

A Story of Healing ~

Barbara Brodsky, Author and Meditation Teacher, shares her story of her quest for healing with the Brazilian shaman known as “John of God”

By Barbara Brodsky

What follows is a story of personal healing written by Ann Arbor meditation teacher and author, Barbara Brodsky. Brodsky became totally deaf in 1972, and living with silence has deeply influenced her life and teaching. In this article, Brodsky writes about her healing journeys to a Brazilian shaman.

Brodsky is the guiding teacher of Deep Spring Center and she's an ordained Interfaith Minister. She's been practicing meditation since 1960, and teaching since 1989. Her teaching draws from dual roots in the Buddhist and Quaker traditions. Her book, published in 2003, is entitled Presence, Kindness and Freedom.

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The Casa de Dom Inácio is a healing center in central Brazil, headed by a man named João Teixeira de Faria, often called John of God. Medium João, as he is also called, serves as a channel for many healing entities that work through him to do what often seems to be miraculous healing. Approximately 31 different entities incorporate into his body, one at a time, to do the healing work. João was born in Brazil, just over 100 miles from the Casa. He has been doing this work for almost 50 years. It is through his dedication and vision that the Casa has come into existence. At the Casa, literally the lame often begin to walk, the blind to see, the deaf to hear. Those with diseases

I made my first trip to the Casa in January of 2004 with the hope they could heal my deafness. I lost my hearing in 1972, just after my first child was born. In childbirth, the nerves were oxygen starved and died, leaving me deaf and without balance. Doctors in the U.S. said there was no cure.

For decades I lived with the situation, learning to lip read and relying on a walking stick for balance. At first I sought many “cures” but soon let go of the grasping for a cure and learned to live with this body as it is. For more about this phase of my experience, see *Being Bodies*, edited by Lenore Friedman and Susan Moon, Shambhala, 1997, pp.35-42.

In 2003 someone “accidentally” sent me material about the Casa, a mailing list onto which my name had crept. I googled “John of God” and was riveted by the energy from his photographs, which felt so familiar. Immediately, I knew it was important to go. I had no idea how to do that. I looked up Abadiania and could not find any reference to it in maps of Brazil. How do you book a trip to a place that's not on a map? And my husband was concerned about my heading off alone to Brazil. My son decided to accompany me, and I looked on the web sites and chose a guide with whom I felt a strong resonance.

After I was committed, many changes began to happen. I understand now that once I had made a decision to go, the entities began to work with me. The first step was to look at the possibility of hearing. It seems wonderful but I had to be honest with myself. Deafness was also an escape from some unpleasantness. If someone was angry, I could avert my gaze. When the world news was unpleasant, I could stop reading the captions. If my children were noisy, I just looked away. After 3 decades of deafness, I was used to living in some degree of



Meditation Teacher and Author, Barbara Brodsky

Photo by Linda Lawson

trip, the entities told me they probably could help me. It would take time. I would need to return. That was fine.

Three months after that first visit I was in a terrible accident, tossed with my small surfboard against the ocean floor by a large wave. I was drowning, unconscious, with full-blown near death experience, in that tunnel, with brilliant light at the end. Loving energy was with me. Some level of awareness watched from above as the body slipped from terrible pain into unconsciousness. There was a moment of choice, to go further into the light or remain in the body. It wasn't fear that drew me back, but love, and understanding that my work here wasn't finished. When I made that decision, I felt spirit's voice directing me, “swim toward the physical light.” I regained enough consciousness to reach the surface and cry for help. As hands grasped me, consciousness ceased again and I was pulled unconscious through the surf and onto the beach.

Many bones were broken including facial bones, and my vision was severely diminished. A blood vessel was ruptured in the retina. Now I wasn't only deaf, but blind in one eye, with poor vision in the other, and in severe pain. Yet in those moments in the ocean I had made a decision for life. And the body would heal; neck and back were not broken, which I knew was a gift from the entities. I had felt them with me, in that moment of impact. That year I focused on healing the broken bones, and exploring what it meant to choose life and fully embrace it. I could feel the entities energy and support in my meditation.

My next trip to Brazil was in February of 2005. Again I asked for healing of the deafness and also of the vision. I went there with 20/200 vision in one eye, 20/100 vision in the other. I returned home a month later with the better eye 20/20, the other 20/50, and immense gratitude for the world that was returned to me. Choosing life! That healing led me back to the question, what does it mean to heal? It's not only the body that heals, but the healing is about karma, and my entire relationship with the world. To hear and see fully is to be completely intimate with the world.



João Teixeira de Faria (often called “John of God”) and Barbara Brodsky

like cancer, MS and AIDS often find healing, as do those suffering from depression and mental disorders. Others, coming free of major disease, simply find clarity to their spiritual paths. While the healing seems miraculous, João remains humble. He says, “I do not heal; God heals.”

seclusion. And I saw the deafness in many ways as a gift, one that had led me to my life's work as a dharma teacher. What would it mean to hear? What would I lose?

The year before the first visit was intense, as I looked at the intention to hear and what hearing meant in a deeper way. By the time my flight took off, I felt ready. On that first

Yet we all protect ourselves, armor ourselves in some ways. I find as a meditation teacher that for many people, separation is the greatest pain. We separate from the world, from those around us, and from ourselves.

The year of 2005 brought its own challenges, as laser surgery in the U.S. again diminished the vision. When I returned to the Casa in January of 2006, one eye was totally blind, and now, 2 years after my first trip, there was still no change at all in the hearing. In 2005, the entity had asked me to buy a complete octave of tuning forks and sound them near each ear daily, to "hear" the sound waves and

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chant the tones. I was an expert at this now, able to recognize the vibrations and sing on tune. But I still couldn't hear normal speech, or even thunder or a firecracker. As the trip approached, there were doubts. Am I deluding myself? Should I give up?

Early in the 2006 visit, one of the entities asked me with such compassionate eyes and expression, "Why do you wish to see and hear?" It brought me full circle to that early reflection about allowing full intimacy with the world. I knew it wasn't asked as a challenge so much as a suggestion that I develop more inner clarity. My first thought was of the wish to hear the beauty of a child's laughter, the sweet music of a stream flowing over rocks, the sigh of the breeze in the trees, music; to see the beauty of the rainbow, the smile, the dew drop. But immediately I knew that wasn't enough. Along with all those sounds and sights are the harsh and difficult ones; the terrible screams of beings in agony, the roar of a tidal wave or erupting volcano, the cries of grief, the violence of a bomb dropped, limbs torn off and flying through the air.

At first I said, "I'm willing to see and hear it all," then realized an amendment was needed. I want to see and hear it all. Only through intimacy with what some call the 10,000 joys and sorrows does the heart truly open. It's only here that we begin to know true compassion. Can I then say that I want to hear and see to better know compassion? I spent several days with that question. The end isn't compassion, but unconditional love. It's only love that allows us to be fully present to others, and ourselves, only love that can bring forth change. Compassion is the path. And intimacy and presence are the companions to compassion.

Is there a voyeuristic component, to hear and see so as to experience? I acknowledge that's part of it, a little greed, wanting to gain something, to be filled. But that part isn't willing to be intimate with the pain, only to survey it from outside. The motivation must go deeper, into that place that aspires to know unconditional love and to serve from that place of love.

The entity's question drew me to see the destination more clearly, the aspiration to service, to love, and the intention to open ever more fully to everything. Then I had to ask myself, do I need physical vision and hearing to reach this goal? No. Then why do I want to hear and see? Here my heart finally opened deeply to the immense sadness of what has been lost, the sense of limitation I'd developed from my lost hearing and limited vision.

There is equanimity now, at some level. But I also saw how I had withdrawn through the years, with a subtle "sour grapes." There was failure to trust the true possibilities of connection, to trust the capacity of the heart to love and to hold pain with love. Deafness was just the scapegoat. Then what needs to be healed? Not the eyes. Not the ears. The separation. I open to the 'ever-healed,' to that which knows its divinity, wholeness and innate perfection.

As I reflected on this, the question returned, why do I want to hear and see? For joy! It's not just that ego wants experience. Love invites joyful experience just for the wonder of it. That intention needed to be honored, love's intention to ever more deeply know itself. I saw the part of me that felt some grasping, and could offer it kindness, and also the part that felt some shame at asking for hearing, thinking of it only as physical sensation. Both still arise in the human. Let them be, and turn to that which seeks, in joy and love.

I finally understand that this was the deeper healing, which the entities understood the need for long before I did. They didn't create the wave accident of course. Our lives draw us where we need to be, and one experience or a parallel one will come. But they helped me to use that experience to cease to armor myself in any way, to open my heart to the world and to myself. In their wisdom they didn't just "fix" the outer symptom, which I know they could have done, but asked me to heal the inner wounds.

Later on that visit I asked one of the entities, Dr. Valdivino, if there was any karma that still contributed to the deafness and blindness. He replied with such compassion in his eyes that it made me weep, "I am helping you with the karma."

These insights were a needed first step. That year they smiled at my tuning fork demonstration and said the work was right on track. They are working on the ears. Please be patient. Interestingly, while I do choose to hear, I no longer need to hear, because I hear it all now through my other senses. The barriers are gone. I am complete, and hearing will be a wonderful extra gift!

I returned again for a month in January 2007. When I came to the Entity to ask about the present status of the work on my ears, he said, "You will hear; be patient." A sore on my lip, a result of the accident almost 3 years earlier, was bleeding profusely as I stood before him. It had been bleeding for 4 days. After 3 years of intermittent lip bleeding, my doctor at home had said it needed to be treated, the lip incised, the artery cauterized and the lip stitched. He had put off proposing this because of the scarring, hoping it would heal on its own. I had an appointment in February to have the work done. So the Entity took one look at the lip and said, "That I can help with now." In 10 minutes the bleeding stopped. A small scab formed. Within 3 days it fell off and the lip was perfect, and has remained so for these 4 months. My primary care doctor at home saw it in February and said, "Maybe I need to go to Brazil!"

I sat in the current room that week, with the lip not bleeding, and pondered what had happened. I had seen so much real physical healing, but not experienced it personally. Now I had this proof. What did this mean to my trust in his statement, "You will hear"? I know he didn't heal the lip to teach me faith; he healed the lip to heal the lip, out of his compassion. But it did teach me faith. I will hear! As I sat there reflecting on this question, I heard what sounded like an odd tone of tinnitus, the inner ear noises I often experienced. But this came from

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outside of me, not from within. It was a loud rumbling sound. "Thunder," came the thought. "It is thunder."

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There were many thunderstorms those 2 weeks, and I rejoiced with each one, with many people coming to join me as I danced in the rain. Thunder is loud; softer sounds of speech have not yet come, but I know they will.

Now, May 2007, I'm preparing to go with my husband and collie for a long walk. This ability has also been a gift of the entities. Seven years ago I had arthroscopic surgery to repair torn cartilage in my knee. The knee was never stable after that, and through the years became increasingly painful so I was limited to short walks, and with pain after. I had not asked the entities for help with this, thinking to focus on the ears and eyes. This January the entity asked me, ever respectful of my free will, "We can repair the knee; do you wish it?" They told me I would need to stay off the leg for a week, then limited walking for another 4 or 5 weeks, up to the 40 days the healing might take. "Yes," I replied, "Yes!" My first week at the Casa in January 2007, they did this surgery at the same time as they worked on ears and eyes. I went back to my room and slept for almost 48 hours. The knee was sore at first. I stayed off it. Now, 4



Photo by Linda Lawson

months later, it's entirely pain free and stable for the first time in a decade, and once again I can enjoy long walks.

Increasingly, my visits to the Casa lead me to the question, "What is healing?" Our meditation practice leads us to investigate woundedness, and to come to know the "ever healed". At that ultimate level there is nothing to heal. Yet on the relative plane there are wounds, both physical and mental. There is karma too, though on the ultimate level even karma disappears. For me the deepest healing is the integration, to know the "ever healed", to know our innate perfection, yet to have compassion for the humans that we are, who sometimes become so lost in delusion that all we can see is the imperfections. There is nothing to fix and yet we must always attend to the real experience of suffering, and with love. So the deepest healing is of the duality; there is no longer "either/or", perfect or imperfect. Right there with the seeming imperfections is the perfection. Right there with pain is that beyond all pain. Right there with fear is love. Right there with deafness is that which already hears those 10,000 joys and sorrows.

May we all find the healing that we seek.

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(A full-length interview with Brodsky appeared in the January - April 1999 issue of the Crazy Wisdom Community Journal. A limited supply of back issues are available at Crazy Wisdom — \$8 per issue.)