ForeWord Reviews

HEALTH & FITNESS

Bring Me the Ocean: The Natural World as Healer
Rebecca A. Reynolds
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Imagine never being able to contact Mother Nature again. Never feeling the warm caress of a summer ocean, the grit of sand trapped in your shoes, the cool flow of a breeze against your skin, or the damp, rich soil of a primeval forest.

Unfortunately, these experiences that are taken for granted are not always available to many people receiving specialized care. Animals As Intermediaries (AAI) offers a change by bringing nature into their lives. Reynolds poignantly relates real teaching sessions with AAI in an emotional reading.

As she draws in the listener, she relates how they collect the materials used in the sessions from the meadow and forest. They gather sweet grasses, pick up fallen bird nests and lost feathers and even carefully dig up the imprint left by a deer's hoof. These materials will be arranged to simulate natural surroundings while offering patients a feeling of control over their surroundings.

Within the framework of the class, water flows across pebbles on a platter and two rabbits investigate their new field. Two dogs, Fern and Shadow, circulate through the room, greeting the patients who eagerly reach out to pet them and sensing not to pressure those who are scared. Certified by the state to care for wild animals too injured to return to the wild, AAI also raised a hawk that is only brought to sessions once mutual trust has been established. In one class, a bed-ridden child with extended arms makes a connection with the injured hawk's inability to fly.

Mutual trust, knowledge and intense joy grow with each meeting between AAI and the students to the point where one man injured in an accident asks them to "bring [him] the ocean." When they ask how (having never done an ocean program before), he replies, "In buckets." So they collect sand, starfish, seaweed, shells and driftwood, and they discover that this man had never revealed that he was a fisherman before being injured in an accident on his boat. By bringing him the ocean, they brought back his memories and his sense of self-worth with the knowledge he shared.

The thrill of the exploration of new territories by the students shines through Reynolds?

voice, relaying her own joy in the experience. An uplifting journey to take.

Melanie C. Duncan