

My Personal and Professional Journey to Health and Wellbeing

Barbara "Teddy" Piotrowski, Greater Harmony



I've often been asked how I discovered Eastern Healing Arts--yoga, meditation, acupressure, shiatsu and other holistic approaches to healing the body, mind, and spirit. In actuality, I believe it worked the other way around--instead of me finding them, I believe these modalities found me when I needed it most in my life.

Over twenty years ago, in 1998, yoga studios, shiatsu, massage and wellness centers weren't on every corner. At the time, I was coping with aging and ill parents and raising three young children, all while working as a registered nurse in a fast-paced Intensive Care Nursery at a Center City Philadelphia hospital. Understandably, I was struggling to take care of myself and hold it all together. I'm sure many people can understand how the busyness and stress of life can feel overwhelming.

I heard about shiatsu and tried it as a way to de-stress. (Shiatsu is a Japanese massage technique.) When I received my first shiatsu treatment, I was amazed: simultaneously, I felt very relaxed, but very aware. With the energy (or Qi/Prana) flowing freely in my body, I experienced a truly life-changing event. Not only did I want to experience it again, I wanted to study and be able to tap into this life force. Thus **began my journey as a student for life.**

As I began to learn more about myself, I created changes and choices that would lead to new health behaviors. At the same time, I embarked on a new professional journey. As part of my training, I explored working with energy and became a **practitioner of Asian Bodywork Therapies and then a Yoga and Meditation Therapist.** As I practiced and learned, I began to feel a major internal shift--a true transformation. Although life continued to present more stress and life challenges, I was feeling more empowered and vibrant with a greater sense of well-being. I felt so good and believed in the transformational power of holistic medicine so much that I hoped to introduce this modality to the people I served in my roles of nurse and caregiver.

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In my initial nursing training, I did not learn how to care for myself. Through my own self-realization and discovery using these ancient healing sciences, I finally learned what self-care was all about. I like to use the analogy of being on an airplane and the oxygen masks come down. To perform at an optimal level, you first put the mask on yourself, then help others around you. In that "aha moment" I realized I had it backwards--I had been putting everyone before myself and not prioritizing my own health and wellbeing. My obstacle to move forward was lifted, and my journey continued.

My intention was then to pass these ancient healing sciences to all individuals and to educate, empower them through these self-care techniques and be a conduit to health and wellness. This also led me to become a **Nationally Board Certified Holistic Nurse**. This was a way for me to bring together my training in Eastern Asian Healing Arts with my more traditional "Western" nursing training.

Holistic nursing views all aspects of life as inseparable and interrelated--your mental, emotional, physical and social/relational aspects are all intertwined and interrelated.

So I have come full circle; home to my love of the science and art of nursing!

(Interesting fact: one of the most famous nurses in history, Florence Nightingale, was the first holistic nurse.)

As a next step in my journey, I launched **Greater Harmony** in 1999 as a way to share with others the powerful benefits of holistic nursing and Eastern Healing Arts I discovered in my own life. The blend of both Eastern and Western knowledge in my private practice encourages the integration of both beliefs and the greatest benefits to those I serve. In this way, Greater Harmony is a true life passion! I have met so many wonderful people through my yoga classes, bodywork practice and one-on-one therapy, and I thank all of them for their support and all I've learned from them over the years.