

The Dancing Healers: A Doctor's Journey of Healing with Native Americans

Carl A. Hammerschlag



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This fascinating account of a Yale-trained psychiatrist's twenty-year experience with Native American healing interweaves autobiography with stories of the Native Americans who challenged his medical school assumptions about their methods.

While working as a family physicans in a Native American hospital in the Southwest, Carl Hammerschlag was introduced to a patient named Santiago, a Pueblo priest and clan chief, who asked him where he had learned how to heal. Hammerschlag responded almost by rote, rattling off his medical education, intership, and certification.

The old man replied,"Do you know how to dance?"

To humor Santiago, Hammerschlag shuffled his feet at the priest's bedside. Despite his condition, Santiago got up and demonstrated the proper steps. "You must be able to dance if you are to heal people,"he admonished the young doctor."I can teach you my steps, but you will have to hear your own music."

Hammerschlag synthesizes his Jewish heritage with his experience with Native Americans to produce a practice open to all methods of healing. He discovers the wisdom of the Pueblo priest's question to his Western doctor, "Do you know how to dance?"

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