

An Interview with Bradford Keeney

BY SYLVIA SOMERVILLE

I met Bradford Keeney during the grand opening of the Ringing Rocks Foundation in Sedona, an organization whose mission is to explore, document and help conserve global wisdom and healing traditions. Keeney, the foundation's distinguished scholar of cultural studies, was there to share some of his experiences with several of the world's oldest shamanic traditions. As editor of the foundation's critically acclaimed book series, Profiles in Healing, Keeney has lived with indigenous healers around the world. From the jungles of the Amazon to the deserts of the Kalahari, he has experienced their traditions as an insider, as someone who has been welcomed and initiated into their mysteries.

Keeney's vibrant demeanor gave no hint of self-importance. He moved frequently to the celebratory music, completely engaged. With his shoulder-length, straw-colored hair and black silk shirt and slacks, he looked more like one of the performers than the world-respected psychotherapist, scholar, author and shaman. When Keeney spoke and spontaneously broke into song and toning, however, he did so with an authority that no one could deny. I certainly felt shaken and touched by grace.

Keeney looks upon the shamans he has met as song catchers, dreamers, those who open and reconnect others with a larger circle of being. Unlike the pop culture depictions of shamans as wild-eyed men and women in search of hallucinogens and power, Keeney has experienced them as deeply spiritual beings that are in ecstatic union with divinity. Keeney calls them "lightning rods of love."

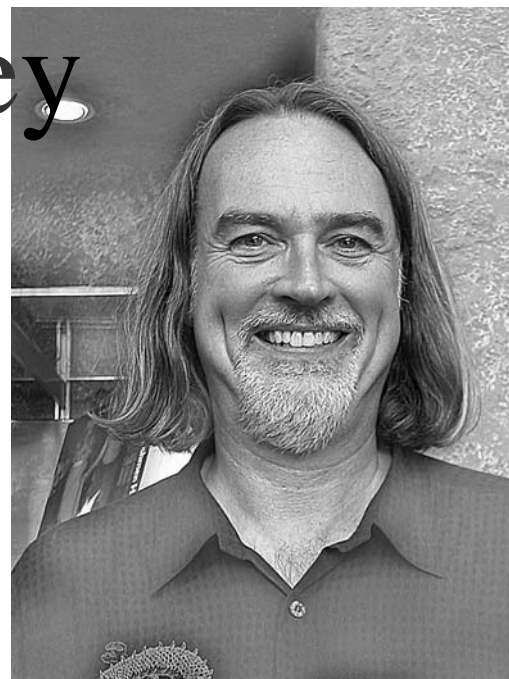


photo by Pamela Becker

The Shamanic Path of Ecstatic Healing

THE HEALING WAY OF THE SHAMAN

Shamanic traditions, although often trivialized, offer time-proven approaches to meet the challenges of living by opening bodies, minds and spirits to the transmission of life force energy. In the West we have forgotten this connection, says Keeney, yet this energy is a healing reservoir that can be activated by such methods as dancing, singing, touching, shaking and praying. These are the tools and the healing way of the shaman.

1. Shaking with the Spirits

At the core of shamanistic healing practice is movement and arousal-not relaxation, tranquility or talking through problems. "In the West we are too stationary," says Kinney. "We need warming up, not crossing our legs and sitting still. We must get up and move. We must dance and go past dancing to vibrating and shaking." The paradox, adds Keeney, is that "when we still the body, the mind gets busy. But in Africa when the body gets very busy [as in the ecstatic dance of the Bushmen], the mind gets still. It's shake and bake... It's opening up to the universal life force."

The best way to get more healing life force energy, Keeney suggests, is to move more: to rock, dance, walk, swing our arms, tap our feet, bob our heads -- all in a non-choreographed, free-flowing way.

2. Improvisation and Play

It's been Keeney's observation that people in trouble take themselves too seriously. That's why he believes that any healing interventions should take place on the level of play, always interjecting some element of surprise through sound, sight, touch or movement.

According to Keeney, improvisation is a way to cut loose, a kind of crazy wisdom we can apply to our lives. The art of improvisation uses whatever is at hand. For example, to break out of the habit of overeating, we can do absurd things with food, such as singing to the chocolate or dancing with the pasta. To cope with an illness, we can personify it in sculpture.

A shaman is constantly improvising, says Keeney, and in improvisation there is no wrong note: "Hitting a clunker note is simply a surprise that must be

creatively woven into the ongoing flow of sounds," he says. In the same way an unexpected mistake can reveal hidden talents and desires. "Authentic shamanism is always a voyage into the unknown where no one, not even the designated shaman, will know what he or she will experience."

3. A Circle of Love

"The Shaman's starting point is a burning sun of passionate connection with all of life, the original source of love, taken to its purest and most intense form," says Keeney. "Spirit touches and moves our lives through the mystery of love and relationship."

"Here on Turtle Island we thirst for spirit. We think we can get that by finding the right ceremony, the right mantra, the right teacher. We are 'line people' cut off from the circle of life. We miss what is most essential-that everything is connected. We must become *circle people*."

Shamans demonstrate how we can become less linear. They know that they are no different from the beings around them. They understand that they have as much madness, neurosis and sickness as anyone they would attempt to heal, and they submit themselves to the same healing process "so they can touch one another and be touched by the Big God." Shamans accept the polarities of life with equanimity, and each one has gone through a birth and death experience.

4. Blowing the Heart Wide Open

To become whole, we must be broken, the shamans say. We have to move beyond our arrogance, dropping to our knees and come to know love as the ultimate healer. "Our hearts must be broken so that we can find heart-and become fully heart," says Keeney. "To be available to big mystery and big love; you have to have your heart blown (and we thought we had to have our minds blown)." Keeney laughs. "How you love the other is the making of who you are."

Sylvia Somerville, who writes frequently for Four Corners Magazine, dedicates this piece to the longevity of the world's wisdom traditions.

To learn more about shamanic traditions, contact the Ringing Rocks Foundation at: www.ringingrocks.org or visit their headquarters at 3190 W. Hwy. 89A at Dry Creek Road. Contact number is: 928.282.1298

To learn more about Bradford Keeney, see his autobiography *Bushman Shaman* (Destiny Books, 2005) and *American Shaman: An Odyssey of Global Healing Traditions* by Jeffrey A. Kottler and Jon Carlson (Brunner-Routledge, 2004).

Feel Well Foods and Therapies that Heal

By Reuel Ari

Healthy living is alive in Sedona, Arizona! We are reawakening to the consciousness connection that we are spiritual beings, living in human bodies. We are remembering how to walk this land gently, and to treat our bodies as temples, supporting our immune system - our true defense against stress and disease. As a colon therapist and a live foods advocate, I'd like to ask you a few questions.

DOES THIS SOUND LIKE YOU?

• Do you wake up in the morning in a fog, feeling a bit arthritic, constipated, gassy, grumpy and headachy? • Do you think a jumble of thoughts? "What should I eat? Should I eat at all? Why did I eat that pasta last night? Should I take a laxative and if so what kind? What am I doing to myself? How can I change this on-going scenario and feel well?" • Do you want more than anything just to feel "well" to wake up in the morning and bounce out of bed to meet the new day with joy and a sense of happiness and contentment?



If this sounds like you, you should know that you are at that pivotal point in your life when a shift in your mental, physical, emotional and spiritual health is absolutely necessary!

Is your hair a bit dry and brittle, and your bowel movements are irregular and constipated? Do you feel bloated and gassy and suspect that you may have parasites, candida or both? Do you have that intuitive feeling that certain items you are eating like coffee, dairy, animals, grains, cooked foods, sugar, fruit, baked flour products and processed foods with additives and chemicals are contributing to your suffering and overall toxicity?

WHERE DO YOU BEGIN?

• Begin with adding enzyme-rich living/raw foods into your daily diet and commit to a series of colonics. When practiced and experienced together, these healing modalities will give you the wellness that you are seeking in your health.
• Eat living/raw food because we need a fresh new supply of enzymes every day.

There are two types of enzymes: metabolic enzymes that hang out in the bones and organs and act as catalysts for literally every function of the cells. These enzymes do not regenerate and become exhausted due to our poor lifestyle habits of eating improperly and not managing our stress well. Then there are **food enzymes**, which break down the food we eat into their smaller nutrient form so the body can be nourished at the cellular level. When we eat foods deficient in enzymes, the metabolic enzymes must come to the rescue, which depletes our storehouse in the bones and organs and leads to disease.

• Have a series of colonics because they are very beneficial in clearing out the impactions and encrustations that have developed over a lifetime throughout the digestive tract, ridding the body of the putrefaction that is reabsorbed into the blood stream and perpetuates dis-ease. Norman Walker, the grandfather of colon therapy refers it as Colon Reflexology. His theory is that the colon is a map of the body like the feet, hands, ears and tongues and has reflexes along its walls to every organ of the body.

This explains why recipients of colonics report having a wide range of releasing and healing experiences like improved vision, enhanced lung function, increased vitality, mental clarity, optimal bowel functioning, an overall feeling of wellness and lightness of being and weight loss just to mention a few.

It is a great time of year as we approach the holiday season with all of its temptations, stresses and indulgences to recommit our focus to living a healthier life.

Reuel Ari and his wife Mariko are partners at the Digestive Wellness Center on 450 Jordan Road in Sedona 928.203.0653

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