

## APPRENTICESHIPS OF THE HEART

My first inspiration to develop a theory of the heart arose in the context of an eight year apprenticeship to my great shamanic teacher, don Alverto Taxo, the Taita Iachak, Atis Kichwa tribe, from the High Andes of Ecuador. The apprenticeship is ongoing. During the course of time I collected and organized, in his own words, his heart-based path, a veritable 'camina del corazon'. In time I became clear that the real apprenticeship was not primarily to don Alverto, so much as it was an apprenticeship to the heart. He has been a hollow bone, a channel for this path of the heart. Here I share his precious words gleaned over the years and presented in 'the elegant simple language, translated from Spanish and Kichwa languages by some of my friends and myself. A brief introduction is offered, and then don Alverto speaks and answers questions, shares with us the Andes Code of Ethics. If you would like to learn more about don Alverto, attend his retreats and workshops, or explore apprenticeship and working with him in Ecuador contact Marilyn at [mllutjens@yahoo.com](mailto:mllutjens@yahoo.com), or contact me for workshops with don Alverto at Crow's Nest Wilderness Retreat Center, contact me: [ShamanicAR@aol.com](mailto:ShamanicAR@aol.com)

Check the Calendar of Events on this web site for announcements of opportunities to attend retreats and workshops with don Alverto in north America. Enjoy!

C. Michael Smith

Introducing don Alverto Taxo

and the Way of the Iachak:

### An Overview of Basic Principles In His Own Words

It is not easy to introduce or characterize don Alverto Taxo. We could use many descriptive terms and names; "Indigenous Kichwa Elder from Ecuador", "wise man", "poet", "nature-mystic", "healer", "shaman", "author", "servant of life", "political activist". But he prefers to use the terms from his own cultural tradition. He is content to say that he is a "Taita Iachak", who walks a path of the heart, guided by feeling, and seeking to keep thinking and feeling in balance.

For a number of years he has been coming to North America, in fulfillment of the ancient prophecy of his ancestors, known as the Pachacuti Prophecy, which says that one day, the peoples of the industrial and technological countries of the North, and the indigenous peoples of the South would fly together, entering into a profound exchange of resources and wisdom that would bring us all into better balance.

This type of prophecy may seem unfamiliar to our ears. But it isn't difficult to explain. We in modern western civilization, not only the USA, but all westernized societies, correspond to what is meant by the "peoples of the North" or the Land of Eagles. The Eagle is a symbol of the power of the mind, of thinking, planning, and its capacity to bring about material manifestation and prosperity. The Condor is symbol of the capacity to feel, and of an earth-honoring spirituality that invites you to walk in balance with the Earth and all creatures.

The signs and warnings are accumulating that the modern world is terribly out of balance. Ecological disease engendered by this lack of balance, is affecting the basis of life, human and non-human. In the Land of Eagles, the mind when operating out of relationship to the heart, and not having developed the capacity to feel and be in tune with the Earth, is becoming increasingly greedy, and is exploiting the biosphere and beautiful indigenous ways of life by its sense of entitlement and its belief that it has a right to dominate. The message of the Pachacuti prophecy is timely, and is brought to us through the sanction and commissioning of the Elders of the Kichwa people. It is not a message of fear or doom, but one of opportunity and hope, for turning things around and bringing us all, all the earth's creatures into harmonious relationship. In order to help us bring our lives and way of life in the Land of Eagles into better balance, don Alverto offers us the wisdom of his ancient tradition, the Path and practices of a Taita Iachak. The symbols of the Eagle and Condor arise throughout the book's discussions as root metaphors for the teachings.

## El Aigle y El Condor

### The Eagle and the Condor

I have come to North America because the time for manifesting the ancient prophecy of the New Pachakutin is has now begun. This is the prophecy of my ancestors and teachers that one day the Eagle and the Condor would fly together and be in balance and harmony. For my ancestors and me, this great land of the North is the Land and Power of the Eagle. By this we mean the power of the mind, its capacity to think, to create systems of thought, to develop technologies, to plan and make material things. In South America we have developed the power of the Condor, the space of feeling, of earth-honoring spirituality, and natural healing. We have developed this capacity to feel, to attune to Nature and become harmonious with her. In the North, you have developed the amazing powers of the mind. This is a good thing. This Eagle is so important and brings us many good things, like marvelous architecture, roads and technologies, books and computers, and marvelous forms of communication, like cell phones and the internet, to mention a few of its gifts.

But the power of the mind itself is not sufficient as a basis for life. Without the power of feeling we are left empty and out of balance in life. Likewise, the power of feeling is important, but without the power of the mind, the power of the Eagle, it leaves us in the South without the benefit of technology, planning, or access to the political process.

Life is hard in Ecuador for my people, the Kichwa, who make up 80% of Ecuador's population. We are a happy people and love life, love Fiestas and feeling the beauty of life with gratitude, even though we don't have much materially and conditions are hard. In Ecuador I encourage people to develop the capacity to think. Here I invite you to develop the capacity to feel more. So we each have gifts that we can share with each other to improve life for all and to be in balance. I have come here in a spirit of reciprocity, of mutual sharing of gifts so that we can all fly higher.

### The Four Elements

The simplest way to develop our capacity to feel is through giving awareness and attention to the Four Elements. By "feeling" I mean that you perceive with attention, from the heart, the powers of Earth, Water, Wind and Fire.

#### Sentir el Poder del Tierra

#### Feeling the Power of the Earth

Each of us is Mother Earth walking. But we have probably forgotten this. Through the feminine, natural to women, but also a potential in men, we can develop feeling and come closer to Mother Earth. When we realize that we are each Mother Earth walking, we will treat each other better and the non-human creatures of the Earth better as well. But how can we begin to develop a closer relationship to the Earth Mother through feeling? A very simple answer to this is, through food; eating!

I used to farm in Ecuador, and my ex-wife, Elva, who is also a healer, grows food. Her primary way of healing is through feeding you. We can learn so much from this. To feel the food we eat is to feel the power of Mother Earth. With every bite of food we can savor it while letting go of thinking. We simply want to feel it, and be aware of the love of mother Earth who has offered it as a gift to you, bringing you're the pleasures of richness of taste and aroma, and nourishing

you. When you eat this way, you are having a sacred ceremony; you are communing very directly with the wisdom, love, and power of the Earth. Let me invite you to try this simple ceremony the next time you eat. Do it with feeling, with the awareness that you are taking in the love of Mother Earth.

### Deepening the Ceremony of Eating

We can deepen this ceremony of feeling the Earth through eating, by preparing our food with feeling and attention. We ask the vegetables, "Which beans want to be in my soup today? (Laughs). We should also give thanks to the Earth Mother and to our food. We should never eat mechanically. Many people just eat and watch TV, very mechanically. The mouth is chewing, the eyes are watching the TV, and the mind is somewhere else. The person is scattered all over the place. They even say the prayer mechanically. When we do these things mechanically, we are only stuffing the body, the outside of us. When we eat with feeling, we also feed the heart, the inside of us, and we re-collect our energies that have been scattered.

### Exercise

Let me invite you to try this as an experiment, and see how it works for you. To do this, it is helpful to avoid talking and thinking as much as possible while you are eating. Those things are of the mind, and the mind is made for talking and thinking. The mind is greedy for thoughts, which is its danger, and can thus take over and dominate, and you forget to feel. To develop feeling while we eat, just gently let go of thinking whenever it arises, and return to tasting your feed deeply, notice every nuances of flavor and aroma, and do so with thanksgiving. If there is any thought, let it be that you are feeling the love of the earth Mother.

A few years ago I participated in a workshop at the University of Notre Dame on shamanism and indigenous healing. When I spoke, I talked mostly about food and eating with feeling. To some people this seemed a strange topic, given the theme of the workshop. I explained that developing the capacity of feeling in a healer requires careful attention to what you eat, and how you eat. I am a vegetarian for the simple reason that I pay attention to the affect of fruits and vegetables on my capacity to feel. Some kinds of food open you up more and help you use feeling more; others close you down. I was encouraged by my elders and grandparents to try different foods. I found that meat generated fear and anger, and generally shuts you down. I found that fruits and vegetables have the reverse effect, they open you up; make you more sensitive so you can perceive more. The path of the lachak does not require power plants or psychedelic drugs, you can open to all the wonderful dimensions and realms of being through developing feeling, including through eating with feeling. So if we want greater sensitivity and capacity to feel, we must eat as naturally as possible. Being natural is everything in a healer's way of life. We must always feel what food, plants, material or medicine is appropriate for us, and for our patients, and feeling must guide us in this, not thinking. At the Notre Dame

conference some doctor asked how I selected plant medicines, and know their chemical properties. I said “the plant tells me, through feeling.” Its ushai or ‘essence’ speaks to me and recommends it for this or that problem or ailment. You should have seen his mouth drop. In the medical professions of the North, you tend to think about chemistry. The Eagle with his books doesn’t know there is another way of knowing, that comes through attunement to the Earth, to the plants. But the mind is a trainer and we are trying to teach the Eagle, today, about the beauties of the Condor, and how to fly with it so we can be in balance.

### The Body’s Guardians

We should use our capacity to feel in deciding what to eat as well. When I first came to this country I couldn’t eat the food. Everything seemed strange and was confusing. Through feeling I realized that I should mix foods together to see how they looked on my plate. If it still looked appetizing after being mixed, I would eat it, if it looked bad or repulsive, I would not eat it because it would probably be bad in my stomach. When you eat, things mix in the stomach. Imagine mixing some pizza and orange juice on your plate, then eating it. First your feeling would say it is repulsive. You might even vomit or wretch. The body has natural guardians against putting bad combinations of food or liquid into it. But we can trick the body’s natural defense system, the guardians. How? We can simply eat pizza, and then drink orange juice. Each may taste good as they go down, but they still mix in the stomach, ferment, and will probably give you indigestion, and some combinations will make you sick.

This is another reason why I don’t eat meat. Feeling also guides me in this, not only because of meat closing off my sensitivity, my feeling, but because the body’s guardians warn me. Meat really isn’t good for us. It looks bad before we cook it, it smells bad, and it tastes bad. What makes meat tasty is tricking the body’s guardians with tasty and aromatic spices and sauces. We can trick the body’s guardians, but in the long run we harvest the results of our choices and actions. If we eat the wrong kinds of food, we will harvest insensitivity, and many of the diseases (coronary disease and cancer) associated with meat eating in the Land of Eagles.

### General Guidance for Meals

I am often asked about what kinds of foods to eat when. Feeling can guide you in this, but here are some basic principles to help you.

### Preparing and Blessing:

Prepare your food with love. You can talk lovingly to the food. Ask the vegetables which one wants to be in your salad or soup today. As you prepare the food also thank it and express your gratitude to the Earth Mother as well. When you sit down to eat, remain as quiet as possible, let go of thinking, and just feel and taste the food in a spirit of mindful appreciation and thanksgiving, savoring each bite as the gift of the Earth Mother and her love. When you eat this way you not only nourish the physical body, but the person inside. Always, always, bless your food and thank the Great Spirit.

Breakfast: In the morning we have a days worth of activity awaiting us. We need the most energy to power us up, and the mindfulness to help us approach the day with feeling from the heart. It is good to have a full meal to power us up. Grain cereals are good, maybe with a touch of honey or maple syrup to begin the day with a pleasant feeling of sweetness.

Lunch: At noontime we need a good balanced meal and usually some salty foods if the body is okay with that. Remember: when we eat too much salt, or too much of anything, we will harvest sickness.

Dinner: At nighttime we should eat the least amount possible. We no longer need so much energy, which if we eat a big meal, it will not digest well, and will probably be stored as fat. Dinner should be a simple meal.

A Desert or Late Snack: It is good to end the eating ceremonies of the day with something sweet, simply because it feels good and ends the day with the beauty of sweetness.

These are really simple and common sense natural principles which follow the curve of energy in a given day. We should eat in accordance with the natural rhythms.

## Sentimientos el Poder de Agua

### Feeling the Power of Water

It is said that our bodies are 70% water, or more. Water and life go together. Without enough water, we will quickly become dehydrated and die. I have one simple recommendation for feeling the power of water: take advantage of that shower in the morning. Our mind knows many things and it knows the power of water for cleansing our skin. But we can now add to this the

power of feeling with attention to cleanse the inside as well. We can do this simply by feeling the water on our skin, feel its caress. We can feel its power entering our pores, and if we can feel that this water not only cleanses our skin, but purifies our interiors as well, then we will enjoy benefit from our bathing more. This is bathing with feeling, which makes it a sacred ceremony of inner and outer cleansing where we let go of things we no longer need. As with eating mechanically we only feed the body and fail to feel the love of Mother Earth, so with bathing, if we do it mechanically, without feeling and awareness, we only cleanse the skin and our insides remain unaffected. But when we do it with feeling, our insides can benefit as well. The same goes for the toilet, we can eliminate physical and emotional and spiritual impurities at the same time, letting go of baggage we no longer want or need, making room for new gifts.

The most marvelous things are quite simple, when you begin to feel. Often we are looking for sophisticated practices and fancy ceremonies. The mind likes to search for these things, and there is no end to the search. What we need is practice, and we can practice with what we already have or do right now. Using feeling transforms the most common actions into ceremonies, making them marvelous and magical acts.

Things often seem difficult at first. But just look at kids, they aren't serious or sophisticated, they love to feel and play every moment. We can learn much from them. So why did we stop playing as we grew up? Society told us to be serious, and we obeyed. The mind is like that and it is always telling us what we can or can't do. . The Eagle is always telling us to think, question, and doubt and be careful. It tells us to be serious. That's its job. But we need to be more natural to get in balance. We have already given the Eagle a lot of space to fly in. What we need is more space for the Condor, for feeling. Life becomes very complicated when we think without feeling.

There are many other ways to use the Power of Water, and you do not need fancy rituals to do it. Who does not love being close to a body of water, a river, a lake, a pond, or the ocean? The water has a natural attraction for us. We can benefit just by sitting near such a body of water. Its qualities fascinate. It is good for clearing the mind when we are conflicted or confused, --the mud settles and the water clarifies naturally in its own way and time. To feel water we can go to a river, a pond or use the shower and caress the water softly with the palms of our hands, feeling it circulate in the space between our fingernails. As you do this, express what your heart wishes. We can also take advantage of rain. Feel the rain! Kids like to play in the rain—at least in Ecuador (chuckles). I like it too and sometimes I jump around outside, naked in the rain to connect with the Power of Water, and to feel its love.

The Eagle with its' books says we are seventy percent water, so we can use that information to transform this water into a ceremony of feeling. The mind is a trainer. So let us feel the water that runs through our own veins, because the mind can tell you who live in busy cities that you

don't have time to go to the river. If time is short, your body is sufficient, for you can feel the water within you, right where you are, right now.

The "mind," I said, is our 'trainer.' It is not our enemy. It can teach us helpful things, or unhelpful things. It will always tend to argue about feeling; question it, doubt it; discount it. It is a property of the mind to ask questions, to think and reason and explain. But it can also help to make us stronger in the path of feeling, it can point us in a good direction, and so become our best friend and trainer. These teachings aim at the mind, so it can help you practice feeling from the heart, and to help you feel the four elements.

### A Portable Altar

We don't need to live in a forest or on a beach. We can always feel the four elements wherever we live, even in a busy city, because we have the elements within us. In our interiors and in the exteriors of the body. We have Earth in our bones, Water in our blood, and Air in our lungs, and Fire in our body heat. All four elements are inside us all the time. So you don't need a fancy altar or fire pit, although they can help if you use them to feel and avoid practicing mechanically. You can use your body, feeling the elements within you, a portable altar that is always, always with you. We don't have to look for a special place or time. All time-space is special. Everything is sacred, when we feel. This is the right time! The right place! Now!

### El Poder del Aire

#### Feeling The Power of Wind (Air)

We are always breathing. We can take advantage of this every moment. Feel how it comes in through the nose, circulates through the head, and in our throats. Feel it fill our lungs up. Let yourself enjoy the possibility of life that air brings for us. We can hear its power blowing through the forest, breathing with the movement of the tree tops—see it in the dancing leaves. I like to lie down and see how the wind moves the leaves. I transport myself more rapidly if clouds are in the sky. If clouds or trees move with the wind one way, it feels as if you are moving in the opposite direction. Ever try it?

Kids love to lie down and sky-gaze. We should learn more from the children and get past thinking that we have to teach them. They can teach us, and they have much to teach us about how to feel, to play, and be spontaneous. In Ecuador, in summertime, we like to fly kites as a way of feeling the power of wind. But again, there are many ways. That which your heads know, you can practice with your heart.



The power of the wind can be very therapeutic, helping cleanse the mind of thoughts it no longer needs, and that you are ready to let go of. Wind can carry it away leaving the mind empty, and you relaxed and free. Try it when your mind seems cluttered or you are burdened with disturbing thoughts. Go outside and give them to the wind. Let the wind sweep your mind clean.

El Poder de Fuego:

Feeling The Power of Fire

Fire is a magical power that gives warmth. For me, fire and water go together, and I like to combine them in bathing. Water without heat is ice, and so water in a liquid form has some degree of heat. The mind, of course, says they don't go together. It thinks they are opposites. They are not, they are compliments, and in my life they always go together. It might be water around a fire, or using heat and cold in a bath or shower. I get up from a warm bed [warm because of the fire of my own body-heat] and take a cold shower in the morning. In this way I feel an activation of my entire body. A warm shower or bath should always be followed by a cold shower or cold bath because heat opens the pores, which can lead to invasions and sickness. Cold water closes the pores back up. A few years ago some Tibetan monks came to my home in the Andes to visit. They do the same thing in their ceremonies of bringing fire and water together. They get up, meditate, and then take a bath. One monk told me that in the Himalayas they run outside naked and lay in the snow. Like it or not, cold water helps you feel, and it promotes health by activating the body's natural defenses.

To feel fire itself, we can do various ceremonies or simple rituals. We can light a fire, a candle, burn incense. We can use interior or exterior resources to feel the power of fire. Fire is also naturally therapeutic. You can use it to get rid of emotional patterns and painful memories that are troubling you, or that you no longer need to feed. You can throw them symbolically in the fire and let its power burn them away. But this won't work if you don't feel the fire burning away these things. It won't mechanically work. You must feel the fire burning up the things you no longer need.

De Dios:

## On the Cosmos and the Many Dimensions of Reality

I have been speaking about the senses as one way to feel, to feel with the heart, the four elements. But there are many ways to feel, and many dimensions to feel. There are things to feel beyond the material dimension of the Earth Mother. We all know some ways of feeling these other dimensions that we have discovered on the path of life.

When I speak of the Element of Earth I am talking about the mineral elements, plants, soil, food and so on. But when I speak of the Earth Mother I am speaking of the planet materially, and also of her wisdom, love, and creativity. There are many other planets in the Cosmos and stars, as you know, beyond the Earth Mother. We call the Earth Mother Ashpamama, and in the view of my ancestors She is inside another Mother of the Cosmos, you can call her Mother Nature, my ancestors have called her Pachamama. So the Earth (Ashpamama) comes from an even greater reality, that of Mother Nature (Pachamama). And all these are inside of God, like one small egg inside a larger Egg, and it inside a yet larger Egg, and all inside of Jatun. Mother Earth is the physical and tangible expression of the Great Force of Life; we are each "Mother-Earth-walking". So we are each an essential part of the Great Force of Life

## Los Palabras por Dios

### On Words for God

In Spanish there is only one word for God, in Kichwa there are several words. My idea of God, to use the familiar term for it, is different from the traditional European and Christian views as well. I do not see God as looking down on the Cosmos from above. We have four different words in Kichwa to describe this Infinite Reality. The First word is "Jatun" which can be translated as "the Great Force of Life." This word means Immense, Large; the Eagle cannot grasp it. Jatun is the outermost circle or Egg that includes all of Reality, and all dimensions, and yet transcends them all. All things are an expression of It. Within this circle or Egg is a smaller circle, expressed by the second word, "Wiracocha" which means "Lake" or "Laguna" and refers to the Great Lake of Knowledge or Wisdom."

The third word for God is Pachacamak. Here I must break down its etymology. "Pacha" refers to space and time. In my view they are one. You can have space, such as the one you are in today, but not without it's being our time also. Space and time are not two, not divided, and cannot be divided. Then we have the other root of the word, which is 'camak' and conveys the sense of "one who watches over".

The fourth word for God is Pachakutinck; this refers to temporality as a continual return, a flow of renewal. Time is circular with past-present-future being one. For us there really isn't any past or future or present because everything is felt, or experienced as a continual flow.

So God is in all the greatest and tiniest things, which the mind cannot comprehend. The mind comprehends just a tiny space.

To think of God as "up there" separates Him from us. God is All, and Everything, and Nothing (the no-thing in the mystical sense).

To personify God is a great mistake. To think of Him (or Her) as in Heaven is a mistake too. For to personify is to limit the Great Force of Life (in Kichwa, "Jatun"). We are not far away from God, nor under God, we are part of Him and He is part of us. So every one of us is God and we should feel this truth, which you can experience when you feel gratitude and love. Feeling gratitude and love, this is happiness.

### On Healers and the Healing Path

It is a beautiful thing to be a healer and the world needs healers. In my tradition it is important to begin with caring for yourself. We must take care of ourselves. We can't just eat anything; we must keep our digestive tract clear of fermentation. We have to increase our sensitivity and capacity to feel. Love is an important part of healing work. But we must love ourselves first, if we are to be able to love others. We must be in balance if we are to help others come into balance, and we must enjoy life if we want to help others enjoy life. We mustn't be too serious. The lachak-healer's way of life is full of pleasure, enjoying and feeling everything, every moment, and every place.

### The Healer's Intent

We must also be clear that we aren't really the Healer. We don't really cure anything. The Great Force of Life does that. All we do is to open the patient up to that which does the healing. Our curing or healing efforts are simply tools for helping people live, feel, and be happy. Curing symptoms is easy. But most people won't change their lives and what they were doing that has given rise to their symptoms in the first place. The healer must be concerned to heal a life, not just symptoms. The intent or desire to cure is important. It is a force or energy. Good intentions can bring good results. But good intentions can also mislead people into making mistakes because intent is a product of desire coming out of immediate circumstances. We don't see the big picture in cosmic context when we are in such a hurry to cure. The message, the Why of the problem must be addressed. All we healers do is open the patient up to that which does the

healing. Only the Great Force of Life should make that decision. Only It can know if it is time for healing.

### The Iachak Philosophy of Problems

Problems are not popular, most people complain about them and are in a hurry to get rid of them. But in the way of the Iachak, we should be thankful for all things, even problems, because we need them on our path of the heart. Problems become friends if we don't fight them but use them to inquire, find out what the message is, so we can use the message and fly higher. It is important to observe carefully, not only the problem, but also everything going on around a problem: your situation, your life, your habits, and practices. Use your capacity to feel. When a patient [or anyone] stands before me I start to feel all that is about the person. A vapor, a colored light may appear, or I may just feel [without an image] what needs to be moved around in the person. It is the "Great Force of Life that does the healing.

If we view problems as enemies instead of friends, then they will pull us downward. Every problem that has confronted me, and like everybody I have my own problems from time to time, has helped me fly higher. So don't struggle against a problem. Rather try to see what message it brings. If we understand the message, that problem or illness will disappear. If an emotion is giving us difficulty, we can use the same strategy. Fear, for example can get in the way. We must learn to befriend fear. Don't fight it or pull back from it. Understand fear, and use it. Take advantage of it in order to be more mindful, more observant, to feel more. Consider the troubling symptoms of illness. Again, if we fight the symptom, it will push us down. To fly high we must use it like a Judo master. I once knew a Judo master, a small and thin man. Yet he easily defended himself against much bigger people. Instead of out-muscling his opponent and combating him directly, he used the other person's weight and direction of energy to trip him up. So when a negative experience comes, use it in this way to fly higher instead of being pushed down. In my experience, there isn't much difference between negative and positive experiences. Both can be used as teachers; both can help us become happy and healthy.

### On Emotional Problems

Mental and emotional pain responds to the same natural approach.

The Elements are natural healers. All the elements have many beneficial properties, and it is good to begin working with one or two elements that appeal to you most. You can use the

elements as healers too. Some elements are especially good for certain types of problems or healing needs. For example, the element of Earth is good for absorbing stress, for recycling things you no longer need, for grounding and nourishing you. Wind is especially good for letting go of thoughts you don't need, for cleansing the mind. Fire is good for burning away emotional baggage, old bad habits, and pain-causing memories we need to let go of. Water invites calming and clarity, and transparency.

When I am really troubled about something, emotionally upset, I tell my friends that I must go into the forest to work something out. I may be gone for days. I'll find a tree and talk to it. If I am sad or hurt, the natural thing to do is to cry and get it out of your system. If I am angry, I talk it out with the tree. Once I thought I was alone with this tree, it was talking back to me. I was yelling at it. Then I turned around and these people were looking at me, frightened of me (laughs). The important thing is to get it out, if you keep it in it will pull you out of balance and set up a sickness.

You can take your troubles to a river or a lake, talk to a tree or animal. There are many tools for removing pain. Bring it out with Earth, Fire, Wind, Water, or with whatever you can. Don't keep it in; that is the worst thing. Withdrawing to forests and sacred sites is very good.

### On Family Problems

So often even family pain is a matter of imbalance. Recently I saw a couple that were working opposite shifts at their jobs. This generated a lack of balance between time together and time apart. Correcting the balance relieved the pain. There are many ways to restore balance.

### On Fragmentation and Soul Loss

Question: What about the condition, known as 'soul loss' in the literature on shamanism. Do you do soul recovery in your healing work?

Answer: What you call "soul", a European concept to us, my tradition calls the Ushai, the vital essence and force of life in the person. All things have an ushai. In humans, when they are wounded or out of balance, the person becomes fragmented. A person becomes fragmented and loses their ushai. So you can use the four elements to 'travel' and 'recover' it, IF that is what the Great Force of Life wants.

Order don Alverto's book through his website [www.ushai.com](http://www.ushai.com)