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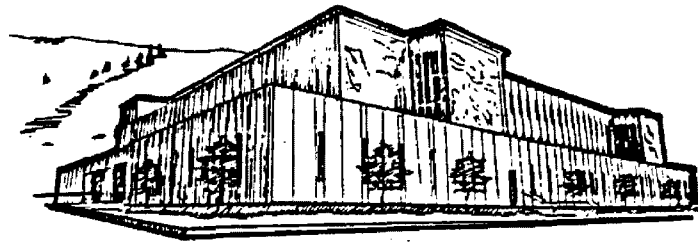
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University of
Montana

THE HEALING POWER OF NATURE IN WILDERNESS

By

James A. Thormahlen

B.S., Sacramento State University, 1975

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Master of Science

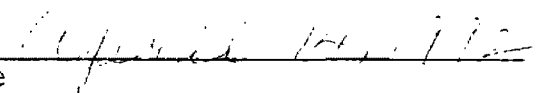
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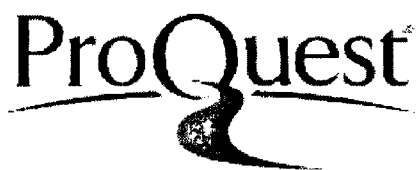


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J.A.T.

PREFACE

This study contains stories belonging to a lot of different people. These are people who have spent their lives in the outdoors, in wilderness. The stories they tell are about healing in the outdoors and how it has affected their lives. Their stories are very personal and I feel privileged to have heard them. I also feel that their story is my story because, like them, wilderness has contributed to the direction of my life. I would like to share my story, also.

Since the age of ten I've been involved with wilderness. That's 35 years of wilderness. I've been an avid backpacker, canoeist, skier, fly-fisherman and photographer. I've been a wilderness ranger, smoke chaser, trail crew foreman, surveyor, helitack crewman, and fire lookout. I've been an instructor in many outdoor activities and my outdoor teaching programs have been publicized in newspapers and in a popular magazine. I've been a commercial backpacking, river and fishing guide. In short, my life has revolved around wilderness. Wilderness has contributed to my image and my identity.

What very few people know is that, until recently, I've never been very comfortable in the wilderness. I've had the knowledge and physical skills to work and play in the wilderness, but I never totally enjoyed it. Usually I couldn't wait to get back to civilization. Oh, I had a few inspirational experiences and there were some exciting adventures and good times, but there was always an underlying

current within myself that detracted from the experience. Frequently that undercurrent surfaced in the form of intense anxiety, fear, loneliness, desperation and other emotions that I didn't really know how to handle. At times they drove me from the wilderness. This was a real threat to my identity and caused embarrassment and loss of self-esteem. I never talked about it. I just hid it and hoped nobody would ever find out and maybe someday it would go away.

Actually, I didn't do too badly maintaining my cover. I've taken hundreds of people into the wilderness and I doubt if very few knew of my fear. Most of the time it wasn't that difficult to hide. I had acquired a good assortment of defenses to protect myself. By defenses, I don't mean guns, knives and wilderness savvy, those defenses that protect us from perceived wilderness threats. I had the usual concerns about grizzlies and being injured while alone. But what I was afraid of came from deep down inside. At times I experienced, what I thought to be, unbearable anxiety. My typical way of dealing with the anxiety was to keep moving. If everyone else was tired and couldn't go any further, I could always do some heroic deed that kept me walking. If that didn't work there was always fly-fishing: another way to keep moving. If I couldn't keep moving another good defense was visiting other hikers. This is a good cover for a wilderness ranger.

However, I couldn't always rely on my defenses. Sometimes they were not available to get me through the night.

Those are the times that were most embarrassing. The times when I had to run. As an adolescent I would just get sick. I would get so sick I just had to go home. As I got older it became more difficult. If I could get everyone to hike a little faster and a little longer the trip would end sooner. Or I could convince everyone else the trip wasn't going just right and it was safer to terminate it at this point. "Better luck next time; it's for your own safety." I'm sure there were times when I made a good safety decision, but I'm stuck with the memories of when it was for my own emotional survival. If I were alone, I would just leave.

The story most vivid in my mind occurred when I was a wilderness ranger in Desolation Wilderness in California. I was patrolling in the area of China Flats on a drizzly, gloomy evening, doing a little trail work. It came time to set up camp. I was the only soul around as it was late fall. I set my tent up and started to make dinner. Then it started, anxiety rapidly turned into desperation and panic. I packed up my gear and headed up the pass. As I began to climb, darkness approached and it began to snow. I reached into my pack for a flashlight which turned out to have dead batteries. It was snowing, dark and I had no light. Going down the other side of the pass was even more difficult: virtually a switch-backed trail down a cliff. But the anxiety was overpowering. Feeling the edge of the trail, I crawled down on my hands and knees. When I reached the bottom of the pass it was raining.

I was tired, soaked and hungry. But, in my exhaustion the anxiety was gone. The next morning was bright and beautiful and I was fine. I can tell 35 years of these kinds of stories.

In spite of all the anxiety and desperation, I kept going back. I kept trying to stay in the wilderness. I knew there was a reason for my being there; I just didn't know yet what it was. I wanted to be strong. I kept thinking that if I were tough enough I could stay in the wilderness indefinitely. I kept thinking that if I were tough enough I wouldn't feel the anxiety and panic. I kept going back, and I kept anxiously leaving. Back home I would fantasize about going on a long wilderness adventure, with no scary emotions, like the heroes in the adventure magazines.

At age 40 my world began to fall apart. First my mother died. Two years later my marriage of fourteen years dissolved. These experiences led to my letting go of a teaching position held for 13 years. I finally realized that I would also have to let go of the home I had built and the property I loved. I had no money or security. As I kept losing all the things that I held dear to me, I slipped into an emotional crisis. In the words of Carl Rogers, I allowed myself to feel all of my emotions to their limit. This went on for days, then weeks. Then, there were months of aloneness.

That spring I had a experience that changed my life. While living alone I had been learning and practicing meditation. One evening, after a long period of meditation, I walked out onto the nearby wildlife refuge adjacent to my house and quietly sat down in the midst of a flock of wild geese. Eventually, I could feel the energy of the geese intertwining with my own. I talked to them very quietly. They honked and made other goose noises in return. They seemed to understand that I was no threat and was there as a friend. At times the energy between us was so strong my skin tingled. At one point I became very tearful. I had been going through a period of opening up, and now I was experiencing the emotions that came along with the openness. I was letting down my walls. There in the middle of the wild geese, I felt a connection to the natural world I had never felt before.

Once again I had gone to nature. Only this time it was an extremely rewarding experience. As a result of the process of opening up, experiencing my emotions and dropping some of my defenses, I had allowed myself to experience nature in a different way. It wasn't getting tough that allowed me to have this experience. In a sense it was by becoming soft. Nature had taught me what I needed to know to accomplish my goal of being comfortable in the wilderness. I needed to go into the wilderness and be still. I needed to be part of it instead of conquering it. Since that experience I've spent a

lot of time alone in nature, in wilderness, and have felt at home.

I wanted to know more about this fascinating process. I wanted to know why I kept returning to wilderness again and again, even though I was so miserable there much of the time. I wanted to know if others had similar experiences. The search for those answers led to this study. This paper contains much of what I've learned.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

Throughout the United States hundreds of therapists, schools, mental institutions, correctional facilities and organizations promoting experiential education are turning to our wilderness and other natural areas to implement healing and growth programs.

The concept of wilderness as a place to grow and/or heal is not new. For thousands of years shaman, other traditional healers and spiritual leaders all over the world have looked to nature for their powers to heal. Native Americans used the healing power of the earth in a way that is expressed by Chief Luther Standing Bear, a Sioux born in 1868 in Nebraska:

The old people came literally to love the soil and they sat or reclined on the ground with a feeling of being close to a mothering power. It was good for the skin to touch the earth and the old people liked to remove their moccasins and walk with bare feet on the sacred earth. The birds that flew into the air came to rest upon the earth and it was the final abiding place of all things that lived and grew. The soil was soothing, strengthening, cleansing and healing.¹

Traditional healers called upon nature for help in service to their people. Tatanka-ohitika (McLuhan 1971, pg 16), a Sioux medicine man, explains how he learned to call

¹This quote was taken from Steve Van Matres' *The Earth Speaks* (pg 137). The actual quote can be found in *Land Of The Spotted Eagle* by Chief Luther Standing Bear (1933).

upon the powers of nature to help cure others:

Then I had a dream, and in my dream one of these small round stones appeared to me and told me that the maker of all was Waken tanka, and that in order to honor him I must honor his works in nature. The stone said that by my search I had shown my self worthy of supernatural help. It said that if I were curing a sick person I might ask its assistance, and that all the forces of nature would help me work a cure.

Shaman and spiritual leaders of early traditional cultures were not the only healers to see the value of nature in healing. This view was shared by more contemporary healers. One in particular, Carl Jung, saw the value of nature in maintaining a healthy mental state and attempted to live his life in balance by honoring the wilderness within his own spirit. In "Camping Experience and The Unconscious," Talley (1974, pg 3) describes Jung's relationship with nature:

In his lifetime, devoted to studying the complexities of mans' nature, Carl Gustav Jung (1874 - 1961) saw mans' task as one of healing the split between nature and reason. There can be no wholeness² without honoring this fundamental duality of the psyche. Jung himself lived his life constantly aware of this. Besides his prodigious intellectual activity and work with patients, he sailed and hiked. He explored primitive wilderness in his native Switzerland, in the African Jungles, in the American Southwest and in the vastness of India and the foothills of the Himalayas. He built himself, stone by stone, beam by beam, a primitive house called Bollingen on the shores of the Lake of Zurich surrounded by dense forest. There was a well from which he drew his water by hand and

²One definition of healing is to make whole or sound.

fireplaces where he cooked his food and warmed his rooms....Here he watched the animals and the birds and listened to the wind and the running brooks and the lapping of the lake against the shore. And he listened to his own inner nature.

Coinciding with Jungs' understanding of a need to have experiences in nature, existential theorists discuss loneliness, uprootedness, and alienation, as the failure to develop ties with nature (Corey, 1986, pg 79).

The same therapeutic value of nature is emphasized in the writings of poets, essayists and environmentalists. Among the many who saw the healing power of nature was Walt Whitman, expressing it in this popular quote from Leaves Of Grass: "Now I see the secret of the making of the best persons. It is to grow in the open air, and to eat and sleep with the earth" (Van Matre 1983, pg 12). Thoreau, in 1906, expressed the therapeutic value of nature in Walden when he wrote: "We need the tonic of wildness - to wade sometimes in marshes where the bittern and the meadow-hen lurk, and hear the booming of the snipe...." (Van Matre 1983, pg 54). Likewise, John Muir communicated his belief in the healing power of nature in a passage from In Wildness Is The Preservation Of The World:

The tendency now-a-days to wander in wilderness is delightful to see. Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home; that wilderness is a necessity; and that mountain parks and reservations are useful not only as fountains of timber and irrigating rivers, but as fountains of life. Awakening from stupefying effects of the vice of overindustry and the deadly apathy of

luxury, they are trying as best they can to mix and enrich their own little ongoings with those of nature, and to get rid of the rust and disease (Opie 1971, pg 32).

In "Wilderness and The Human Spirit," The English explorer and anthropologist Colonel Laurens van der Post (1982, pg 69) depicts his own experience with the healing power of nature:

Those of you who have experienced being exposed to wilderness, who have taken people into the wild areas and lived with them there, have witnessed a change within them similar to that which happened within Jung.³ Somehow they emerge from the wilderness transformed as if they were coming from a highly sacred atmosphere. Indeed, wilderness is the original cathedral, the original temple, the original church of life in which they have been converted and healed, and from which they have emerged transformed in a positive manner.

A classic reference to the healing power of nature in fiction literature is found in Siddhartha by Hermann Hesse. Siddhartha, in a final attempt to heal, finds the answer listening to the river:⁴

³Lauren van der Post (1980, pg 69) considered Jung to be the only truly great man that he had ever known and believed in Jung's theory of the split between the natural or country mind and town or city mind. Jung felt that there was a disproportionate emphasis on the town mind that distorted reality. Jung found that the only way of closing the split, of healing the "cataclysmic divide," was to build the instinctive and natural elements to balance the rational scientific elements, so that the person was able to see that all these elements actually served one transcendent value.

⁴Siddhartha, a Brahmin's son and soon to be a respected Brahmin himself leaves his life as a Brahmin and his family to pursue the contemplative life of a Samana. He soon gets restless and trades this for the life of the flesh. He

Siddhartha listened. He was now listening intently, completely absorbed, quite empty, taking in everything....He could no longer distinguish the different voices....They were all interwoven and interlocked, entwined in a thousand ways....When Siddhartha listened attentively to this river, to this song of a thousand voices; when he did not bind his soul to any one particular voice and absorb it in his Self, but heard all of them....His wound was healing, his pain was dispersing; his Self had merged into unity. From that hour Siddhartha ceased to fight against his destiny. There shone in his face the serenity of knowledge, of one no longer confronted with conflict of desires, who has found salvation, who is in harmony with the stream of events, with the stream of life, full of sympathy, and compassion, surrendering himself to the stream, belonging to the unity of all things (Hesse 1951, pg 136).

As did Siddhartha many individuals are going to nature to heal. As a result there are many types of wilderness therapy programs have developed in the United States, catering to numerous types of people with a multitude of problems and goals. All of these programs have one thing in common: they implement their programs in wilderness. What they do while they are out there varies, based on their goals and clientele. Although it is beyond the scope of this introduction to present an in depth survey of wilderness therapy programs, the following is a brief synopsis of the types of programs and their target clientele.

conceives a son, but bored and sickened by lust and greed, moves on again. Near despair, Siddhartha comes to a river where he hears a unique sound. This sound signals the true beginning of his life. Listening to the river he begins a life of first suffering, rejection, peace and finally, wisdom (Hesse, 1951).

Programs for Growth and Self Awareness

These programs orient their activities toward personal growth. Clientele who participate in these programs usually haven't been referred⁵ and are basically healthy people who choose to get involved. In general they are looking to make changes in their lives or are extending themselves in the pursuit of new skills. The programs surveyed in this study are of this type.

Adolescent Programs for Behavior Disordered Students

These clients are referred by doctors, counselors and parents. They demonstrate any of a number of behavior disorders and are there under the basic premise that learning is facilitated by removing them from the classroom which they may already identify with failure. They participate in a number of adventure activities designed to enhance self concept, social adjustment, academic achievement, group cohesion and improved relations with peers, parents, teachers and counselors.⁶

Wilderness Family Therapy Programs

These programs attempt to use wilderness experience to enrich family life by developing trust, support and open communication. Family members participate in a number of

⁵In some cases participants have been referred by psychologists, schools or other institutions. Occasionally participants have been placed in the program by the courts.

⁶For more information on adolescent programs for behavior disordered students see Lappin 1984.

wilderness activities and adventures.⁷ Due to the entire family's involvement, and its changing context in a new natural environment, family members experience new levels of intimacy.

Programs For Substance Abusers

Programs for substance abusers are available for both adolescents and adults. The adventure experience is used for adjunctive or primary treatment, with most clients referred by medical or therapeutic staff. The focus is on constructive change around issues common to chemically dependent populations. It was discovered by Gass and Kerr (1989) that other people besides substance abusers participate in substance abuse programs. They include: emotionally disturbed and behaviourly disturbed persons, youth at risk, juvenile delinquents, adult children of alcoholics, survivors of rape, corporate personnel, the chronically mentally ill, DUI and DWI recipients, adult offenders/corrections, survivors of family violence, individuals with eating disorders, family therapy clients, survivors of incest, vietnam veterans, physically disabled persons, battering men, agency staff and cancer patients. Other groups using these programs are sex offenders, dual diagnosed adolescents, people experiencing mid-life crises, individuals with hearing impairments, affective disorder sufferers, and individuals with conduct

⁷For more information on Wilderness Family Therapy Programs see Mason 1987.

disorders and/or personality disorders.⁸

Programs For Juvenile Offenders

These programs utilize survival training, adventure experiences and therapeutic camping. As in other programs, emphasis is on increasing self-concept and interpersonal skills. They combine the advantages of peer group treatment with components of therapeutic recreation and survival training.⁹

Programs For Chronic Psychiatric Patients

Wilderness programs for psychiatric patients use an outdoor setting to accelerate the learning of a greater sense of self, personal responsibility and social cooperation. These programs stress the development of personal responsibility and social skills and the diminishing of sick behaviors and attitudes (Banaka and Young 1985). They either consist of a general camping experience (Banaka and Young 1985, Polenz and Rubitz 1977, Shearer 1975) or an adventure camping experience (Jerstad and Steizer 1973).

Goals

Quite an extensive library exists on the healing power of

⁸For more information on substance abuse programs see Gass and Kerr (1989).

⁹In a study by Baily and Ray (1979), results showed important changes in self development as measured by initiative, personal identity and personal habits. Significant differences between the recidivism rates of discharges from the camping program and youth admitted to other correctional facilities were demonstrated.

nature, ranging from New Age on power places, spirituality, meditation and vision quests to articles in professional journals on adventure programs for specific groups. In general the articles discuss programs, techniques, activities, results and theories. With few exceptions, little attempt is made to discuss the actual healing power of nature. In most cases the emphasis is placed on techniques and activities or refer to nature in very passive terms. It became apparent to me that the activities wilderness therapists conduct (e.g., rock climbing, white water boating, backpacking, group discussions, etc.) are what the authors are referring to when they discuss the healing power of nature. Or possibly, there is confusion on the part of the therapists and counselors concerning the different roles nature, wilderness and the activities play in the healing process. Therefore the goals of this study are: (1) to determine if wilderness therapy practitioners and counselors believe that wilderness in and of itself has therapeutic powers, independent of any possible healing aspects of the activities (2) to discover how counselors and practitioners interpret these powers, and (3) to determine how these powers, if they do exist, facilitate healing.

Format and Presentation

To accomplish these goals I employed two sources of information. The first source is ethnographic interviews of

guides, counselors, therapists, teachers and other facilitators who work in adventure therapy programs.¹⁰ Ethnography is the act of describing a culture. Spradley (1979, pg 3) states that the essential core of this activity is understanding another way of life from the native point of view. Thus, the main body of the paper is presented as an ethnography, a written representation of a culture (Van Maanen 1988, pg 1).¹¹ The culture, in this case, is that of the wilderness counselor/healer. The introductions and interpretations are kept to a minimum in the main text, to let the guides tell their own story.

The second source of information is from the literature, including professional journals, popular magazines, books and any other documents that discuss healing in a relevant context. The source may not discuss the healing power of nature/wilderness per se but may pertain to the subject in some related way, i.e., healing mechanisms, psychological theory, personal experience or a literary reference to healing in nature/wilderness. This information is presented in the form of footnotes so as not to distract from the ethnography. (I have elected to use footnotes rather than endnotes because the information is important in understanding

¹⁰All of the quotes throughout this study are from either the guides or the literature. I've indicated where statements are from my own philosophies and experiences or my own interpretation of information.

¹¹The actual process of selecting and interviewing the counselors etc. is outlined in chapter II.

context and is more readily available in this form.) The footnotes serve a number of functions. They define terms or jargon used in the profession or clarify a philosophy or theory that supports a particular activity or view point.

There is a third source of information that influences the interpretation of the material. That information results from my own experiences in the wilderness. Throughout the interviews, literature research and the writing of this study, I frequently had the experience of close familiarity with the information disclosed. During the interviews, the interviewees often acknowledged my familiarity with comments like "you know", and "you've probably had similar experiences." It would be difficult, therefore, to draw any conclusions without reflecting on my own experiences.¹²

¹²Milner (1990) refers to this as "insiders knowledge." Riemer (1977) calls it opportunistic research; research which draws on the investigators familiarity with the subject. In a couple of cases the interviewee would not begin the interview or divulge certain information until I had shared my own personal experiences with wilderness and healing.

CHAPTER II

THE GUIDES

Choosing The Guides and Gathering Data

Guides¹ selected for interviews were initially chosen by looking through brochures and newsletters of programs professing to use the healing powers of nature as part of their approach. I made initial contact with a school in Colorado that advertised: "....drawing on the natural healing of the outdoor environment." Contacts made by telephone with the director and staff of this school led to recommendations to interview other guides not listed in the brochure, but affiliated with the school. In most cases guides were involved in a number of different programs that used nature as a healing medium.² Five men and two women in Colorado were selected for interviewing as a result of a series of phone calls. Appointments were made, and in June of 1990 I drove to

¹The term guide is one that I chose for convenience and simplicity. According to the American Heritage Dictionary (second college edition 1985, pg 581), a guide is one who shows the way by leading, directing or advising. This is a name commonly given to someone who takes others into the wilderness. The informants had difficulty in giving themselves a job title. Some of the titles that materialized in the interviews were spiritual healer, facilitator, mentor, shaman, counselors, sacred healer and wilderness guide.

²Throughout the interviews the difficulty of making a living in this profession became apparent. Most of the guides were also employed in other jobs or working a number of different programs.

Colorado and conducted interviews. Two more guides were selected for interviewing from a Montana based program. As with the Colorado program, its brochure included references to the "healing powers of nature." Thus, nine interviews with two women and seven men form the basis of this study.

Each interview centered around a set of 12 questions that I had developed and then refined after the first interview.³ Interviewees were not held strictly to the content of the questions. In many cases the respondent would "spin off"⁴ in other directions as their thoughts drifted to related topics and experiences. I made no attempt to discourage these "spin offs." In some cases a question was answered before it was asked. In many cases a response would lead to my asking questions related to the response rather than continuing with

³ According to Hammersley and Atkinson (1983, pg 113) there are two styles of ethnographic interviews. The important distinction is between standardized and reflexive interviewing. Standardized interviews center around a set of prepared questions. Ideally, ethnographers do not enter an interview with a set of specific questions but with a list of issues to be covered. The approach used in interviewing can be directive or non-directive depending on the circumstances. A directive form of interview requires answers of a specific nature from the respondent, where as non-directive interview is more open-ended in nature.

The questions used in this survey can be found in the appendix.

⁴"spin-off" is a term referring to a situation where novice interviewers, when not guided by a formal schedule, let the talk of the informants ramble and stray from the main topic of the study. As indicated in "Topical Analysis: A Method for Collection, Classifying and Developing Concepts and Models from Narrative Data" (Driessen ND), some sociologists feel strongly that it is very important to correlate "spin-off" topics with the main topics since they function to add sense to the informants' experiences.

the standardized interview. On occasion I asked for a response in reference to a comment made in previous interviews with other guides. I encouraged the guides to relate stories of their own personal healing experiences and those of their clients. In this way I could compare their stories with their individual theories on healing. Interviews were tape recorded at the time of the interview and transcribed at a later date. Interview length ranged from 45 minutes to two hours, though most interviews lasted one hour. Each interview ended with a thirteenth, open-ended question: "Is there anything else I should have asked?"

The transcribed interviews were then evaluated for content by topic with the aid of a computer program called "Ethnograph".⁵ Topics were initially generated by the nature of the questions, but as respondents continued to relate stories and their own personal philosophies, new topics and subtopics were generated. The coding process included numbering each line of the transcript (via the ethnograph program), analyzing each line for content and then assigning a code name to that topic. Each successive interview was then examined for similar topics and given the same code name and at the same time examined for new topics, and given a new code name. The Ethnograph program then isolated topics and

⁵In the words of the founders of "Ethnograph" from Qualis Research Associates: "The Ethnograph is a set of interactive, menu driven computer programs designed to assist the ethnographic/qualitative researcher in some of the mechanical aspects of data analysis."

subtopics by code and regrouped them on separate pages by topic.

The Guides

No one description would fit all of the guides interviewed for this study. Individually they have many things in common, and as a group they share an advocacy for doing healing type work in the wilderness and a love for the outdoors. Their ages range from the late 20's to mid 50's, the majority in their mid 30's to early 40's. Their professional backgrounds are diverse. They each have at least a masters degree in different subject areas and one has an Ed.D, another an M.D. Their degrees include education, psychology, public health, occupational therapy, counseling and environmental studies, and one in medicine. The majority of the guide sample had previously held more conventional jobs, such as counselors, public health officials, teachers, etc.

Transition Into A New Profession

For all of the sample except one, Rick,⁶ moving into a

⁶Rick's background is considerably different than the rest of the sample. He has spent what appears to be his entire working and playing life in some form of wilderness guiding. He worked first as a climbing guide in the Tetons and than as an Outward Bound instructor. He served with the Peace Corps in Africa and kept up with his love of climbing and exploring while there. He has authored a number of articles on using the wilderness as a therapeutic medium and the art of centered climbing. He is the founder and director of the program in which most of the sample received their initial training. He also runs another program that specializes in white water

wilderness oriented therapeutic program was a transition. For some it appears to have been an abrupt transition and for others a rather slow incorporation. All of the guides shared stories about their transition into the world of wilderness based therapeutic programs. The following are examples representing either end of the spectrum of speed of transition.

Jed, previously a counselor from the East coast, describes his somewhat sudden transition:

I came out to Colorado six years ago in the spring of 1984. I had finished my masters degree in counseling and psychology and had been working in a variety of pain and stress clinics, eating disorder clinics, career counseling agencies, things like that. I was feeling very unsatisfied with myself, how it felt to work in indoor settings, and the progress I saw clients making. So Rick [the school director]....kept sending me his material. Somehow, in the grace of some good fortune, his materials came to my house. And I had looked at them for years and finally, on one bad day working at the clinic, I picked up his material that mentioned that he had a several month training program for people who wanted to be wilderness guides, conscious wilderness guides....And I decided to take a hiatus in my life, so I packed up all my belongings....drove across country and spent three months....

As Jed's story goes on, he stayed. After his three months of training were completed, he realized that he needed more training and as he put it: "I cloned myself to Rick." He worked for nothing. Volunteered for everything. Now he is a

river guiding. In addition he holds a BA and MA in Philosophy.

regular staff member of Rick's school and working for other nature based programs as well.

Penny's transition wasn't so abrupt:

I started out when I moved to Colorado in '76 from Ohio and Chicago, and most recently in graduate school in Boston. And I needed to do an internship so I chose Colorado to do that because I had been out here skiing, things like that. I was interested in doing more things outdoors....I took a river trip with Rick's group, that was my first introduction and I liked that operation and the way they did things, so I kept coming back and did a little bit more. I took a rock climbing workshop and did a winter training program and just kept evolving into the system. He [Rick] oftentimes refers to me as the one who took a seminar for five years. It was a real hard transition for me to make that shift from more traditional work life to a less-traditional field. So, I just sort of evolved into it more than anything else, starting out as a customer and seeing what it did for me in all the different contexts that it was in, the different courses I participated in and how I was being affected and growing through those, and ultimately came to the place where I felt I had something to offer to other people in that way.

Penny is now a regular part of the staff in the Colorado program and, like all the others, is also involved in other programs.

An interesting account of a transition into being a facilitator in a wilderness healing program came from Bill, a school counselor and guide in the Montana based program. Bill, unlike the others, didn't make a full transition from a more traditional type career but added this new type of counseling work to his existing role as a school counselor without ever leaving the job. What makes Bill's transition different is that he did not go through an extensive outdoor training

program in advance.⁷ As with Jed, Bill's transition was rather abrupt. He was given an opportunity to participate and then became a facilitator in the program. He liked it and stayed on, working as a guide in the summers:

I've led and done workshops indoors, and what turned me on about this is, I am at my best outdoors. So my thinking personally was, why not do what I love doing, which is the social group dynamics thing where I'm at my best and where I tend to be most whole and centered. So for me, it was more, I was thinking of myself, I wasn't really thinking in terms of healing anyone else. I just know that I like to be there. So I wanted to manifest for my life an ideal job for me; and I wasn't out there to do the ideal healing for anyone else.

Childhood Experiences

Seven of the nine guides interviewed related stories of having had positive experiences in nature as children. Since the guides were never formally asked about their childhoods, it cannot be assumed that the other two guides did not have positive childhood experiences in nature; it just never came up in answering any of the other questions or in their "spinoff" tales. In each case the informant was trying, it seems, to relate how being in nature had been (and still is),

⁷Even though Bill did not go through a wilderness training program, he did have extensive experience in the wilderness. Wilderness adventures had been his dream since a young boy. In addition to the personal experience he had extensive training and experience in group counseling through the Ken Keyes College in Oregon.

a regular part of his or her life.⁸ The following are a few of the statements concerning their childhood:

Since I was a little boy, I couldn't wait to get outdoors. I've been climbing trees since I was tiny, as soon as I could walk and I knew there was something called a tree that you could climb, I was into it. So, I pretty much grew up in the country, in a small town in Alabama. My grandmother owned a girl scout camp, actually a pretty good sized camp, and we had several houses there that we lived in that weren't directly in the camp - but it was an approximation of wilderness. It was fairly lush and green and there were big ponds you could fish in and go boating on. Those are some of my earliest memories in life, sitting on the porch of the old country house, listening to the birds and listening to the owls and crickets....So it's real deeply imprinted in my brain.

I grew up in the woods, in the Catskills in New York, and ran through the woods and played in the creeks and swam in the lakes and felt that kind of connection then, so it felt like a very natural thing. I've always been more at home in nature than within urban environments.

I grew up in rural Kentucky and was always out in the woods.

In the busy life of teaching I knew that when I went to the mountains, when I got out of Denver and went over the front range or just over the hills of

⁸ Thomas Tanner (1980, pg 21), in an article on "Significant Life Experiences," relates the early life experiences of famous conservationists to their interest in conservation activism. He found striking similarities in many childhood hours spent alone or with a few friends in a more or less pristine environment which in some case was lost to commercial development. He also finds similarities in early childhood experiences in autobiographical statements made by 45 professional staff of selected environmental citizen groups.

Edith Cobb (1959) relates the genius of three hundred creative thinkers to their relationship with nature as a child.

Genesy and saw the front range, that it was just like, whoa, coming home and it was real peaceful to me. Even though sometimes nature isn't peaceful. And probably a lot of that was childhood integration experiences with my family, being out there together.

I was always the one that wanted to go play in the fields and climb the trees and look at the crayfish, much to my mother's chagrin.

Why Do This Type Of Work?

Even though each guide was asked formally why they do this kind of work, the answer to the question came out in many different contexts. The one overall theme was that wilderness had been a healing place for them and they felt that they could help others share in that experience. As indicated in his previous quote, for Bill it was the ideal place for him to work.

When Jim, one of the Montana guides, was asked why he did this kind of work, his answer was straightforward and emphasized a desire for others to share in experiences similar to his own:

To answer that real simply: a belief that what had happened to me, and the nourishing aspects of the environment for me, was not just a singular occurrence for me, but that it could be - that nourishing environment and that communication between the land and human - could happen for other folks, too.

In quoting Willi Unsoeld⁹ from personal correspondence, back when they were both involved with Outward Bound, Rick gave a much more philosophical view:

....there are some larger values and truths by which or through which you or I have been profoundly moved and affected. And that there's something at a higher level to share there, a higher moral level or ethical level or spiritual level and you realize you have gained that by your own sometimes epic experiences. The ones that have pushed you beyond who you are and what your sense of your own limits are. And that's where experiences like Outward Bound lie, in the capacity to, in fact, invite people out to have experiences that they wouldn't otherwise have, that will open them to aspects of themselves in their larger connections with the larger universe.

But Rick goes on to say:

And I guess it's the belief that in some small way each of us is contributing to helping to create a climate in which more of us, each of us, can feel supported and sustained.

The guide's inclination for working in professions which involve helping others also has deep roots in more intellectual interests that go hand in hand with helping professions. There appears to be a general interest in personal health and the health of others:

My interest in medicine all along has been in optimal health, high level wellness, that sort of thing, helping people reach their maximum potential and not just putting band aids on their cuts or giving them a drug for their nasal congestion or something to lower their blood pressure. Instead what I've been interested in is helping people really become who they want to be.

⁹ Willi Unsoeld was a legendary mountaineer, Outward Bound instructor, Peace Corps director and philosophy professor. For more information on Willi see Leamer, Laurence 1982.

What I've always been interested in is personal growth, consciousness studies, holistic health, and what kind of environments, what kind of situations, what kind of interactions promote growth for people, spiritual and psychological.

In most cases each of the guides had been involved in some sort of helping profession long before they became involved in wilderness programs: Penny as an occupational therapist working with disabled children, Jed and John as counselors, Lynn and Jim as teachers, Charles as a public health educator and counselor, Bill as a school counselor and Bob as a medical doctor. They were all inclined in one way or another to help others.¹⁰

But helping others was not their only motivation. They saw that in doing this type of work they not only help others, but also help themselves. As Rick puts it:

We're all working on....trying to find where we are and where we need to go and one of the best ways to do that is to work with other people.

¹⁰ One theory pertaining to people in the helping professions is that of the wounded healer (Achterberg 1988, pg 116). The idea of the wounded healer implies that the healer has gone through some kind of crisis or personal transformation that directed him/her to their present work. The transformation helps the healer gain insight into problems of self and others. Jung theorized a wounded healer archetype (Wilmer 1987, pg 117).

Another theory pertaining to people in the healing profession is that of answering a calling. Greenwood (1966, pg 17) defines calling as a divine summons to undertake a course of action. Originally it referred to religious activities. The Protestant Reformation widened it to include economic activities. In this sense a divinely inspired career can be a "calling" for a life devoted to "good works."

The Guides Personal Experiences With Healing In Nature

Each guide had a personal healing story to tell, That took place somewhere out in nature. Some occurred in childhood. For Jim going to the wilderness allowed him to see a different side of his father and participate in his family in a new atmosphere:

[I can describe two healing experiences] One real briefly. In the Boundary Waters in northern Minnesota...with my dad and my family, what I call a dysfunctional family situation...[My father was] quite controlling. An insecure person...he went through ups and downs and roller coaster rides in his life and took the family with him. And what happened was with my dad's connection to nature, he would take us up every year, three weeks at a time, and he himself would undergo a transformation. The family would too. Me being a child, this was all intuitive. I wasn't bringing to bear any rational or analytical tools, as far as, gee this system of family dynamics is...I just knew that we had a lot more freedom from the sort of closed environment feeling of the household...It was a healing incident for me.

Some of the healing experiences occurred in times of transition later on in life. Or the experience influenced the transition. A combination of two wilderness experiences influenced major changes in Bob's life:

So I had one experience and then I did the trip with Rick, the Breaking-Through, probably a year later I think. And that was interesting because there was the added dimension of group process which I had never done in the wilderness. And I think when I started that week that I was in a pretty arrogant kind of place....and as the week went on and I listened to people talk about their pain and their struggles and the difficulties they were having and how nature provided a backdrop for all of that....there were a couple of older men who had a really hard time climbing some of the mountains we were going to climb and I had no

problem with that at all, it was no big deal and so I never even really thought that it would be a struggle for someone else to do and what they might go through if they couldn't do it. And gradually it started opening me into this real deep sense of connection with these other people. I began to get very bonded with them and very close to them and by the end of the trip, I really broke down and became quite tearful and soft and vulnerable about the struggles I was going through in my life. And then I began to realize that I was in a marriage that wasn't what I wanted it to be and three months after the trip was over, we were separated. And that was a big step for me, to really get in touch with what was important, because up to that point I think I'd just been sort of fumbling along in life and assuming that I couldn't really have what I wanted. So that was a very, very healing and opening kind of experience for me.

In some cases the healing experience took place while the guide was functioning as the healing facilitator for clients, demonstrating that the motivation for doing this type of work, consciously or unconsciously, can and at times does involve doing one's own personal work. Charles show evidence of this in relating a story in which he was co-leading a vision quest and at the same time consciously doing his own work in the form of a personal quest. His own work related to the impending death of his mother:

....I knew that I'd be co-leading this workshop, this vision quest, so I wanted to do one for me, just as someone who was experiencing it and just to refresh my experience of it....and so my agenda for this vision quest was to say goodbye to my mother because in fact she had already died. [There] was really nothing left and there never would be, and I had to come to terms with that. And so that was a real difficult quest for me. I shed a lot of tears and there were a lot of good people on that quest, but again most of the quest occurs in the solo and there is the sense of letting go.

Guide Responsibility

As with any other type of wilderness guide the main responsibility of these "New Age Guides"¹¹ is the safety and well being of their clients. And as in other outdoor programs like NOLS and Outward Bound,¹² these guides have the responsibility to instruct in wilderness skills. However, Rick sees instruction in mechanical skills merely as a tool for greater awareness:

And sometimes it's a very manual activity. I take a group of kids out climbing; it concerns details and knots and procedures and so on. But behind that is a reservoir of experience and awareness which makes that whole. And I think for the people that I work with in those settings, they not only experience physical activity, but they experience the whole part of that which is my role as an instructor to convey, rather than just concentrating on the procedures or movements. It's a much larger process than that. And to whatever extent I can encourage people to see it in that larger context and be aware of the connections beyond just the next foothold or handhold, then people are open to some awareness beyond themselves, beyond the immediate, even though there is nothing more than the immediate.

Seeing things in a larger context, as Rick points out, leads to another responsibility that the guides take very seriously, a responsibility to the land. On all of these courses the guides emphasize what is commonly referred to as

¹¹The term New Age Guide was coined by Rick in advertising for his Colorado program. See Rick Medrick, "Training The New Age Guide."

¹²NOLS (National Outdoor Leadership School) and Outward Bound are the two largest Wilderness training programs in the nation.

"No Impact Camping."¹³ They not only stress this method of being light on the land but also a new type of relationship or connection with the land that reflects the Deep Ecology¹⁴ movement.

The guides also see that they have a responsibility to create an atmosphere where participants feel safe: "...the guides, I think, are required to create certain conditions for that, like safety and trust and a basic level of communication." This is conveyed by their general attitude and feelings of positive regard towards their clients and humanity in general. This is also implemented by various techniques that will be discussed in a later chapter.

¹³"No Impact Camping," along with a number of other synonyms, describes a way of being on the land that involves leaving no signs of human use. Most outdoor programs stress this philosophy in theory and practice.

¹⁴"Deep Ecology" a term coined by Arnie Naess involves the philosophy that all life has an inherent right to exist. This is true if it has an immediate value to man or not. This philosophy is in response to the traditional conservation movement or "shallow ecology" that gives value to other life only in terms of its essential usefulness to man. (See Kucak 1986)

In his interview, Jed emphasized the importance of education in Deep Ecology: "So there's training experience also on the level of Deep Ecology -- If I could be specific about what that is. Well, it might be simply doing -- do you know the John Seed thing called the council of all beings? He's got a wonderful book called Thinking Like A Mountain, and it's exercises where people actually become something that's threatened or endangered, whether it's an animal or a meadow or a river. And you go through a whole series of exercises where people speak as if they were that living thing. And it's very powerful...recommended in a deep ecology course. That's the stuff that lights my fire. It's really where it's at and it's what we need, too. Anything else doesn't make sense to me in the current situation."

One responsibility that a number of the guides emphasized was that of preparing the participants for re-entry into their normal world:

I think the more successful a program is, the more likely you're going to have a period of depression following the success of that program, with the individual. Because they go back to an environment that is not enlightened or is not offering at the same level of clarity that the person has achieved. It's not operating on the same level of wholeness or the same concern for healing as the person whose come off a vision quest or some intense experience with wilderness. And that just has to be dealt with....there just needs to be an opportunity to prepare people for that, to give them support systems to refer back to, and to help them keep the flame alive.

And that to me is the danger in a traveling road show, in any kind of a workshop, is getting people that high and then leaving them there and not preparing them to deal with it later....I feel like were doing something ethically [correct] in talking about how to support yourself afterwards.

One significant difference in this type of guiding as compared to traditional wilderness guiding is in the role of leader in the group. Even though it is the responsibility of the guide to create a positive and safe atmosphere and direct the progress of the trip, to care for the participant's safety and well-being and to teach skills and to direct activities that lead to openness, trust and personal responsibility, he or she must also become part of the group. The guide cannot just stand outside the group and direct:

And as a group leader, one of the things that I struggle with is how to be an integral part of the group and still be the leader. How to really be a

member, than set myself apart in any way, and that is an ongoing struggle. I think I'm gaining on it, but it's a hard one because it's really easy to step back and facilitate and not be right there.¹⁵

¹⁵ As a leader, whether to be part of a group or lead as one separate from the group is an old dilemma. It is more desirous to be part of the group as evident in the old adage: "It's lonely at the top." In the Tao of Leadership, Heider (1985, pg 123) states: "A person does not have to join a group or be a wise leader to work things out....Group process evolves naturally. It is self regulating. Do not interfere." As a member of the group it would be easy for the leader to use the group for his/her own benefit. But as Maslow (Yalom 1985, pg 223) points out, there are situations when: "The good leader must keep his feelings to himself, let them burn out his own guts, and not seek the relief of catharting them to followers who cannot at that time be helped by an uncertain leader." A leader does not have to sit on the outside and observe and direct. The best method of leadership is by example or modeling. One means of modeling is through an appropriate and properly timed self-disclosure. But as Yalom (1985, pg 223) demonstrates, there can be pitfalls in too much therapist or leader transparency: "The paradox is that freedom and spontaneity in extreme form can result in a leadership role as narrow and restrictive as the traditional blank-screen leader." A delicate balance of participation, observation, and directing would be the optimal system. Once again, as so aptly stated in The Tao Of Leadership (Heider, 1985, pg 55): "The leader can act as warrior or as a healer. As a warrior, the leader acts with power and decision. That is the Yang or masculine aspect of leadership. Most of the time, however, the leader acts as a healer and is in an open, receptive, and nourishing state. That is the feminine or Yin aspect of leadership. This mixture of doing and being, of warrior and healer, is both productive and potent."

CHAPTER III

THE PROGRAMS

It would be difficult to give a single, simple description of a wilderness based healing program. The Colorado guides are each involved in a number of different programs and each has different types of trips or experiences to offer. The Montana guides have only one program but they offer a small selection of trips which can vary each season. The following trips represent only a sample of those advertised in the newsletter that was used to make the initial contacts in Colorado:

BREAKING THROUGH ADVENTURES - Breaking Through explores the intimate relationship between wilderness and personal growth.

LAWYERS IN THE WILDERNESS - This is a week long outdoor experience designed for the neophyte outdoorsman. Topics of personal concern such as health and wellness, stress and burnout, and lifestyle planning are explored as well as more professional issues such as ethics and time management.

THE YOUNG WARRIOR TRAINING COURSE - Discover the warrior spirit and make the move from apprenticeship to manhood and adult warriorship through challenge, brotherhood and celebrating your connection to nature in all its faces and moods. Designed for young men 16 to 20.

Other trips offered by the initial Colorado program as advertised in flyers are:

CANYON QUEST AND SPIRITUAL WARRIOR TRAINING - Join us for this healing journey through the magical Canyonlands where we will move through exquisite environments of desert sandstone, ancient passageways and towering arches which offer a playground and sanctuary for deep renewal of the

self.

THE WILDERNESS WARRIOR - Join a gathering of men for this week-long journey of brotherhood and community.

MOUNTAIN QUEST - This 7 day wilderness experience is an opportunity to fully open oneself to the positive power and possibilities of change in a way that honors our wholeness.

In addition, the guides work in other programs¹ that offer some of the following trips or experiences:

BEGINNINGS - Rites of Passage in the Canyonlands of Utah for high school juniors and seniors.

VISION QUEST IN THE CANYONLANDS FOR GAY MEN² - The intimate connection we experience with the earth while questing teaches us that we live and grow by the same rhythms and cycles, deaths and rebirths, which constantly renew the natural world.

HEART, WISDOM & COURAGE - The encounter with the immensity and solitude of the wilderness supports not only our own deepening, but helps us experience our connection to the earth and nature.

The Montana program, smaller and newer, doesn't have as varied a selection. It advertises the following trips:

A MEN'S WILDERNESS PASSAGE - The Wilderness--the world beyond the village--has served human beings

¹In many cases the guide is the director of the program. There appears to be a lot of crossing over or guiding a trip in someone else's program as well as guiding trips of their own. The Colorado programs, even though directed by different individuals act as a wilderness healing network.

²This course is actually aimed at people who are HIV positive. At the time this course was developed the state was asking for names, addresses and phone numbers of contacts. So, Charles felt it wouldn't be prudent to put out brochures specifically for people who were HIV positive, because in his words "no one in his right mind, in that given climate, would have identified themselves as such". The advertisement talked about vision quests for gay men but was aimed directly at those who were HIV positive.

for millennia as a place of healing, return and renewal. Our small band of men will enter it and savor it for four days.

PASSING IT ON -- A TRIP FOR FATHERS AND SONS - Anticipate a mix of fun activities designed to draw you and your son closer together, time for your own pursuits, and plenty of good fresh food.

WANDERING THE CREST -- A MEN'S NOMADIC VENTURE - For men who wish to sample the ways of their nomadic forbearers--in conversation and deed.

The Colorado guides are involved in other trips as well. Charles directs his own program and has been involved in a number of other programs over the years. As an official with a county health agency, he has conducted outdoor courses for DWAI³ offenders. He has also offered trips through his own program, including CANOE WITH YOU which focuses on communication patterns and targets couples who are having communication problems; SOFT TRACKS, a llama pack trip focusing on walking softly on the land; and CYCLES, a mountain bike trip focusing on issues of transition. Another course that he offers is THE LISTENING POINT which involves a family therapist working with families of high risk teens. Lynn is involved with trips for pre-schoolers and trips for women. She is currently working to develop a confidence building program using the outdoor environment (namely rock climbing) for women on welfare. John works with men's groups, Vietnam veterans and corporation executives. John,s outdoor programs

³DWAI is a lesser drunk driving charge which stands for driving while ability impaired. It involves having a lower blood alcohol level than DWI.

are in conjunction with his own counseling business. Bob has organized healing trips to Central America which involve the rain forest and ocean. Penny works a number of programs and as she puts it: "I do all kinds of trips. I do trips for kids, teenagers, women, mixed group trips. Some that are designed for beginners or a smorgasbord kind of approach...." There are a number of other programs in the Denver area, with directors not included in the sample, such as the previously mentioned program "Heart, Wisdom and Courage."

Clients

As might be expected, the type of participant enrolled in a course is determined, for the most part, by whom the advertisement targets and the course is designed. If the program is for business executives, then business executives are going to sign up for that program. But what type of business executive would sign up for this kind of healing program? John gives us a profile of the executives he has worked with from various corporations:

I started working specifically with executives, that had addiction problems. And these were very powerful men and they were 40, 50 years old and had reached the pinnacle of their career. They had had ultimate success financially and in the corporate world. And yet inside, they were looking at me desperately for some meaning; is there something else? Here I am at the top and I'm still feeling dead on the inside. And at that time, what they were beginning to do is to medicate themselves, is to look for that experience, look for that healing process through some very detrimental processes: drugs, flagrant sexual abuse, and so forth.

Penny describes another successful businessman from one

of her trips:

He had done very little in the outdoors and he literally made himself totally incompetent through this struggle and anxiety that he couldn't do anything that he normally, I mean he couldn't tie his shoes practically. And he was so much involved with his fear and was really absorbed and incapacitated by it. And he knew it and that made it all the more difficult for him because he knew -- he's got a very prominent job somewhere in New York City. I don't remember what he does but he's obviously a capable, bright man, and he was totally brought to his knees by just the fact of being in the wilderness. And struggled with that and was angry about that.

As mentioned, another group that John has worked with in the out-of-doors is Vietnam vets. He describes them as "being very skeptical, very hard core, very kind of, the world against me type stuff." At the time of the interviews John was working almost exclusively with men's groups. (The Montana program also works exclusively with men.)

As Penny pointed out, at times she works with groups composed entirely of women. She describes the majority of women in these groups as not being feminists:

What I found was that the kind of women who came for the most part were not the feminist types, although there was some aspect of that. We had a fairly nice mix of women, some who had been married and raised families and put all their energy into their children having adventures and some who were single, one who had young children--but all looking to explore their abilities and their talents--feeling that some of those things were untapped.

People participating in these programs can also be described as "in transition," committed to their own growth and change, and physically healthy. One other point: except

for those in the program run by Charles for the County Health Department, all of the participants are there of their own free will.⁴ They chose for one reason or another to participate in the course.

Bob points out one other interesting characteristic concerning people doing growth and healing work, that he has observed in his medical practice:

So the only people I see that really have time are the ones who have experienced total breakdown....Its like these people now have an opportunity to work on themselves.

Not a very good general description of the people participating in these programs, Bob's quote does point out an interesting trend. These people in many cases are dealing with some sort of life crises. It may be serious or it may be minor. They may not even be conscious of it, or they may be very directed in their search for change. This trend involving crisis will become more apparent in future sections that include stories of client experiences.

The Length Of The Trips

The length of time for these trips vary from three days to two weeks. One of the primary considerations in determining the length of a trip is the amount of time

⁴Not all programs are voluntary programs. In many cases, especially with adolescents, the participants are directed to the program by the courts. These type of programs are becoming more common throughout the country. See Chapter 1, page 5, Adolescent Programs for Behavior Disordered Students.

customers are willing to invest: "They want more than a weekend but they don't want to take up two weeks of their vacation." The length of the trip also depends on what the leaders want to accomplish. In John's case almost everything he's done has been either two or three days, but most of the guides agree that three days is the minimum. One believes the minimum time is longer: "I think like a weekend is really not long enough. It takes usually three or four days just for people to start to unwind." Bob sees a 10 to 14 day trip as ideal, but others are skeptical about long trips: "It's like the longer you have the longer you can fiddle around in the beginning." One of the trips, Rekindling The Fire, is 7 days but the participants are pushed a little more on that trip and it is described as an intense experience: "There's something to be said for the intensity of knowing you only have a short amount of time and you're going to have to get down to it". Bill likes the idea of the longer trip. He believes that things are going to happen when you have more time. But he has observed that people in a longer group psychologically pace themselves: "People are afraid of getting too deep too soon." Penny agrees: "....It takes people a few days to let down some of the barriers and get there." One of the advantages of the longer trip is that you can expand the course time periods:⁵ "More happens in the eight day trips

⁵ The time periods of a trip include the entry period, work period and the exit period.

In a study conducted by Turner (1976, pg 73) it was

than happens in a three-day weekend." But in the end, as Rick points out: "People can have a profound experience in one day or three days. Obviously if I can have someone for ten days, I prefer that." Lynn makes the definitive point: "Any amount of time (in nature) is worth the time."

Destinations

The main focus of this study is to determine if healing is expedited in the wilderness, and if so, how. In the interviews the guides frequently referred to wilderness as the setting for their work. They used other terms like "outdoors" and "in nature" but the majority of the time guides referred to wilderness as the setting for the majority of their work. And by wilderness, the guides do not necessarily mean areas officially designated by Congress, but those wild lands that are relatively undisturbed and somewhat private.⁶ Some of the

concluded that structure is necessary in all forms of wilderness therapy, there being a direct relationship between the duration of the experience and increases in personal growth from the experience.

⁶Wilderness as defined by the Wilderness Act of 1964: A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined in the act to mean an area of undeveloped federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvement of human habitation, is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural condition and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand

programs are facilitated in designated wilderness but they also frequent National Parks, National Forest land, BLM land, proposed wilderness, ranches and at times natural areas in other countries. Even though the guides use the term wilderness frequently, some doubt the actual existence of true wilderness:⁷

The only thing really left of wilderness now [is] parks. There [are] real places on the planet that maybe human beings haven't set foot on, but not for much longer....So I think wilderness is a thing of the past....we're talking about preserves.

Really there is no wilderness any more. It's all been traversed. There's wildness. You can find wildness here in the city....So the outdoors and wilderness, those are dubious distinctions; they're arbitrary delineations, I think, because you can experience being with nature and being in contact with nature right in the heart of the city.

Thus, Rick thinks the term outdoors is even suspect when referring to the environments guides use in their work:

acres of land and is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological or other features of scientific, educational, scenic or historical value. (Duvall and Sessions 1985, pg 114).

⁷In both of the following quotations the guides refer to wilderness as a place that hasn't been traversed or explored by man: wilderness doesn't exist if somebody has been there. The American Heritage Dictionary (1985, pg 1382) defines wilderness as (1) An unsettled, uncultivated, region left in its natural condition. (a) A large wild tract of land covered with dense vegetation or forests. (b) An extensive area as a desert or ocean, that is barren or empty; waste. (c) A piece of land set aside to grow wild or (2) Something likened to a wild region in bewildering vastness, seriousness or unchecked profusion. Neither the Wilderness Act of 1964 nor the dictionary refers to human discovery or transient presence as a criteria for wilderness.

And outdoors is a delicate term, too. I mean, I'm outdoors when I walk in the park and can experience myself feeling joy and connection with the trees and the animals and the flowers and everything else.

With the existence of true wilderness in question and "outdoors" having too broad a meaning, it may be more accurate to describe some of the specific requirements for a suitable program environment and use that as the guide,s definition of wilderness. Jim, points out some specific guidelines in picking an area:

I like to see it happen in a real varied landscape and you don't get more varied than the wilderness because part of the definition of wilderness is it hasn't been simplified, it hasn't been used for human purposes to the extent that it's been -- you know we have just a few species that are [used for] resources. And within the wilderness, moving into where there's variations in topography and sunlight....richness and diversity of experiences, of tastes and smells and temperatures as you move through different elevations and you move in a canopy, all of these are very important....Another important aspect is privacy and isolation from encountering other beings. It's my feeling that people doing this kind of work want to cut that to a minimum because those people are symbols and bearers of convention and bearers of -- they haven't thrown their pebbles, their patterns of life away necessarily from the city, from the village....So privacy and a sense of isolation, wilderness often offers that. If there's too many trails, too many accesses, if the access is made too simple, if there are roads, if there's too much human activity: mineral exploration, logging, that kind of thing -- all those trappings of civilization, of a different way of being with nature, those really can inhibit people outdoors.

That sense of not being disturbed is also important to

Charles:

It takes a while before you really get into

wilderness. You're in the outdoors, obviously, but to me wilderness is the sense of beauty that comes from not being disturbed. And most outdoor arenas are places that have some disturbances.

The places that the guides use which have the necessary characteristics include: Canyonlands National Park in Utah, The Great Burn Wilderness Study Area in Montana; and Royal Gorge, Sangre De Cristo Mountains, and the Arkansas River, all in Southern Colorado. Other rivers include the Delores River, Rio Grande, Taos, Cachama, Box and the Missouri. Other mountainous areas include the San Juans, Rocky Mountain National Park, and the Front Range out of Denver which includes Eldorado Canyon. The rain forest, rivers and seas of Central America have also been used as the setting for healing.

Moreover, Bob sees the value in any natural location that gets people away from their day to day lives: "So I have led trips to Mexico, for example, to resorts."

Whatever the location, it must have the physical characteristics to promote challenging activities. The guides require places to climb cliffs and peaks, run white water, hike through rugged terrain and conduct other challenging activities.

Goals

The goal of all these trips is to provide a healing experience in the wilderness. This is accomplished through a

number of techniques that will be discussed later. But in conjunction with this primary goal, there are a number of more directed, secondary goals. One of the secondary goals that surfaces very clearly is that of showing people that there are other ways to live. One guide stated, "I started out wanting to offer people an alternative to the life style that is fucking up this country." In order to do this the participants need to be more open and willing to look inward and try new ways of seeing. This is another secondary goal of the programs, to get participants to open up and experience: "Open themselves to experience which back home they would filter out, whether they are experiences of themselves internally, nature, other people or whatever." To do this people need to let down defenses, another secondary goal: "Going ahead and experiencing their feelings without using their defenses." The exploring of new parts of one's self or unknown parts of self is stressed over and over: "Helping people open avenues for their own self discovery, for connecting with their own internal truth and learning how to carry that out into the world in which they go back to." To do this they must let go of old images and identities: "Having people let go of their executive status, or let go of their victim status and contact their more primitive human qualities." That leads to another secondary goal, that of encouraging participants to participate in the world from a different level of consciousness: "To be more mindful and to

be more personally responsible for their actions and their outcomes and their impacts. And to operate on a higher level of consciousness." This also means becoming more aware of their environment and how they are an integral part of it: "To keep opening their awareness to what's going on around them and how they fit into the greater scheme of things and look at a larger scope instead of their little part of it." The guide, in an attempt to assist the participant in the opening up process, must work at creating an atmosphere where people can safely act in a manner of their own choosing rather than acting in a manner that they feel is expected of them: "Our goal is to have an experience for men in which they can get together and talk and play with other men in a way that may not naturally happen for them in their lives....go out in the world and to act like they would like to act, not how they've been programmed in how they should act." To put it differently: "We're trying to enrich the human and bring it beyond what we do most of the days of our lives." To give rise to this safe atmosphere, guides need to create a space of openness and respect and caring.

Activities and Techniques

The guides use a number of activities and techniques to facilitate their programs and pursue their goals. The most commonly publicized is the use of challenge and risk. There are numerous adventure based counseling and challenge programs

throughout the United States⁸ - the oldest being Outward Bound⁹ - whose basic activities are hiking and camping in a natural setting, most commonly wilderness.¹⁰ In addition, the programs use white water boating, rock climbing, repelling, basic and winter mountaineering, and skiing. The activity allows the guide to utilize the environment in facilitating challenge and risk. (The healing benefits of challenge and risk will be discussed further in succeeding chapters.)

The programs also use less physically demanding activities that are by no means less challenging. These activities ask people to take risks in other ways. They ask people to risk being honestly intimate. They encourage them to discover and share their true identity. They give participants the opportunity to share their fears, desires and hidden emotions. Even more challenging, they ask them to look inward.

Many of these non physical activities revolve around ceremony and ritual, used extensively throughout the programs. The guides choose ceremony and ritual for a number of reasons;

⁸See the Association of Experiential Educators, 1988, Directory of Adventure Alternatives in Corrections, Mental Health and Special Populations,

⁹For a detailed account of one psychologists experience in a Outward Bound challenge program see Serbin, 1984.

¹⁰In other programs not included in this study the basic program is different. Hurricane Island Outward Bound uses sailing and sea survival as their basic context. Many other programs use desert survival.

one is to create altered context:

The purpose of the ritual is heightened consciousness and to create a connectedness with one's own experience in the context....which occurs to be more whole in the moment. And the thing that's bringing ceremonial ritual -- and that's a better way to describe it -- into a context is that they remove people, they take people to a deliberately altered context.

They also use ritual to create a mood or set a tone:

And being able to describe a tone, set an atmosphere partly through a structure that some people would call ceremonial....inviting these people to participate in a reverent and open relationship with this new encounter they're going to have with wilderness.

And to encourage sharing:

....people share in a deeper way. In doing some of the rituals that we do, all of that kind of stuff, it's not just OK to share who you are and what you feel, it's necessary. And it gives sanction to things in our everyday lives that we hide sometimes.

Ritual also promote connectedness:

And the advantage of rituals is that they give a specific prescription in which people can feel their interconnections. And the same thing occurs in a support group. They're out on, you name it -- there's a power to the process and the ritual, whether it's a few words read or just the fact that everyone there is there to acknowledge who they are and share the common context.

Although the programs use ritual extensively, Rick points out a pitfall; ritual can get confused with the purpose for doing it:

These are signs. You know there are sign paths along the way, but they're not the path itself. And let's not mistake the map for the territory, for the actual place. It's very easy to get caught

up in the significance of any single ritual, but the fact is that all of what we're doing is ritual, that any activity that was programmed in a deliberate or intentional way is ritual. Some rituals become habits, like eating, brushing our teeth and so on. But other things become more deliberate. If you brush your teeth in a deliberate, intentional, conscious way, it is as significant as doing Native American ritual.

Some of the rituals have been borrowed from Native American tradition, while some have been created by the guides or borrowed from other programs. The vision quest and the medicine wheel are two examples of borrowed ritual. The vision quest or a modified version, the Solo,¹¹ is a commonly used practice in healing programs, borrowed not only from Native Americans, but traditional cultures all over the

¹¹The Solo is a modified form of the vision quest. Schoel, Prouty and Radcliffe (1988, pg 155) define the solo as: Time alone, without communicating with anyone, even if it's for 15 minutes. It gets them away from the noise and energy of the group. It can be used in many ways, for writing, drawing, the practice of centering techniques, or rest. Pair solos can be used as an adaptation. There can also be a group solo, where the group is left on their own to solve tasks, work out problems, etc.

The solo, like the vision quest, is prepared for with the help of the guides. This includes pre- and post- solo activities. McIntosh (1989, pg 30) divides the beginning of the solo into distinct time frames: (1) pre-solo activities; (2) expanded activities on the solo; (3) reflective guidance through brief discussions and/or solo packages; and (4) the teaching of the component skills of reflection before the solo. The importance of reflection in adventure activities is stressed by Stremba (1989). During the solo, participants are encouraged to keep track of their feelings and other experiences in a journal. Commonly, other types of reflective activities are conducted after the solo.

In most cases a watchful, but unobtrusive eye is kept on the solo participant. This may be through signs, signals, distant observations or short encounters.

world.¹² It was one of the most frequently discussed rituals during the interviews and many of the stories came from vision quest experiences. The vision quest, as seen by the guides, is one of the most effective activities used:

I realized that the part of wilderness work that I thought was the most therapeutic, combining the best of all that (meditation, ritual, Native American ceremony), was the traditional vision quest format.... It's just something about that

¹²The vision quest concept had its origins in Native American traditions. A person would go alone into a wild and remote place for days, often fasting from both food and water, to seek in the natural world a vision of transformation, a guiding spirit or "ally", or to develop a personal totem. Such rituals served as important rites of passage among native people, helping them to make the transition from one stage in life to another (Ronney 1983, pg 30).

The vision quest is actually an ancient ceremonial practice that has been done all over the world (Levitt 1989, pg 18), but in most American programs a form of the Native American vision quest is adopted. Foster and Little (1989, pg 20) describe the vision quest in the context of ancient psychological theory. This is a story of the "heroic passage archetype" and is told in three phases. In the first phase, severance or separation, the quester must leave everything behind, civilization and the civilized mother. He must be weaned from everything that has sustained, defined, or inhibited him. In the second phase, threshold, the quester makes his passage. Without food, shelter, or companionship, he must submit to the whims and wiles of his true Mother, to her rhythms of light and darkness, harsh and soft, growth and decay. The threshold phase, from a therapist-client perspective, is full of potentially healing emotional states and therapeutic information. In the third and last phase, incorporation, the quester returns from the threshold and is joined with the body of the civilized world, the body of his community. This is where the new beginning starts.

The vision quest or the rite of passage has become incorporated into other aspects of counseling in different contexts. It's incorporation may or may not be intentional (see Tracy 1990). Theoretically, this is due to the lack of rites of passage in modern culture. Foster and Little (1989, pg 17) state: "Because our culture only dimly recognizes the value of traditional rites of passage, large numbers of us suffer changes in life status like victims - a burden to ourselves and others."

combination of the whole way the scenario is set up from pre-screening interviews with people to sweat lodges to very specific information-gathering with clients ahead of time, about both problem areas and transitions they're facing in their lives, plus hopes, joys, dreams, goals. And taking all that and then going into the wilderness which includes solo time. Building up the group process through sharing, through ritual, through all kinds of dyads.

One of the main characteristics of the vision quest is that it is done alone. The quester spends a specified amount of time alone in the natural world. Just being in the wilderness alone has many effects:

The solo experience: it removes people from all the supports with which they are comfortable and allows them to open their experience out to whatever comes in.

The vision quest is wonderful because the transformative qualities occur when the person is alone. All the community time is spent supporting....supporting a sense of community to come back to and community to leave from. But the three day solo is when the person is alone with the universe. And it's that period of time when no one else is around -- no instructors, no activities, no facilitator.

To have that alone time; there's something about that, for me personally when I'm in training and what I've seen of groups....

A lot of it's just allowing people to sit down, slow down, go within, and become aware of themselves internally, become aware of their external surroundings and the interconnection that's there.

The medicine wheel ceremony is a ritual practiced by the plains Indians of North America. It is used to instill ecological awareness and understanding of Native American cosmology, and is a means for dividing large groups into

clans.¹³ As is with most of the rituals the guides use, the medicine wheel provides an alternative context from which to experience nature:

The medicine wheel provides an alternative context, since most of us have in our education and growing up a specific framework within which we are taught to look at the world. Suddenly we're talking about the directions of the compass and animal figures and process elements. That suddenly compels one to realign one's thinking and be open to new experience and to insights that well up. Just standing on the Medicine Wheel, some place in the Medicine Wheel, brings all kinds of connections and it's that whole allowances thing and affordances thing, being able to move around the Medicine Wheel. And not only physically in an outdoor surrounding do you perceive your surroundings in a different way, but emotionally that occurs also.

¹³Michael Adams (1987, pg 36) describes the Medicine Wheel as a model of the universe. The wheel is oriented to the four cardinal directions, with a central hub and spokes radiating outward. It should be made of materials native to the area, and the rocks, bones, pine cones, etc. that are used should be gathered with respect and conscious awareness of their place in the ecosystem. Each direction has an associated animal, color, and personal characteristics. East is the eagle; the color is the gold of the rising sun; the qualities are far-seeing and clarity of vision. South is the mouse; the green of spring is its color; innocence and trust are the qualities. To the West is the bear; the color is black; introspection and looking within are the characteristics. The white buffalo occupies the north; he is characterized by wisdom.

Large groups are asked to divide into clans, based upon the animals of the wheel. It is explained to the participants that each of us is born to a certain position on the wheel, and through the process of living and growing, we have the opportunity to move around the wheel. A person is not complete until he/she has travelled the entire medicine wheel. Participants are asked to look at what qualities they seek most at this time, and to choose that direction and animal. The four clans can be in charge of various camp tasks. In some cases clans have performed skits for the entire group or made gifts, "give-aways," from native and personal items for members of other clans. Often a healthy and friendly competition develops as to which clan can cook the best dinner or perform the most interesting skit.

Suddenly I'm between the white buffalo and the black bear, I'm between the introspective side and self that has potential for rebirth....

Another ritual used frequently in these programs is the talking staff.¹⁴ The talking staff is from European tradition and is used to give the holder the right to speak without interruption. The talking staff ceremony makes it easier for people to speak:

Holding the talking staff; the fact that my talking staff here has been used, it has a history it carries with it, the legend of people who have used this to share from....gives a larger historical context, a tribal sense to it. When people grab the talking staff in a ceremony or ritualized setting we feel, I feel, a connection with others, and issues that have been touched are accessible and more easily accessed. So I do feel my self speaking more openly and honestly from my heart, saying what's on the tip of my tongue, as it were.

¹⁴Michael Adams (1987, pg 36) describes the talking staff as one used in meetings to give the holder the right to speak without interruptions. It may be an ice axe, or an elaborately carved and designed staff. What to use is a matter of personal choice: "With some groups we make the construction of the staff a group exercise - participants go into the woods to find sticks, feathers, bones, etc. and then come together to construct the staff. This is not necessary, but can be valuable if there is time within the framework of the program. If not the introduction of the staff with a five or ten minute explanation is sufficient."

The Talking Staff is used for debriefings. The staff is passed around the circle and whoever holds the staff is to speak from the heart and may not be interrupted as long as he/she holds the staff. One may remain silent and either pass the staff along, or hold it for several minutes in silence. The silence may be as valuable as any words that might be spoken. The staff goes around the circle three times, if time permits, giving people an opportunity to respond to others, as well as go deeper into their feelings. The staff gives people permission to speak honestly and deeply, knowing they will not be interrupted. As part of the preparation for the talking staff ritual, the leader stresses that what is said should be the result of deep, honest reflection, and should be accepted as much as possible without judgment.

And that's a process that links all of us, whether we do it in a ritualized way or we do it in open, acknowledged ways.

 You can do the talking staff ceremony like we do on our trips where basically you just hand somebody the wand and say "speak," "be." No one's going to interfere. Say it, say anything you have to say from the deepest part of your being. That's a very, very profound experience for people, especially just sitting around the fire; it's a lot safer and more conducive. You don't know if you'll ever see these people again, so it is a little easier to get into your stuff in that situation.

The talking staff ceremony also allows the people speaking to be heard:

In fact, it's amazing how powerful this little -- this is the executive talking staff. And I've taken it out with some corporate executives I've worked with and just the fact that it's shiny -- and you know it looks like the kind of thing you'd have on a chief executive's desk or boardroom table. And the fact that you can get people's attention by rattling it; you can call upon the power of the place and the powers of our whole communal presence to use to speak if you have a ritual that goes with it. Only he who holds it, who holds the rattle, may speak. That gives power and sanction to the words that someone has to say and it allows other people to share it and allows the people speaking to be heard.

A lot of the clients in these programs are helping professionals themselves, psychologists, social workers, doctors, etc. The guides find that these people are a little harder to get to open up and need a little more nudging. Thus, a little something extra is added to the talking staff ceremony for them:

When you're dealing with helping professionals I find they need a little more nudging. So I might start out the first couple of days with some exercises that just get them to talk about what's really going on in their lives and let them know it

is OK to do this. So we have one exercise where you just go around the group and you fill in the blanks. You know: one thing I really like about my life is -- kind of light and happy. And the next round would be: one thing I've been disappointed about is -- then you might go a little deeper and say: one thing in my life that gives me great pain is -- And you might say something like: one thing in my life that I have a hard time being honest about is -- you gradually take people in deeper and deeper and deeper. So in the beginning you start out with light stuff to get people working with each other as a team and just knowing that you've created a safe space, you break the ice. And then you start moving in more and more and more to the core of what's really going on in their lives, assuming that most people in helping professions don't get an opportunity to share that, unless they're in therapy or have a really, really close partner they can talk to -- most people don't have, don't have a space where they can do that -- and so we try to create that space of safety and put it out that what's really important is what's real: basic human needs.

The main function of the talking staff ceremony is to get people to talk, but the guides encourage people to talk outside of the ceremony as well:

We do a lot of sharing, a lot of dialogue, a lot of talking to people about their experience....

One way to get people to talk is by asking questions:

I tend to do a lot of probing, question asking, getting them to think. So I ask them what can we do to support you, to get what you're here for, and what are you here for?

Another activity that gets people to talk is to encourage them to tell stories. The Montana program uses this format in an exercise termed "Stories From The Land":

....one activity we use we call Stories From The Land. Early in the morning we'll get up and people will get together with a partner and they'll go off on the landscape and they'll find something,

something will draw them in their immediate landscape -- now this is the camp we've set up wherever our location is -- and they'll tell a story about some feature in the landscape and it could be totally a fantasy....depending on their tenancies, they could be talking about geology or something scientific, natural history. It takes a lot of different forms; people play with it a lot and we emphasize a sense of play. What people do after they've gone out in this landscape and they come back, they share their stories and they share the place, too. So that as a larger group, we'll move around to these places and they'll tell the story of this place.

They just don't make up stories about the land but tell stories of their own trials and triumphs:

....and another things is, men not only telling their personal story of past tribulations and triumphs but just, stories of let me tell you things that I've done that will impress you or make you laugh. It amazes me how men just telling what could be bullshit stories, seems to be a very empowering activity....the other guys laugh. But I think part of it is we just get this big belly laugh on our own self. This huge acceptance; no need to look good. Because invariably the stories are times when we haven't looked good and we're just getting a great belly laugh about it in hindsight.

Not all of the rituals and activities involve talk. Some of the guides are getting away from verbal activities and leaning toward less talk and more active experience:

So, we do some non-verbal stuff in nature, too, where people will move out into the landscape and they'll share what they see, and what's exciting to them, with a partner. Only they'll do it non-verbally, totally non-verbally.

I'm actually leaning more and more away from a lot of verbal stuff....

....of all the strategies we used the thing that people remembered most a year later was the silent

hike we took at night. Usually under a full moon we'd hike up to a point that overlooked the continental divide....And we sat in silence for an hour.

There are a number of rituals that the guides use to begin their programs. The idea is to alter one's state of consciousness upon entering the wilderness:

(We) basically do an induction. Which is the simple saying: You're here in a natural setting, you're here in nature and it's time to leave behind all the garbage that you brought with you. That's permission to enter into an altered state of consciousness, to open yourself to experiences which back home you would filter out....

The Montana program uses a ritual at the trailhead to set mood and tone and to get people to think about entering the wilderness unencumbered with baggage.

One thing we do is we sit in a circle at what may be our trailhead and again I want to make sure that the trailhead, or our entry point is a better term, may or may not be any better kind of designated trailhead: wilderness or Forest Service designated trailhead, it could be and it could not be, that's really not relevant. It's a place or setting that has a sense of entry into another landscape. We sit there in a circle and after sharing some of these expectations, talking about our ancestral relationship to the land, the fact that our ancestors....went into the wilderness with a certain set of expectations and lived there with a certain set of expectations - and that our expectations may be different or they may be similar. Then what we actually do, we have the people grab a pebble or grab a rock at the trailhead and hold that rock for a bit and put.... every anxiety, everything of their life which they're leaving behind temporarily in their day to day life -- problems with their wife, problems with their job, that kind of thing, stuff that doesn't really belong on this journey. Sort of stow that all in this pebble and then toss that pebble to the side. Just a way of demarcating that we're going

to come fresh into this endeavor, that we're going to open ourselves.

As with the induction rituals, the purpose of many of the other rituals and activities is to promote an altered state of consciousness:

But after a while, after talking, after icebreakers, I think it's equal[ly] if not more important to experience: whether it's drumming or movements and dance or take off hiking and exploring or singing or chanting. Something that helps produce alternate states so that folks get a chance to see a spectrum of possibilities for their consciousness....we get out there and all of a sudden realize there's all these alternate states: there's shamanic states, there's identifying with animals, dream states.

Another form of ritual used by the guides in the Colorado based programs, also a physical activity, is Tai Chi.¹⁵ They use Tai Chi for centering, coming from a physical and mental and emotional and spiritual center, as well to teach moving with awareness and balance:

One of the things that martial arts tries to do, and in particular Tai Chi, is open up the flow of chi energy which is what connects heaven and earth. And in Tai Chi heaven and earth are connected through humans or animals or other creatures, but in the case of Tai Chi, through humans performing natural movements which open up the avenues for energy flow, for the flow of chi, which is just basically allowing your own internal energies to match the surrounding environment and be nourished

¹⁵Tai Chi originated in China between 910 and 1279 A.D. It's founding father is reported to have been an alchemist named Chang San-feng. It is a system of exercises that involves the entire organism. The exercises consist of 108 forms, composed of 37 basic actions, which are carried out in a definite sequence. Tai Chi is also a form of self defense that involves the principle of harmonizing antagonistic movements both within oneself and in relation to an opponent. For more information see Maisel (1963).

and sustained and healed by doing that. We have a hard time doing that driving down the highways inside a car.

No matter what the activity, or lack of activity, the guides see the importance of teaching by modeling:

A big part of it is what I call modeling. I've had a lot of training in something called neurolinguistic programming, and the basic tenant of NLP is, most of the communication that goes on between people is non-verbal. So if you want to teach someone about something, the least effective way is to get out in nature and say: Now we're in nature, this is what's happening. To do it in a didactic kind of format. The best way to teach them is to show them.

No matter what they want to teach, whether it be openness, respect for the land, patience or any other positive characteristic, the guides must also demonstrate those characteristics. One of the qualities that the guides model is that of being light and playful:

....we try to introduce more sensory awareness and playful learning kind of things. It takes away a lot of the cognitive trauma of learning a new skill.

And so I believe very strongly in injecting a healthy dose of humor. So when I get out in nature, I start to feel physically light, I start to bounce around a lot, and I consciously put that out to other people. OK, so for example, somebody's walking and they're talking about how their pack is really sore on their back. And Saturday Night Live had these two guys that were always talking about all these horrible things that can happen, you know, like an ice pick slips in your ear and it's white hot and it's so painful and the other guy says, I hate it when that happens. So there's a way that you can show people how to respond to their physical discomfort -- that you can have, in the face of adversity, you can still have a great time. And I try to demonstrate that: if it's bad weather, if it's raining, you can still tell jokes and cut up. So there's ways you can

guide, in very subtle unconscious ways, you can guide the mood of the group. By taking everything and turning it into a fun game.

And one thing I did, the role I often play is kind of the trickster, and you know, we would go into some horrendous rapids, crazy stuff, and I would scream at the top of my lungs: Oh My God! We're all going to die! And just to make a joke of it.

And the other piece is to make sure that some way there's a lot of laughter, a lot of play, and a lot of that kind of child like nature that comes out spontaneously out there.

At the beginning of the Colorado programs the guides ask the clients to develop and sign a "No Discount Agreement"¹⁶ which is a contract asking them to take a certain amount of responsibility:

....our No-Discount Agreement where we ask [clients] basically to be more mindful and to be more personally responsible for their actions and their outcomes and their impacts.

It's one of the very first things that we do; we set the whole group down; we talk about self-responsibility and how we're all dependent upon each other. We're [an] interdependent group out here and so we do training on that level.

There are many other rituals and activities that the various programs use: singing, drumming, dancing meditation, chanting, dream circles, deep processing, family voyaging, healing the inner child work, guided imagery, body centered therapy, aerobics, nutrition, mask making, visualizations,

¹⁶Project Adventure uses a similar type of contract called the "Full Value Contract." Its basic premise is that members agree "not to devalue or discount themselves or other group members." This means observing the safety and spotting rules, and agreeing to speak up and confront others when they see an unsafe situation developing (Schoel, Prouty and Radcliffe 1988, pg 16).

deep breathing, and massage. But, more importantly, the guides do not rely solely on challenge, ritual and other activities to facilitate the healing process. Once they have set the mood, the wilderness can take over:

And the way I do it would be to structure the experience, structure the encounter and set a tone for the meeting. And then be as unobtrusive as I could, as far as what happened between the person and the wilderness....I'm very careful about neither minimizing the role of a guide in this kind of experience nor maximizing it. It's a very important role and yet a very important part of that role is , number one, to pull back and to allow the exchange, allow the magic of the relationship to develop.

Like counselors in other settings the guides use various counseling theories to work with the clients, also. Just being in the wilderness, whether it be alone or with other people, will bring up enough issues to keep everyone working throughout the journey. Thus, they are trained as counselors to deal with whatever comes up:

And the way we have been trained, or try to look at it, is to use those [hardships, problems] as opportunities rather than as obstacles, And use that in allowing people to come up against the challenges that are there from nature and utilize that.

Another technique that guides are trained to utilize is metaphorical experiences.¹⁷ They also use the metaphors

¹⁷Schoel, Prouty and Radcliffe (1988, pg 34) define metaphorical experience as taking the experience in one arena and applying it to another arena. It is both a conscious and unconscious process. For example, a person grows to care for a group and expresses it through becoming an active encourager

derived from their own wilderness experiences in conducting their personal lives:

Brian (a white water instructor) is called a river otter just because he intergrates with the water so much. Learning how this water acts over land and trying to read what's going on underneath by what's going on top and doing that hour after hour with this sort of training day after day began to create this integration with the water. We started using phrases like: "We're going to eddy out in life."....(or) flowing with the river, flowing around the obstacles, filling up the spaces. Just a lot of parallels with what water does over land forms.

In a number of instances the guides referred to people coming to the campfire or sitting around the campfire. Traditionally, the campfire has been the place where our ancestors met at night and for meals. Even for modern campers it's a place for social gatherings. Due to lack of firewood, new lightweight camping stoves, and no-impact camping philosophies, some programs discourage the use of the campfire. However, some programs purposely use the fire as a tool for the same reasons that it had always been used. It is

and spotter. That person begins to benefit from this in the way she conducts herself in her life by being more giving and attentive at work. Unconsciously, she may be more giving and caring in all her relationships.

Mason (1987, pg 100) describes the use of metaphor in wilderness family therapy: "As we climb (canoe, bike) is how we live our lives" is a motto of the wilderness family groups. By using metaphors adapted from concrete experiences in the wilderness, a person can transfer the metaphoric experience to his or her real life. In family therapy sessions which follow wilderness courses, family members often use climbing metaphors to provide a neutral domain for talking.

Stephen Bacon (1983) in The Conscious Use of Metaphor In Outward Bound describes the process of planning and using metaphorical intervention in achieving course goals.

a place of warmth and light. We are drawn to the fire:

....after the silent period some people may tend to wander off, to really be physically separated from the rest of the group and the fire then brings people back together.

Follow-Ups

Formally, little is done in the way of follow-ups on participants in these programs. Some of the guides are concerned about this: "....what happens to people when they leave these programs--so open, so excited, so clear perhaps for the first time about themselves? We've seen a lot of rapid, powerful changes for people. We also lose touch." There are a number of reasons for the lack of follow-up, ranging from a shortage of money to a lack of time: "It's a time problem for all of us. We all have other jobs to support doing this work right now." But informal evaluations are made concerning the success of the trips for the participants. Guides interpret results basically in two ways. One involves the guide making a subjective analysis of the trip during the course, and the other involves informal, and at times, chance, encounters at a later date. At times, efforts have been made to solicit responses in the form of a letter a few months later: "There are a few questions that we ask them to process and write us back around Thanksgiving time."

While conducting a trip the guides are in constant relationship with the participants. They are looking for signs of change, warning signs, or indicators of a need for a

certain type of procedure or technique. They may be looking for danger signs. For whatever the reason, they are always observing the participants. A lot of their evaluation for success comes from these observations. Needless to say, this is somewhat subjective but is, nevertheless, a type of evaluation.¹⁸ The following is one guide's observation of the businessman from New York mentioned earlier:

I can't remember exactly when the shift was, it may have been the climbing day, but there was some event during that week that made a fundamental shift for him and he was able to step out of that place of being helpless and inept and incompetent and be present with his fear but also move beyond it. And be present with the group and integrate with the group and to see that shift in him was really profound. And he was different when he left. When he left he was making plans to travel around the country alone and check into different places and seemed to have the freedom and confidence that he hadn't had before.

An evaluation of the success of the trip for an individual might be made at the very end of the trip:

We had come out of the canyon and someone pointed out to her that she had a rip in her shorts and we were going to go to this restaurant, she might want to change her shorts. We were in the parking lot of the Moab restaurant and she took off her shorts in the parking lot and put on new ones. This was a breakthrough for her. She had just become comfortable and at ease.

These stories along with many more are interpreted as success stories for those people, but what happens down the road, in one year, ten years? Occasionally, informal follow

¹⁸This would be similar to the ongoing evaluation a therapist might make at the office during weekly visits by a client.

ups are made six months to a year or two years later. John, because he draws his wilderness clients from his counseling business, gets ongoing reports: "...reports of relationships being better, more joy, less stress." But he does nothing quantitative in the way of follow-ups. Bob has stayed friends with some of his past wilderness clients and also gets feedback through his medical practice: "I have stayed friends with a lot of people who've done the course and oddly enough, a lot of my patients come in and say, oh yea, I did that course four or five years ago and it really impacted¹⁹ me and it really had an effect on me." As a result of lasting friendships, chance meetings and an informal network of communication, the following kind of story surfaced:

And by the end of the week, this guy had changed. This was a year ago. He made a renewed commitment to his wife and they are doing really, really well. She ended up moving out here to be with him. He's been doing a lot of personal work. He's been doing therapy and he's just been a different person.

The following is an example of a follow up report due to a chance meeting:

And I saw him a year later in Boston and met his wife and she confirmed for me that he came back a very, very different person. That he'd never been so emotionally open. So he was able to be intimate with her and much less hidden. And their relationship blossomed as a result of whatever happened to him out there.

¹⁹This term was used a number of times in the interviews. In this context it means to have an impact: the effect or impression of one thing upon another (American Heritage Dictionary 1985, pg 644).

Another source of follow up or feedback occurs when a person comes back to try another trip. In this way guides hear life stories about what has happened since the last journey:

It's very common for us to hear something like....the breaking-through trip was the most powerful change experience in my life. Really, frequent to see people go home and change their relationship, change their job situation, change some major piece of their life very quickly.

There are mixed views on the validity of conducting follow-up surveys. Rick expresses his skepticism as follows:

And I have a certain antipathy for it in that you can't take what is diffuse and put it in a box and say that the very methods and premises on which a lot of evaluative structures are placed are antithetical to the process through which people have gone. And you can get approximations in terms of measuring self-esteem: yes you can do before and after tests, but the factors that affect that are so variable that unless you were to do a real extensive pre-history and post-history, compare all the similar configurations, you're taking on an immense task that is probably at best inconclusive.²⁰

He goes on to compare the immediate effect of the experience based on subjective evaluations, chance meetings and return participant testimonials to 10 year studies:

²⁰ Gibson (1979) summarizes 21 empirical studies from 1966 to 1978 demonstrating positive results. The studies cover a variety of program types, subject populations and outcome criteria. But he is quick to point out that all of the studies presented suffer from some form of minor to serious methodological shortcoming.

For more information based on empirical studies see Jerstad and Stelzer (1973); Heaps and Thorsenson (1974); Baily and Ray (1979); Kaplan and Talbot (1983 & 1986); and Drebing, Willis and Genet (1987).

Yea, and the immediate effects seem to demonstrate the efficacy of an experience like this is greater than other treatment modes. But the conclusive evidence after comparing studies over 10 years is that there's no difference. At least that's some of the feedback I've gotten from people who worked with the literature.

Of all the guides interviewed Charles has the greatest interest in follow-up studies. As director of the program he conducted for the county health department, he ran one year follow-ups:

The self-recorded changes were real positive, not just with regard with not drinking and driving but just drinking habits in general as well as other quality of life issues and relationship issues.

Charles spoke of an interest in follow-up research on HIV positive clients participating in the Gay Men,s Vision Quest as part of a doctoral research project:

....this work with AIDS and wilderness gives, I think, some real tangible ways of demonstrating in fact the healing quality of wilderness on some physiological levels. So it combines elements of wilderness experience with health education and with the emerging field of psychoneuroimmunology which looks at body/mind influences on the function of the immune system....I would like to look at the extent to which a wilderness rites of passage actually does effect T-cell count.

CHAPTER IV

HEALING AND THE CORE SELF

The term healing¹ is used quite frequently in the advertisements for the programs involved with this study: "Join us for this healing journey...."; "Along our way we will build a healing/learning community...."; "The power and support of this healing/learning community is an important part of these retreats."; "Healing and transformation occur through sharing our life journeys with fellow travelers...."; "The Wilderness--the world beyond the village--has served human beings for millennia as a place of healing." I've used the term in the title of this paper and throughout its contents. What does it mean?

To the guides, healing appears to have a number of meanings, but there also appears to be a thread of continuity tying those meanings together. But before examining that thread I would first like to explore what it does not mean to the guides. To heal does not mean to cure²:

¹In the Second College Edition of The American Heritage Dictionary (1985, pg 599) healing is defined as 1. To restore to health or soundness; cure 2. To set right; repair 3. To restore to spiritual wholeness. To become whole and sound; return to health.

²In the Second College Edition of The American Heritage Dictionary (1985, pg 349) cure is defined as: 1. Restoration of health; recovery 2. A method or course of medical treatment used to restore health 3. An agent, such as a drug, that restores health; remedy 4. Something that relieves a harmful or disturbing situation.

The difference between healing and curing is that in healing you're transformed. If you have cancer and you cut the cancer out, you may be cured from it but you're not necessarily healed. To me when a person goes through a healing process it's not so much that they're getting rid of whatever made them aware something is wrong, as that they're moving into a whole new level of self-awareness.

The "whatever made them aware something is wrong," often is emotional pain.³ Emotional pain drives them to get help and relief. Yet, what they may find is that even though they have experienced healing, the pain may not have left⁴:

I guess I have trouble with the concept of healing because I have an old tape about that that says, when you're healed the pain is gone. And it's not

³There are emotions (feelings) other than pain that encourage someone to seek help. These may include resentment, rage, hatred, anxiety, grief, guilt, abandonment, vulnerability and so on. Most people seek professional help because they experience anxiety or depression. Many clients seek counseling with the expectation that the counselor will remove their suffering or at least provide some formula for the reduction of the anxiety (Corey 1986, pg 90). Most people want to escape from fearful stimuli and avoid unpleasant feelings (pg 139). Commonly, these feelings are brought on by a life crisis (Fossum 1989, pg 9), but at other times they may be residual from previous life experiences. In Gestalt theory these feelings are attributed to "unfinished business." Because the feelings are not fully experienced in awareness, they linger in the background and are carried into present life in ways that interfere with effective contact with oneself and others (Corey 1986, pg 123).

⁴Counseling does not guarantee the end to pain. Joseph Roccasalvo (1980, page 160) points out: "...successful psychoanalysis does not guarantee the banishment of suffering; that while it can transform the quality of suffering through understanding at the mundane level and through the sublimative magic of meaningful interpretation, it cannot guarantee the complete cessation of conflict. Consequently....the word "psychoanalytic" can never be combined with the word "cure"...."

true.

It's not exactly healing in the sense that the pain is gone, but it's healing in the sense of connection and being in touch with the feelings that I have around that [pain], being able to share that with people.

The thread or concept that ties all of the guides definitions of healing together is that of the "real self."⁵

⁵Before defining the "core self" or "real self," it would be helpful to define self. Zurcher (1977) divides the self into two types: 1. self as process; and 2. self as object. Those definitions which focus on self as process emphasize the continuity of a flow of consciousness, including perceiving, thinking, planning, evaluating, choosing, willing, introspecting, intuiting and others. They are sometimes also taken to describe the self as knower. Those definitions which focus on self as object emphasize the view a person has as a physical person, his or her sense of identity, self-esteem, sense as an object in space and time and interaction with others. Rogers (1951, pg 498) defines the self as awareness of being, of functioning.

The Buddhist concept of anatta asserts that all entities are insubstantial and without permanent, enduring self-identity. By this doctrine there is nothing in a person that can be said to be fixed, nothing that can be called the self. The self is always changing. A person is not fixed in self (Roccasalvo 1980, pg 156). Sociologists see the self in a changing context similar to anatta. They see the self as non-existent apart from society (Mead 1971, pg 338) and as changing, depending on personal experiences. Rogers (1983, pg 43) states that the self establishes both understanding and meaning and meaning is a reflexive process. In describing the changing character of the self he says: "An object of lived experience, the self is given as a changing unity, known through a stream of intentional acts. Mead (1971, pg 339) describes the self as the essence of being social.

Jung saw the self as a goal rather than a fact, a movement rather than a state. He saw it like a salvation, which is not attained but is always to be attained. The self does not exist as an abstraction, however, according to Jung, it is experienced as a coherent, fluid, somewhat symbolized movement toward unification in the personality, as an underlying continuity not only within itself but with mankind and with reality as a whole (Barton 1974, pg 106).

Authentic being, or being one's "real self," means that the person explores the opportunities and challenges afforded by each situation and then chooses a response which expresses

The guides identify this self with a number of different labels: "true self," "pure self," "core truth" or "authentic self." Their definition of healing involves finding and honoring this "real self":

....it's when people get to their most core truth: who they are, why they feel, what they want, what they don't want, what has happened to them in their lives, and what's kept them from being more whole.

....and then the experience itself can allow us to let that manufactured self to disintegrate and get down to the true self.

I felt like for the first time I could really be myself whatever that self was....

In formulating a definition of healing which involves getting to the "core self," the guides describe a number of processes that are essential to that end. One of the most

his true values, needs, feelings and commitments (Jourard 1974, pg 205). The alternative to being one's "real self" is to be one's "false self" or "manufactured self." That is, the person one thinks he or she should be due to a need for acceptance or the self that results from the unconscious use of defenses.

Rogers (1954, pg 8) describes the characteristic trends of becoming "real self" as follows:

1. Opposite of defensive - Open to experience.
2. Openly aware of one's own feelings.
3. More openly aware of reality instead of seeing it in preconceived categories.
4. Can tolerate ambiguity.
5. Can receive much conflicting evidence without facing closure.
6. More open to body sensations.
7. Willingness to be in process.
8. Has trust in one's organism.
9. Has an internal locus of evaluation.

Jourard (1974, pg 168) sees becoming an authentic being as a sign of healthy personality and the means of achieving healthy personality growth.

consistently expressed processes is that of opening up.⁶ Opening up means to be more open to new experiences, ideas and ways of seeing things, including oneself:

....to engage in physical things that are challenging or scary to them but also to open up and share them, ask for help or support or be able to feel free to have their emotions in that kind of situation.

to be able to accept and welcome any experience, even if it were death.

You're here in nature and it's time to leave behind all the garbage that you brought with you. That's permission to enter an altered state of consciousness,⁷ to open yourself to experiences which back home you would filter out, whether they're experiences of your self, internally, nature, other people or whatever.

 I think, generally, an openness that might not have been there before. I see often times a diminishing of resistance to new ideas, new things. There's more openness; there's less resistance. And oftentimes a lot of feelings.

As pointed out in the above quotes, to open up requires a number of additional changes. The first is to feel free to experience emotions⁸: "feel free to have their emotions." To

⁶Opening to experience is one characteristic that Rogers perceives as a step to becoming "true self." See footnote 4.

⁷Altered states of consciousness are in contrast with the usual ways in which persons experience themselves and their world. When one is in an altered state of consciousness, one becomes more open and experiences the world in non-ordinary ways (Jourard, 1974, pg 48-49).

⁸Rogers (1954, pg 14) describes the experiencing of feelings (emotions) as the discovery of unknown elements of self: "When a person has, throughout therapy, experienced in this fashion [feeling all the way to the limit] all the emotions which organismically arise in him, and has experienced them in this knowing and open manner, then he has

experience emotions a person must drop his or her defenses:⁹

....a lot of times we'll turn our backs and use one of our defenses¹⁰ instead of experiencing the fear, being able to move through that place. So, therefore, what happens is we end up stuffing the feelings and going to habitual behavior.¹¹

This process of dropping defenses and exposing oneself was expressed in the metaphorical sense of peeling off layers:

experienced himself in all the richness that exists within himself. He has become what he is."

⁹ Defenses or ego-defenses help individuals cope with anxiety and prevent the ego from being overwhelmed. Ego-defenses include: repression, denial, reaction formation, projection, displacement, rationalization, sublimation, regression, introjection, identification, compensation and ritual and undoing (Corey 1986, pg 14).

¹⁰Throughout the interviews the guides refer to letting go of defenses. As mentioned in an earlier footnote defenses are unconscious reactions designed to protect the ego or "real self." It is important to realize that to drop ego-defenses totally is a dangerous prospect. If a defense is dropped something needs to take its place for protection. It would be pretty scary going out into the world with no way to protect oneself. The healthy replacement for an unconscious ego-defense mechanism is a conscious coping skill that is appropriate for the occasion.

¹¹Habit: A constant, often unconscious inclination to perform an act, acquired through its frequent repetition. (American Heritage Dictionary 1985, pg 586)

The habitual behaviors referred to here are unconscious coping skills, ways of getting through a crisis or a perceived crisis. However, people do not have to rely on habitual behavior to survive a crisis. They can learn new coping skills. Fossum (1989, pg 12) describes this acquisition as responding to a life crisis with something new from within -- perhaps from an inner source they never used before. A man in crisis needs to find new ways to respond that he never knew about -- ways of responding and capacities of self that may have lain dormant or undeveloped.

And boom, it just started to pour out. The rest of that trip I had a feeling of like pulsation inside; the first time in my life where I felt emotionally open and alive. It's like layers had been peeled off some way,¹² layers of both being in my head and being out of touch with my feelings in my heart.

The process of dropping defenses and becoming more open was also compared to removing a mask:¹³

People get, in the old classic sense, stripped bare and are able to see themselves in more elemental terms and interact with another with fewer masks and more real kind of ways.

An example given of a defense used to keep from experiencing emotions was rage. The following is a guide's description of a man who used rage to keep from experiencing his true emotions:

I'll give you a guy, Jerry, who was what I call a rageaholic. I mean this guy was in total rage all the time no matter what happened. He would snap at a moment's notice. And he was a fighter and on guard all the time. And his way of handling his fear was to strike out, and he would strike out in rage all the time. The way he got close to people was to fight them.

¹²Fritz Pearls likened the unfolding of adult personality to the peeling of an onion. In order for individuals to achieve psychological maturity, they must strip off five layers of neurosis: 1) the phoney 2) the phobic 3) the impasse 4) the implosive and 5) the explosive (Corey 1986, pg 124).

¹³The metaphor of removing a mask was also used by Carl Rogers: " Gradually, painfully, the individual explores what is behind the masks he presents to the world, even behind the masks with which he has been deceiving himself. Deeply and often vividly he experiences the various elements of himself which have been hidden within" (Rogers 1954, pg 15).

Another term, surrender,¹⁴ was used in describing the process of opening up and dropping defenses. The following quote describes an example of surrender, also displayed by Jerry:

....this was in Missouri and we went on this trip on horseback down by the Missouri River for two days--this guy would stay by himself, too. The rest of the group, we were interacting and he was very staunch in his approach and he wouldn't interact and so forth. And he got to a place by the river and his horse came up lame, so what he was going to do was walk his horse, telling everybody else to "go ahead, go by yourself." So the group got together around the campfire and we said, that's not going to work, you're going to have to ride with one of us, you're going to be with us. And he went into this whole rage thing, saying: "Fuck you guys, you're trying to pressure me into doing this, I'll take care of it," and so forth and so on. And finally....he allowed us to gather around him and we got closer and closer until we were able to embrace him. And he just came to this place of weeping and crying and knew that what he needed more than anything else was somebody else to be there, somebody to be close. And so what he ended up doing....he doubled up with another guy and became part of the group.

Jerry surrendered and allowed himself to experience his emotions. He allowed the group to gather around him without

¹⁴Surrender in this case has a positive connotation rather than the normal connotation of quitting or giving up. It still means to give something up, but in a positive sense. Surrender can be a valuable coping method. Another word for surrender would be to yield. To yield can be a form of strength in many situations. You could look at it as being a good team member. At times it can be part of a respectful relationship. It's good, sometimes, to yield to your spouse. We must surrender in order to fall asleep. For a person to cry or scream they must surrender to their emotions (Fossum 1989, pg 22).

having to go into a rage. He surrendered his defense.¹⁵ His "true self" wanted to be in touch with other people in a way other than conflict. He wanted to be close.

Another concept associated with surrender in the interviews was "letting go". Letting go is part of the process of transition or change. Death and rebirth were also associated with transition and letting go. Death and rebirth were described as an integral part of the healing process for clients who are HIV positive:

Now when a person discovers that they're HIV positive, there are some real things that need to die. I'm just stating this without any judgment at all. Sleeping around needs to die; any thoughts of having children needs to die; any unprotected sex, spontaneous, sexual patterns need to die. Any youthful illusion of immortality needs to die. So a lot of things need to die and what is to be reborn is an appreciation for every day that one has on this planet. What needs to be reborn is a greater sense, greater value of relationship, perhaps without sex. What needs to be reborn is a whole new way of sexual expression that requires the mechanics of condoms.

Two words that surfaced frequently in descriptions of

¹⁵When a person lets go of a defensive response they are letting go of part of their "false self." The "false self" consists of all the defenses, social facades and unconscious anxieties that are used to protect the "real self." The "false self" has one positive and very important function, which is to hide the "true self," which it does by compliance with environmental demands. There is a compliant aspect of the "true self" which can serve the same purpose as the "false self." That aspect is the ability to compromise. In health compromise ceases to become allowable when the issue becomes crucial (Davis & Wallbridge 1981 pg 51). See footnote 21 in this chapter.

healing were centered¹⁶ and grounded:¹⁷

And if there was any goal while healing, it would be to be sufficiently grounded and centered....

being more grounded in my own truth

The concept of being grounded is used here to describe a person's verbal expression during a talking staff ceremony:

In the talking staff we've experienced people who will start talking academically, factually, and [then] their voice gets lower and their feelings come up and they will get into some kind of emotional opening, like crying, and it gets real heart-felt and they get, I guess we'd say it was grounded because their voice sounds like it's coming from a lower part of their body instead of from the throat or whatever.

Along with centered, a related term frequently used was balance:¹⁸ "So that's how I define healing; trying to seek

¹⁶To center yourself means to contact an inner point of stability, the calm part of yourself that is not identified with the everyday "noisiness" of the mind (Schuster 1991, pg 58).

Fritz Perls (1969, pg 30) wrote that: "If you are centered in yourself, then you don't adjust any more -- then, whatever happens becomes a passing parade and you assimilate, you understand, and you are related to whatever happens."

¹⁷Grounding can have a couple of meanings. One meaning involves the process of feeling more connected to the earth which is supporting you. For example, a grounding meditation involves visualizing roots extending from one's body down into the center of the earth.

Another meaning for grounding is in being grounded in, or finding support in something stable. Someone can be grounded in their self-confidence or possibly grounded in reality.

¹⁸To be in balance is best described by yin and yang. In ancient Chinese medicine the life force chi is represented by two polar forces, yin and yang. When the yin and yang are balanced, the living system exhibits physical health, when they are unbalanced, a state of unhealth exists.

One definition of balance is to bring into, or keep in equal or satisfying proportion or harmony (American Heritage

that, that sense of balance". To say we need balance would indicate that we have imbalance in our lives. Bob demonstrates this with a description of his patients:

And from the very beginning in my medical practice it became obvious that when people are locked into the context of their daily lives, it's hard for them to make the kind of fundamental shifts they need to make. First of all, it's hard for them to even believe that these shifts are possible. And secondly, it's hard for them to get a grasp or some kind of insight into what really is necessary, or what their life could be like. Because when you're locked into this daily grind of you have to get up, you go to work, just on and on and on--and mostly you're in survival mode. Most of the people I see are in some kind of survival mode of one form or another. They're pushing as hard as they can just to get through the day and their main thrill comes from maybe going to a rock concert and getting high or whatever their preferred drug is, whether its alcohol or cocaine or sexual addiction or something like that. It's a very addictive society that pushes itself beyond it's limits and tries to balance that out by getting some kind of stimulation.

Some of the guides see this state of imbalance as necessary to

Dictionary 1985, pg 152). Pertaining to a healthy personality, this would mean having opposites in one's life in harmony. Examples of opposites that need to be in balance are work and play, unconscious and conscious processes, the female and male components of one's personality and balance between the individual and the group. Fossum (1989, pg 53) describes this by saying: "The Journey is not a state of constant balance and virtue. You naturally get off balance....The key is you're always returning to the balance in which you are strong, healthy, well-rested, and unhurried so you can notice your experience and learn from it."

Another way to look at balance is the idea of "in balance with nature or balance of nature." To live in balance with nature means "to keep in balance with the way the pattern of energy use moves through your own place." Whatever we do that uses energy from nature must also return energy to nature (LaChapelle 1978, pg 131)

The main thing to remember is that too much of any one thing is as bad as too little.

understand what it means to be in balance:

You need to feel sad so you know what joy is like; you need to be imbalanced so you know what balance is like. It's just that when people actively engage themselves in the process of healing they're making a definitive statement that they're choosing balance as a goal....Many, many people through life do not even consider the distinctions, so their whole lives are in imbalance and they accept that as the norm.

To come into balance a person needs to first, get out of his or her head:

How do you get people to get out of their heads and shut away all the messages and shoulds¹⁹ and shouldn'ts that are there and allow their own energy to flow?

And to get them out of their heads the guides show them how to use balance in interacting with their environment. That is, using the entire body rather than just the intellect:

....and moving with awareness and balance, and coming from a physical and mental and emotional and spiritual center, rather than thinking our way through something.

The significant thing now is that what I've been doing is coming from being in my head to being in my body.

One process that surfaced repeatedly in determining the definition of healing is self-disclosure²⁰:

¹⁹One of the major objectives of Rational Emotive Therapy is to show clients that they have incorporated many irrational shoulds, oughts and musts (Corey 1985, pg 216). Musts, oughts and shoulds can be replaced by preferables (Corey 1985, pg 221).

²⁰Jourard (1974, pg 163) defines self-disclosure as the act of communicating one's experiences to others through words and actions. Self-disclosure is in contrast to a person's

I see healing as living with as much fullness as possible, as much ability to self-disclosure and removing as many obstacles as possible to full functioning as human beings....

A number of the healing stories shared by the guides involved self-disclosure:

Rick did a vision quest two years ago as part of the Heart and Courage Program with about 15 participants, most of them women, with three on the staff. And almost every single woman, I think he said 8 out of 10 women, by the end of that trip were talking and sharing about the incest experience that she had as a young child....Some of them hadn't talked about it at all, and he said he was blown away. He'd never seen anything like it. Not only that there were so many women in one group--one woman was the catalyst, she started to talk about it, wrote about it--boom, then all of a sudden they were dropping like flies.

Part of the self-disclosure process involves clients relating stories about wounds they have experienced throughout their lives: "And I also think of the intense wounding that emerges from people out there." Because of their wounds a person comes to acquire defenses. Re-experiencing these wounds and constructively dealing with them was one technique described in doing healing work:

And so we have that [a full range of emotions] and the spirit and the body, and what we begin to do immediately is to reflect off our environment....what goes in if it goes in clean, it comes out clean. If it goes in dirty, it comes out

repression of their real experiences. When people chronically lie to others about their real feelings, wishes, memories and plans, they will eventually lose touch with their authentic experiences. They will not know who they really are. As people reveal themselves to others, they also reveal to themselves. Jourard sees the capacity to be a transparent self in ones personal relationships as a sign of healthy personality.

dirty. And since our parents and our environment have so much clutter, so much shit in it, and we are taking that in--we have to somehow manage ourselves and we find ways. We begin to manufacture ways to deal with mom and dad's unfinished business that they've dumped on us with the family process and so forth. And so we get wounded very early on....So we get wounded in that way; we start taking that pure self and kind of hide it in the background and begin to develop this other self. So these wounds start to fester inside.

The healing of these wounds is an important goal in many of the counseling theories.²¹ It was also expressed as an important goal in wilderness based counseling:

²¹I once heard a definition of therapy that went something like this: As we get to a certain stage in our life we have so many holes in our development that we cannot grow any further until we go back and fill the holes. The function of the therapist is to help the client go back and fill the holes. In Gestalt theory these holes are called "unfinished business." Unfinished business involves unexpressed feelings that are a result of problems in development. People form various ways of avoiding the problems and therefore reach an impasse in their personal growth (Corey 1985, pg 121). According to Fritz Pearls, the father of Gestalt therapy, resentment is the most common and worst kind of unfinished business (Pearls 1969).

D.W. Winnicott (1965, pg 145) describes the self that results from developmental problems as the "false self." The function of the "false self" is to protect the "true self." Winnicott theorizes that the developmental inadequacies that lead to the "false self" arise in the relationship that an infant has with its mother; that is, whether or not the mother has met the needs of the infant and how compliant the infant has become in squelching its needs to satisfy the mother. The "true self" has been traumatized and never must be wounded again (Winnicott 1986, pg 33). The defenses and false projections of self that constitute the "false self" are the same defenses and projections that keep people from experiencing feelings as a result of "unfinished business."

The holes, unfinished business and necessity of infant compliance behavior can also be referred to as wounds. A contemporary concept that has arisen from theories like those of Pearls and Winnicott is that of "healing the child within." This concept is based on going back and healing old wounds (Whitfield 1987). See footnote 15 in this chapter.

So the healing process for me is to somehow go back, open up that wound, re-experience the pain of the true spirit not being loved and then at that moment, stand with ourselves, let this man stand with this wounded little boy and say basically, truly: I love you--no matter what your condition is. I will be here with you; I will not abandon you....So the healing is moving back and clearing out the old wounds and healing the wrong that is done, healing the ways that we've had to be in order to survive. So that we can be who we are and live instead of just surviving.

Healing was frequently associated with the acceptance of self:²²

Healing is more than just getting well. Healing is learning to accept strengths and weaknesses, lights and darks, positives and negatives and integrating that into being a more effective being....

Healing is not something that someone does to someone else. The guides do not believe that they can heal someone. They described healing as something that comes from within: "...the healing in all of us comes from within and our receptivity to allowing that process to flow as opposed to creating interference." And at times the immune system just

²²Rogers (1961, pg 87) asserts that self-acceptance as a concept falls short of the truth. It has been established that in successful psychotherapy negative attitudes toward the self decrease and positive attitudes increase. Self-acceptance carries the connotation of a grudging and reluctant acceptance of the inevitable. What happens in truth is the person begins to like himself. This is not the bragging or self assertive liking, it is rather a quiet pleasure in being one's self. Correlated with the acceptance of self is an increase of the acceptance of others.

According to Albert Ellis and the theories of Rational Emotive Therapy, healthy people accept themselves because they are alive and they avoid measuring their basic worth by their external achievements or the evaluations of others (Corey 1986, pg 216).

needs a little help:

....when we teach climbing or skiing, we're doing it in an internal awareness context, where what's important is the feedback that you get yourself. That's the basis for homeopathic²³ healing. For example doing things that allow the body to provide it's own feedback. Perhaps if there is an ailment in the body, you give a little bit of what caused that or what would normally cause that ailment, which arouses the immune system or the body's own resources to deal with that illness and the body heals itself.

The guides ardently stressed the importance of slowing down. In order to be aware enough of our selves, to do our healing work, we need time. We need to take the time to look inward. We need to take the time to "....get in touch with who we really are." We need to slow down: "....slowing down of the body, movements, speech. Sometimes it's a little more willingness to sit longer somewhere or be quiet longer."²⁴

²³In contrast to allopathic medicine, homeopathic medicine applies the idea of treating "like with like." Termed the "law of similars," it means treating someone's condition with a substance that would cause the same symptoms in a healthy person. The effect of this is to undermine the illness and cause its elimination from the body--called the "initial aggravation." This corresponds to a worsening of symptoms, a brief return of difficulties of past illnesses before one begins to improve. This idea is common to many natural healing modalities (Haas 1981, pg 16).

²⁴According to Jeremy Rifkin in "Time Wars: A New Dimension Shaping our Future," compared to every other period of our history, we seem to have less time for ourselves and far less time for each other. "Surrounded with time-saving gadgetry, we find ourselves overwhelmed by plans that cannot be carried out, appointments that cannot be honored, and deadlines that cannot be met." (Rifkin 1987, pg 46).

The biggest loss due to lack of time is in getting to know one's self. Throughout this chapter I have discussed opening up, getting in touch with feelings, altered consciousness and finding the true self. Without the time to

This also included taking the time to become aware of one's external surroundings:

A lot of it's just allowing people to sit down, slow down, go within and become aware of themselves internally, become aware of their external surroundings and the interconnection that's there.

Part of becoming aware involves the ability to focus. Being able to focus was presented in a concept described as "flow"²⁵:

Obviously, the more you perform at a certain level in any kind of activity, physical or mental, the easier it is to recognize that state and allow yourself to drop into it and to be carried by it, to have that flow experience....It happens in skiing too, when you really get into that flow in

sit and quietly reflect, these goals are virtually out of reach. All of these processes require time. They require the time to sit and experience.

In one of the interviews, during a discussion on meditation, one of the guides commented that if you sit in meditation long enough everything that you hold inside will eventually surface. Then you can deal with it.

Time alone and quiet can be very difficult for the same reason that it is healing. You will eventually experience emotions that are not very comfortable and at times down right painful. It can be painful at first to get to know your self.

Fritz Pearls incorporates sitting with one's feelings into the process of peeling off the layers of neurosis: "When we allow ourselves to fully experience our deadness, rather than denying it or running away, then the implosive layer comes into being. By getting in contact with this layer of our deadness and unauthentic ways, we explore our defenses and begin to make contact with our genuine self."

There are other benefits to sitting, slowing down and being quiet. One of the most noticeable is stress reduction. Meditation can be integrated into daily practice sessions in learning to relax (Corey 1986, pg 183)

²⁵"Flow" is the way people describe their state of mind when consciousness is harmoniously ordered and they want to pursue whatever they are doing for its own sake (Csikszentmihalyi 1990, pg 6).

skiing and suddenly everything begins to feel good....you're in that point of balance where you don't have to think any more.

The concept of not having to think was expressed in an earlier quote, associated with balance. Not having to think was described as using the entire body; using all of our faculties to move through our environment:

....and moving with awareness and balance, and coming from a physical and mental and emotional and spiritual center, rather than thinking our way through something.

Before moving on to signs of healing, one more vital process needs to be mentioned. That process is the finding of one's own power²⁶. The following is one guides story of a client finding her power:

²⁶There are basically two kinds of power. The first is the power to direct our own lives. Adrienne Rich speaks to that when she presents a new definition of power, a reaction to the normally associated definition of power over another person: "....for a long time now feminists have been talking about redefining power, about that meaning of power that returns to the root--posse, potere, pouvoir: to be able, to have the potential, to possess and use one's energy of creation--transforming power" (Rich 1986, pg 5).

The other form of power is in having control over others. This includes the process of denying, force, exploitation, control, confinement, etc. Jung has the following to say about this type of power: "If power symptoms creep into the work that is done around you, then diminish your own power and let others have more responsibility. It will teach you a very sound lesson. They will learn that more power and more influence brings more suffering, as you yourself are learning under the present conditions. One should not assert one's power as long as the situation is not so dangerous that it needs violence. Power that is constantly asserted works against itself, and it is asserted when one is afraid of losing it. One should not be afraid of losing it. One gains more peace through losing power" (Wilmer 1987, pg 95).

There was a woman on our woman's quest last year, and she had been a housewife, she was recently divorced and in a lot of pain, a lot of transition, and was always self deprecating. A l w a y s apologizing for herself, always certain that she couldn't achieve, couldn't do. Had never slept outside before. We were in Canyonlands, and you know you don't need tents in Canyonlands, and we were talking about not taking tents with us and she had this incredibly horrified expression on her face. So we said: "OK, you can take your tent and perhaps move beyond that." And just to watch her transition through the whole thing of doubting herself and not accurately seeing her skills. Going up over the slickrock, she was terrified. And she was a natural climber but she didn't know it. To watch that evolve and unfold and to see her begin to recognize her power and her ability was really incredible....She was one that was really afraid of bugs and critters, and she made friends with the spiders under the ledge and had a place that was hers and was comfortable to her even in the night....I think the real growth for her and healing for her was to recognize her power and her natural ability and to stop apologizing for who she was.

The guides indicated a number of signs that determine if a client is having a healing experience. As in most types of counseling, change is the biggest indicator of effectiveness. If a person is demonstrating positive change, the experience can be interpreted as healing. One sign of change cited by the guides is the client's reaction to his or her own activities:

So I always tend to think of examples where people say I've never acted this way before. And whether or not they have a powerful, emotional experience with that is hard to say, but they step into revealing their authentic self. That's what I look for.

Another healing sign specified was the client's willingness to self-disclose and to become more vulnerable:

So how I saw that as healing was, self-disclosure about a part of the self that was considered forbidden or bad or wrong....be who you are and either be well-received for that or have it so you don't give a shit.

By the degrees of surrender the person goes through during an experience....I see it in people's bodies, again that surrender.

The amount of self-disclosure and surrender can be determined by changes in their behavior or personality:

This woman had never asked for support, maybe in her whole life. And by the end of the trip, she was very soft and vulnerable and tender.

One sign that the guides all look for is that of play and laughter,²⁷ especially if it's a significant change in a person's behavior:

I can hear in my mind's eye, my mind's ear, all the people from previous groups laughing and playing and being in ways that they really haven't been in years.

....we get real silly, the silliness of these retreats is probably the biggest difference that I've seen....men just get real silly when they feel safe....just feeling connected with each other and playing with each other, that's healing.

²⁷Sidney Jourard (1974, pg 102) sees the capacity to see humor in situations and to respond with laughter as an indication of being well: "Laughter is a response that can be made only by persons who have transcended their animal heritage as well as the conformity-producing pressures of society. Healthier persons are able to find humor in situations, they are able to laugh at themselves as well as at others, but they will not be addicted to jokes, which inflict harm or express malice."

....creating an atmosphere where they experience joy. That is a very healing kind of process. One of the best anecdotes to stress is to laugh and play. How can you be stressful when you're laughing and playing?

Another sign of healing emerges after the person has left the program and returned to the daily routine:

I always gauge success on how [people] come back to their daily life and incorporate what they have learned or what's happened to them and change their lives. So a typical comment, or typically what I would see would be that a person would allow himself to be more vulnerable to interaction with another person.²⁸

Lastly, signs of healing can come from descriptions verbalized by clients to their guides:

Partly I take it from the descriptions of the people involved. They'll either use that terminology or a terminology that will suggest... "this has been healing for me. It's given me strength; it's repaired some hurts or some wounds from my past, of course some fears."

[I can determine if healing has taken place from]....the content and the clarity with which people speak.

One guide described the surest way to determine if the people are having a healing experience; simply look into their eyes:

....but there is a spark in people's eyes that is just awesome, it's incredible....their eyes are just alive, clear. It's incredible.

²⁸ What happens after the course is completed is discussed in chapter III, pg 58. In order for guides to get this type of feedback they need to do some sort of follow-up on clients. In many cases this type of information was received informally through chance meetings, therapy groups, client involvement in other trips, etc.

CHAPTER V

CONNECTION AND SPIRITUALITY

Spirituality

The terms spirituality and connection were used frequently by the guides in describing their relationship to nature, specifically wilderness.¹ They often referred to their experiences in the wild as spiritual:²

The experience of untouched wilderness is, for me anyway, a very spiritual experience.

I think there's a huge amount of spirituality that comes out of dealing with bad weather, for example, learning how to be self reliant in that situation.

¹A spiritual connection to nature is the main force behind most proponents of wilderness. In many cases they speak of the wonders of nature and the psychological benefits of going into the wilderness. John Muir, in My First Summer In The Sierra (1939), writes: "Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves." Aldo Leopold (1949) writes of his spiritual connection to his beloved Wisconsin in Sand County Almanac. Sigurd Olson (1976, 1958) writes of spiritual connection on canoe trips in Canada in Reflections From the North Country and Listening Point. In "Spiritual Aspects Of Wilderness," Olson (1969, Pg 133) writes: "It is good to know that the old spirit of adventure is still very much alive in young Americans. As long as it is, there is little to fear. They think they go into the back country for a lark, just to test themselves, or to face a challenge, but what they really go in for is to experience first hand the spiritual values of wilderness."

A spiritual connection with nature is also the main force behind proponents of the Deep Ecology movement.

²Spiritual is defined in The American Heritage Dictionary (1982, pg 1178) as (1) Of, relating to, consisting of, or having the nature of spirit; not tangible or material. (2) Of, concerned with, or affecting the soul. (3) Of, from, or pertaining to God. (4) Of, or belonging to a church or religion; sacred. (5) Pertaining to or having the nature of spirits; supernatural.

And knowing you can't get angry at nature. Nature's just doing its thing. In our society if your boss is on your case then you can point your finger at your boss and say, he's an asshole. OK? But if nature does something really bad, causes a hail storm, you can't say nature's an asshole. It's just the way it is. And I think that induces a spiritual perspective on life, because then you have to turn inward. You don't have any choice but to turn inward because you can't point a finger and say nature screwed up.

By using spirituality in this context, the guides are not referring to a church or organized religion³ but to a way of looking at things.⁴ Bob compares it to mysticism:

³Legere (1984, pg 376) distinguishes between religion and spirituality. He defines spiritualism, not spirituality, as religion: "Spiritualism per se is a religion with ordained ministers and an agenda considerably different than what interests us in spirituality. Spirituality is not a religion. Spirituality has to do with experience; religion has to do with the conceptualization of that experience. Spirituality focuses on what happens in the heart; religion tries to codify and capture that experience in a system....Ideally, the religious system is also set up to help followers have roughly the same analogous experience that its founders had. The big difficulty comes when people think that religion is the experience. When people come together on the level of spirituality, they are meeting on the level of the heart.

⁴Merle Fossum (1989, pg 44) describes spirituality as being about connections, relationships and honoring personal experience. He goes on to describe spiritual relationships as a connection to something beyond our conscious, decision-making selves: "Some call it a relationship to something deep within ourselves. Others call it a relationship with God or nature. It's about accepting possibilities that can't be proved or measured, and it creates a feeling of aliveness. It means going beyond the "nothing but" perspective of science and technology to attaining a sense of beauty and awe. It means using our personal experience in addition to logic. It means using images, stories, and metaphors, our inner voice, our "gut feeling" as ways to understand our lives."

Fields (1991, pg 77) defines spirituality as: "that place in us where the utterly intimate and the vastly infinite meet."

Legere (1984, pg 376) describes spirituality as the experience of the radical truth of things and the attempt to

"True mysticism is simply an awe for the universe around you. It's a sense of wonderment for what you see just walking down the streets, the sunlight, the beautiful blue sky, the rain, the smells, the breezes. That's what mysticism is all about; that's what spirituality is all about. It's not about going to some cathedral once a week and acting holy. It's about reverence for life.

Percieved by guides, a spiritual way of viewing life is enhanced by being in nature:⁵

And when you get in nature you get grounded into those kind of practical, tangible ways of looking at things. Which I think is a very, very spiritual process.

Spirituality is seen as an integral part of our being,⁶

give ultimate meaning to things. He sees it as the ultimate context for humanity to understand itself.

⁵One of the basic reasons these programs are conducted in the wilderness is because the guides consider wilderness as a place for individuals to get in touch with their spirituality. They also see the relationship between spirituality and the healing process. Early healers like witch doctors, medicine men and shaman, considered spirituality and health inseparable, but in the first half of the 20th century psychologists didn't recognize spirituality as a factor in mental health. This is due primarily to Freudian influence (Butler 1990, pg 80). Psychologists are now beginning to realize the importance of spirituality in the healing process (Bergin 1988, Pg 24; Legere 1984, pg 379). It is also becoming apparent that spirituality is related to physical health (Antonovsky 1979; Bergin 1988, pg 24).

⁶Bergin (1988, pg 24) states: "it is conceivable that there is a system that functions according to classical conditioning which coexists alongside other systems having to do with agentive processes and spiritual processes, each having a part to play in the organic whole."

Brooke (1987, pg 194) refers to a spiritual dimension that provides meaning to age-related experiences and enables the elderly to cope with problems that result from illness and longevity.

as is any other part of our physiological or physical makeup:⁷

....for the most part we come into this world with our physiology, our bodies, with our emotional bodies, and with our spiritual self....

And for me also, I've studied a lot of spiritual traditions and what spirituality means, and that's the level that I like to see what happens to people.

I think I'd spent, prior to coming out, I'd spent a week down by the Supi Indian Reservation and I know that my physical, emotional, and spiritual being was immersed in this power that I certainly don't have in my everyday life walking around.

Connection

A spiritual experience in the wilderness is seen by the

⁷When practitioners deal with the physiological and psychological systems they refer to physical and mental health. It would be conceivable then to refer to spiritual health when describing the spiritual system. There are as many descriptions of spiritual health as there are supporters of the concept. Bellingham and Cohen (1989, pg 19) define spiritual health as: "the ability to live in the wholeness of life." Chapman (1986, pg 39) defines optimal spiritual health as: "the ability to develop our spiritual nature to its fullest potential." This would include our ability to discover and articulate our own basic purpose in life, learn how to experience love, joy, peace and fulfillment and help others achieve their potential as well. Roth (1988, pg 153) defines spiritual health as: "a way of being in the world that matches one's religious beliefs about the world."

Brooke (1987, pg 195) claims spiritual well-being is comprised of four characteristics: (1) life experiences of several decades that have a unique meaning to the individual. (2) an inner life that allows wholeness and integration of the self. (3) long term relationships with family, friends and communities, and (4) multiple, gradual changes in the biological, psychological, and social domains.

guides as manifested through connection:⁸ connection to self, to others, to the earth/ nature, to the universe and to a higher power. One of the major goals of these programs is to facilitate connection in and with nature:⁹

We're not doing anything that's exclusive; there are a lot of people doing this in lots of ways. We happen to be doing it throughout specific courses--the very health conscious and deliberate intention of helping people to connect with and get in touch with those parts inside and let that unfold. Once having had that experience, you never forget it in new and sometimes repeated ways.

I help facilitate people in exploring themselves primarily from being in the outdoors but it's no different from what I would do if I were relating one on one with someone. It's just that putting people into that context in the outdoors creates a greater potential for people to make that kind of connection.

Disconnection

The guides see connection as a primary goal because most

⁸The American Heritage Dictionary (1985, pg 311) defines to connect as (1) To join or fasten together; link, unite. (2) To associate or consider related. Connection is defined as the act of connecting.

Bellingham and Cohen, (1989, pg 18) state that connectedness implies that one can grow through and toward relationships.

⁹Wilderness offers solitude and people need solitude to get in touch with self. When people are able to handle solitude, when they can listen to and discover their inner feelings and thoughts, it will be possible for them to achieve and continually promote connectedness to oneself (Bellingham and Cohen 1989, pg 20).

everyone is seen as being disconnected,¹⁰ including themselves: "I'm just as disconnected as the next person." The lives we live, the urban and social environments in which we live, ultimately lead to disconnection. Bob describes the process of disconnecting in relation to his having prepared for the medical profession:¹¹

I think we're a real disconnected society. We do everything we can to override the natural rhythms of life. We drink tons of caffeine--you know, having trained in hospitals, spent years in hospitals working on very, very weird schedules, 36 hour days, go home, sleep for a few hours, do another 36 hour shift--the norm is to feel abnormal. And you begin to think that's the way everybody feels, that everyone feels weighed down and tired and disconnected. And the ultimate effect of that is you start disconnecting from your body and from your emotions. So you disconnect from physical sensations and from emotional sensations and you get totally absorbed in your thoughts and what you think you should do, especially in terms of performance. And so this mind/body split becomes huge.

Disconnection distorts one's spirituality, and makes it difficult to experience reverence for life:¹²

¹⁰Disconnectedness is a common source of pain that pushes people to seek professional help in the form of counselors and therapists (Bellingham 1989, pg 20). Those seeking help get assistance in developing skills for renewing or making new connections.

¹¹Slater (1970) in The Pursuit Of Loneliness concludes that the more Americans fulfill their desire for individualism, competition, and independence, the more they become disconnected, bored and lonely.

¹²Albert Schweitzer expresses the importance of connection in his essay "Reverence for Life": "Let a man once begin to think about the mystery of his life and the links which connect him with the life that fills the world, and he cannot but bring to bear upon his own life and all other life that

And it's hard to have that reverence when you're caught up in a daily routine because everything is dictated by the demands of the schedule, by that survival mode, so there's not a lot left over just to be appreciative and reverent.

Disconnecting isn't always a result of one's environment or occupation alone; it can also be a defensive process to avoid experiencing feelings:

So what are you going to do? If you're uncomfortable, do you split and go back to civilization, do you disconnect? OK, things aren't working well with your wife, you just disconnect, go find somebody else. That's what our generation does in general. You get into a relationship with somebody, it doesn't seem to work, you just disconnect, go somewhere else. You never really drop down into the real feelings you have and into being with the feelings.

Connection To Self

The guides often spoke of connecting to one's self. They see connection to self as vital, and one goal of the programs is to facilitate the process of getting more connected or reconnected to oneself:¹³

....and so I feel like a lot of work I do with my groups in my work is to help people experience themselves....

....people are asked to look inward and to connect with their own inner thoughts and aspirations and

comes within his reach the principle of reverence for life...." (Van Matre 1983, pg 133).

¹³Self alienation results from losing connectedness with oneself. To regain connection with self a person needs to go through the painful process of passing through layers of anxiety and fear. Once in touch, a person acts congruently with their feelings and values (Bellingham and Cohen 1989, pg 19).

fears and concerns.

In many cases they refer to getting in touch with one's self as getting in touch one's truth or what is real:

....when the aha! the aha! this is who I am. The aha! this is my connection to the universe. These are my affirmations, these are my dreams, this is what's real, this is what's not real, this is my confusion, this is my clarity. That's when it all happens.

....helping people open avenues for their own self discovery, for connecting with their own internal truth and learning how to carry that out into the world in which they go back to....

The following story relates how a program participant connected with a part of her past and, as a result, part of herself:

One thing last year, or two years ago, in Heart Ways and Courage, a woman, a very bright woman from Washington, D.C., runs her own computer consulting and accounting firm, you know, very head oriented, analytical kind of work. She came out and I liked her immediately, and it was clear that there was something that she was hiding the whole time she was on the trip. Partly because she could never really be clear about why she had come; there was some mystery to her. She felt compelled to come out to the woods. And on her vision quest--Oh God, I just remembered, I hope there's enough tape--on her vision quest, she suddenly got in touch with what that was. A very important relationship much earlier in her life--I think she's in her 40's now--the man she had been involved with, she had treated him badly--I don't know what that means--he had gone out on a camping trip and, he had died in the wilderness. He had gone out by himself and he had died, somewhere in the Colorado mountains. That was on some level really pushed down in her, and in other ways she just knew it but couldn't talk about it. She came back from the solo experience and the first sharing circle was... very, very tight; she just burst at the seams, the dam burst emotionally and she talked about the experience of losing him; she was like a living example of damned

up...finally releasing itself and she was then able to talk individually with people and you could just see that some big obstacle that had been blocking her for years was removed. She released that, she made it fully conscious....

Connection With Others

To become more connected to self will lead to connection to others, and visa-versa:

....And you know they're symbols, they're signs. Lets not mistake them for the message, or the heart or the connection that's there: they're the iceberg, the outward manifestations of what is, I would think, a very basic human need. And that is to be in touch with our internal energy and self which is connected to all of ourselves.

The healing power of connection to other people was emphasized throughout the interviews:¹⁴

I think the most significant human experiences come by human beings being bonded together through some experience, whether it's on a mountain expedition or just sharing the process of living together in a natural setting so that the healing comes through functioning in that way and being in contact that way.

It was expressed that part of that connection with others is in knowing that you have something in common with them in addition to feelings of belonging and acceptance:

There's a lot of value in introspection but there

¹⁴Losing connectedness with others causes loneliness. People who experience loneliness normally desire to be connected to others, but lack the ability to fulfill this desire (Bellingham and Cohen, 1989, pg 19).

Our essential connectedness to one another is inherent in the fact that we are all within the same cycle of time (Bellingham and Cohen, 1989, pg 24)

is great value in feeling things in common, having identified....our issues, most of the issues that each of us have are fairly similar. They are interconnected: they just have an individual pattern to them that is our own individual personality and situation. That the commonalities are greater than the dissimilarities.

....some of those early experiences were important to me, because in some ways they were some of my first times when I really felt like I belonged. And why did I feel that way? I was getting that message from other people. I was getting probably better attention from other people than I'd ever got when I wasn't out camping, when I wasn't out in the wilderness...So I just see that kind of just feeling connected with each other and playing with each other, that's healing.

So for me, throughout the experience of leading workshops, those two things will be real important: the social bonding, the sense of clan and what that means, and also a bonding with the land and the connection with the wilderness....I believe all of us human beings carry these connections to tribal unit.

The following story is an example of program participants connecting with one another in the course:¹⁵

Rick did a vision quest two years ago as part of this Heart and Courage Program with about 15 participants, most of them women, with three on the staff. And almost every single woman, I think he said, 8 out of 10 women, by the end of that trip were talking and sharing about the incest experience that she had as a young child. And that's with a week build-up, and then there's vision quest. Some of them hadn't talked about it at all, and he said he was blown away. He'd never seen

¹⁵In many cases the stories of people connecting involved the process of disclosure, a technique often used in counseling. A self-disclosure from a group member or leader stimulates other disclosures. Disclosure is a means of truly getting to know someone. As Bellingham and Cohen (1989, pg 21) state: "Connectedness to others requires that both parties know who each other is." The Talking Staff Ceremony assists in facilitating disclosure.

anything like it. Not only that there were so many women in on group--one woman was the catalyst, she started to talk about it, wrote about it--boom, then all of a sudden they were dropping like flies.

Connection With Nature

In discussing connection, the concept of connecting with nature or the earth came up frequently. Connecting with nature is one of the main reasons for conducting these programs in wilderness. The focal point of that concept is not just that we are connected to the earth but all things on earth are connected. Along with that is the idea that the earth itself is alive:¹⁶

And this gets into my own biases, the belief that the earth is in fact alive as a single entity, as a living entity, as an entity with homeostatic processes. In that sense at least, it's alive. That's a consciousness that's just beginning to emerge with people on the planet. A very small percentage of people still have a sense of that, let alone a full embracing or acceptance of that. And so if you accept the notion that the earth is alive and not just the things living on it, then that gives people a more tangible way of understanding this connectedness.

Another concept that emerged involves, not only our connection to nature but our sameness, our equality to nature when in its midst:

I'll just reiterate that one part: what became very clear for me, is that we as human beings are

¹⁶The Gaia hypothesis, named after the Greek goddess of earth, was developed by Lynn Margolis and James Lovelock. It regards earth as a single living organism (Lovelock, 1979).

no different than nature unless we take ourselves out of nature. And so to offer that experience of communion in nature and to see how those forces are the same outside of us (and) inside of us.

For some people it is difficult to make connections. It was suggested by a guide that nature gives individuals the opportunity to experience connection because nature may at times be easier to connect with than people:

A lot of people that I work with have never been able to connect with people but they can connect with nature because the power of nature is certainly undefended. Nature is not a defended entity so it's raw and it's pure and it's clean. And therefore we have a hard time keeping ourselves from that, especially the longer we stay in the environment.

Almost every guide at some time referred to the natural rhythms in nature and their healing capacity. They used different terms such as rhythm, vibrations, cycles, energies, or pulsations, but in each case they were referring to essentially the same thing, a pace that is more natural, less rushed, more in tune with the natural environment. When Bob described the state of our disconnectedness he made the statement: "We do everything we can do to override the natural rhythms of life." He goes on to explain what he means in more detail:

And part of that mind/body split is that you get out of touch with the cycles.¹⁷ The fact that

¹⁷Elson Haas, M.D. (1981), in Staying Healthy With The Seasons explains relationship to the environment and health. The basis for his book is ancient Chinese Medicine, and he believes harmony with nature leads to a healthier life. In order to be healthy one must change as the seasons change.

there are longer days in the summer, shorter days in the winter, and the fact that these things have an influence and that you have to recognize it. Most people don't have as much energy in the winter, but our society does not allow for that. You're expected to work, most people are expected to work 9 to 5 jobs, spring, summer, winter, fall, with no shift in your lifestyle based on that. You just zoom right through in this kind of artificial structure. And there's a lot of research coming out now about circadian rhythms, the fact that your cortisone levels go back and forth in the course of a day, that there are physiological shifts that occur in everyone whether you're cognizant of it or not, whether you acknowledge it or not. It doesn't matter, it's still happening in your body. And if you try to override that and you do it long enough, you begin to deplete your organ systems, especially the adrenal gland, then you begin to develop fatigue, which is the number one complaint I see. I'd say eighty percent of the patients I see complain of fatigue in some form or another. For some people it's debilitating, for some people they're right on the edge of it. But it's an extremely common complaint and I think it comes from disconnection from the natural rhythms.

I read a zen story once about these two monks and one is saying, my miracle of life is that when I'm tired I sleep and when I'm hungry I eat. So when I'm talking about the natural rhythm I'm just talking about the fact that we do have bodies and these bodies are subject to very normal natural influences; that certain times of the year, our bodies are going to have more energy: In the winter we're going to have different dietary requirements, people seem to crave carbohydrates more in the winter....and that has a lot to do with the pineal gland. The pineal gland is going through these shifts. I don't know if you're familiar with that but the pineal gland manufactures melatonin and is very sensitive to the length of the day, and if you ignore these kinds of

This is based on the five element theory, where each of the five elements - wood, fire, earth, metal and water - correspond to spring, summer, late summer, autumn and winter. In each of the five seasons a different part of our anatomy needs attention. Our activities should change as well as our diet as the seasons change. This then constitutes living in harmony with the seasonal cycles.

things, then you're going to get sick because you're going to be out of synch with the body's natural rhythms. And one nice thing about being in nature is, after you're out there for awhile, you start to fall into a pattern where you live by the sun. I think it's really, really important--to live by the sun.

All the guides agree that the place to get in touch with the rhythms of nature is in wilderness:¹⁸

And I think the wilderness has its own vibration that maybe can't be quantified, but it can be felt. And how it feels to me is a sense of renewal and reinvigoration and aliveness.

Jed sees those rhythms as energy and the most valuable healing quality in wilderness:

That's sort of nature at its best, this dying, birthing cycle over and over again, that there's a natural rhythm to--a rhythm and flow to, not only the cycles and seasons of nature but something energetic. And as much as anything is what I feel out there and what I come back to; when I go back into Boulder Graduate School or whatever and inside an office for a week; it's like that sense of almost a pulsation¹⁹ inside; sort of like my whole energetic system has been tapped into something that's larger. And that's the thing that is the

¹⁸Frank Trocco (1983) postulates that the earth survives by a tension/release process. All of nature builds up tension and then releases it. Only people build up pressure and keep it. If people would get in touch with the rhythms of nature, build up tension and then release it, they wouldn't have as many psychological problems or as much illness.

¹⁹George Leonard (1978) in The Silent Pulse describes an underlying rhythm that sustains life and underlies all of existence: "At the heart of each of us, whatever our imperfections, there exists a silent pulse of perfect rhythm, a complex of wave forms and resonances, which is absolutely individual and unique, and yet which connects us to everything in the universe. The act of getting in touch with this pulse can transform our personal experience and in some way alter the world around us."

most powerful healing out there.

Once experienced and incorporated into our own systems, these rhythms can be called upon when needed. Lynn believes that you need to keep in touch with them physically, that is, go back into nature in order to refresh them. Rick feels once these rhythms are sufficiently incorporated, you should be able to call on them from anywhere and at anytime:

Now it could be that when mankind gets closer to integrating with nature or learning from its energies and its rhythms that we integrate it into our being and then yes, maybe we can manifest it with each other without having to go so much into it. Except I think you always have to keep in touch with it or you lose it, and that's kind of a frightening thing as we keep pushing [nature] back, chopping it down.

And one of the important things I think is to be able to carry that into our cities, our urban environments and find that they're there too.

Those rhythms that exist in nature are seen as always present and will still be present after people are long gone from the scene:

And if that takes us to our ultimate demise, if we destroy ourselves and our environment, well, it's a lesson learned and the earth will go on growing and the universal vibrations will still continue.

But when in nature, we incorporate those rhythms and then they become our own. We slow down and move more naturally. We also take these rhythms, these pulsations back to civilization and at times can recall them when the pace is too abnormal or unnatural:

Each time I come back, I'm able to bring a little more of that peace or that serenity with me and the

flow of it stays with me longer

The following is Lynn's own story about connecting to nature:

I had a wonderful connection with a juniper tree out in Canyonlands, and it was like this little exercise that they did for kids about hugging a tree and smelling a tree. And I was out there on solo and had never gotten any closer to this tree than just to look at it, and what I was noticing was parts of it were dead and parts of it were alive and that seems to be an ongoing process for juniper trees in particular. And the bark was real shaggy, and I thought it would be really rough. I thought it would be real difficult to get close to it, and the more I hugged it, it was real soft. And I was really surprised how comforting this tree was and getting close to it. And then the significance there for me was the grounding, the tree being the connection with the earth and sky and bringing all of those things together so symbolically. It became a sacred kind of feeling for me.

Historically, when making connection in the wilderness, a person goes to a power place.²⁰ The guides, when dis-

²⁰Traditionally, young Native Americans have gone on vision quests as a rite of passage. These vision quests ordinarily take place at a power place in some wilderness setting (Lame Deer & Erdoes 1972). Cultures around the world have in the past, and still do value power spots as a place to experience enlightenment and altered states of consciousness. To people all around the world such places are sacred and represent the spiritual foundations on which their lives are built. It's a place to become closer to God or the source of life (Swan 1987, page 67). Climbers, hikers and other back country travelers encounter unusual or "magical" places more frequently than would be expected (Schultheis 1991 pg 34). The science of locating such places, Geomancy, has been practiced for thousands of years. The science involves following "energy ley lines" which are biomagnetic paths running in straight lines on the surface of the earth. Ley lines were traditionally followed by dowsing but in recent times they have been followed by the use of a geiger counter. Where ley lines cross there is an increased amount of electromagnetic energy actually documented by scientists

cussing this process occasionally referred to their own place of power:

But it's also directly connected to what kinds of experience in any one of my power places or sacred spots that I've identified and they're in my repertoire, or reservoir, of experiences that I can reconnect with by thought or actually go connect with in person.

There's a cabin in the peaks near Buena Vista that we go to every year as part of the seminar group that I work with. And it is a very powerful place for me....And it seems like that particular place has that power for other people, too, in different ways, in their own personal stories. But it is a powerful place.

Connection With The Universe

To go beyond connection with self, others and nature is to become connected with all, with the rest of the universe.²¹ This connection was brought out in the interviews and mentioned in an earlier chapter as a goal of adventure programs: "....experiences like Outward Bound lie in the capacity to in fact invite people out to have experiences

(Anderson 1986, pg 28). Researchers have also found an increase in negative ion content in the air at those sites (Swan 1987, pg 72).

²¹The thought that a person is part of an infinite and vast system of space can be both overwhelming and comforting. It is overwhelming to consider our smallness in relation to the infinity of space; it is comforting to realize that we are not alone in that vastness. If a person were to focus on this comfort, on what is here in front of him/her, rather than on the largeness of the universe, he/she would be able to experience a broader connectedness. Once we realize that all persons are connected to all other inhabitants on earth and in the universe we will be less easily overcome by our sense of smallness (Billingham and Cohen, 1989, pg 23)

that....will open them to aspects of themselves in their larger connection with the larger universe." This also involves the concept that everything is interconnected. The guides stressed the importance of feeling that sense of interconnectedness:

Well, interconnectedness. The fact that all things are connected, that there are patterns and connections that run through all beings, all matter, all nature of which we are a part. And whether that's an energetic connection or something far more subtle than that, we are all connected. And when you meditate a lot-- part of what we do, I do, is to really push individual identity and separation and feel at one with whatever larger energy or the indescribable, the ineffable that exists. And it's what is happening when we have those moments of transcendent joy or a transcendent feeling of being at one or whole or part of the outdoors....connection, feeling that kind of wholeness....it's something that's not measurable because there are no criteria or, if you wish, [no] left brain measures to calculate that internal, spiritual kind of level.

Connection to everyone and everything, that feeling of oneness, can occur in climbing a peak:

You know, a nice day on top of the peak, I may shake hands with my partner, but there's a much stronger bond than that. I'm not simply an isolated being. I'm connected to all: I'm connected to the peak, the trail, the earth, the air, all the lotuses, so much a part of what being is about. There's no separation, no distinction for that....And hence we walk up the trail and are part of the trail and are part of the surroundings. Even when we get on top of a peak, we look down and see people in the valley, but it's like we're the peak looking down.

That feeling of oneness is also part of the flow experi-

ence:²²

Then in another stressful moment-- on a rock face or in a moment where balance is the issue-- then there would be some memories, body memories or a better phrase, some spiritual memories of having been in that place. The more of those you can stockpile, the more likely it is to be able to have those. Obviously the more you perform at a certain level in any kind of activity, physical or mental, the easier it is to recognize that state and allow yourself to drop into it and to be carried on by it, to have that flow experience. It's probably the simplest way I know of describing what it's like when people are connected and interconnected, when everything is working together and there's no focus outside what's occurring in the immediate moment.

Some guides expressed connection in Jungian terms as connecting with the collective awareness or consciousness:²³

Where within me does that allow me to go in terms of connecting with my intuitive well of experience, of insight, my access to some collective awareness that goes beyond myself.

The following story describes one guide's experience connecting with a greater universe:

²²That feeling of oneness with our surroundings, humanity and the entire universe is also part of what Maslow (1964) calls the peak experience. It is quite characteristic in peak experiences that the whole universe is perceived as an integrated and unified whole.

For more information on the flow experience see Csikszentmihalyi (1990).

²³The systems view of the mind does not limit the mind to a single organism but extends it to social and ecological systems. Groups of people and societies can have a collective mind. The collective mind in Jungian terms also includes the collective unconscious. With the collective mind we participate in collective mental patterns. Capra (1982, pg 296) takes it one step further and envisions a planetary mind with cosmic levels of consciousness.

I was out at sea actually, going to Vietnam and I just had this incredible--we were out to sea, we were probably out to sea for sixty days and I had this wish to jump overboard and commit suicide. Not really commit suicide, it was almost like -- this was one night after about six hours of sitting up on a catwalk and being surrounded, the night was so dark I couldn't distinguish between the horizon, the sky, and the water. Even though the stars were brilliant and the water was full of phosphorous, my state of being was in a complete altered state. And what I wanted to do was abandon this world and join something greater, something larger. And something became very clear to me; I was eighteen years old and for the first time in my life I understood explicitly, on some level anyway, the whole process of relativity, that this body, this being, this person is equal and relative to everything else in the universe. And that I could be one with that universe because I am of the same stuff, I am of the same energy, the same spirit. And in my adolescent state, in my detachment from self, what I wanted to do--it was somehow almost like being on LSD or something--was join the universe itself. But I came back to my senses and I realized that this state of being that I experienced of being one with the universe, or one with nature and the world around me was not foreign or hostile toward me unless I rejected it or unless I tried to manipulate it or unless I tried to be master over it. But if I allowed myself to experience this incredible beauty and experience this power and to move with the flow of it, then I could be at peace with myself. I know, I believe that could not have taken place in a room or in a house or in a manufactured environment. But being subjected to the elements at that point -- that was a very profound experience for me.

Connection With A Higher Power

As was emphasized in the interviews, one of the most sought after experiences in wilderness is connection to a higher power:²⁴

²⁴Jung believed it was inevitable that on some level everyone must seek out or deal with God or some form of higher power (Legere 1984, pg 380). One of the universal archetypes

....some people go in there to find magic and mystery which is a sense of awe; again that's hard to define but a very present feeling that we have out there of spirit, of something larger. For some people it's God; it's their religion out there.

To advocate connection with a higher power would indicate that the guides believe in a higher power. If asked to define what that higher power is each would most likely come up with a different description:

And yea, I believe in a higher power, but whatever that is -- I could give you six different definitions or images of that, none of which would be incorrect. And six people sitting around could talk about their own higher power.

One guide looks to wilderness for that connection in response to an inability to find that connection in other places:

that Jung discovered was that of "God." Being part of our collective unconscious, something we are born with in our unconscious memory, we cannot deny the need to reconcile with our spirituality on some level.

The archetype "God" is a component of the collective unconscious. The collective unconscious can be thought of as being inhabited by motifs, images, ideas, personalities, moods, places, visions, and spirits we have never known in day-to-day life. We are born with our collective unconscious; we psychologically create our personal unconscious after birth. We are not born with a mind that is a tabula rasa, a clean slate (Wilmer 1987, pg 61).

The basic thesis of transpersonal psychology is that we cannot become ourselves until we go beyond ourselves (Legere 1984, pg 381).

Bellingham and Cohen (1989, pg 18) place connection to a higher power in a category they call "connectedness to a higher meaning or purpose." A lack of meaning or purpose comes from losing connectedness with a set of guiding principles. This type of disconnectedness usually brings on a spiritual crisis accompanied by either a feeling of pervasive dread or pervasive boredom.

When I go through some of the experiences I go through in relationships, with women for example, it starts to get real easy for me to believe there isn't a higher power. You know, how could a higher power set these kind of situations up, because it can get so negative. Why do human beings do this sort of thing to each other, why are they so mean to each other? So it's easy to start feeling, again, that start of disconnection just from the rhythm of life....But two hours of walking around and looking at the wild flowers reminds me there's something going on here that's bigger than me. It's bigger than my concerns, bigger than me. And that's healing. Just to say I don't understand, I don't know why this is happening, but I know it's happening for a reason....I can't look at nature and not have this mystical reverence and awe and believe that there isn't a higher power. It forces me to believe that....And you get out in nature and you see things happening and it tends to induce a certain trust, that the things are happening to you for a reason. That it isn't just random; that there is some kind of plan in mind....If you're open to that and trust that and you invite it in, specifically if you invite it in, that's when this healing power takes place. It heals relationships between people and that's the main thing that needs to be healed in our society -- it's relationships with ourselves and relationships with each other.

The healing capacity of connection was touched upon throughout the interviews and was found to be of vital importance to the wilderness experience. When asked why connection is healing, Penny's reply was simply: "You're not alone."

CHAPTER VI

THE HEALING POWER OF NATURE IN WILDERNESS

Nature vs. Activity

Does an individual automatically heal when in wilderness or is the healing due to one's activities while there? In terms of healing, can nature be separated from the activity or do they fuse into one inseparable process? Many journal articles, bearing titles that lead one to believe they are about the healing power of nature, in actuality discuss the healing benefits of climbing, rafting, hiking and group process. The articles fail to mention the role of nature other than as a setting for those activities. The guides, when asked about the healing power of nature, often moved directly into discussions of activities. When pressed further, they did answer the question in terms of nature alone. The guides say they believe there is an inherent healing power in nature:

I think just being in that setting has a power of its own, so I think it infiltrates every portion of the work I do -- it's just enhanced by that.

I guess for me, being in the wilderness is a time where I can just absorb and take in the energy or the beauty or whatever I feel around me, and being able to receive that....it's just absorbing what is there and I don't identify it as any specific thing but I feel it when I'm there and I see other people feeling it when they're there.

When I'm outside I just feel healthy. It goes back to this vibration thing; I just have this kind of tuned-in and centered vibration that I'm just -- I don't read a lot of books that objectify it, but it

feels good to be outside....but I can't say that I've ever not felt good when I've been outside for a period of time and I've been on some pretty shitty trips, as far as weather or logistics goofing up or personalities rubbing each other the wrong way, but I always feel good being outside, and other than I like it and keep going back to it....I guess what I'm saying is I almost must think that being in the wilderness, in and of itself, is all that's necessary....Maybe it does it in spite of us.

I know partly that was what happens to the immune system, just being outside or breathing fresh air or carrying a pack, or being in the sunshine. That there are levels of health that will change just by being there....it showed me that even though there was this physical problem with my body, being out there had changed my energy level, something about my mind/body dynamics. And I felt good....And being out there and almost my body -- in a way it seemed like it didn't matter so much to my body....because it was drawing in so many other forces of well-being.

But it was difficult for the guides to separate the activities from the natural healing. They believe, in most cases, that without the activity in conjunction with the setting, the insight and healing may not have taken place:

So two things were important. The environment was important. Also the facilitation, the selection of the experiences that helped the context to -- helped the individuals and the context to take advantage of the opportunity that was there.

I don't think you can separate the rock climbing from the rock or rafting, for example, from the river or being in the mountains from moving through the mountains. That they're inextricably interwoven and that people's experiences are made by both the context in which they're in and the actual activity, the way they can act or not act, as the case may be andit's that connection that I think is the therapeutic potential that's there. One without the other is empty, formless. So if you put nature and being able to move and interact with nature together, you've got a much more total kind of experience.

Affordances and Allowances

To benefit from nature and the opportunity to heal, one must be open to the experience. The environment, wilderness, has something to offer and the activities open people to what they might receive. Rick describes these processes as affordances¹ and allowances:

Delores talks about it in Sacred Land, where she talks about affordances -- that nature affords us the opportunity to connect with our environment in ways that overwhelm our own individual, narrow perceptions as we walk up a valley and approach a peak....And I think there's another notion that goes with that, too, and I call that allowances. That to appreciate what nature affords us we have to be able to allow ourselves to let go enough to notice, to be aware of, to experience these different perspectives....

The key to experiencing the affordances of nature, is to open oneself enough to experience those healing forces. This, then, is the role of the activities and techniques: "To get people to open up to those lessons, those forces, and heal."

¹Affordance is a word coined by James Gibson (1979). In the interview Rick gave credit to Delores LaChapelle (1988, pg 107) who defines it and uses it in Sacred Land, Sacred Sex, Rapture Of The Deep. She does give credit to Gibson for inventing the word. Affordances of nature are what it offers, what it provides or furnishes, either for good or ill.

The Greek prefix for afford implies completeness. One definition of afford is to go forward or advance towards completion (The Oxford English Dictionary 1989, pg 222). A definition of healing is to become more whole. To become more whole or more complete are similar processes.

The activities in themselves do not heal.² They are a means to the healing experience.

Wilderness As A Place To Do Healing Work

The most passive role seen for wilderness is simply as a place for the activities to occur. To the guides the best place to do their healing work is in the wilderness or some other acquiescent natural setting:

It's almost like the way I'm working right now is being in nature, being in the wilderness the ultimate setting, the environment that energetically allows us to do whatever we do....

And forming what I call the container for the work to take place. Which is a feminine quality in fact; and out of the feminine, as we all come out of the feminine, the masculine can rise and stand with himself. And quite often we ignore that part as men; we've been taught to ignore that feminine part. And I think nature, mother earth, is in fact

²However, certain activities in themselves can be healing. The benefit of physical exercise has been known for thousands of years. There are countless games and activities that therapists and counselors facilitate in group therapy. They have the capacity to heal wherever enacted. But in adventure based counseling the context of the activity is as important as the activity itself. Without the context, the activities are less effective. Stich (1989, pg 23) outlines seven healing aspects of physical activity, which is the most common component of a wilderness experience. But he does go on to say that activity alone cannot accomplish therapeutic objectives.

Just as followers of a religion can confuse the religion with the desired experience (Legere 1984, pg 376), wilderness healers can confuse the activity with its function: to open the individual to the healing powers of nature. During the years that they researched the Outdoor Challenge Program, Kaplan and Talbot (1983) found, that the program evolved from one with an emphasis on physically difficult and demanding activities into an increased opportunity to simply be in and interact with the wilderness environment. The changes in no way reduced the benefits gained by the participants. As a result of this change, the benefits were derived from the environment as well as the activities.

the best teacher of that, providing that container for men to come through.

When asked if these processes can take place in a setting other than in nature, the answers were varied. One guide said yes: "Yes, I think all of that could have happened somewhere else. And it has, there are times when I've been somewhere else." In a discussion where rock climbing was the specific topic I asked if the same experiences could be had on a climbing wall. Here, the answer was no:

To me the climbing wall seems very flat, a flat experience. Maybe these are elements we don't even know work on us, but it's like being out there with the weather, being out there with the temperature, being out there with the growth on the rocks and or around it, somehow enhances that experience, adds to that experience. And I don't know how man can create that....there's only so much data you're going to get from a concrete wall as compared to a granite rock that's filled with feldspar and...quartz crystals and they have different forms and colors that you put yourself in contact with and find out how that holds or doesn't hold or if there are holds in it as compared to sandstone. That's all information that's coming in and that information either clicks in with something you're going through as a person emotionally or it doesn't. But the more one is out there, the more one finds pieces that do. So in a sense it's a kinesthetic encyclopedia for our growing into more wholeness.

But overall their answer was clear: the experiences the guides and their clients had in the wilderness would not have happened in a more manufactured environment:

I know, I believe that could not have taken place in a room or in a house or in a manufactured environment. But being subjected to the elements at that point -- that was a very profound experience for me.

And I'm very sure, being in that ancient, powerful

place that I was involved in an energy and an experience that probably opened me up to some possibilities that would not have been available otherwise.

Although the guides see working indoors as a possible alternative (and a number of them work out of an office when not in the wilderness), they believe an office environment is not as productive as a natural setting. In fact, the office or clinic environment may contribute to the problem, to the client's sense of disconnection:

You can, but the office kind of setting, being in a building, tends to reinforce that sense of being disconnected.

and I felt this anxiety to get out of the university and to get out of this enclosed environment...which I would...maybe this is a good time to explain...I would call that environment one that severs connections, the natural connections....

 So long as you're in that little box, you're one step removed from your basic nature which is your humanity.

 I for one think it's real difficult for a person who isolates themselves in an urban environment, that a person can achieve that connection.

The Healing Process in Nature: Connection

As was pointed out in the previous chapter, a sense of feeling connected is important in the healing process.³ The

³Process as defined in the American Heritage Dictionary (1985, pg 987) is (1) a system of operations in the production of something; and (2) a series of actions, changes or functions that bring about an end or result. In this case the end result is the healed person. Based on the information given by the guides and literature that would be a person more closely connected to the real self (See chapter V). The process would include letting go of defenses, opening,

guides see wilderness as a place that enhances connections:

There's something about being in nature, and certainly the risk element is a factor, or heightening one's awareness and perceptions and feeling those connections at a higher level.

Put in another perspective, John sees wilderness as a place that lessens options for disconnecting:

I knew this guy was strong enough; he could have walked out of there. Even when we were 25, 30 miles into the thing, he could have. But I think [wilderness] lessened his options, and I think maybe that's what nature does; it lessens your options.

Enhancement of Connection to Self

The point was made in the interviews that wilderness not only lessens chances for disconnecting, it enhances connecting, mainly the opportunity to connect to self. Nature can enhance connection to self in many ways. One of the most publicized ways is through risk and challenge.⁴

dropping masks and facades, surrendering, becoming humble, experiencing emotions, learning new ways to deal with discomfort and with life in general, learning a new sense of community and relationship with self, others and nature.

⁴The majority of the adventure-based counseling programs use challenging activities that involve risk to facilitate their ultimate goals. The most famous, Outward Bound (Serbin 1984 pg 27) was established by Kurt Hahn during World War II to help British sailors develop a will to survive. Project Adventure began in 1971 to help American school children improve self-concept and relies heavily on "perceived risk" and "impossible tasks" that are physically demanding. Schoel, Prouty, and Radcliffe (1988, pg 130) point out: "challenge is a two-edge sword. While it presents the opportunity for change and success, it also lays bare the issues we are afraid of: losing face, failure and injury. Challenge must be used properly."

For, when people meet challenges head-on, they quickly discover their limits. They may find out what they are truly capable of doing, capable of enduring, rather than relying on false, unproven, self-established limitations:

One of the primary things I have seen in my work in the last few years is the way the natural environment provides the opportunities for people to look at their own patterns, their self-limiting kinds of behaviors. And it's there, the challenges are there by reason of the setting....in essence that provides an opportunity for people to go through whatever they're going to go through under hardship.

I think in knowing ourselves there's a certain amount of pushing beyond the limitations that we set on ourselves or that we let the culture set on ourselves. And so one needs an environment to do that, and there are many environments one could pick to do risk taking, but one of the most conducive to that for me was rock climbing....In doing that, in pushing beyond what I thought were my limitations and experiencing that risk-taking and knowing that I could go further than I had set for myself, [I] applied [that lesson] to the rest of my other experiences. It was a message: don't always go setting limits on yourself, you never know how far you can go.

The following story describes a client's experience gaining a new sense of self-worth through experiencing risk and challenge and finding out her true limitations:

One gal is working in mental health and had been through some real crises in her own life and had some real difficulty in self-worth. And she was brand new to this, I don't think she'd even been skiing. And she was skiing and carrying a pack at the same time, let alone climbing rocks or coming down the chutes on Broken Hand in the middle of the night and she was the first one down because she wanted to get down. She made sure she was the first one. But she was dropping off places that weren't necessarily ledges but were fallways into other chutes, and so there was some real concern about knowing where you're at. When she completed

the program, one of the things she felt she got was that she did it, at least she did it. She may never go out and teach it but she did it, and she didn't know that she could do it. The sense of that gave her voice, a lot more voice. And in that I mean that she was able to speak up more about who she was and what she needed. So it was a real significant piece to her self-worth.

Sometimes when we face danger and take risk the outcome isn't good. We can get hurt and sometimes we do. But it's possible to get hurt and still have the outcome be positive. It all depends on the lessons learned and how we want to look at them. Rick explains how he turned a painful situation into a positive learning experience in the following two stories:

Once I was kayaking and went into a big hole and had my kayak stripped from me and tried to hold on to it. Then it got dragged over the rocks until I let go, and went ashore and recovered my kayak three miles down the stream, split in half. There was certainly that sense of, wow, I went through that. And I'm alive and life is ripe and clear and new and I feel renewed even though I'm pained and bruised and so on.

Thirteen, fourteen years ago I took a 40 foot climbing fall, crushed my right heel and was in explicit agony for a long period of time. It was a significant wake up call in terms of looking at where I had been and where I was going and how I was living and getting more clarity about how I wanted to live and how I wanted to be and how I wanted to work. Even though that limited some of my capacity to do the things I once did, it's made those things that much more precious and that much more powerful in terms of the capacity for other people to learn by doing those kind of things.

On numerous occasions the guides emphasized the importance of placing clients in a new and different environment. Nature enhances the process of connecting to self by being that new environment: "They get out of a context

in which they are comfortable, in which they know all the moves." In the wilderness individuals have the opportunity to look at things with new eyes: "Freeing ourselves from one way of looking at things and appreciating what nature affords us in terms of activities to see and experience in different ways." People get away from their old, familiar surroundings and have experiences in a new context:

In my experience, you get people away and after about three days the energy starts to slow down a little bit. And usually by the end of the week the person is faced with themselves and that can be really painful or it can be enlightening.

And I've gotten really interested in the wilderness as a vehicle -- I don't just think it's wilderness, I think it's anything that gets you out of the context of your life....As soon as they're away from their routine, then their inner drives begin to kick in, then they begin to notice how their life is out of balance, what's not working for them.

....getting people out of their normal context, I think that's one of the really big things.

....I feel that you can break it down into a number of levels; the healing power of nature -- on the psychological level, I feel like there's something about taking people out of their normal setting, their rut, their conditioning, their stuckness, and going into -- I consider the wilderness the unknown for most of us....The healing power of nature psychologically means to me....freedom, expansiveness, a whole new way of looking, a whole new way of seeing things, of smelling things, of feeling things.

Enhancement of Connection with Others

Healing in wilderness is seen by the guides as dependent upon interaction with other people. Some of the greatest

insights come from being in wilderness with others. Wilderness puts people together in a different context so traditional roles have to be put aside. The powerful CEO is no longer in charge in the wilderness. The executive may have a lot of control over his/her environment in the city but must forfeit that control in the wilderness. Roles change. Individuals may become humbled in the face of the nature's powers or the abilities of others. They may surrender to these forces, a foreign, uncomfortable experience. These circumstances afford the opportunity to become more open. Combine this with having to plan, work and survive with other people in the wilderness and there is enormous opportunity to connect.

The guides mentioned over and over again the role nature plays in bringing people together and the importance of that in their experience:

The context of nature just doing its thing with daybreak and night and it seemed like night would bring us together: we'd sit around the campfire. Other times, it comes to me, as rain has brought me together with people in other trips in my adult life where we didn't come together as a group of friends, but rather people filling a river permit for example, in the Southwest. And different rafts having their own conversations, but the rain would bring us together under a tarp and next to a fire. And so the social aspect, wilderness seems to have really facilitated that for me. So social, being with other people, seems to be a really big theme for me with the wilderness.

I think the most significant human experiences come by human beings being bonded together through some experience, whether it's on a mountain expedition or just sharing the process of living together in a

natural setting so that the healing comes through functioning in that way and being in contact that way....But in any given setting we grow, if we allow ourselves, through our interaction with others, either the pushing or the pulling or the merging or the resisting, and that's how we define and see ourselves and [our] experience, and this happens in a much more basic and natural way in a natural setting.

something about a real awakening of consciousness that happens in nature when you do it with people, with groups for the purpose of growth that I find very powerful, unable to get away from.

Bill describes his most influential experience in the wilderness as being with other people. Being in nature with other people encourages a feeling of being connected through acceptance; acceptance from nature and acceptance from others:

And what I remember, a big part of the healing for me, was comraderie with other people and the acceptance I felt....I think I associate it a lot with acceptance in the wilderness.

Part of being in the wilderness with a group is the experience of group energy and how that can carry people through difficult experiences. Group energy brings people closer together and establishes connections. A couple of the guides and participants experienced that group energy coming off a mountain in the middle of the night. The following stories are two different accounts of the same adventure:

....It wasn't any technical climbing, but it was in the Crestons and the composition of those peaks is conglomerate so there's a lot of free rock and it requires a great deal of safety on the part of a large group and that takes time. And so we were climbing to the top and decided whether we should go on or not. Rick made the decision that it felt

real good to go on. The energy of the group was such. We got there, it was late afternoon, and so we spent the whole night coming back down in the dark because of the safety factor and because of the snow fields and because each person had to take their own time to get down. We also had some wind that added to the chill factor and there were a number of natural things happening around us that we had to deal with as well as ourselves....It's the humanness involved in this that's real important too, and I think that that was another push beyond, learning what people's energy can create for a group and how it can work for or against the success of that. Those are the kind of memories that we'll always remember but if we have to survive in our own lives, whether it's emotional or physical or social, that kind of cooperation, that kind of integrating provides an experience of knowing that you can go beyond it.

Last fall, not this past fall, a year ago, with our training group -- the one that Lynne was in and that Penny was along as my assistant -- we had a 22 1/2 hour ascent of Broken Hand, another epic in the same area, at 5 complicity, the group made a decision to go on for a summit. And we ended coming down in the night, all night long, in November under cold, treacherous conditions, and that people hung together and performed at a level that was well beyond what anyone thought they had the capacity to do. And for myself there wasn't any question but it was a totally focused experience. We were going to get down, and I think there was a group intention there. That we are going to get through this and make this.

The guides often mentioned that people have to depend on each other in the wilderness. When people are in the wilderness they have the opportunity to take more responsibility, responsibility for themselves and for others. This is due to the inherent risk when in wilderness. This dependence stimulates a greater sense of community:

I believe, that being in a group has a lot more importance when you're out there. Because you

depend on each other.

 It's one of the very first things we do; we set the whole group down, we talk about self-responsibility and how we're all dependent upon each other. We're an interdependent group out here and so we do training on that level. It's called community.

Penny discussed a down side to connecting with other people during these adventures: you eventually have to say goodbye. But in reality that once again allows a better connection to self. Anytime that we have to experience emotions and allow it to happen, we get closer to experiencing our real selves:

I get so involved and revved up, and I suppose that's another area for me that is both healing and painful about this work is the transient nature of it, getting connected to a group and allowing myself that space and then having to say goodbye time and time again. And that's something for me historically is very present and real and it's almost like I practice that and so the whole cycle of resistance to getting involved, then getting involved, then having to separate is a good learning process and healing process for me. Again it's not one of those [processes] that is without pain but certainly an important one.

The interviews brought up stories of other connections that can be made in the wilderness that are not as apparent as those in group activities. Some individuals go to the wilderness to make connections with lost friends and relatives. This is one important reason people go to power spots. One of the guides periodically travels to a power place high in the mountains to make connection with her deceased father:

My father died about three, four years ago and I was very close to him and as he died I told him that I would go to the mountains and look for him. That was the highest place I could think, and something about this area, his spirit was there. And I can connect with him, and every time I go there, that's there for me.

On a more primitive level, going into wilderness can also connect us with our ancestors:⁵

I'll never forget once. She (Delores LaChapelle) said that -- we had high winds during one of the breaking-through trips -- and she said you know that the primitive people, the early ones, used to fear the wind more than anything. And I said, why was that? And she said, if they were out in the plains, if they were exposed, it would kill them quicker than anything. It would kill them for sure if they didn't have shelter or clothing or whatever, and food. And I think that there's something so primitive in our weather -- it's our brain or just some very, very deep levels of our psyche -- that going back there is like, is literally going back to something that we know our ancestors knew. It's a way to live in accordance with those laws out there, in accordance with natural laws of survival and survival of the fittest.

Nature As Teacher

The guides believe that in many cases they are not the one doing the teaching; they are only facilitating the experience:

I pride myself in being a good facilitator and a good teacher and there's no way that I'm going to

⁵Going into the wilderness and connecting with aspects of nature can trigger memories in the collective unconscious. This then puts us in touch with our earliest ancestors and their feelings, fears, beliefs, etc. which then can become conscious. They may become conscious in ways that at the time don't make sense. For instance, anxiety about something that has no real threat or unexplainable feelings of connection.

delude myself into thinking that I'm controlling what's happening out there. I may add some influence as a facilitator but it's the wilderness that's teaching.

[Nature] teaches people about their own lives, about their own spirit and the spirit of nature, but also the way their relationship with the earth is fostered: their relationship with the land, relationship with other living beings. There are so many dimensions and levels of waking up that happen; most of them happening just by being out in nature which is one shocking thing I've learned.

Nature, as a teacher, puts us in connection with the many aspects of ourselves. One of those aspects, often forgotten in our busy day to day lives is the capacity for playfulness. Witnessing nature at play, Bob explains, can connect us to the playful part of ourselves:

But I'm trying to reflect what I perceive in nature as its basic authenticity, and simplicity and child-like qualities. You know, squirrels playing with each other. Look at what's happening, just look at them. Animals are playful in nature. Watch marmots play with each other. They have a great time. It's basic. And if you can reflect that playfulness back to people, you can say look what's around you: nature can be powerful and destructive and it also can be quite playful. These marmots aren't worried about daily stresses, they go out and they gather food and they get ready for winter and the spring comes and they come out and they hang out in the sun and they play with each other.

Nature can also teach us about relationships, our own and those of others. The following is one guide's story of experiencing nature as teacher while learning about her own relationships:

I once watched this horrendous spider in the

Canyonlands, and I didn't expect to see a spider that big. Totally' it was probably the palm of my hand and it's body was maybe an inch long and maybe a half inch wide, and that was a pretty good size guy to see. We literally came upon each other very unexpectantly, and I was dressed in orange plastic so I wasn't sure how well I could be accepted by that. And I was really sorry at the time; you know I'd read Tom Brown and I thought, this is not going to be very conducive. And it was the first time I sat down for half an hour, I think, at least. Half an hour is a long time when you're on this treadmill pace. I mean I couldn't even do 5 minutes for awhile there when I first started, and I went a ways away behind some bushes and I watched this spider and I could not tell if it were male or female, I had no idea, but he reared back at me when he saw me coming, in defense, and then when I passed out of his vision he was on his way. And he had a mission, he was going to this hole. When he got to the hole, he kept going into it and backing off from it, and I thought that was real peculiar behavior and it took a long, long time before finally he popped out of the hole and then this other spider came up. I got to watch this saga go on, of interactions between spiders in defense, or male/female, or whatever. And I just thought that was really incredible. I had this sense of being invited, and yet I wasn't....I wasn't invited but I was able to be there and be present and see that. I almost walked right over it and missed it entirely in my trek through the brush, the willows. So wow, in terms of healing, in terms of wholeness....I'm going to equate healing with wholeness....you know watching that behavior relates to me about my own behavior and/or explains other behavior.

The guides shared a number of stories wherein clients also experienced nature as teacher. In all cases the lesson was experienced in a wilderness setting. The following story takes place in the Everglades of Florida and involves a heavy smoker attempting to quit. The guide leading this trip perceived nature as the teacher for in the end nature taught the women, by example, that she wanted to participate wholly

in life and that her smoking was interfering with that vital drive:

There was this woman who came on the trip and her contract [self contract] was to stop smoking. She had been through every smoking cessation program and she had struggled with this addiction for years and was not successful in kicking it. Once again she contracted with herself to stop smoking. She made a pact with her canoe partner before the trip that she, the partner, would keep a pack of cigarettes on hand -- the partner didn't smoke. And only if this woman threatened the partner's life would the partner give her a cigarette. So we were on the second day and it was a day in which we were pretty deep into the Everglades. And it was a March day and March is a tough one, it can be absolutely beautiful or it can be kind of ugly. And the air was real still; there was no movement at all. The mosquitoes were starting to come out; it was kind of muggy. It was in the middle of the day and she was getting really bitchy and she was just climbing a wall, really crazy. And so finally she got to the point where she was threatening the life of her partner. And so the partner gave her the cigarettes. She went out and she took a few puffs. And about that time the whole canoe party came out, we had been canoeing in these mangroves and deep, sort of thick clumps of saw grass and we knew that we were close to the heart of the Everglades. There's a huge lake in the middle of the Everglades and we came out and all of a sudden were on the edge of this big body of water as far as you could see. And it was just a spectacular sight, thousands of birds everywhere, the sky was filled. Big white puffy clouds. And there were these sounds, just like this rhythm of life, of sounds, sounds of the birds, sounds of the frogs, sounds of the alligators. We were witness to this incredible rhythm of life that was occurring. It was not conscious in the same sense that we think of consciousness and yet it was beautiful. It was awesome. And we all just sat here in silence, just absorbing this. All of a sudden this woman stood up in the middle of us and she just screamed; it was like a primal scream and she threw the cigarette as far as she could. And that's what it took; that's what it took for her. There's a deep sense of: I want to be part of saying yes to my life on this planet, including my own, particularly

my own. And so I began to realize at that moment, how powerful a teacher, and not metaphorically, but real that was a real experience, in which people can get in touch with this energy that we call life and that we are a part of. And I think it's a part of the planet's future and I think it's a part of healing....that's the healing aspect of it as well.

Nature helped this women contact her true self by getting her in touch with the primal rhythms of life and her own desire for life. Nature's role in helping make that connection surfaced frequently:

I would say that the healing quality of wilderness is that connection with being alive. From a broad definition of health which I operate from, that is what health education is....teaching people facilitating ways in which people can become aware of that connection with life and their being part of that.

I think being alive is something that people are wanting, particularly people that live a very citified existence. So I think the wilderness is the place that helps that aliveness to happen. At least it has for me.

How does nature teach a person to participate in life?

One guide claimed it teaches by being a mirror:

It's the connection that people are making inside to a deep sense of being alive, a deep awareness of what living is all about because it's mirrored in the woods, its mirrored in the ecosystem that is untouched by human hands. It's mirrored in beauty, it's mirrored in power, it's mirrored in health....So that's the healing quality for me, it's that wilderness mirrors life untouched by human intervention, pure wilderness is -- there's a source, there's an energy that creates life in wilderness and when an individual experiences that, experiences the beauty of it, that person then begins to see perhaps the potentiality of that source within themselves.

We all have stress in our lives and have perfected different ways of dealing with it. Some methods are

conscious, others unconscious. Some methods are functional and productive, some are not. Nature as teacher offers the opportunity to learn new and different ways to deal with stress. Bob sees weather, for example, as a wonderful teacher for dealing with stress:

Weather, I think, is a wonderful teacher for people because it's so unpredictable, especially in Colorado. You take people out to an incredibly beautiful place and it rains for three days. And that's real; the people have to deal with that. It's not an internal stressor, like the stressor of pressures that you think are put on you by your boss: deadlines, schedules to meet, things like that. That's mostly internal, cognitive kind of stresses. When you put these people out in nature they get in touch with a more primeval kind of stress; the stress of being physically uncomfortable, for example, the stress of not being able to go up a particular route because there is too much snow. The stress of physical injury. Those kind of things are very solid and they're very tangible and it tends to ground people....When you go out in nature you've got something real basic to deal with. You're cold and you're wet; what are you going to do about it? It demands tangible solutions....When your dealing with nature, nature just is. That's just the way it is.

Learning we are not always the one in control came up periodically in the interviews. Nature teaches us that ultimately we are not in control; we cannot always manipulate our surroundings. In nature, other forces control what goes on around us:

....there's people brought up thinking you can control your environment, through any level. You know we have air conditioners where you can set the exact temperature and the exact amount of humidity. And you learn in these totally controlled environments. Suddenly you're out in a place where you have no control. I see it over and over again. Like I said, I'm pretty comfortable in nature, I know what to expect. But when I go out with people

who haven't spent a lot of time in nature, as soon as it gets a little cold it's: Oh I'm cold, let's go. Let's go back to our hermetically sealed environments where you don't have to deal with discomfort.

It will be a real organic experience because just the act of going out in nature is opening ourselves to the other, to the unpredictable, the unknown and we're not controlling our environment so much. We're partaking of it....

....I think maybe that's what nature does: it lessens your options. It really teaches you that you are not in control. And I think that's what happened to him. What he had to do was surrender to a force greater than himself, and I think that's what nature does. You have to learn that you are not in control. And if you can accept that, if you can surrender to that then, paradoxically, you have more power.

Nature as a teacher can also heal relationships. Bob explains how:

So nature has the power to heal relationships and it does it by example, it teaches by example, and it also does it just by being what it is: beautiful and wondrous and cosmic.

Nature can heal relationships by providing the opportunity to practice staying connected when circumstances become difficult or trying. The following story is one guide's example of exactly that kind of lesson. In this story a program participant learns to deal with an troublesome relationship with his wife by having to deal with uncomfortable weather on a trip:

The first two or three days of the trip we had pretty steady bad weather. It was either pouring down rain or sprinkling; it was cold, and we knew we were going rafting and so you'd stay pretty much cold and wet all the time. And it was a real

drain. And this one guy had been basically nice but hadn't really said anything until about the third night -- opened up at the Talking Staff and said, you know I have to admit I'm really thinking about leaving. I can walk down to my car and in 2 1/2 hours I can be home sitting in my hot tub and I don't know why in the heck I'm hanging out here, because I'm very uncomfortable and I'm not sure I'm gaining anything from this experience. And at that point it seemed like the whole trip was going to fall apart, basically, because this one woman was complaining that she was really scared and this other guy was saying he was uncomfortable, a number of other people had complaints....And this guy had been right on the verge of getting divorced. He was having a real hard time with his wife. She was living in another town and really wasn't sure what to do. Was trying to hang in there but basically it was a metaphor: Things are uncomfortable, why don't I split. So the metaphor that came up, well you've got total choice in this matter. You can hang out with this and just say, OK, I'm uncomfortable, that's the way it is, that's what nature provides. It's going to be like that sometimes. So what are you going to do? If you're uncomfortable, do you split and go back to civilization, do you disconnect? OK, things aren't working well with your wife, you just disconnect, go find somebody else. That's what our generation does in general. You get into a relationship with somebody, it doesn't seem to work, you just disconnect, go somewhere else. You never really drop down into the real feelings you have and into being with the feelings....we're not weather gods; we don't have any control. In fact we like this. It's making us look at our own stuff. We like it to be sunny and warm and pleasant. We like that. But that's not what's happening, for whatever reason....And so he said: Ok, I'll stick it out. And by the end of the week, this guy had changed dramatically. This was a year ago. He made a renewed commitment to his wife and they are doing really, really well. She ended moving out here to be with him. He has been doing a lot of personal work. He's been doing therapy and he's just a different person.

One of the most important lessons that we need to learn is trust. We need to trust ourselves, others, and nature. Nature as teacher can offer the opportunity to renew our

ability to trust. One guide believes that healing depends on one's ability to trust:

And you get out in nature and you see things happening and it tends to induce a certain trust, that the things are happening to you for a reason. That it isn't just random; that there's a higher power that has some kind of plan in mind. I've seen it in group after group, just the way everything was sequenced, the way the weather was sequenced, the way things went that had a very deliberate, specific kind of effect. If you're open to that and you trust that and you invite it in, specifically if you invite it in, that's when this healing power takes place....

Other Healing Aspects of Nature

In nature we can connect to the earth which is seen as the source of our existence.⁶ This guide sees nature as nurturing:

....nature, the wilderness has a lot of, you know it's our umbilical cord really, the beginnings of our existence. And there's a lot of different

⁶Nature as source has derivations in earth as our mother. We all come from mother earth. The term mother earth, attributed to Native American beliefs that everything comes from the Mother, has been a popular term for environmentalists. The idea of earth as our mother was expressed in early 1900 by Big Thunder of the Wabanakis Nation: "The Great Spirit is our Father, but the earth is our Mother. She nourishes us: that which we put into the ground she returns to us, and healing plants she gives us likewise" (McLuhan 1971, pg 22). Steve Darden (1991, pg 80), a Native American who formerly served on the Flagstaff, Arizona, city council describes his relationship with the earth mother: "My mother engendered within me a very deep commitment to respect all that has life. With respect to the land, I honestly believe that this is my mother. Physically she's pregnant every day, and every day she brings forth life. You just look out here and you'll see the ponderosa pine tree coming out of Mother Earth...."

pathways of nurturing. And some of them can be lost.

Another guide gets more in touch with himself in nature through his dreams:⁷

I always have the most powerful dreams [in wilderness]. I have many more dreams about animals. And I have vivid dreams about the current state of my psyche, my psychological development, spiritual development. So I think this healing power of nature is what it reminds us of. What it stirs;

⁷Adlerian, Gestalt and Psychoanalytic theory all support the value of dream work. Freud saw dreams as the "Royal Road" to the unconscious. During sleep, defenses are lowered, and repressed feelings surface (Corey 1986, pg 35). In Adlerian theory dreams are seen as rehearsals for possible future courses of action. They are seen as purposeful and personally unique (Corey 1985, pg 56). In Gestalt theory the dream is not interpreted as a past event but is acted out in the present, and the dreamer becomes part of his or her dream (Corey 1985, pg 139).

Jung felt that dreams are the only examples of memories and fears that we possess in our mind without conscious distortion. A night of dreaming can undistort consciousness (Wilmer 1987, pg 106). To Jung there were two kinds of memories in the unconscious mind. One, the personal unconscious, is inhabited by images, memories, feelings, and ideas which were once conscious but are now repressed. The second, the collective unconscious, is inhabited by motifs, images, ideas, personalities, moods, places, visions and spirits we have never known. We are born with our collective unconscious, while we psychologically create our personal unconscious after birth (Wilmer 1987, pg 61). Our dreams are a path to what has been stored in the unconscious.

In "Camping Experience and the Unconscious," Talley (1974, pg 6) describes the collective unconscious and its role in our relationship with nature. He states that Jung saw the collective unconscious as nature itself, and that part of us which connects with the living process. Jung noted that historically we experience ourselves as originally part of nature. Talley states that it is time for modern people to reestablish the connection of our ego-consciousness to the deep wellsprings of nature within us and discover the humbling fact of our own vulnerability and humanity.

you could call it the deepest archetypal⁸ part of ourselves. Sometimes I think only my dreams can talk about that; the words are so hard. And that's why I also feel that doing dream circles and dream work is a really important piece to do with yourself. It's so different from just the ordinary chatter.

Using metaphors as a tool in adventure-based counseling was discussed in the literature and by the guides. Nature affords us experiences that relate metaphorically to the rest of our lives. Techniques facilitated by the guides open individuals to wilderness experiences and an opportunity to interpret the experience and establish the metaphors:

The other thing that happened [that] was really significant was river guiding. There were a couple of things about this particular guide that I had that was significant in playing in that. Brian is called a river otter just because he integrates with the water so much. Learning how the water acts over land and trying to read what's going on underneath by what's going on, on top and doing that hour after hour with this sort of training day after day began to create this integration with the water. We started using phrases like: "We're going to eddy out in life."

Acceleration of the Healing Processes

One of the benefits of doing healing work in wilderness

⁸Archetype is a term developed by Jung which defines an invisible world we have never seen; it is hypothesized to be the deepest realm of the psyche, which has the potential to evoke images of a more or less predictable nature. It is these that we see in the form of fairy tales, sagas, legends, and stories told the world over. They have been reappearing from time immortal (Wilmer, 1987, pg 56). The archetypes are part of the collective unconscious and have many forms. The archetypes include: father, mother, hero, shadow, trickster, wounded healer, self and God. It has both positive and negative characteristics.

is the acceleration of the healing processes: "....a week in the wilderness might be worth years of individual therapy to people." Nature, group dynamics and the physical activities all speed up the processes: the psychological and physiological adjustments necessary for connection, insight, growth and transformation.

Nature speeds up the healing process in a number of ways. Some of the results happen passively and occur as a result of simply being in the wilderness; others involve nature as a participant. By whatever means healing is accomplished, all of the guides see the process happening much faster in the wilderness:

....in my gut I feel like it was specifically the wilderness experience that sped that up. Because I've been in a lot of groups and some group therapy situations, too, certainly both as a participant and in training, and I've seen those things happen. Like I'm in a group now that's been going on for a year; we're all therapists and educators. We have two leaders, and basically what we do is we're being ourselves and we're studying how group process works by just basically going with what comes up in the dynamics of the group. And it's taken us -- it's been a year this August for me -- I feel like a lot of the levels of confrontation around conflict and anger and also things like sexual attraction, interest in another person -- it's just begun coming out in the last two or three months, meeting once a week for an hour and a half. And it could be my bias because I love this work so much, but I feel like I see all of it so much quicker [in the wilderness]-- in some week-long courses you see that.

One of the most valuable properties of wilderness, mentioned over and over again, is the lack of distractions. People can leave behind all the distractions that keep them

from connecting to self and others: books, radios, TV, drugs, toys, all those items that we pay attention to in order to keep from paying attention to ourselves. We can also leave behind all the trappings that go with living in an urban environment: cars, noise, fast paced living, bars, movies, parties and anything else that distracts us from ourselves, our true selves. We can also leave behind jobs, romantic relationships, self images, power, sex and other relationships that can be addictive in that they keep us from looking inward. If we like, we can abandon the baggage,⁹ but that's more difficult and one of the goals of the healing process. If we want, we can leave behind people and experience the wilderness alone. In aloneness or in loneliness we can find ourselves. When we are alone we have only ourselves to consider. In every interview the lack of distraction in wilderness was mentioned:

And now that I think of it in that way, that's part of healing in the wilderness, it allows you to feel the things that you can ignore or distract yourself from in a lot of other places.

they can just stop and experience where they are and who they are and how that interaction is going on....

The urban environment is very specialized and compartmentalized and it inhibits integration of all life's vari-

⁹Baggage is a term that appears occasionally in counseling jargon. It refers to the unfinished business dealt with in Gestalt therapy. Baggage includes unexpressed feelings such as resentment, rage, hatred, pain, anxiety, grief, guilt, abandonment, etc. (Corey 1986, pg 123).

ables. Wilderness in all its interdependency is not compartmentalized, allowing people to operate on many different levels. One guide expressed this integration as nature's role in the healing process. Another sees this characteristic as being threatened by the increasing fragmentation of our wildlands:

It's not compartmentalized in the wilderness. It's all there and it's all interweaving and interacting, so a person will have the freedom to and the encouragement to be operating at many different levels. Maybe the best way of looking at it is with the compartmentalization that happens in the city, it's like we think in those patterns and there's again the sense of control of the patterns. That we are the primary controllers and actors in our healing. And in the wilderness we aren't.¹⁰

So I think the reality is that wilderness is going to become more and more compartmentalized. It's going to be more like big zoos.

One term used by the guides that relates to the defenses, addictions, roles we play and other distractions is "garbage." The guides claim we really don't need our garbage when we are in the wilderness. There is no reason to bring it with us. Wilderness, unlike urban environments, is a place we can go and leave it all behind. Without all the garbage the healing process accelerates:

¹⁰Not all of the guides agreed with the statement that we are not the primary controllers in our healing. Rick for one sees the power to heal as coming from within ourselves with nature being a participant: "It's not the healing power of nature. It's the healing power that people have within themselves that they can discover by being in nature and engaging in activities with, for the most part, other humans in that kind of setting."

Which is the simple saying: you're here in a natural setting, you're here in nature and it's time to leave behind all the garbage that you brought with you.

As was presented in the previous chapter, totally experiencing emotions is a key to connecting to self.¹¹ The guides frequently discussed the importance of expressing emotions. Wilderness is a place where individuals can freely express and discharge emotional energy in a manner that may seem awkward in more structured environments.¹² Having this opportunity for expression accelerates the healing process:

....I went up this hill and reached the top of the summit and I let out a scream like it was another voice, it was not a voice that I recognized as being from me....there was just a tremendous sense of relief and a tremendous sense of comfort....

I can't remember if I was just getting in touch with my emotions; maybe that was all the healing I was doing. And that's a real significant healing for some of us who have suppressed and put them down and done all of our acting out in our minds. Just to be emotional there, just to feel comfortable enough to dredge up the emotions. I wasn't getting that any other place as easily. I

¹¹See Rogers, 1954, Chapter IV, footnote 8.

¹²Person Centered (Rogerian) and Gestalt counseling theory both emphasize the importance of experiencing one's feelings in attaining mental health. When a client refers to a feeling or a mood that is unpleasant and from which he or she has a great urge to escape, the therapist urges the client to stay with or retain the feeling (Corey 1986, pg 139).

In our society it is quite common for men to be ridiculed for expressing their feelings. The proverbial "keep a stiff upper lip" sets the standard for emotional behavior. There is tremendous pressure for men and boys to control their feelings (Fossum 1989, pg 17). In the wilderness, especially if they are alone, men and women can express their emotions and the only response will be from nature.

wasn't even getting any counseling that was convincing me that that was as successful and as trusting.

There is one property of wilderness that is both active and passive and contributes to the acceleration of the healing process: wilderness can be a dangerous place. Just being in the wilderness can create images of getting hurt, getting lost, even dying. Historically, it has been the setting for a lot of frightening stories. It's the setting for life or death adventure stories and risky activities like climbing and white water boating. Nature can also deliver storms, fires, rivers, snow fields, ice, severe heat and other obstacles to negotiate. Powerful animals can harm you: grizzly bears, lions and wolverines. The elements alone can challenge you or the activities can create the risk. Where there is danger, people will be afraid. They will experience fear. Fear is a great motivator and is the key component of many successful healing experiences. In the following interview segments, guides discuss fear and the healing process:

In the outdoors when you're placed in the experience of a technical climb or rapids on a river or...challenges like that, it's hard to escape the fear.

I think part of it is the fear of what you might encounter inside yourself when we get out there. That's a big chunk of it. And another is just the way we're brought up in society. We're brought up thinking that nature's kind of a dangerous place and we have to be real careful -- people get killed out there.

If you know the next morning you're going to get up and you're going down the Royal Gorge which is a

pretty heinous Class V raft trip and you've never done something like that, you're going to be scared shitlessThis a very real kind of threat; you can be killed, literally, people die in the Royal Gorge every year, 3 or 4 people every year die, so there's a risk to your very existence. And what it does, it allows you to go deeper much more quickly.

The following story describes changes in a client's way of dealing with fear after a frightening white water river experience:

We had two doctors, two medical doctors, and one, a woman, had spent hardly any time in the wilderness. She was working very hard at her job and like many people in helping professions, very caught up in her persona, in her role, but inside was in a lot of pain and was experiencing a lot of emptiness and uncertainty, low self-esteem even. Kind of amazing, we've gotten people out there who are very well thought of in their community, but internally have very low self-esteem, incredible doubts about themselves. And this woman was pretty distant when the trip started and I think we did -- one day we did a fairly easy float trip and the next day we were going to the Royal Gorge. And we were sitting around the camp fire talking and all of a sudden this woman just broke down completely and said, I'm really scared. And I've never admitted this to anybody in my life, the things that I'm scared about, but now I am really scared. I don't even know if I can do this. I am terrified. And broke down in tears, started crying. Here was the woman that was projecting all this strength and equanimity, everything's fine -- I have a great job and I take care of all these people, no problem -- and she really got deep down into what life was about for her, mainly the fear: fear of making a mistake, fear of getting hurt, fear of hurting somebody else. And so she debated for a long time and we didn't know if she was going to go, if she was going to do it or not. Then she did go on the trip, and everyone was very aware of where she was at and so she got a lot of attention from people who validated the fear, who kept checking in with her, how is it going? -- Everyone had their own way of responding to this woman and giving her support. This woman had never asked for support, maybe in her whole life. And by the end of the trip, she

was very soft and vulnerable and tender. She'd gone through a personal transformation.

Nature's peacefulness contrasts with the danger and challenges inherent in wilderness. Peace in the wilderness can serve many functions. An individual can escape and rest, or work and grow. Both can be healing. But in the aloneness of wilderness, by yourself, no other people to contribute distractions, you may have to face yourself: "I think part of it is fear of what you might encounter inside yourself when we got out there. That's a big chunk of it." That possibility of aloneness, without distractions, is the reason the solo or vision quest is so often used as a technique in wilderness: "I felt my loneliness; I felt my aloneness from people, my disconnection. I felt the hurt in that, and in feeling that something started to change."

The techniques involved in the vision quest or solo were discussed in a previous chapter. They were among the most frequently discussed techniques. The following story describes one client's adventure, spending four days alone in the wilderness on a solo and looking deep within himself:

A better example in my mind is a radio executive from Boston who came out three years ago and he did a quest with Rick and I. Before he went out on the solo he was asking a lot of questions in all the circles: well, do I have to stay in my little circle area on the solo? Can't I get out and walk around? Do we really have to build a medicine wheel and stay in there? Really challenging, questioning everything, and we answered those questions as best we could and sent him off when the solo time came. And he came back and walking through the entry gate back into the group setting, it was clear that something magnificent had

happened to this man because he looked like a different person. And what he proceeded to tell us was he found out why he was afraid to sit quietly and be alone....it wasn't the first day, he did fine the first day, the second day he got incredibly restless and he could not stand to be in his own skin. So he said, well I'll just get up and go for a walk down to the river, which was probably 100 yards away. So on the way to the river, there was a snake sunning itself on a rock by the river. He was terrified of snakes because we do a lot of training about the symbolic aspects of nature. He turned around and fled back in the direction of his tarp, got there and said, well I'll just go up in the other direction toward the trail. So he walked up towards the trail, and there was another snake on the trail. He freaked out. He turned around and said, this has got to mean something, I'm going to sit down in my solo site. So he plunked himself down. Within awhile he realized that what he was running from was, both his parents had died within a year of each other when he was six years old. And again that was something that was very deeply compressed in him; he'd gotten very depressed as a young child. I don't think he'd ever had therapy or really let that particular feeling out. And for the next day and a half, he described just sitting in these waves of missing and longing, and crying and wailing about mommy and daddy.

Both the activities and the environment can also be a means to and a place in which to escape.¹³ A concern

¹³Kaplan and Talbott (1983, pg 192), classify different aspects of escape. To escape means the absence of some aspect of life that is ordinarily present and presumably not always preferred. There are at least three different patterns of this kind of escape: (1) escape from distraction; (2) putting aside the work one ordinarily does; and (3) taking a rest from mental effort of any kind.

There can also be escape from dealing with personal problems. A person can escape from a difficult relationship rather than work it out. A person can escape from making a decision. The problem arises when escape becomes avoidance to problems that need to be addressed before growth and transformation can occur. The issue here involves rest vs. avoidance.

brought up by one of the guides involves using the wilderness as a place to escape rather than a place to grow. He appears to be in touch with this concern because he has personally used wilderness as an escape and sees that possibility for others. The alternative is to use the lessons inherent there to grow and improve life away from wilderness. The guide describes his search for an alternative to escaping in the wilderness:

So the question for me is more, how do you use this metaphor of nature, how do you acknowledge that it's there, not as an escape but as a metaphor that you can bring back into your life and civilization to make your life better here, as opposed to a refuge where you can get away from all the stuff that's going on. And say, well I can always go back to nature and hang out there and everything will be fine. I think that's bullshit....I don't mean to imply you can't use it, I don't mean to imply the natural world isn't still wonderful but I think the real issue now isn't where's the best place to run away to, but how you can go to these places and remember who you are as a being and bring that back and impact civilization some way that it gets off its path of destruction.

As mentioned earlier, some of the guides see nature, as it is found in wilderness, actively participating in our healing process. In doing so, it accelerates the process. As a living entity, nature is seen as responsive like any other participant:

We aren't the only actors in our healing. There is a larger organic life there that is involved in our healing and that is responsive. It's not dead; the environment is not dead....It's not dead and it's a responsive whole and when you're out there with your grief in the environment and you're expressing

that and that's filtering out, there is a wave of response.

Response from nature is perceived as clear and unambiguous,¹⁴ unlike the responses we receive from urban environments. If an individual is climbing and makes the wrong move, he/she gets stuck or hurt. If they don't take care of their equipment it gets damaged or lost. If a boater reads the river wrong, he/she goes for a swim. One guide uses nature's clear feedback to interpret and find solutions for stress:

When you put people out in nature they get in touch with a more primeval kind of stress; the stress of being physically uncomfortable, for example, the stress of not being able to go up a particular route because there's too much snow. The stress of physical injury. Those kinds of things are very tangible....A lot of what I think goes on in our society we get involved in these cognitive stresses up in our heads and it turns into an internal loop process where we're thinking about it and worrying about it over and over, ad infinitum. When you go out in nature you've got something real basic to deal with. You're cold and you're wet; what are you going to do about it? It demands tangible solutions....or as one article I read on stress said, people talk about stress in this abstract sort of way and they want to deal with it in an abstract kind of way, by meditating, by jogging, by taking naps, by taking weekend personal growth workshops, things like that. Whereas if you talk

¹⁴Reser and Scherl (1988, pg 275) hold the view that feedback from running, mountain climbing, endurance activities and wilderness trekking is concrete, clear, and inherently reinforcing, in contrast to the lack of clarity and confusing quality of information in the environment in general. This experience occurs while performing strenuous and often painful out-of-role activities. They claim that the reward of clear and unambiguous feedback is optimal functioning for a biological information-processing system which is programmed to impose meaning, anticipate, and adjust to ongoing and continually changing environmental demands.

about stress as being a specific problem with specific conditions like I can't afford to pay my rent, then the solution is not going to be a jog or meditate or take a personal growth workshop. The solution is going to be to figure out some way to get the money to pay the rent. And when you get in nature you get grounded into those practical, tangible ways of looking at things.

One of the guides perceives nature as an equalizer:

Moving my work into the wilderness or into the out-of-doors or into nature, it's like it's such a great equalizer. What happens after a period of time in the wilderness is everyone realizes that sense of equality. It strips us of our specific agendas that we walk around with....it really helps people move out of themselves, out of their stuff, out of the way that they manipulate their world. We develop many, many tools in our life to manipulate our environment, and the more we get used to our environment, the more we get accustomed to it, whatever it might be -- we find more ways to manipulate it. But when you get into the wilderness, that manipulation is almost wiped out in a sense for so many people. It's the wonderful feeling (people I deal with disagree with me) that wonderful feeling of helplessness, of awe.

Resulting Processes

As a result of affordances or opportunities in nature individuals can experience a number of positive personal changes. Some guides believe that process happens in other, less natural environments but happens much faster in wilderness. One change frequently discussed by the guides is the dropping of defenses:

....if the experience is new and untried or unknown, [and as] far as I'm concerned in the wilderness there's always something that's going to come up that is untried or unknown, whether it's

the weather or the natural surroundings.... we don't have time to kick in our defenses.

Again, I work a lot with defense mechanisms versus what I call true self, and anytime any person comes up against a situation in the natural environment that's such a humbling experience.... they have to surrender some of their defenses.

In the outdoors when you're placed in the experience of a technical climb or rapids on a river or...challenges like that, it's hard to escape the fear. It's hard to use one of your defenses to kick in and to override that. Of course, we can still do that --- we use our skill base a lot of times to override our feelings....

One of our defenses, is the wearing of masks.¹⁵ Masks hide who we really are and how we really feel. However, they drop away when faced with difficult situations in the wilderness. One guide views rock climbing as the quickest way to surrender our masks:

So there's a way that the physical piece triggers things, the survival piece triggers things, and I know that rock climbing is the greatest thing I've seen for....an anxious personality, if you have a lot of fear inside, and you mask that. You can't mask that when you're starting to rapel down the side of a trip; your body can't mask that.

To surrender to this absence of control and to humble ourselves in nature's presence is a catalyst to dropping our

¹⁵We use masks to impersonate the person that we want to be perceived as by other people. Another word for this is persona, derived from the Greek drama actors who wore masks that turned them into dramatis personae. Wilmer (1987, pg 65) states: "The persona is an archetype; it is a functional complex that is necessary for adaptation to relations. It is the compromise between what we wish to be and what the surrounding world will allow us to be. The persona conceals our true nature and disguises both our shadow and our finest ideals, yet it tries to approximate our ego ideal, so it's like putting on a face."

defenses. Becoming humble is associated with dropping defenses in this guide's response:

If they move into a space where they find they cannot do it by themselves, that they do have to surrender to either help from someone else or realize that the force of nature is greater than they are, then there's a certain humble quality that takes place and there's an opening.

To be humbled, where they are helpless in effect, opens them to look at the world in new ways. There's nothing that can do that better than moving up the side of a 14 [difficulty climb] or to be moving down a [class] 5 rapid. You're there and you're in the experience and you are not in control. And that is just a great teacher.

When people drop their defenses they are more apt to experience their emotions and feelings, one of the quickest ways to get to know the true self. Once again guides associate healing with expression of feelings, and they see the process of experiencing and expressing emotions accelerated in difficult wilderness experiences:

I also think it's some kind of combination of all the hard physical work....it really works up emotions. If a person's got a lot of buried rage or something underneath, carrying that backpack around, slopping through the mud and things like that, their stuff can get triggered; whereas in a group therapy setting, sitting indoors, you might not see that for months or years.¹⁶

....I can think of a lot of specific circumstances out there like bad weather or a difficult climb we had that rapidly brought up people's stuff, you

¹⁶I've experienced this myself when pushing hard on my bicycle during a workout when teaching high school. During the ride I would have fantasies of getting even with especially difficult students. I informally asked friends if they had had similar experiences and they had.

know, their fears about dying. A lot of the men in that particular group had issues come up about being seen as vulnerable by other men, about being seen as having feelings by other men. It's like we had chief executive officers from companies, very powerful individuals, and some of them were completely broken down, not in a negative way but in a very loving, open [way] by what had happened on the mountain, what had happened on the river.

One of the guides experienced this opening up to his own emotions and connecting with others on his first trip with the colorado program:

Our last eco-training was a vision quest that was run by Earth Rites. And we'd been together, fifteen of us, three months, so we got pretty close together as a group, and I just remember being out there -- actually it was in May, it wasn't the end of our training. We were standing out one morning doing some yoga and stretching in a field...and there'd been something bothering me the whole trip that I hadn't quite been able to put words on it. And it came up suddenly; I just started crying in the middle of the discussion session, and the leaders noticed it but were wise enough to let me have that feeling and not have to draw attention to me. What it was, a lot of my old, East coast upbringing, like a way of -- arrogance, of keeping myself separate from people, not sharing what was nearest and dearest inside of me -- and I had been feeling kind of cut off from people a little during the early weeks of the training, like not knowing how to really speak my truth, how to connect, how to express myself emotionally. And boom, it just started to pour out. The rest of that trip I had a feeling of like pulsation inside, the first time in my life where I felt emotionally open and alive.

When people are together in the wilderness there is going to be group process, it can't but happen. Group process takes place wherever and whenever people come together. One of the biggest factors in the success of any expedition is how the group works out their differences: "One group wants to go

further than the other and the other thinks they ought to wait, hold out the storm, that sort of thing." Group members can do it constructively and meet their objectives or do it destructively. They may or may not meet their objectives in this case. With proper guidance the wilderness is a place to learn to deal with others in new and better ways. It's a place to learn conflict resolution, both with others and with self. The situations that evolve that require people to work together effectively do not necessarily have to be facilitated by the guides. In many instances nature presents the situation. Because they have to work together, the bonding process is accelerated. The following response excerpts discuss the acceleration of the bonding process:

....maybe we'll have to end up shoveling through a cornice together to bring the llamas down through a ridge into a valley, which for some people is a little scary. People have to have--their attention has to be right there. And so in some ways, maybe it can be said that some people would say: let's plan this ahead of time so the group will bond. For us it's never been that conscious, that calculated, that the group will bond and here's how we'll have the wilderness assist us toward that end.

And what I've seen in nature is that in a week, 5 days, of people going through the normal stuff of what nature puts out for you, suddenly you are deeply bonded with these people and sometimes that bond lasts a lifetime. You get that close that quickly. So nature just speeds things up.

The speeding up of group process is due in part to the added responsibility. In the wilderness groups may face risky situations daily and they are not facing them alone. They are

not only responsible for themselves but for the others in the group:

It's like we realize suddenly that if we're not taking responsibility for ourselves in a group, that can affect the whole group and it can certainly cost us our lives....

I believe that being in a group has a lot more importance when you're out there. Because you depend on each other....

The following story illustrates the importance of the wilderness experience in speeding up group process:

....we had one of the greatest trips I think we ever had, was where Rick made a bad decision to lead a group down over a bluff going into Canyonlands to a plateau from which we believe there would be trails down into the area. And there were no trails, and this was a pretty out of shape group. The next day we had to go back up the bluff which was several hundred feet up with the heavy packs, bitching, moaning, complaining. We knew what was coming up that night in the group session: there was anger, fire. And that all happened early on in the trip and people had an experience that they could tell the truth about that. They could get that off, they could be really upset, they could -- and once it was clear that we supported them; we felt like we had no choice but to say yea, we made a mistake, let's deal with that. Then by the end of the trip, it was the closest group we'd ever seen, I'd ever seen in the wilderness. And not in that kind of what Scott Peck calls pseudo-community, where groups can sound like they're really close but there's all these hidden issues underneath....¹⁷

¹⁷There are four stages of group development that take place on wilderness adventures. Schoel, Prouty and Radcliffe (1988, pg 81) list those stages as Forming, Storming, Norming and Transforming. Forming is that period when groups are scrambling for leadership, who to follow. Participants are eager to please and enjoy their accomplishments. During Storming, alliances between members have formed sufficiently to generate negative behavior. Testing of the leaders begins.

All the accelerated healing processes combined are perceived as contributions to an acceleration of growth:

....what I see as kind of speeding up of the growth process which is what happens naturally in the wilderness....

an acceleration of psychological growth, maybe spiritual growth, which I don't know how to measure, which happens just by being in a setting where survival issues, where community, where all the deepest parts of ourselves are brought up because we are in a setting where some of our more superficial and defensive aspects, I see them as, like they start to fall away.

For whatever reason all the guides have experienced a form of healing in the wilderness and have observed similar experiences in others. The results may have been due to the setting, unknown powers, natural phenomenon, or physical or group activities. Most likely, it is a combination of all these variables. The guides feel that these variables, these forces are very powerful and much more can be accomplished with the help of nature. They appear convinced that it takes months and years in an office to accomplish what is done in

True personalities come out of hiding. In Norming the group begins to operate as a unit. The group moves away from dependency on the leaders. Transforming is what a group must do when it runs out of time.

A new version of this came out in the interviews: forming, norming, storming, performing: "It forms, people begin to develop a norm, they kind of, you know, they act nice to each other, everything is fine, and then all of a sudden the storm breaks, people's shadows come out. Ant that's when it really gets powerful. A lot of people are together and are nice to each other but there's very little hope for anything transformative to emerge. But when people get pushed just a little bit past their limits then they start to get real."

the wilderness with the help of nature in only a couple of weeks:

I started to feel like there are some very, very powerful forces in the world, in the natural world, that do not have the addictive quality and that we shun those, especially in our western culture, because they do not appear to have the speed and the force behind them that say, drugs and alcohol or sex or the corporate work world may have. But the powers that are available; the natural powers are much cleaner and much more valuable and transferable to everyone.

What is it in the quality of air, water, electromagnetic energy -- plus support, healing, communication, the group -- what is it when all those things are together that seems so powerful? I don't know but I like it.

CHAPTER VII

CONCEPT CLARIFICATION AND CONCLUSION

CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

The viewpoints expressed in this study are not necessarily unanimous. At times they are the expression of only one of the guides and at other times they represent most, if not all of them. It is difficult, therefore, to generalize about their beliefs and theories. But within their stories exist threads of commonality that allow me to make some generalizations in forming a hypothesis on wilderness and healing. Furthermore, there is an interconnection between the ideas expressed by the guides and recent psychological and philosophical literature. Their ideas are also expressed in environmental essays and some fiction. Relying on that connection, I've attempted to answer the questions that prompted this study. In order to begin answering those questions, it is important to clarify some concepts.

Nature and Wilderness: Throughout this study the guides use nature and wilderness interchangeably. They referred to both the healing power of nature and the healing power of wilderness. They also refer to going into or being in nature as well as wilderness. At the same time they commonly spoke of nature or the wilderness as being "alive," with all the corresponding attributes. As part of being alive, nature is a participant in the healing process: "We aren't the only

actors in our healing. There is a larger organic life there that is involved in our healing and that is responsive. It is not dead; the environment is not dead." In agreement with the guides are the proponents of Deep Ecology and James Lovelock, creator of the Gaia hypothesis.

In the context of nature being a living, breathing entity (Gaia) and a vital participant in the healing process, it appears that the guides, although they often used the terms interchangeably, sometimes inadvertently distinguished between nature and wilderness. As I interpret their stories, nature is an entity found in wilderness. Because nature, as it is found in wilderness, is so pure and unaffected by humans it is difficult to distinguish it from the wilderness itself. But in the city or urban community, where there is a clear distinction between nature and the immediate environment, it is easier to separate nature and that environment. Someone living in an apartment in the city may encounter nature in the form of a spider on the living room wall. There is a clear demarcation between the apartment and the spider (nature). In this case, watching that spider may be a source of healing. In wilderness, however, everything is nature. The spider may be on a tree or a rock. No matter where it stands it is on another natural entity. There is no clear demarcation. Because of this lack of demarcation nature and wilderness become one. Nature is in its purest form in wilderness. Even though we can make contact with nature in any environment,

wilderness is the most obvious place for these connections to occur. Hence, the interchangeable use of wilderness and nature. But, like the apartment, wilderness is a place. The difference between the apartment and the wilderness is the quantity and continuity of nature. Also, as pure nature wilderness is associated with wildness, while in the apartment nature is limited and associated with tameness, its opposite.

The possibility of nature being found in both environments leads me to believe that the power of healing the guides refer to is that of nature, found in its purest form in wilderness.

Even though nature exists in all environments, it is in wilderness that it is the most easily accessed.

Nature as Teacher: The guides refer to nature, or aspects of nature, as a teacher. The following statement, made by one of the guides, is an example: "Weather, I think, is a wonderful teacher...." In referring to weather (nature) as a teacher, it appears that weather is being personified. It can be argued that weather is incapable of teaching and should not be referred to in this context. Weather does not have the ability to consciously teach and is totally indifferent to humans or any other entity. To some, extending this teaching capability to weather (nature) is simple (and offensive) anthropomorphism. Deborah Slicer (1991, pg 112) claims that in not recognizing the difference between humans and other natural entities, we once again give ourselves self-centric importance. She goes on to say that other entities in

nature are not only different from but indifferent to what man does. To demonstrate her point, Slicer gives an example from an article by Karen Warren (1990) where Warren describes a rock climbing experience (nature here is in the form of the rock): "One recognizes the rock as something very different, something perhaps totally indifferent to one's own presence...." But Warren goes on to say: "I felt an overwhelming sense of gratitude for what it [the rock] offered me." To me, there is little difference between nature "teaching" or nature "offering."¹ Neither need be construed as personification or self-centric. Other animals teach their young, just as humans do, but the recognition of this fact does not constitute personification. Animals can teach. They act and react with intention. If a grizzly chases me away from its feeding place it is teaching me to stay away. That's not a human characteristic; it's the grizzly's. At the

¹In fact, a strong argument can be made that "offering" someone something is a more conscious (and therefore presumably more human) act than "teaching." The original Indo-European root of "to offer," BHER, to carry or hold out to someone for acceptance or rejection (Clairborne 1989, pg 67) implies a much more physical or conscious act than teaching (from the root DEIK, to show what or how (pg 76). The "showiness" of the rose brings knowledge of beauty, fragility, and design to the human viewer (not to mention the knowledge imparted to bees and other insects). Conscious intent is not a prerequisite for teaching. A young child can teach his or her parent about spontaneity or playfulness without being conscious of doing so. By simply being and doing. If the parent has learned something, however small or powerful, that child is his or her teacher. Likewise enlightened people in history have been called "teacher" by their followers, though they disdained the label, and simply led their lives.

developmental level of a spider, who knows? Whether a rock can intentionally "teach" is speculation as is it's ability to intentionally "offer." Nature seen as a living, breathing entity (Gaia), may or may not have that capability. But for nature (the rock, spider, weather, grizzly) to "teach," it does not have to be intentional. There are lessons available from simply observing. A small child teaches its parent a lesson without being conscious of doing so. The same phenomenon happens in nature. The spider, weather or rock can teach without ever knowing or caring. Intention is inherent in the human activity of observing and being open to the lesson, not necessarily in the teaching. Another way to look at nature as teacher without personification is to say that we can learn by observing nature. However, in referring to nature unequivocally as teacher I have followed the lead of the guides who did the same in the interviews.

Healing and Health: A frequent question that arises when discussing the topic of healing concerns the bodily system healed. Are we referring to physical health, mental health or spiritual health? Can going into the wilderness cure cancer? Will a psychotic person be healed in the wilderness? Is wilderness a place to find God? In the holistic or systems view of health these three areas of concern cannot be separated.² As with nature and wilderness, they are interconnected. If one system is healed, all systems are

²See Capra (1982), chapter 5.

affected.

The main reference throughout this study is to the psychological system, but not to the exclusion of the other systems. In chapter V the relationship between mental health and spiritual health is continually pointed out. Many of the journal articles cited pertain to spiritual health as it contributes to mental and physical health,³ and there is substantial evidence for the connection between mental health and physical health. The connection among all the systems, in and out of the body, is an element in the healing customs of traditional shaman, Native American healers and ancient Eastern philosophies. Even though reference is made primarily to mental health, the guides view health from a holistic viewpoint, including all the systems.

The concept of self in healing: The one concept most frequently referred to in the interviews and the literature is the self. The guides and other sources define healing in terms of self. Because the guides focused on self in the healing process, I chose to do the same in this study. The use of self as the main focus of healing demonstrates the influence that Humanistic, Gestalt and Jungian theory may have had on the guides' own definition of healing. The techniques and activities are oriented towards discovering self and involve nature in that process. But in discussing this

³See Bellingham and Cohen (1989), Bergin (1988), Brooke (1978), Butler (1991), Chapman (1986), Fossom (1989), Legere (1984), Roth (1988), and Wilmer (1987).

concept, the guides' references to many different types of self lead to confusion. In many instances, even though they use different adjectives, they are referring to the same concept of self. For simplicity in describing a healing process involving nature, I've combined the different selves into three categories.⁴

The term self is preceded by many positive descriptive labels in the interviews including true self, core self, authentic self, and real self. It is also preceded by labels with negative connotations like false self and manufactured self. The terms were, in many instances, used interchangeably, as were nature and wilderness. Once again, it is possible to clarify the differences, based on inadvertent discriminating references made by the guides.

The core self is what we have at birth. As Wilmer (1987, pg 61) points out: "We are not born 'tabula rasa', with a clean slate." We are born already programmed in many respects. Those programs involve many aspects of our being and growth. Our genetic program includes what we have inherited from our long history of ancestors. This genetic information will affect us our entire lives and will pass on to our own

⁴I do not believe that the guides consciously made the divisions of the self that I have made here. There did seem to be a clear division between the false self and the real self, but the division between the core self and real self was not as clear. They seemed to use the two selves interchangeably but the processes they referred to at the same time were not interchangeable. As a result I looked at the process that went along with each self and created my own division. I believe that unconsciously the guides were creating a similar division.

offspring. We are also born with the capacity to express emotions. Babies do not have to learn how to laugh or cry. These emotions originate from information contained in the core self. And if Jungian theory is accepted, another program involves the information in the collective unconscious and the archetypes that reside there.⁵ This information will surface in our dreams, stories and personalities. Through the collective unconscious we carry the experiences of all humankind and will have to deal with this information our entire lives. There are other theories concerning what we bring into the world with us. According to Leonard (1978) we are born with an inner pulse, a rhythm. That pulse is in synch with all the rhythms of life. The baby first connects with it when hearing its mother's heart beat. The guides

⁵Jung (Wilmer 1987, pg 35) distinguishes between the self and core self with the concept of I and not-I. The I that we usually identify with self is the I of the personal psyche. This is the I influenced by the person's real world and resulting relationships. This self, involved with I, is designated with a little "s." The core self is designated with a capital "S" and does not involve I; it involves not-I. The Self is the inner, all-encompassing archetype. This includes all that is outside of ourselves. In this context, to go into the Self (the not-I) is to actually go outside oneself.

Arne Naess, in his Ecosophy T version of Deep Ecology, theorizes about norms and basic values. His top norm or ultimate norm is Self-realization. But the Self-realization that Naess refers to is not the same ego-realization often used by western psychologists; it is a universal-self that is spelled with a capital "S" and identifies not only the ecosphere but even the entire universe (Duvall and Sessions 1985, pg 227). The universal Self that Naess is referring to is the same Self that Jung describes. They are both referring to the self found deep within our core that connects with the totality of existence.

often referred to the rhythms of nature and the feeling of pulsations. Both Maslow (1964) and Csikszentmihalyi (1990) refer to getting in synch with the rhythms of nature. These rhythms are associated with all life. The desire to live and participate in life is also programmed in our core self. Whatever programs one ascribes to the core self, that information is brought into the world with us and is part of our unconscious self. Because this is the most basic or primitive part of ourselves, this is also where nature resides. To Jung nature is considered an archetype. Those healing powers discussed in chapter VI that are inherent in nature, are also inherent in ourselves. And just as we must be open to those powers in nature, we must be open to those powers within ourselves.

It was mentioned in a couple of the interviews that there is no difference between us and nature. Ideally, in our purest form, because nature is part of our core self and our core influences our real self, we are nature. If we drop all of the garbage⁶and baggage⁷ that we carry around, there would be little or no difference between our self and nature. This garbage, which we use to protect our egos, obscures who we

⁶Garbage is jargon for ego defenses, masks, walls and anything else that interferes with our experiencing who we truly are. It's called garbage because it is thought by some (including the guides) that we don't need it and we can throw it out. The term was frequently used by the guides and occasionally turned up in the literature.

⁷See footnote 9 chapter VI.

really are. As Stephen Levine (1991 pg 71) points out in "Deathwork," when individuals are in a crisis situation all that we can hope for is that they get the most out of the situation and that it takes them to their true nature.

The real or true self evolves from life experiences, good or bad, and from information in the core self. We cannot return to the state of mind with which we were born, but we can grow into a true or real self that has its foundations in our core self. There are both lights and darks, yin and yangs in our real self. An example of the balance found in the real self (yin in harmony with yang) is demonstrated in Jung's concept of a country mind and or city mind. Jung states that we are out of balance because we are living more in our city minds and need to move more toward our country mind (van der Post 1982, pg 68).

The real self contains the personal unconscious⁸ and has access to the core self. The real self relies on its own information (life experiences, coping skills, will power) plus information from the core self to grow and live in accordance with one's true nature. It has been said that if we live in accordance with our true nature, we will have less physical and mental illness. The real self could also be referred to as the mature self, as the real self grows through this

⁸The personal unconscious consists of personal experience from the moment of conception' all of the external environmental contributions to one's makeup (Talley 1974, pg 4).

process and matures.

The false self is that part of the self that is hidden behind defenses, personas (masks) and walls. Its function is to protect the ego⁹. The false self, while camouflaging the true self, acts as a barrier to the true self. It interferes with a person's learning and growing and its walls hinder connections. The false self is the person we get to know when the true self is hidden. Often a person's self-image is based entirely on the false self. The guides believe it is necessary to become more open in order to penetrate the false self and begin to learn from the core self (nature).

The Role of Spirituality: The guides spoke often about spirituality, usually in relationship to connection. (I've defined both spirituality and connection in chapter V.) In brief, spirituality gives explanation to events that cannot be explained by more objective scientific interpretation or rational explanations. It involves connections, relationships and honoring personal experiences. Spirituality is an intimate relationship to something deep within ourselves and can involve a higher power or the supernatural. As outlined by the guides, spirituality can be interpreted in a number of ways: as a bodily system that needs to be maintained or simply as a state of mind.

Jung states that we cannot avoid delving into our

⁹According to psychoanalytical theory of personality, the ego is the conscious, logical part of the mind that develops as we grow up and is our operational contact with reality.

spiritual self because God is an archetype contained in the Self. He claims that spirituality may not manifest itself in the form of organized religion but will appear in less obvious ways.

Following Jungian theory, our spirituality is then part of our core self. When we connect with the spirit in our core, we have what Maslow calls a peak experience, or what Csikszentmihalyi calls flow. Maslow points out that people who have regular peak experiences usually have their own personal religions. Religion can result after individuals have a peak experience and then try to help others have the same experience. In doing so they facilitate the same activities that brought on their own enlightening experience. When people make insightful connections through the church and experience the high and connectedness that go with the peak experience, they become advocates of that religion. This insight and growth constitute a healing experience, giving life reason and purpose and bringing one closer to his/her true nature.

When this phenomenon happens in the wilderness, those who experience it become advocates of that process. To help others have a similar experience, they facilitate the same activities connected to their experience. In this case spirituality is similar to religion. To the guide who experienced the healing, it was a spiritual experience and the resulting facilitated programs could be considered religious

(organized spirituality) in nature. In either case spirituality is related to making connections. Often it is involved with making a connection with a higher power, possibly God. At other times it involves connections with other people, nature or the entire universe. If we subscribe to the theory of a collective unconscious, affirming that information exists in the core self in the form of archetypes, then to make connection with people, nature, a higher power or the universe is to make connection with the core self. Because "others" (including nature) are within the core self and, Jung believes God dwells therein, any experience involving a connection to the core self and thus to "other" can be interpreted as a spiritual experience.

Conclusion

Do the guides believe that nature has an inherent healing power? The guides did eventually say they believed nature had healing powers.¹⁰ But, similar to accounts in the literature, the guides had difficulty in separating the healing power of nature from the activities in which they and their clients had participated. In addition, their stories and descriptions did not substantiate that healing power

¹⁰According to the theorem of "The Self Fulfilling Prophecy" set forth by the sociologist W.I. Thomas: If men define situations as real they are real in their consequences" (Merton 1949, pg 179). Believing in the healing power of nature gives momentum to the healing process from the start of the wilderness experience.

according to generally understood definitions of the term "power." At no time did they say, without qualification, that simply going out into the wilderness, resulted in healing. In all instances there was a prerequisite or activity to the potential healing. The minimum prerequisite was that the person be open to what nature has to offer.

The guides did indicate that people go through positive changes by being in nature. They believe there is an energy in nature which can change one's level of health. They seem to believe that given enough time, there is the possibility that even the closed person will eventually do some healing work in nature. Simply being in the wilderness involves activity. The lack of distraction provides an opportunity for a person to do work. Just sitting becomes an activity when one is reflecting, looking inward, experiencing emotions or observing nature. This type of activity can be an insightful experience or a negative experience, depending on the person's level of openness. The level of openness is a reflection of the persons spiritual health and can be increased through the techniques, activities and rituals facilitated by the guides. (Each of these is discussed in chapter III.) Any experience, positive or negative, can be interpreted as an insightful experience if the person chooses to use a spiritual frame of reference.

Because of the guides' belief in the healing power of nature, promoting it regardless of their inability to

substantiate it, I decided to look at power from a different viewpoint. Is it possible that the guides are defining power other than in the classical sense? One key word in the definition of power is effectiveness.¹¹ Power can result from effectiveness. The affordances of nature, discussed by Rick and Delores LaChapelle (1988, pg 107), are effective in promoting healing. The guides' stories did substantiate the effectiveness of nature's affordances in promoting healing. Looking at power in this context, the healing power of nature is in its affordances. Affordances involve taking advantage of opportunity; therefore, it's up to the individual to take advantage of the opportunity. These affordances come in many forms and are described in detail in chapter VI. With each affordance there is a lesson that gives us the power to heal ourselves. This may be why Rick made the comment: "One is not healed by nature but in nature".

To benefit from the affordances of nature there are certain prerequisites. One cannot simply sit in nature with a closed mind and magically heal. A person who is closed and protected will not benefit. In this sense an activity is required even if it's just to become more open. Because of this relationship between activities, openness, affordances and healing, it is difficult to separate the healing power of nature from the activities. This may explain why the guides

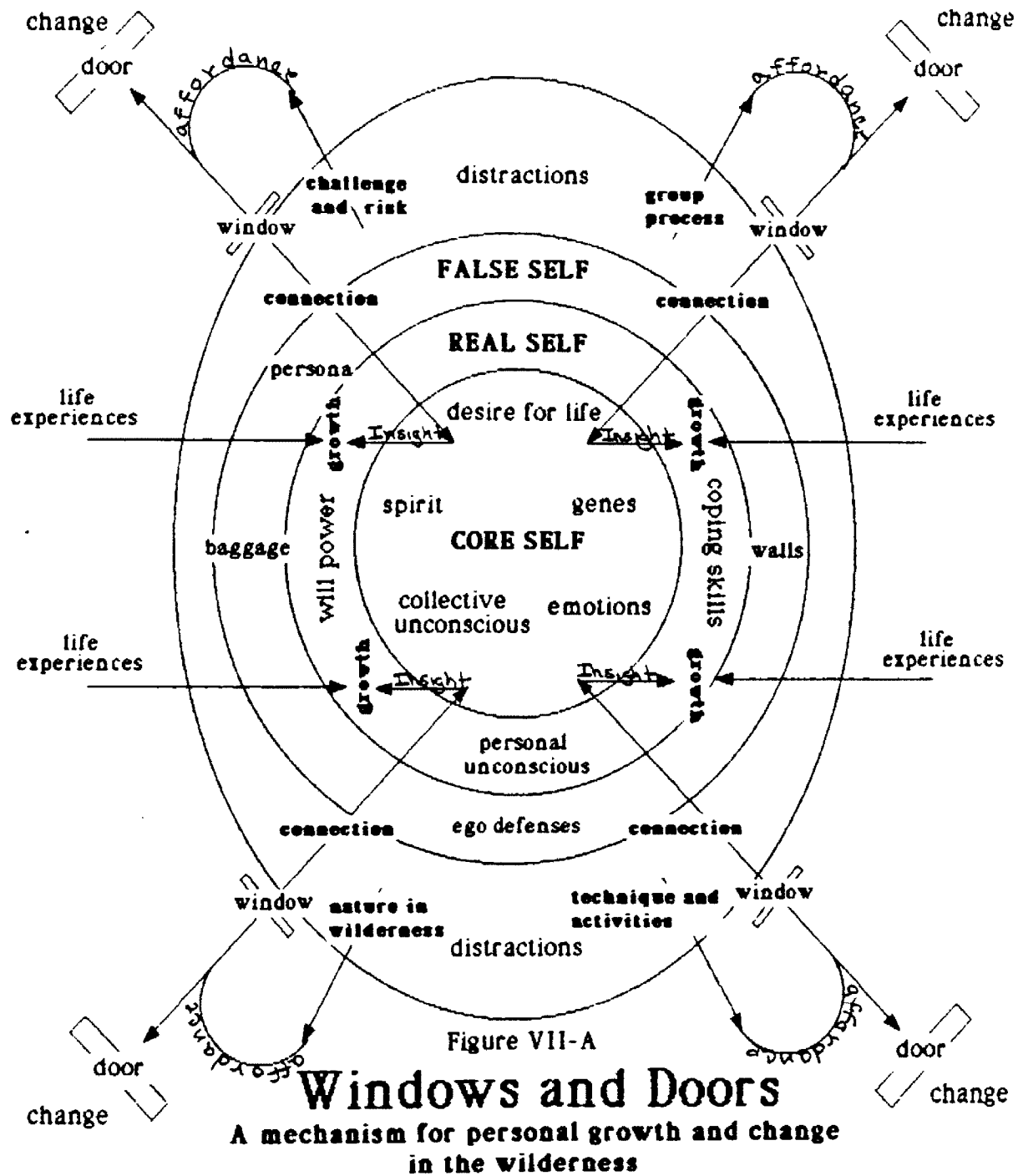
¹¹ The American Heritage Dictionary (1985, pg 971) gives one definition of power in terms of forcefulness or effectiveness, for example: "a novel of unusual power."

and authors also have difficulty in making that separation.

The mechanism that allows the healing process in nature to work appears to be simple although the process is very complex. The complexity results from the inherent intricacy of the human psyche, which includes all the aspects of self discussed earlier. By adding the affordances of nature along with the other players -- the guides, other clients and people who aren't even there -- the process becomes even more complex.

But the healing process, as I interpret it based on the findings of this study, can be described more simply as shown in figure VII-A, page 165.

We go into the wilderness with different degrees of false self, including all of the garbage and baggage that false self implies. For each of us this is very personal and unique. Along with the false self, we also bring our own distractions. In the wilderness we are exposed to various experiences that open us to the affordances of nature. Those experiences result from: the powers of nature; challenge and risk; group process; activities in which we participate; and techniques facilitated by the guides. The affordances come in the form of opportunity, energy, rhythms, and lessons. The information in the affordance stirs something inside of us which opens a window to our core self. This is where we make a connection to our self. We get to look through the window,



through the distractions and false self, into our core where the roots of our true nature lie. Looking inward, we can change. In experiencing the joy of being in synch with our true nature we may not want to go back to our old ways of dealing with our life encounters. We then can use the information we find to formulate a real self that is more consistent with our own true nature. When used in combination with our life experiences, this process leads to growth. However, opening this window may be a very painful experience. Letting go of distractions, dropping ego defenses and peeling away masks may be too much to endure and change may not take place. The person may prefer the protection of the distractions and false self. If the person does accomplish this change to some degree, he or she becomes vulnerable and must develop other ways to survive. Vulnerability has its place but at times can be very dangerous. Most healthy people build protection by developing coping skills, a more conscious means of survival than unconscious ego defenses.

In that core lies our connection to everything else. Theoretically, in the collective unconscious we have our connection to all that exists and has existed before us. This is where we initiate our connections to all that lies outside of ourselves. Because others exist within us (in the collective unconscious), if we make that connection, we more easily connect to the "others" outside. When we go into the wilderness and experience nature, it opens a window to the

nature within. Through that window we make a connection. With connection comes familiarity and empathy. We can then connect to nature outside of ourselves through that same window. Healing occurs as a result of making those connections.

Once we have connected to ourselves and others, we have the option to facilitate change in ourselves and in our response to ourself and others. We have the option to change our actions. I refer to this process as stepping through a door. As indicated in diagram VII-A, it is possible to step through a door and make changes without going through this entire process. The question to be considered here concerns the motivation. I'm skeptical of this kind of change because it may be motivated by the false self and the ego. It reminds me of people who are generous or sensitive only when others are looking or it's for their own benefit. However, it is possible for a person to have made a connection with nature within him or herself at a very early age when the barriers are not yet formed. The false self, at this time, is in the early stages of development and the walls and defenses are at a minimum. As a result, later in life, it may seem that such people have an inherent connection to the other (including nature). It is possible that they have gone through, at an early age, a process similar to the mechanism suggested.

There are affordances in all aspects of our lives, in the urban environment as well as in wilderness. Many of the

activities facilitated by the guides could be just as effective elsewhere because they are based on sound counseling theory. Individuals can definitely experience group process in the urban environment. Likewise, events outside of wilderness contribute to peak experiences and we have the opportunity to interpret events in a spiritual context no matter what our location. Whatever the environment, the healing that takes place is brought about by the connections made during the experience.

Even though the healing process can take place in other environments, the guides are convinced that the process is accelerated in nature. There are a number of reasons for this acceleration as presented by the guides and the literature: 1) In wilderness there are few distractions, including those inherent in urban living and those people use as protection. 2) People experience nature in its purest form in wilderness and therefore have a greater opportunity to connect to life's energy, common to all organisms. 3) Wilderness is a foreign environment to most people and gives them opportunity to have experiences in a different context. 4) The inherent risk in wilderness adventure adds intensity to the experience which results in the acceleration of certain processes. 5) Participants and guides have less control over their environment in the wilderness, encouraging more flexibility and spontaneity in dealing with situations. 6) And, the wildness, beauty and grandeur of the wilderness encourages a

spiritual interpretation of an individual's experience.

This study has presented a subculture of people who believe that the wilderness is the most efficient place to do healing work. Supporting views have been presented from the literature, including poets, environmentalists, psychologists, doctors of medicine, philosophers, explorers, and many others. The guides and others believe that the healing process is enhanced and accelerated in the wilderness. As a result they facilitate wilderness experiences using techniques and activities which allow people to open to that healing experience. The mechanism proposed is based on the information gathered from the guides and supporting sources and is only one of many possible means. There are certainly other possible routes to healing. The one proposed may work for some people but not for others.

But the process discussed above is only one step in the entire healing process. It's important that people become healthier in all respects in order to lead a more rich and rewarding life, and from that place move one step further. They can move outside of themselves to help with the healing work of others and the planet. Throughout the interviews the guides expressed their involvement in the environmental movement and their efforts to teach the principles of deep ecology.

Objective studies on measurable results in wilderness based therapy are scarce and much more research needs to be

done in this area. The number of wilderness based healing programs in the United States and Canada is increasing steadily, indicating that the number of people looking to nature for healing is also increasing. The subculture is growing. As this subculture grows, hopefully it will become more apparent that we need wilderness and other natural areas as a resource for our personal health. And as the worlds last tracts of wilderness daily diminish, nature surely needs this growing constituency.

Gary Snyder (1969, pg 4), the well known poet and environmentalist explains in an early interview that "We can reach beyond our social nature and see our relationships in nature, or we can reach inward and see the relationships that hold there....It's at this level of awareness that I feel all these relationships; my best poems come from such a state and plot these relationships for a listener, who really knew about them but didn't know he knew." To make his connection with nature Snyder looks inward to a place deeper than his ego-centric self. That's the healing process: going inward and finding out what we already know, but "didn't know that we knew," by making connections. Rediscovering that everything is connected and we are all interdependent. We find this connection in our own internal wilderness.

Intellectuals think that we live in a world of ideas which we invent - a domesticated world where we create new hybrids of grains, new breeds of cattle and new ideas - it's all the same - they come out of our ideas. But deep inside us is a wilderness.

We call it the unconscious because we can't control it fully so we can't will to create what we want from it. The collective unconscious is a great wild region where we can get in touch with the sources of life.

C.J. Jung

The Wilderness we explore is really the wilderness we find within us.

Rick Medrick

APPENDIX

REVISED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE KIND OF WORK YOU DO WITH PEOPLE IN THE WILDERNESS?
2. IF YOU WERE TO GIVER YOURSELF A JOB TITLE THAT DESCRIBES WHAT YOU DO, WHAT WOULD IT BE?
3. HOW DID YOU GET INTO THIS KIND OF BUSINESS?
4. THE BROCHURE FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION REFERS TO THE HEALING POWER OF NATURE. WHAT DOES THAT MEAN TO YOU?
5. CAN YOU DESCRIBE AN EVENT IN YOUR LIFE WHERE YOU HAVE EXPERIENCED THE HEALING POWER OF NATURE?
6. HOW DID THIS EXPERIENCE CONTRIBUTE TO YOUR CHOICE TO WORK IN THIS LINE OF WORK. (Optional, depending on the answer to # 5.)
7. WHAT KINDS OF METHODS DO YOU USE TO HELP OTHERS EXPERIENCE THE HEALING POWER OF NATURE?
8. WHERE DO YOU CONDUCT THESE ACTIVITIES?
9. CAN YOU DESCRIBE ANY EXPERIENCES THAT YOUR CLIENTS HAVE HAD THAT DEMONSTRATE THE HEALING POWER OF NATURE?
10. HOW DO YOU DETERMINE IF SOMEONE (CLIENT) IS GOING THROUGH A HEALING EXPERIENCE?
11. HOW DOES THE LENGTH OF THE TRIP AFFECT THE EXPERIENCE?
12. DO YOU CONDUCT ANY FOLLOW-UP TO DETERMINE THE SUCCESS OF YOUR PROGRAM?
13. IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE I SHOULD HAVE ASKED? (Is there anything you would like to add?)

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