

# Weller Than Well

by Dr. Michael Obsatz – July 2022

Laura Collier has written an article called "Growth After Trauma." She describes people who have experienced trauma and instead of just closing down and dying, they become more aware, compassionate, purposeful, and connected. Working through one's pain and seeing one's inner beauty was the primary focus of the Human Potential Movement started by Abraham Maslow and others. Maslow was my college psychology professor in 1960 - 1963.

I began my teaching career at Macalester College in St. Paul in 1967. In the 1970's, I worked part-time at the American Chemical Dependency Center in Chanhassen, Minnesota as a group facilitator, aftercare leader and family group leader. The Center was created by Robert and Mary McAullife. They had written a manual about the disease concept of chemical dependency and its treatment. One of the core beliefs in the treatment program was that of "Weller than Well." It meant that people who explore and work through their suffering and pain in depth can become more whole, loving, connected human beings.

"Well" is considered what is "normal" in America -- an unexamined life. "Weller than Well" is about people who have struggled with abuse, addiction, trauma, and oppression. They have cried and yelled, and dealt with feelings of isolation, betrayal, unworthiness. They become more in touch with emotional connections, and more compassionate and empathetic.

The original groundbreaking books about shame were by Kaufman, and co-authors Fossum and Mason. During the seventies, books about healing shame were written by John Bradshaw. Shame, he stated, was a necessary byproduct of a culture of greed, hypocrisy, and hierarchy. I call this Empire Consciousness which focuses on domination, power, control, and hierarchy.

"Weller than Well" means moving beyond the cultural norms of individualism and domination. It means see the larger picture, the picture of Oneness. Oneness Consciousness is about wholeness, compassion, and experiencing love for all of creation. This includes the earth, of diverse people, animals, plants, and oneself.

Going through suffering, pain, and trauma has growth potential. There are centers in the United States focusing on "Growth After Trauma." Many believe those who have worked through their pain, developed meaningful spiritual connection, and moved from Empire Consciousness to Oneness Consciousness are more loving, insightful, and empathetic.

It is interesting that wholistic concepts created more than 60 years ago laid the groundwork for our understanding about addiction, abuse, and trauma today. May we all become "Weller than Well."