



# The Tao of Healing:

*Guide to Wholeness through the Integral Way*

By: John Kim, MD

**Dedication**

Team in Georgia Integrative Medicine making all things possible for our patients and for me to build the best healing environment for the highest good of everyone involved.

**Acknowledgement**

*My family whose love gives me meaning, hope, and purpose in life*

*My friends who have supported me and encouraged me to walk this path*

*My teachers & patients who guide my healing journey every day.*

## Preface

This book describes my journey; it describes the Tao (way or path), Te (virtue, compassion, achievement), and the healing I was privileged to observe.

The tide of medicine versus healing has turned. In medical school, my interests in alternative healing modalities were actively discouraged, if not suppressed by well-meaning medical school faculty. The concern was that I could come under scrutiny by conservative institutions. Nowadays, there are medical schools that encourage students to learn about alternative medicine. There are even residency programs actively training physicians in integrative medicine.

Not all of the changes have been good. Our health care system is on the brink of collapse under its own weight. Our people are suffering; even before the financial crisis of 2008, more people lose insurance and insurance benefits with each passing year. As of 2008, an estimated 45 million Americans are currently uninsured or underinsured.

We spend more money in health care than any country in the world and the results do not reflect the level of investment. Healthcare spending has been estimated at \$1.7 trillion in 2003, more than \$5,800 dollars for every American. This accounts for approximately 15% of the gross domestic product (GDP), and is projected to outpace growth in the rest of the economy. Despite our health care expenditure, we do not enjoy the best overall health in the world. Health indicators for the US have dropped to 38<sup>th</sup> place after Costa Rica. Clearly the saying “more is better” is not true in this case.

We need an affordable health care system where people can experience compassion, care, and healing.

“The world thinks the most valuable aspect of Tao is found in classic books. But books are only a collection of words. Words are valuable: the value of the words is the ideas they convey. But those ideas are only a representation of something else, and that something else can’t be conveyed by words.”

Chuang Tzu

Chapter 1

## **Introduction**

*Tao and Te*

People’s interest in the philosophy of the Tao is rising. In speaking about the Tao, there are two major divisions: the philosophy of the Tao and the religious practices of the Taoism. This book is about the philosophy of the Tao. The philosophy of the Tao has been founded by Lao Tzu, a relatively unknown, poorly documented sage who left us the well known Tao Te Ching which has been translated into many versions.

To begin, definitions are in order. Tao (道; pronounced as Dao) is often translated as the Way. It is difficult to describe. Classics on the Tao state that the “Tao that can be named cannot be true Tao.” Words can help to facilitate understanding of the Tao, but words alone are inadequate to describe it fully. At the University of West Georgia, I was privileged to teach a course on the Tao of Healing. The class had a syllabus, curriculum, and recommended books but they only served as guides. Experiential learning, developing mindfulness, and clarifying insights are what made the course truly unique.

I hope that the reader seeks to understand the principles of the Tao and its application for self-healing. Being one with the Tao can manifest in harmony, peace, and love. It also brings simplicity and spontaneous lessening of effort to achieve a desired effect.

The idea of this simplicity is referred as Pu (樸). It is believed to be the true nature of the mind without preconceived perceptions and beliefs. In this state, consciousness is free from learned labels, biases, and definitions. It becomes less “fixed,” and more flexible, adaptable. The value of the state of Pu is to be able to perceive things as they are. One of my students commented that the phrase “it is what it is” helps him to accept more difficult situations in life. Perceiving things with distortion ultimately creates more confusion and distances us from the truth. To achieve the state of Pu, it is useful to let go of distortions – what remains should be the ability to see things as they are.

The state of Pu is a natural result of attaining the state of lessening of the effort to achieve. This state of lessening of the effort is often referred as non-action or Wu Wei (無為). I consider the state of Wu Wei as natural spontaneous achievement rather than non-action. In the state of Wu Wei, one can act in accordance with his or her inner way of being and can expend less energy. This process is facilitated by love and attainment of mastery of the subject. Having love and attainment of mastery, the work becomes almost effortless.

In contrast, neither having developed the love nor attainment of mastery in life, it is commonplace for people to struggle rather than to experience effortless flow. Without the natural flow, it is easy to struggle and suffer. When focused on struggling and suffering, it is easy to lose mindfulness. Without mindfulness, the way to developing insights to one's own issues becomes limited. Without insights, it is easy to repeat one's mistakes over and over again.

When one practices being one with the Tao, one can begin to cultivate Te (德; pronounced as Duh). Te is translated as virtue, but in the context of Taoist philosophy, the attainment or cultivation of virtue is a more appropriate translation. Te is a natural outcome that results from being in harmony with the Tao. Whereas simplicity and spontaneous efforts are natural moment-to-moment benefits of being one with the Tao, the long-term attainment as a result of being in the Tao can bring about the benefits of Te.

### *Tao and the Martial Arts*

Many names of martial arts end with the word "Do" which is an alternative pronunciation of Tao. Many martial art traditions use their arts to explore the Tao. For example, Tae Kwon Do is the Way of Kicking and Punching, Judo is the Gentle Way, and Aikido is the Way of Harmony and Energy. The expectation in many martial arts is that the practitioners should learn not only the techniques of the art but also to pursue a spiritual path. The practice of martial arts can become a tool to strengthen and harmonize mind, body, and spirit.

My love for martial arts has enriched my life in many ways. I have met many good friends through martial arts. I have studied with masters who showed me the Way, and I learned about the importance of being in the flow.

My first exposure to martial arts was through Taekwondo in elementary school. In martial arts, there are two broad classifications – internal style and external style.

External styles emphasize physical attributes such as speed, conditioning, and power. Internal styles emphasize subtle skills such as intuition, relaxation, and grounding.

Oftentimes, the distinction blurs in higher levels of martial arts where external practitioners cross-train in internal arts and the internal practitioners, through their exercises, develop external traits. For children and young adults, external styles are more stimulating. For older adults, internal styles are safer to practice and more enjoyable producers of wisdom and improved health.

As a child I learned external style martial arts and found it fascinating that a smaller person can overcome stronger and bigger person through mastery of techniques and development of a strong spirit.

My first teacher, Master Bae, was an accomplished martial artist with training in Judo, Taekwondo, boxing, wrestling, Hapkido, and Korean Buddhist martial arts. His mastery of martial arts fascinated me and inspired me to study with him. I spent as much time as possible with him, especially during summer vacations.

While I was more interested in learning fighting applications, Master Bae guided me to learn about the spiritual aspects of the Tao. His logic was simple. He felt that fighting represented failed conflict resolution. He felt that the natural consequence of studying the art of fighting should result in choosing non-violence as a first choice. Master Bae's reasoning was simple and obvious: the outcome of fighting is unpredictable and both parties risk injury. Non-violence assures survival of both parties and allows conflicts to be resolved safely. Master Bae often said that the study of the martial arts should result in a situation in which one can run away from an assailant without fear. At first I found his teachings perplexing, but gradually I understood the importance of non-violent conflict resolution. The pursuit of study and application of martial arts has helped me to explore the least violent ways of conflict resolution and to develop my mind, body, and spirit.

When I moved away from Master Bae, he recommended that I study Aikido. He felt that Aikido would help me to continue to explore the Tao further. At first the techniques of Aikido appeared to be very similar to what he taught me, however, I learned that there were major differences. For example, in Aikido there are two separate processes. The first process combines an entering and turning maneuver followed by the second process of employing specific techniques to neutralize the attack. The first process is used to create a safe space for the practitioner. The safe space accomplishes two functions: (1) the practitioner is in a safe place, and (2) the practitioner is able to execute the techniques to subdue the attacker. The techniques of Aikido involve

harmonizing with the attacker's energy and using his momentum against him. The spiritual aspect of Aikido includes developing compassion, moderation, and humility in the face of attack.

Though I found Aikido to be a wonderful art, I found its techniques too harsh. Despite the refinements by the founder of Aikido, the techniques of Aikido involve pinning and dislocating various joints in the body developed from Master Sokaku Takeda, a fierce, fearless warrior who focused on the fighting aspects of the Tao. Advanced techniques of Aikido involve throwing the attacker. If the attacker does not know how to fall correctly, he could suffer serious injury.

### *Tai Chi*

After several years of studying Aikido, one of my Aikido teachers recommended that I should explore Tai Chi. She felt that the solo form in Tai Chi would be a good complement to Aikido where we practice as pairs. She taught me the basics and asked me to continue the lessons with a more advanced Tai Chi teacher.

The style of Tai Chi that I learned was Professor Cheng Man Ching's simplified Yang style. Professor Cheng was a master of Chinese medicine, calligraphy, painting, poetry, and Tai Chi. I was fascinated to learn about a martial arts master who was also a master physician. I found a book about Professor Cheng and learned that he passed away in 1975. I searched for instructors who learned Tai Chi from Professor Cheng. Tai Chi, My search revealed a teacher in the local area, but I did not contact her because I could not believe it would be so easy that a Tai Chi master would be available in my immediate area. Therefore, I launched a national search for Tai Chi teacher. I found that Master William Chen taught in the New York City (NYC) where my sister was living at the time. Master Chen studied Tai Chi with Professor Cheng and was widely regarded as an expert Tai Chi teacher.

At that time, I was first year of my medical training as a family practice resident with very little time off. Nevertheless, I found a way to travel to NYC and to learn Tai Chi. Master Chen found it curious that I could show up once every few months and still display improvements. When I explained that I was using my vacation time to come to New York to learn Tai Chi, he told me that he knew a good teacher in my area. I could not believe that it was the same teacher that I found. Had I consulted with her initially, it would have saved me a lot of time and money. As a physician in training, I had little of both. I lost both time and resources because my desire to find a "true master" blinded my ability to see what was right in front of me all along. My search took me far from home, but paradoxically, my journey also brought me right back to where I had started.

In Tai Chi, there is a concept of investing in the loss. Without knowing, I invested in the loss because I wanted to ensure that I had the best teaching. This point was not lost on the teacher. The fact that Master Chen explicitly recommended her was a great honor in the Tai Chi tradition. She proved to be an outstanding teacher, even going so far as to locate my next teachers in California for me when I moved to San Diego. Though I traveled the long way around to get to my first Tai Chi teacher, I believe that I received an extra level of attention from her because I came to her by the way of Master Chen.

There is a story of a Chinese man who found a horse. When neighbors congratulated him about his good fortune, he said "We'll see." While riding the horse, the man's son fell off and became a cripple. When neighbors offered their sympathy, he said "We'll see." Shortly thereafter, the country went to war and every able-bodied man was recruited into the army. The war went badly with only one out of ten men returned home. Because of his injury from falling off the horse, the man's son was exempt from going off to fight in the war. Neighbors agreed in unison that in this world, fortune and misfortune are difficult to tell apart.

After being introduced to Tai Chi, I lost all interest in other martial arts. There was a level of depth to the study of Tai Chi that I did not encounter in the other systems I had studied. Even after studying and practicing Tai Chi for ten years, I feel that I have just begun to understand the basic principles of relaxation and yielding.

In Chinese, Tai Chi is referred as "Tai Chi Chuan" meaning "supreme ultimate boxing." The supreme ultimate refers to the Taoist concept of duality principles of Yin and Yang. Yin represents feminine, receptive, yielding energy while Yang represents male, dominant, and moving energy.

Tai Chi is said to have developed by the Taoist monk Zhang San Feng observing a snake defending itself from a bird of prey. As a result, Tai Chi embodies the Taoist philosophy of yielding, relaxing, and lessening of effort. Tai Chi relies on relaxation, rather than muscular tension, in order to neutralize attacks. Some refer to Tai Chi as a form of moving meditation, as focusing the mind solely on the movements of the form helps to bring about a state of mental calm and clarity.

The benefits of Tai Chi go beyond the benefits of a traditional meditation. Anyone can learn to enter the calm and relaxed state of meditation. Tai Chi is about being able to remain calm, relaxed, and centered in the face of either mental or physical conflict. The different progression of training of Tai Chi is designed to help one cultivate that level of skill.

The study of Tai Chi chuan primarily integrates three subjects: health, meditation and martial arts. There are a few traditional schools covering these aspects of Tai Chi practice simultaneously, while many more modern schools focus on the single aspect of health.

Typical Tai Chi training begins with a solo form. The next level of training consists of partner exercises known as “pushing hands” or “sensing hands” where people learn to sense an opponent’s balance and learn to apply the principles of Tai Chi. The next level of training may involve weapons training most often in the form of sword. The final phase can include skills in free fighting and/or skills in cultivating Qi, depending on the interest of individual student and the teacher.

Personally I feel that the highest level of Tai Chi is to apply the core principles in non-violent conflict resolution. Non-violent does not mean weak. One has to be spiritually stronger and emotionally more mature to be able to choose relaxation rather than tension and to use intention rather than force. It is much more challenging to overcome an opponent using relaxation and intention rather than reliance on tension and force.

There is a phrase in the West – “When Push Comes to Shove” – meaning extreme stresses will likely to reveal one’s true nature. It is in this time of adversity the highest level of Tai Chi can be displayed. The adversity is not limited to a physical attack. Rather it encompasses all aspects of life including adversities involving job, boss, spouse, children, money, and career.

Can you relax completely in the face of the greatest adversity in life and effectively come out on top of the situation? If the answer is that you are not sure, then you have a reason to begin or continue studying Tai Chi.

“Journey of thousand miles begins with a single step”

Lao Tzu

## **Chapter 2**

### **My Journey**

In medical school, my interests in alternative healing modalities were met with cautious advice to keep my interests in the art of medicine to myself and to explore further the science of medicine through research. I listened to that advice and found teachers who helped me to explore the art and the science of medicine. I feel fortunate to have had many teachers who showed me to the Way (Tao).

#### *Tao of Leadership*

My first lesson on the importance of servant leadership came from working for a biochemistry professor at my medical school learning to conduct medical research. He was a patient, intelligent, and compassionate individual who was successful in personal and professional affairs.

Professor taught me about the importance of servant leadership. I learned about serving the needs of people and inspiring them to discover their passion in work. He excelled at helping people find ways to incorporate the things they loved into their lives. For instance, one of seemingly miserable graduate student had a bright spot in life involving socializing rather than focusing on research endeavors. His interests included enjoying fine quality beer and wine. Professor patiently guided the student to complete graduate school and guided him to a career involving the biochemistry of microbrewery.

I gleaned another important lesson from a successful professional who was equally mindful about his attainment (Te) at home with his relationships with his spouse and his two sons. His professional accomplishments and stature paled in comparison to the importance he placed on development of familial relationships. He was conscientious at work, but he understood that the source of his strength and value came from the love he gave and received at home.

## *Tao of Science*

My undergraduate major was in Chemistry, the study of how chemicals interface with our lives. I found two fields of chemistry most appealing. The first field was physical chemistry. Physical chemistry explains the energetics of chemical reactions as governed by the law of thermodynamics and kinetics. Thermodynamics refers to qualitative information as to the likelihood a reaction will occur on the basis of energetic costs and kinetics refers to the descriptive information of how fast the reaction will take place. An appropriate analogy is to think of a car. While the thermodynamics part asks the question of "What is likelihood of this car starting?" the kinetics part asks the question of "how fast will the car go?"

The value of learning about physical chemistry was that it gave me an understanding of the energetics of chemical reactions. Developing an appreciation for energetics became invaluable to me later with regard to the study of energy healing techniques that have become a basic foundation of my practice of medicine. The second field of interest was biochemistry. Biochemistry is the science of living chemistry or chemistry occurring in life. Biochemistry can explain how energy is captured from the sun by plants and converted to life energy that is usable for plants and animals. Two biochemical processes, photosynthesis and citric acid cycle, are central to life.

### *Yin and Yang in Biochemistry: Photosynthesis and Citric Acid Cycle*

Photosynthesis is the conversion of light energy into chemical energy by living organisms. The raw materials are carbon dioxide and water; the energy source is sunlight; and the end products are oxygen and (energy rich) carbohydrates. This process is the most important biochemical reaction, since nearly all life depends on it. It is a complex process occurring in higher plants, phytoplankton, algae, as well as bacteria such as cyanobacteria. In contrast, the citric acid cycle describes how we convert carbohydrates, fats and proteins with the help of oxygen into carbon dioxide and water to generate a form of usable energy.

My study of biochemistry helped me to understand that photosynthesis and the citric acid cycle bring balance into the energy equation in life. Plants convert light energy into energy rich carbohydrates and oxygen from carbon dioxide and water. Animals use the end products of photosynthesis – carbohydrates and oxygen – and create usable form of energy in the body while releasing carbon dioxide and water.

I saw an integration of the philosophy of Tao manifesting in life through biochemistry. In Taoist philosophy, plants are considered as Yin and animals are considered as Yang. Yin energy is receptive, dormant, and provides the support basis of Yang energy. Yang

energy is active, dominant, and draws upon the Yin energy. Photosynthesis is the process by which Yin energy is created providing the support to Yang energy; photosynthesis uses the product of Yin energy in the form of oxygen and carbohydrates and helps to unlock usable energy for animals supporting Yang energy as displayed by animal's ability to express life through movement. To me, this example illustrated the ageless principles of Tao that can be manifested in the modern world.

### *Tao of Biochemistry: Nutrition*

Additional insights I gained from studying biochemistry also included how nutrition provides biochemical pathways with raw materials and how nutrition can influence the biochemical pathways. In the philosophy of Tao, there is the concept of Te, which is the natural consequence of being one with the Tao. Being in the Tao does not indicate implications of good or bad; it deals with natural consequences. If one is committed to eating foods that cause inflammation in the body, the natural consequence is inflammation of biochemical pathways. The natural consequence of high inflammation is an accelerated course of illness. In the last century, America adopted industrial production methods in agricultural process dramatically increasing the production. However, the cost of the "cheaper" food comes at a high price; our foods today are more likely to produce inflammation. The natural consequence is that the illness is fueled by inflammation. Most illnesses today are chronic illnesses that are mediated by inflammation. In 2008, February issue of the prestigious journal Nature published on the relationship between cancer and inflammatory. As our understanding of the illnesses increases, more connections are being discovered as to how inflammation can impact on illnesses.

Most medical students "learn" about biochemistry by memorizing pathways. I learned biochemistry through experience of designing and conducting research experiments. This experience helped me to develop a unique feel for biochemistry rather than a rote memorization approach used by my peers. The understanding of biochemistry would become a cornerstone in the foundation of my practice in Georgia Integrative Medicine. By understanding the relationship of Yin and Yang and its application in the biochemistry in our bodies, we can learn to achieve optimal results through healing nutrition to influence the biochemical pathway.

### *Pharmacology*

My interests in biochemistry resulted in my choice to invest in two extra years in medical school performing research projects. As a result of my interest and work, I won the Howard Hughes Fellowship, a prestigious award given to promising scientists.

During the fellowship, the focus was on research in pharmacology, the science of how medications influence our biochemistry. Looking back, pharmacology was a natural development for me because of its integration of chemistry, biochemistry, and medicine. Pharmacology also gave me a strong basis for understanding how supplements and herbs can help with healing. More importantly, it gave me an understanding of how we can better harness the power of medications.

### *Medical School*

During my undergraduate studies at Beloit College, we were encouraged to develop intellectual curiosity and to “reinvent” ourselves through exploration and discovery of ourselves. The faculty was immensely helpful and supportive. I fondly remember professors routinely going an extra mile to ensure that everyone had an opportunity to develop professional interests through experiential learning.

“Suffering” is the word that best describes my first two years of medical school, during which time basic sciences courses are crammed together. In contrast to my time at Beloit, in medical school there was very little room to develop intellectual curiosity. Most of my time was spent memorizing vast amounts of information just to pass tests. There was no guidance for how to become a healer. Instead, I sought guidance outside medical school. I feel fortunate for mentors as I learned about healing from them. These individuals taught me things about healing that medical school could not. The only time I felt supported by medical school was when I won the prestigious Howard Hughes fellowship. Though the first two years of medical school is a blur, the difficult times were aplenty. When all looked impossible, I found the strength within to continue, persevere, and survive. Perhaps, developing perseverance is the true value of medical school training.

In contrast to the first two years of memorizing, the last two years of medical school training took place in clinical settings. I found the clinical training to be intense, but vastly enjoyable. Looking at many other professions, medicine is fortunate to have a mentored style of experiential learning where we learn from the experienced personnel in the field. Most often, our learning came from the nurses, other medical students, and patients.

### *Family Medicine Residency*

I chose family medicine as my area of specialty because of its general training. I knew that my training of choice, integrative medicine, did not exist. I chose to pursue training as a primary care physician who was capable of providing care in a number of settings such as hospitals, emergency rooms, and clinics.

I found my family medicine training immensely valuable; however, the tide of medicine was turning away from providing care to the business of medicine. Patient visits became “encounters” to capture revenue. Everyone became visibly stressed, especially the office staff that had to deal with insurance. I saw the profession of medicine caving into business pressures.

The inconsistencies were obvious. For instance, if physicians believed in promoting wellness, their lifestyles did not show it. I was consistently averaging more than 80 hours a week trying to do everything the system required me to do. Working in a high-pressured environment took its toll on me both professionally and personally.

### *Spiritual Retreat*

In August of 1999, I advanced to the last year of residency in family medicine. I felt conflicted about the way my professional life was progressing. I had a vision of the way I dreamed of practicing medicine, and I was frustrated in my endeavors to align myself with that vision. Completing family medicine training would mean relatively well paying job at a high cost to me and to my family. My sense was that the economic pressures applied to physicians by the insurance companies had just begun; insurance companies would continue to make life more difficult for physicians.

I took three months off and reflected on my course of action. I spent one month in the Nicolet National Forest located in north Wisconsin. I meditated, practiced Tai Chi, and fasted. During one meditation session, I experienced an intense spiritual awakening. It was immensely comforting to be connected with the presence of the Universe. A brief, but powerful message flashed: “preventive medicine.”

Until that time, I was not aware of the field of preventive medicine. I broke my meditation and fasting and went to the library to research. To my surprise, there was a residency in preventive medicine. Preventive medicine was a specialty recognized by the American Board of Medical Specialties. I felt particularly drawn to the program in San Diego. Months before, I had fallen in love with San Diego when I visited for a conference. While walking on a beach, watching the sunset, I prayed for an opportunity to live and work in San Diego. It turned out that one of the interviewers for the San Diego program was a physician who had previously trained with me. My research interests, especially the Howard Hughes Fellowship, tipped the scales in my favor. I was offered an early acceptance position.

At the same time, I was accepted to the UCLA Medical Acupuncture Course. While waiting for the UCSD Preventive Medicine to start in the following year, I immersed

myself in the study of Chinese language, Chinese medicine, Tai Chi, Qi Gong, and meditation.

I also found the time healing for my relationship with my wife. We met in high school in Singapore, and we not only grew together, we grew up together. She was in the process of completing her Master's degree in accounting. I took a job as an insurance examiner to help pay the bills and my wife took a temporary job position. We spent a lot of time together. Looking back, I feel fortunate to have had a space and time when I was able to invest in developing and reinventing myself, but most of all to reconnect with my wife. Our relationship had suffered from the busy years I spent in medical school and residency and this respite from training gave us an opportunity to rediscover one another.

### *Preventive Medicine Residency*

In contrast to family medicine, I found preventive medicine to be closer to the intellectual curiosity model I had experienced during my undergraduate training at Beloit College. We were given clear goals, objectives, and guidance. In addition, the residency also paid tuition for me to obtain a master's degree in public health. Most importantly, it opened so many doors, including meeting my acupuncture mentor, introduction to the Positive Choice Wellness Center, and finally a fellowship training opportunity with Dr. Andrew Weil at the University of Arizona.

It was a very busy two years working and learning from many institutions including San Diego State University Student Health Services, Balboa Naval Hospital, Kaiser Permanente, County of San Diego, and finally UCSD Preventive Medicine residency, a typical preventive medicine residency where one learns about health and wellness through partnering with a variety of institutions.

Perhaps the most important lesson was that there are no two preventive medicine physicians doing the same work. In the world of preventive medicine, one has to invent one's own career. It is not for everyone, but I loved every minute of it. With the blessing of the residency, I created an acupuncture program at two community settings. I also learned how to design and conduct clinical trials. In contrast to basic science trials, clinical trials involve human beings who are much more complex. I designed two clinical trials. Finally, I learned to be a medical scholar because I had to write a thesis to graduate. I learned how to write a review paper under the guidance of a master clinical researcher. At first, I was warned that it would not be easy to work with him, however, I found him to be an excellent mentor. The training was highly useful in the development of many of the skills I use in my practice. I developed critical thinking, evaluation of clinical studies, and skills in scientific writing while writing my thesis

under his guidance. The fact that my thesis was accepted for publication without any further edits is a testament to his high standards.

When I was in family medicine training, each day was a struggle. In contrast, preventive medicine training was effortless. Though I was probably busier during my preventive medicine training, I did not feel stressed because I was positively stimulated in a natural flow, the result of being one with the Tao. In preventive medicine, I had found a home. I had found my Tao of Medicine.

#### *Positive Choice Wellness Center*

During one of the seminar at UCSD, I met the director of Positive Choice Wellness Center. He was a visionary who correctly predicted the impending obesity epidemic and created a state of art medical weight loss center.

Positive Choice Wellness Center was an exemplary wellness center that focused on a medical weight loss program. While I disagree with the extreme approach to weight loss using very low calories, I was impressed with the level of integration of psychological growth programs, counseling, physical activity, and nutrition classes. I met many exceptional individuals, many of whom have become friends.

The director of Positive Choice recommended that I initiate a small pilot trial for quality control purposes. They selected the most difficult patients with multiple failure histories at weight loss. This group was dubbed as the “Losers” group. My tools of implementation were also severely limited, as none of the healing modalities proposed were permitted. The only allowed format was group therapy.

I was dealing with professional patients who were highly skilled and vested in defeating program protocols. Not only did I know that the medical approach would be unsuccessful, I knew that these patients would be very effective teachers for me. I accessed my past training to meet the challenge proposed to me. In Zen meditation tradition, development of mindfulness is emphasized over the religious aspects. Master Bae taught me that mindfulness was a form of mental technology applicable in almost all situations. In Aikido, there is a concept of Randori where multiple attackers simultaneously converge on a defender. The secret of success is relaxation and mindful application of evasion and neutralization of the nearest attacker and then to throw the neutralized attacker into the next nearest attacker.

I began working with this difficult population by changing the name of the group from “Losers” group to “Survivors” group. I then employed a mindset of wellness versus weight loss as the most important goal. There would be no weighing-in, which is

compulsory for the weight loss program. Patients would be weighed once a month. Instead, their whole consciousness would be shifted from “How much did you lose/gain?” to answering the question “Where is My Wellness?”

This approach approximates Koan, which is a Zen tradition of asking a question that cannot be answered by logic. Yet there are correct answers that Zen masters would agree. For example, the question of “What is the sound of one hand clapping?” is a classic question. The answer is not found in the intellectual aspect of our mind; rather, the whole mind, body, and spirit need to be engaged to arrive at the correct answer.

Participants of the Survivor Group were paired with a Wellness Buddy to form a mutual support team. They were encouraged to check in with each other on a daily basis. Twice a week, we met to discuss wellness strategies. Perhaps the most important thing I did was to insist that the members pay a nominal fee for the educational sessions because payment demonstrated commitment through the investment of time, energy, and financial resources.

As anticipated, in the third week, one of the participants exploded. He was frustrated and angry and argued that I was not helping him to lose weight. I did not need to respond to defend or explain. The group responded strongly and reminded him that the focus was letting go of obsession on weight loss to discover what wellness factors were missing in their lives. It was easy to adopt a posture of humility, to recognize that even though I was a physician, I knew less than the participants who were masterful food addicts who were able to defeat all medical and surgical protocols for weight loss. I acknowledged their mastery of being food addicts and offered to serve as a guide for wellness. The choice was theirs to make.

The program ended for many reasons. The main reason was that it was a pilot program but I think other reasons may include the fact it was too simple. There were no supplements, no medical weight loss products, and no medications. There was nothing to sell. I think that it represented a threat that a mental technology could work on a physical problem that material technologies had failed. At the end of the program, I was offered a job where I was free to spend up to one hour with patients and custom design individual wellness programs. I loved it. While it was comfortable and enjoyable, I hoped for an environment where I was not contained by artificial rules and regulations governed by conservative and fixed consciousness.

*Dr. Andrew Weil's Program in Integrative Medicine*

“Invest in the loss,” Professor Cheng Man Ching, late master of Tai Chi, is often quoted as saying. Investment in the loss is not easy. When I was accepted to train with Dr. Andrew Weil at the University of Arizona, I was a staff physician with Kaiser Permanente making a comfortable living. My wife was equally happy with our lives in San Diego. Our son was just born. What could I gain by investing in the loss of all we had built in San Diego in order to go study with Dr. Weil at the University of Arizona? Why? Why give up a good lifestyle with comfort?

After much consideration and meditation, I decided to follow Professor Cheng's advice and invest in the loss of our stability in San Diego. I accepted the invitation to train with Dr. Andrew Weil. It was the best decision in my life. Looking back, I see clearly that the flow was being disturbed by Kaiser Permanente plans to dismantle the Positive Choice Wellness Center as a place of healing. Though I arrived at my decision by investing in the loss, not only was there really nothing to lose, I had gained more than I hoped for.

The Program in Integrative Medicine is a result of the life-long pursuit of Dr. Andrew Weil to create a training program for physicians in integrative medicine in an academic environment. Integrative medicine means using a mindful approach to healing by balancing healing and curing, Eastern and Western approaches, and conventional and alternative medicine.

This opportunity was an extremely profitable venture, despite a loss of income incurred during the duration of the program. I met many masters who were Dr. Weil's personal friends. I learned to fine-tune mind-body medicine, energy medicine, acupuncture, nutrition, supplements, and herbal medicine. I met wonderful colleagues who became my friends and teachers.

I feel grateful to Dr. Andrew Weil for creating a wonderful program from which I benefited on immeasurable levels. Our class would be the last class to experience a full two years of experience. After our class graduated, the program was diluted to a 10-month experience augmented by Internet learning. After 2007, the experience only exists as an internet learning augmented by three one-week training sessions. I think that the Internet program provides a wonderful experience to novice physicians in integrative medicine. However, there is no substitution for working and playing with the masters for two years.

The advantages of participating in the residential fellowship were tremendous. We had hands on training by Dr. Weil and his faculty.

Dr. Weil proved to be a sincere person who embodied the three treasures of the Tao: compassion, moderation, and humility. I was especially impressed with his down to earth demeanor and his humility. He was always willing to learn from other people. We hiked together, made meals, and engaged in lively and thought provoking discussions.

The fellowship provided me with an opportunity to examine the business aspect of integrative medicine. Previously, I mentioned my concerns about the precarious balance between practicing medicine and medicine as a business. I wanted to explore how I could build an integrative medicine practice that was different from the pressures of other medical business models. During the course of the two-year fellowship, I had an opportunity to explore many prominent integrative medicine programs from New York to San Francisco. I spent about three to five days at each facility understanding their business models, strategic planning, and operational issues.

After visiting and studying several programs, I began to realize a recurring motif; all the programs were losing money. They suffered from magical thinking that because of the virtue of integrative medicine, institutions would continue to fund value-loss leader programs. I had a different view. In a time during which medical institutions are experiencing a decline in income, they can ill afford to lose money in any venture. It was clear to me that in order for the future of integrative medicine to survive, it would require a balance of good medicine and good business practices.

I remember my meeting with the business manager of one of the ventures in an academic setting. Looking at the financial statement, I commented to the business manager "You are going out of business in six months." Though she may have been perplexed by my statement, the program did indeed close within six months time. In another program, I served on a committee to review financial information. I commented "You will be forced close the program in next several years, unless fundamental equations are changed." They felt that I was being pessimistic and ridiculous, and I was excused from further meetings. In three years, they sent an announcement that due to the costs of running the program, it would close.

In the philosophy of Tao, it is stated that beautiful words are not truthful and that truthful words are not beautiful. I do my best to provide truthful and simple answers, instead of beautiful answers. In many cases, people choke on truth. I still believe in what Abraham Lincoln once said: "Honesty is the best policy." In most cases, I find it to be true. It is also written in the Bible "You shall know the Truth; and the Truth shall set

you free.” I firmly believe that there are truths in the world based on time-lasting principles.

#### *AIMC Berkeley*

Of all the Chinese medical schools, I believe that the best school is Acupuncture & Integrative Medicine College, Berkeley (AIMC Berkeley). The president of the college recruited me to become the Dean of Integrative Medicine. At AIMC Berkeley, an active effort was made to integrate two different traditions of modern western medicine and ancient traditions of Chinese medicine.

I am grateful to the president for giving me an opportunity to build a successful program in integrative medicine. We created a strong team capable of helping many people. He created a wonderful work environment; however, organizational issues left me unsure about my role in the organization. I also felt that I was ready for my next step, to become master of my own destiny. When an opportunity presented to become CEO and to start a new operation in Newnan, Georgia, I was ready for the challenge.

#### *Georgia Integrative Medicine*

I feel fortunate to have found Georgia; in truth, Georgia found me. I came to Georgia hoping to serve people and to create an organization where integrative medicine could flourish. Every degree, training, and certification I have earned helps me to serve my patients. In particular, I feel fortunate that I had developed several integrative medicine clinical programs including one full-scale operation. I also have been fortunate to study many integrative medicine programs on-site where I was able to observe what works and what does not.

Integrative Medicine can be an asset to medical institutions, but most institutions do not know how to harness the power of integrative medicine. Most institutions do not understand that Integrative Medicine is not just another branch of medicine. Integrative Medicine also encompasses healing and caring for employees who then pass that care and concern along to the patients.

Integrative Medicine needs to be viewed and implemented as a whole rather than viewing it as a collection of modalities together under one roof. These aspects should espouse wellness for employees as well as for the patients. I often witnessed the absence of team building. Many practitioners operated in fear under the tyranny of administrators who were in turn under the scrutiny of hospital executives. Even in integrative medicine, with its wonderful focus on mindfulness and mind/body medicine was often limited by lack of true leadership in the bureaucracy.

I believe that integrative medicine without integrity cannot fulfill its potential. Similarly, integrative medicine organizations that operate deceitfully and from fear and lack in their daily operations choose to perform in the lower level of function. My observation is that the integrative medicine clinic failures had one common denominator. They all lacked integrity. Perhaps the secret is too simple. There is no secret. Practice compassion, moderation, and humility to serve your patients. Be patient. Be yourself. Relax. Surround yourself with an outstanding team. Invest in the loss. Stick to the principles, even when it hurts your margins on the short run basis. Survive to serve another day.

An Integrative medicine clinic is still a business. One needs to employ the best business processes. All my clinics operated using the latest business processes such as total quality control, just in time inventory, and probability based inventory-stocking system.

Despite the advances in technology, leadership functions cannot be dependent on technology. There are no short cuts here. Servant leadership allows room for empowering employees to fulfill their passion, which in turn inspires people beyond norms of expected work ethic, productivity, and loyalty. The most expensive portion of operation is often the payroll. Yet most companies do not make enough investment in the employees. Employee satisfaction is not enough. Without providing for the wellness of employees, once they are offered a better deal elsewhere, they will leave. Employee loyalty is only developed when the organization is willing to invest in the employees.

These principles are being used to build Georgia Integrative Medicine. We intend to be an example of how a company can do the best with clients through serving its employees. We firmly believe that how we treat employees will translate into how employees will respond to our clients. This is not a revolutionary idea – take a look at successful companies like Starbucks and Google. I constantly look for better ideas from industry giants.

To empower our employees, Georgia Integrative Medicine takes account of everyone's input before undertaking major decisions. Georgia Integrative Medicine currently offers organic meals to employees, offers deeply discounted nutritional supplements, and pays for educational expenses. In a time when most companies are cutting benefits, we are increasing benefits such as full health insurance coverage. I believe that the success or failure of a corporation is found in its soul. At Georgia Integrative Medicine, we have only one official rule. Practice good judgment at all times. If there is a second rule, it is that we should act with compassion, moderation, and humility. If there is a third rule, lead by serving and lead by example. We firmly believe that our investments in our

employees is the secret of our success because our employee are actively participating to enhance our patients' healing experience.