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Healing

Healing is a most important function of neo-Paganism and neo-Pagan Witchcraft. It is considered a very important practice by many, and some even consider it a gift. This is as it should be because healing has played a dominant part in the evolution of humankind. Within neo-Paganism there are a variety of methods of healing which involve magic; herbal and folk remedies; Eastern techniques which involve the changing of the body's energy field; Native American and shamanic techniques; and Western approaches to medicine and psychology. While some neo-Pagans are professional healers trained in Eastern and/or Western medicine and psychology, others prefer holistic and natural healing methods involving healing by sound, breath, color, touch and movement.

History:

Before the advance of the scientific age, healing was commonly practiced or performed by the village witch or wizard, often called the wise woman or man. These individuals often were born having the mysterious gift of healing by touch, and many were adept in herbal lore that had been passed down through generations of their families. They diagnosed both human and animal ailments. This was because in the early history of humankind animals were very important to human survival. Even today some practitioners still practice animal and plant healing because they consider all life as coming from the gods.

Throughout history many healing methods have been practiced. These include a Renaissance remedy for fairy-caused illnesses by the recitation of Christian prayers; measuring the patient's girdle to see if a fairy had departed the body; diagnosing the patient's urine; using prescribed charms which consisted of both Christian and pagan elements; casting spells; and other folk-magic remedies such as requiring the patient to boil an egg and bury it in an anthill saying the disease or condition would disappear when the ants consumed the egg. Other remedies were more realistic such as using gems and semiprecious stones, which have a long history of medicinal value, to heal.

Healing techniques:

Many holding neo-Pagan beliefs, as well as others, believe in and practice the technique of *healing by touch*. The technique combines Eastern and Western beliefs. The basic concept behind this and other healing techniques is that everything, animate and inanimate, is enveloped in an aura. This aura can be seen by the adept, especially those possessing clairvoyance. They claim illness shows up in the person's aura as weak, cloudy, or discolored spots. Many practitioners attempt helping these people through auric healing, color healing and pranic healing. Many practitioners involved in healing by touch are trained in diagnosing the person's illness and the ability of channeling and transferring vital energy without absorbing the person's illness.

Other healing techniques include herbal healing and gem healing. These are two other special areas of healing where some knowledge is required, especially in herbal healing. The practitioner should have some knowledge of psychology in order to study the character and symptomatology of the patient or subject. Some knowledge of anatomy and physiology should also be known so to know the functioning of the body. The person should also have some dietitian knowledge which aids in the nourishment of the patient. The practitioner must have sufficient knowledge of plant and herbs and their curative properties. This includes knowing when and how to administer the herbs and in what amount. The wrong application of a herb can be harmful. Many practitioners grow and produce their own herbs.

Similar knowledge is required in gem healing or therapy that is required in herbal healing. The curative properties of each stone must be known. The application is based on a color pattern similar to the one used in color healing.

Another technique associated with herbal healing is aromatherapy.

Besides candle magic and puppet healing magical spells are another technique of healing used especially by neo-Pagan Witches. They are never cast without the person's consent because doing so would be going against the Wiccan Rede, "An' it harm none, do what ye will." They most often encompass the technique of visualization. Such spells are various and often are tailored to meet the specific circumstances. Spells are used in association with sympathetic magic, thus while performing the spell the practitioner may have in her or his possession something personal of the person for whom the spell is being cast for. Sometimes another person will substitute for the person in the spell, but this is thought at times to be hazardous because the substitute can be exposed to the other person's illness.

Other methods of healing include exorcism; spirit exorcism (see Spirit possession); shamanic healing techniques which do include exorcism and sucking the illness from the body (see Shamanism); various Native American healing techniques; bodywork techniques, in which healing energies are said to be released through movement and deep muscle massage; and other Eastern methods such as shiatsu, acupuncture, acupressure and reflexology. *A.G.H.*

Sources: 4, 70.