



A Case of the Hiccups

by TONI GILBERT, RN (ret), MA, ATC

A 40-year-old Nelson (not his real name) was in the hospital for heart surgery. I had seen him before but under different circumstances. I knew that he had a difficult long-term relationship and was seeking answers, and he still hadn't gotten the insight or inspiration about his relationship. The surgery was his second within a week. The first surgery failed to correct the problem, and the medical team had to perform a second surgery to alleviate symptoms. After the second surgery, he experienced a severe case of hiccups. Apparently, the medical team was unable to treat his symptoms by conventional means. He had experienced four days of continuous hiccups before he asked for a session in his hospital room.

Nelson was lying in his hospital bed hiccupping. My first impression was that he was sobbing. He was of the "boys don't cry" generation (I call this the John Wayne syndrome). In our society, it is common for men to experience emotions that they don't know how to handle. I felt that Nelson was symbolically sobbing his heart out in the only way that he could.

Because Nelson's condition was life threatening, he had been confined to the hospital bed for several days. The confinement caused him to contemplate upon things at deeper levels than he would have ordinarily. He was in crisis and afraid that he might die. This anxious emotional state put him in a state of arousal whereby he had time to think about things such as how his family would fare if he didn't make it through this health challenge.

However, he was being a good soldier, like our culture had taught him, holding his emotions in check. He couldn't express

himself freely, and so his body had to produce an archetypal pattern of behavior that would express that emotional energy. As he held onto his anxiety, his body symbolically expressed his fear and anxiety through hiccups.

With his permission, I approached his bed to begin treatment. My intuition told me to place my hand on his diaphragm to begin an archetypal energy work. I silently said a quick prayer and asked for healing energy. As I placed my hand on his fourth chakra, he anxiously grabbed my arm with both hands; the action of someone grabbing a lifeline. I was startled but stayed calm and directed him to "just close your eyes and rest."

With healing energy running through my hand, like water from a hose, I stood quietly by his bed. After a few minutes, his facial expression signaled relaxation and a meditative level of consciousness. I quietly explained, "We are going to use your imagination to cure your hiccups." I directed him to take his consciousness down to the area of his hiccups inside his body and describe what he saw. After a moment and still in meditation, he said, "I see a piece of rope that is twisted up at the end." After I asked him what needed to happen, he said, "The rope needs to untwist so I can relax." I guided him to allow the rope to unwind and suggested that his body relax as he watched with his inner eyes. I directed him to draw in healing energy with the in-breath, and on the out-breath, to expel negative energy in all its forms: thoughts, feelings, surroundings. I drew his attention to feeling various aspects of the body relaxing and the letting go of tension.

The hiccups slowly subsided and were gone.

After the imagery session, I talked to him about how men in our culture are not taught to manage their emotions. I briefly told him about his feminine sensitive side and gave him the suggestion that he honor this sensitive side more fully and learn to express himself as a fully sensitive male.

After 30 minutes of energy work, guided imagery, and verbal counseling, my client was again in charge of his emotions, and we had worked out a plan: pray about how to allow sensitive emotions to find expression more naturally.

Two days later, I heard through a friend that Nelson was suffering a reoccurrence of the hiccups. I figured he was “toughing it out” and didn’t want to call me. I called him. Since his son was present in his room, I spoke to Nelson briefly and gave him an assignment for later. In private, he was to:

- write down a list of things that he was afraid of;
- say a short prayer for guidance; and
- wait in meditation until he had answers.

Throughout this time, he was to allow his emotions to come to the surface and be expressed naturally.

During phone counseling, he calmed down but still had light hiccups. Later in the evening, he was able to cure his hiccups by using the techniques of emotional release that I taught him over the phone. Nelson later reported, “I closed my eyes to pray, and during meditation upon that list, the dam broke, and I cried like a baby.”

Hiccup free, Nelson called the next day and reported that he felt emotionally centered. Because of this emotional crisis, he was convinced that he needed to work on his emotional self and was looking forward to learning how to express his archetypal feminine side. “I don’t want to hold onto my emotions so much that they have to be expressed as bodily problems. This makes me see that if I don’t try harder to understand myself in relation to my wife, I will die.”

In this instance, diagnosis and treatment of his heart condition was left to medical science. I assessed the underlying archetypal pattern of the whole person, intuition was followed, and an artistic process using a few healing arts was set in motion. The resolution of his hiccups evolved because his awareness of other dimensions of himself expanded, and he learned that he needed to make changes in the way that he handled his emotions.

While the traditional medical model tends to confine illness to an emphasis on pathology, Margaret Newman’s Health as Expanding Consciousness nursing theory proclaims that the way to health is by recognizing dysfunctional patterns and providing opportunities for insight that opens new pathways in the brain (thus encouraging those in our care to raise their

consciousness and learn new ways of coping). Many years of research have shown that the healthier you are psychologically, the easier it is for your body to heal.

We are at the dawning of an egalitarian system of healing. We observe the yin and yang coming together in each of us and our environments; a balance of the masculine linear and feminine intuitive – major archetypal principles. At this time in medicine, we bear witness to evolutionary leaps toward more holistic methods in healing.

The traditional medical paradigm expects predictable and fixable outcomes to disease and injury. As the healing artist facilitates healing, his/her focus is on the whole person as they live with their family and within their communities. Health is seen as the evolving whole, rather than focused upon the individual’s disease. With this new focus, intuition plays a larger role. The intuitive healer, with training in the healing arts, views the whole person, offers assessments, and then acts as a guide in the creative healing process toward health. With this process, the outcomes vary according to the needs, readiness, and ability of the client to gain insights and move toward health.

A payoff as you engage in this work is that you bear witness to a magnificent, magical and spirit-filled world that creatively and developmentally strives toward an expanded consciousness – toward health of the mind and body.

This story was adapted from the book *Gaining Archetypal Vision* (2011, Schiffer Publishing) by Toni Gilbert. Reprinted with permission.

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