

THE FOUR WINDS SOCIETY

Returning to the Chamber of Grace--excerpted from Alberto Villoldo's new book, *Mending the Past and Healing the Future with Soul Retrieval*

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Alberto Villoldo, Ph.D. is a medical anthropologist and psychologist who has spent more than twenty-five years studying with the Laika, a group of shamans in the Peruvian jungle and high Andes mountains. In his last book, Shaman, Healer, Sage, Villoldo described an indigenous system for healing what he dubs "the luminous energy field," an energy body surrounding the physical body. According to Villoldo, and thousands who have trained at the Healing The Light Body School, energetic wounds are stored in one's luminous energy field, and can be triggered by stress or trauma. When these energetic "imprints" are triggered, they can manifest themselves as severe emotional stress or disease. In his upcoming book, Mending the Past and Healing the Future with Soul Retrieval, Villoldo shifts his focus to advanced processes for soul and destiny retrieval.

In the upcoming book, Villoldo talks about a four-chambered soul, which he compares to a four-chambered heart. By "journeying" on behalf of his client to visit and discover wounds and agreements hidden within the four chambers, Villoldo is able to help his client re-route their current course and come onto their highest paths. This August, he will launch his new "Soul Retrieval Certification Program," with the intention of showing fellow healers how to do the same.

To follow is an excerpt from Mending the Past's chapter on the third chamber, the Chamber of Grace. Keep in mind that when performing an actual Soul Retrieval session, you must first visit Chamber 1 to find an original wounding that threw your client off course, and Chamber 2 to discover what "soul contracts," or limiting belief systems he or she made when the traumatic event first confirmed. The author cautions that Soul Retrieval is highly effective and intense work, and that it should not be attempted without professional training.

Energetic Wounds in the Luminous Energy Field

When we're in the state of grace, we're fully animated by life. It's what the Chinese call "awakened chi," or what makes us bound out of bed in the morning and allows us to overcome the obstacles of life. When we've fallen from it, however, greeting the day is a chore, and everyday life is a burden to be shouldered as best we can.

Even though our soul seeks to live in grace, we usually only take note of it when we feel its lack. For example, when our life force is exhausted from an abusive marriage or work situation, or when we're pressured to compromise our dreams by following a course in life that's expected of us, but is far from our heart's calling. It's then that we become addicted to quick hits of that elusive elixir known as "happiness."

Grace Versus Happiness

Most of us confuse grace and happiness, but the former is profound and transformative, while the latter is fleeting and casual. In Western industrial society, we're at the mercy of the alignment of favorable circumstances for happiness, which is far from the innate sense of wellbeing we know as grace. We're so hooked on this notion of happiness being brought about by events or circumstances that we're perplexed by the contentment of "simple" or "poor" people. Those who live happily with no more than the food in their belly, a roof over their head, or the good health of their children and loved ones.

For instance, research shows that the variance in happiness between those who are struggling to find their next meal and those who are able to provide for their basic needs (such as food and shelter) is quite substantial. Yet there's little difference between those who have their basic needs met and those who are extremely wealthy. Sure, the expensive car or fancy dress works for a while, but we adapt quite quickly and our latest toy becomes the new norm--thus, we're thrown back into a state of desire. To paraphrase the words of Aldous Huxley, we make the ceiling of yesterday's desire the floor of today's expectations.

Just as Chinese medicine looks upon an obese person as someone who's actually starving to death, desperately trying to fill a hole in their being with food. We can also think of the compulsive spenders among us as frantically trying to purchase a cure for a psychological or spiritual void in our lives. By lacking a sense of inner peace, we stumble through life

THE FOUR WINDS SOCIETY

Returning to the Chamber of Grace--cont.

without ever truly living in the moment, and we try to satiate uncomfortable feelings by throwing money away, overeating, taking on serial sexual partners, or working obsessively. Or we may fall into substance abuse, which provides only fleeting moments of happiness that vanish quickly and leave us feeling even more depleted. People dabble in narcotics for the sensation of getting high, but when dependency sets in, that high is replaced by a pernicious sense of deprivation. We call an addiction “having a monkey on our back” for good reason: When humans fall prey to the instincts of the monkey brain—fear, feeding, fighting, and fornication—our existence becomes a fight for survival, making it impossible to live in grace. The two are mutually exclusive. In grace, you’re free to be like “the lilies of the field” who need nothing, or those who “walk in the valley of the shadow of death and fear not evil”...but momentary pleasures can’t and won’t bring us this state. After all, what better image of grace is there than a baby’s smile? Babies don’t strive for happiness or brace themselves against sadness, they just are. That’s grace.

Moving from Fear to Grace

Loss of grace brings about fear, causing us to enter into survival mode. And when we feel that our survival is threatened, we create a “Plan B.” For example, two weeks before my son was born, I went into a frenzy: “I’ve never been a father in my life! I don’t know how to do this!” I screamed to myself. “I’m pretty good in the Amazon, but I know nothing about parenting!” I was frightened by the idea of driving a minivan and becoming a soccer dad for the rest of my life when I’d always been an explorer. So I told myself, “Well, if this doesn’t work, I can always go back to the rain forest.” This was my Plan B, an escape hatch I kept open that prevented me from being fully present for my family. When I realized what I was doing, I closed that hatch and burned my Plan B. I became determined to make “Plan A” the only one that I’d endorse. In fact, shortly after my son was born, I enjoyed two years of being the primary parent while his mother went to medical school.

Burning our Plan B—our fear plan—allows us to free ourselves from wasting a tremendous amount of psychic energy that we can reinvest in Plan A. As simple as this sounds, it’s the criterion for recovering grace, because grace and fear cannot coexist within the same plan.

In Soul Retrieval, the shaman or practitioner journeys to the four chambers of the soul to understand and remedy a traumatic event that chipped away at her client’s inner sparkle, her “Essential Self.” Because ultimately, all soul loss is a separation from our own divinity, from our natural self that always lives in grace. The self doesn’t reveal its face until we confront our wounds, have the courage to rewrite our limiting soul contracts, and begin the hero’s journey toward healing. We imagine grace as some kind of divine state that we can enter if we just practice the right type of meditation or say the right prayer. But there’s no road sign that says “Grace thataway,” pointing to the route that leads us there.

Observing our original wound, as we’ve done in our earlier journeys, provides great insight: Many of my clients are relieved when they finally comprehend that their phobia of fire, heights, or confined spaces comes from an experience in a former lifetime. But deep healing requires that we go beyond insight to renegotiate the contracts made by our wounded self, and that we then recover our healed soul part. As the Laika understand, grace can be attained by journeying back to our garden in the Lower World. All of its attributes—fluidity, joy, and elegance—are there to be found again.

We see this same pattern in Western mythology. Parsifal wandered through life for years before reentering the Grail Castle; Psyche had to undergo a profound loss of innocence and four seemingly impossible tasks before she could find that inner beauty that supported her not only as a child bride but as a goddess. There’s just no way to recover our grace without embarking on a hero’s journey. To do so, we must go to the Chamber of Grace to retrieve that soul part that always remained in grace. It’s here that we’ll come to discover our healed self, which has been kept in a state of harmony. What we’ll recover, which we bring with us on our return to Eden, is born of wisdom: It allows us to trust again shrewdly, to love again sagely, and to live heartily.

Lisa’s Heroic Journey

When I met Lisa, she was 45 years old and battling a severe form of leukemia, caused by inherited chromosomal damage. She was terrified by the severity of her illness and traveled to Houston from Los Angeles every three months to monitor her condition. When we performed her soul retrieval, Lisa and I found that her Chamber of Wounds was a gloomy space shrouded in darkness. In the shadows, we discovered a statue of a woman with a knife in her heart, and she wouldn’t speak or respond to us in any way. When we went into the Chamber of Soul Contracts, there was a note written on a blackboard

THE FOUR WINDS SOCIETY

Returning to the Chamber of Grace--cont.

that said: "I'd rather die than live with loss." We continued our journey and entered the Chamber of Grace, where we found a young girl sitting on the floor playing jacks. She smiled at us and continued her game.

Very shortly after getting her cancer diagnosis, Lisa had begun questioning her aunt about her childhood, and she discovered a traumatic story from her past. When Lisa was 19 months old, her father stabbed her mother to death and then knifed Lisa and her four-year-old-brother in the chest. The next day, the police found the children bleeding next to their dead mother; their father was found dead several days later, having committed suicide. Lisa had no conscious memory of these events for the first 45 years of her life. She knew nothing about how her parents had died, even though she and her brother both had scars below their hearts from their father's attack. She'd always considered the aunt and uncle who raised the two children to be her parents, and accepted that what had happened to her biological parents was a deep, dark secret, not to be discussed. She even believed that the scar below her right breast was a birthmark. It was evident that Lisa was in denial about this incident. What had happened to her was too terrifying for a child to understand—it was even too horrific for an adult to comprehend.

It wasn't until my client's soul-retrieval journey that the realization of that wound forced itself upon her. That night, Lisa awoke with the sensation of being stabbed in the heart—she was in anguish like she'd never experienced. Seeing the statue with the knife in its chest triggered a memory that caused her physical pain, and she was reluctant to return to the Chamber of Wounds, fearing that she'd be overwhelmed by grief (even the chamber of Contracts seemed too dramatic and intimidating). Lisa had seen her original wound, and her body remembered...she knew that her soul contract related to her heart being wounded. In a symbolic replay of this childhood incident, she'd even had the catheter through which she received her chemotherapy placed right next to her heart—an open hold over her heart, with a tube leading to it.

In physics there's a theory of "critical point analysis," which states that you ought to work where the least amount of pressure will have the greatest effect. To that end, I knew that we needed to experience the positive life force represented by the girl playing jacks that we found in Lisa's Chamber of Grace before we could revisit her Chamber of Wounds. Immediately after the soul retrieval, I had Lisa play an imaginary game of jacks, first picking up 1, then 2, then 3 jacks and so on, prodding her onward until she picked up all 12. She struggled with imagining the game as it got more and more complex, but jacks was a perfect game for Lisa. It required skill, dexterity, and concentration, but the game is entirely noncerebral. As the game increased in complexity, her unusual need for control had to be set aside. After the final round, when she'd picked up all the imaginary jacks, she had a big smile on her face.

This exercise allowed Lisa to receive and embody her young and unwounded soul part. She did so by extending her hands and welcoming the little girl who was filled with grace into her heart chakra, and feeling that child's energy infusing her entire body. The game also allowed her to understand that she had the skill and instinct to do well in jacks—and in life.

After the game, we journeyed back into the Chamber of Wounds and faced the statue with a knife in its heart. Despite the obvious reference, Lisa still couldn't understand why this statue was there. All she knew was that she was paralyzed in its presence. I asked her to grab the knife from the statue's heart and draw it out. Suddenly, her arms began to move and she realized that she could withdraw the knife that was still symbolically and energetically wedged in her own heart.

A few weeks later, Lisa went back to Houston for a checkup and found that her leukemia was in remission. It has never returned.

Remember, when you enter the Chamber of Grace to retrieve a lost part of your soul, you'll have to reacquaint yourself with that soul part and protect her. Finding an original wound won't produce grace, nor will renegotiating a soul contract—you need to retrieve the lost soul part and take its energy and emotional resources into your chakra system so that it can re-inform your neurophysiology and your brain. This will allow you to again experience safety and grace and express your deeply buried treasures.

After your visit to the Chamber of Grace, you can't just expect to suddenly jump to the happy ending and live in joy and grace for the rest of your life. Grace is a hero's journey that begins in this chamber, and it commences at the energetic level when you absorb the soul part in through your chakra system. Fortunately, the soul part will instruct you and guide you through the tasks you must perform to receive it and welcome it home.

Mending the Past and Healing the Future with Soul Retrieval will be released by Hay House this June. The One Spirit Book Club (www.onespirit.com) will offer it with an accompanying CD. Look for the book in Borders, Waldenbooks, and Barnes & Noble, or pre-order a copy through Villoldo's training school, the Four Winds Society (www.thefourwinds.com or 888 437 4077).