego is quieter, the subtler right brain cues are more prominent. Sacred touch is allowing the energy of the divine to come through my energy centers, down my arms and out my hands to another human being to bring them back into balance with nature. My intention is “the highest good for all concerned”, to bring the being, body back to balance, to rejuvenate, restore vitality, to help them let go of any energy that no longer serves them and to allow whatever energy the person needs to come forth and heal.

*What else would you like to mention that you think would be helpful in developing a better understanding of sacred touch?*

We are moving into a new paradigm. As our consciousness shifts, our understanding of who we are deepens. Who is touching and who is touched becomes clearer. Sacred touch is sacred perception. We touch with the part of us that is sacred. In premodern cultures, this was taken for granted.

I also think that the beauty of sacred touch enables us to penetrate the layers to reveal the interconnectedness of all things. I believe we are all capable of sacred touch. It is natural in everyone. As Carolyn Myss says so aptly, “...that any of us have had to repress it, is a travesty.”

Dr. Larry Dossey reported in *Reinventing Medicine*, that currently almost half of adult Americans visit a practitioner of alternative medicine yearly. This exceeds the total number of visits to frontline physicians. This is a remarkable social movement. Dr. John Astin of Stanford University School of Medicine reported the findings of a national survey in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* in an article entitled “*Why Patients Use Alternative Medicine*”, that users of alternative health care are more likely to report having had a transformational experience that changed the way they saw the world. They find in alternative therapies an acknowledgment of the importance of treating illness within a larger context of spirituality and life meaning. “In other words, technical medicine is not enough.”

Thank you.