

Journey of a Wounded Healer

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21. Trust

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I am an independent and often contrary cuss. I am not in the habit of asking others for help if there is the slightest chance of my accomplishing the task adequately and safely on my own. It is extremely humbling to surrender yourself completely to the good will of others. It is returning to the cradle where we depend on the gentle care of others to nurse us into strength and adulthood.

When you must surrender your ego and your entire sense of independence, there are but two ways to go: either you trust your care-givers or you do not. In either case, you are entirely at their mercy. Whether partial or complete, we depend on the kindness of strangers to help us through a tender stage. We become children again.

Infants are not thrown into a quandary over whom they can trust and to what extent. They learn instinctively how to trust those who cradle and coddle and care for them. I believe the default state is to be trusting. But if a child cannot trust or has been taught to mistrust, the damage may last a lifetime and color every interaction with the world and everyone in it.

Fortunately for me, I trusted my care-givers implicitly. The doctors, nurses, therapists, aides, and attendants all had their defined jobs and roles for which they were paid. But not once, from any of them, did I get the impression that the money was the primary reason for their being there. Certainly none of them was overpaid. In addition to their jobs and the work they did, each of them had a calling, and that vocation was primarily concerned with helping others, who were utter strangers, get better and learn once again to be independent. Their attitude exuded a quality of healing that I see as a major reason for my improvement with such alacrity.

I trusted each of them from the start, and that trust was not misplaced. These dedicated care-givers are unsung, and I sing for them now. Without their sincere attention and love, I would have remained a helpless infant confined to squalling and complaining. I would have gotten older without getting any better. Thanks to them, the quality of my life has improved almost miraculously. My gratitude is profound, and I owe to them everything I have accomplished since the afternoon of my stroke, and all I will yet do until I am laid in my grave.