

What is Holism?

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Holism as a Possibility

Have you ever seen a powerful movie, listened to a great piece of music or finished a really good book and come away with a feeling of profound happiness? Have you ever said to yourself: "Everything makes so much sense. I wish life were more like that..." only to wonder if perhaps it could be if you could see things a little more clearly? Have you ever felt like everything in your life probably made sense, but you were missing some of the puzzle pieces, and so it remained a mystery to you?

If the answer is yes, then you have glimpsed the holism that underlies and surrounds us all the time, but that we are so often blinded to by the sorrows that accompany even the happiest life. The quest to embody this holism can take a good part of a lifetime, but it is worth the trip. And whether you are recovering from grief, HIV, cancer, trauma, incest, sexual abuse, cultural oppression and confusion, addiction, or depression, if you are seeking a complete recovery, you are in fact seeking to rediscover the holistic state. They are one and the same.

What Exactly Is Holism?

I recently read Peter Russell's *The Global Brain Awakens* and was deeply touched by two stories that go to the crux of holism. They were both about a growing change in perspective since our astronauts viewed earth from the moon. In the first, Edgar Mitchell, the sixth man on the moon (and later a founder of The Institute of Noetic Sciences), said that while standing on the moon he was deeply moved and felt a strong connection to our planet

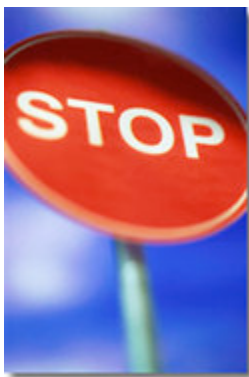
"It was a beautiful, harmonious, peaceful-looking planet, blue with white clouds, and one that gave you a deep sense...of home, of being, of identity. It is what I prefer to call an instant global consciousness."

As Russell further relates:

For me and the APH community, the leap to the realization that we are part of a larger living system, with its own organic intelligence, is a given. Together we are learning to listen to the pulse and tune into its wisdom in meaningful ways. We are beginning to see and feel the holism in it all

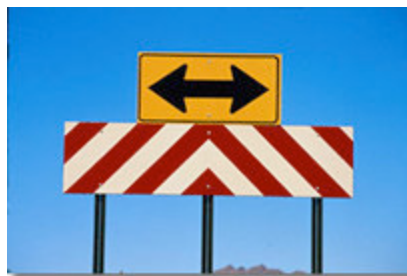
Barriers to Holism: Recognizing the Blindspots

Once we have a sense of our personal variation of the holistic state, we can begin to identify areas in which that experience is blocked for us. Perhaps we are blocked because some areas are too painful to examine and include in with the rest of our life. Some of these roadblocks might include a lack of connection with ourselves and the world around us, an absence of community or an inability to communicate with others. Addiction--which is the way many people today cover up emotional pain--is perhaps the most common wedge between us and the truth of things. However, there are countless more subtle forms of personal and cultural addiction most people never notice. They end up as roadblocks to holism because their purpose is to distract us from what's inside of us emotionally and spiritually.



One very significant block is the split we believe exists between spirituality and sexuality. It not only separates us from our significant others, our spouses and loved ones, but separates us from our bodies and from the natural world as well. It is a major detour on the road to holism. It adds to the repression of the shadow self (the dumping ground for the parts of our personality we disown), and to the separation of the body, mind, and spirit. This can lead to shame, and poor grounding of personal energy, which are roadblocks in themselves.

Other barriers include illness, unawareness of psycho-spiritual principles, lack of respect for self and/or others, cultural pain, repressed trauma, depression and anxiety, confusing adult and childhood needs, and censoring our own inner voice.



The Relationship Between Illness, Trauma, Addiction, & Holism

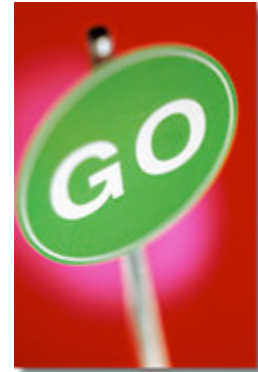
If you're like most people in any illness recovery, you suffered traumas or loss early in life, and received little or no help at the time. In order to survive the pain, you began to dissociate, or cut yourself off from the part of yourself that was in pain. During the time you were dissociating (fantasizing, drinking, taking drugs, drowning your sorrows in any one of a number of addictions or compulsions) you were splitting yourself into safe little compartments, to hide the pain from others and from yourself. You began to fabricate stories around your "shadow" parts to deflect attention from them. You began to create

stories around your over-compensating inflated ego too, creating a "mask of composure," a facade that controlled what feelings you let people see. We've all done it in some form.

The light and dark sides of your mind became separated, and you began to see every situation in black and white, with little or no shades of gray. If something was not ideal, it was "hopeless." If something was good, you "outlined" it, separated it from all other things, and attached yourself to it as if it was your only hope. In the end, you lost all concept of what a whole self might be. Your fear had divided and conquered your own being. Naturally, you became separated from the cosmos. You became "disconnected from the stars," an expression in Latin which spells disaster, pronounced: *disastros*.

But this is not how it has to be. Once fear lessens its grip, the pain will lessen as well. Once the pain diminishes, the need to dissociate will fade. Instead of running away in fear, we can begin to look forward to exploring new adventures; small ones at first, perhaps, but growing more and more bold as time heals our wounds. As so many have said, "It is never too late to have a happy childhood."

The following chart shows in the simplest terms how addiction and other destructive blocks to our well being begins in pain and fear, and how it can be resolved back into a state of holism.



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRAUMA, ADDICTION, & HOLISM

*(Progressing from the Holistic State of infancy at the top
to the Holism of Complete Recovery at the bottom)*

Holistic State

IN INFANCY, OR IN PRE-NATAL/EMBRYONIC STATE

Traumas Encountered

Pain

Fear

Developing Defense Structure

*Disconnection from Parts of the Self
& the Universe*

Dissociation/Repression

Black & White Views

ALL OR NOTHING THINKING

Addictions

DRUGS / ALCOHOL / SEX / OTHER STIMULUS

HIDING / DEPRESSION / ANXIETY / COMPULSIONS

Inner or Outer Intervention

Acknowledgment of Addiction/Depression

Surrender/Asking for Help

Self-Healing Skills/Coping Skills

Knowledge/Faith in Higher Power

Developing Psychospiritual/Interpersonal Skills

Self-Expression/Authentic Process/Community Healing

Less Fear/More Love

Integration of Missing Parts of the Self

Holistic Experiences of Complete Recovery

Fruits of the Tree

Envisioning the Reward of Holism

Holism is the goal of APH. It encompasses not only the feeling of being whole and complete in oneself, but also of being integrated into the cosmos, one with nature, and connected with all humanity. As we envision such a state for ourselves, or at least accept that it is possible, we recognize the need for a process that goes beyond healing our symptoms. Holism is a place of joy, bliss, love, empowerment, creativity, respect for all life, and peace, a place from which we can meet future challenges with resilience, grace and wisdom. We come from a new integration, having brought parts of ourselves (physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual) together at the deepest level of inner knowing. This leads to integration and balance with every part having significant value and importance.

Holism is the understanding that reality is made up of organic and unified wholes that are greater than the simple sum of their parts. At the core of this is what I call the "shame-free presentation and celebration of the self." When we experience a holistic state of being, we know who we are and no longer feel ashamed or embarrassed by our difficult personal history or the so-called shadow elements of our nature. Of course we will still be discriminating with regard to when and where we share certain aspects of ourselves, but we will experience and radiate the essence of true empowerment and spiritual connectedness, whether we express it verbally or not.