
The Power of Macrobiotics

Julie Tara

The power of embracing the macrobiotic way of life is really quite astounding. Born out of the Taoist view of seeing the life of nature through the lens of yin and yang, we are blessed with an amazingly graceful and poetic cosmology that may be utilized in every possible facet of life. That it embraces at its heart the axiom "all things change" makes it one of the most dynamic and versatile of systems that I have yet come across. And in this lies true freedom.

The ways that people come to the study of macrobiotics are as diverse as water and stone – yet at the basis of these apparently separate paths is one deep truth – the quest for understanding and the willingness to explore. Many people describe the most fascinating sets of coincidences that led them to macrobiotics: the old Ohsawa book that dropped off the shelf in the used book store, the East West Center accidentally stumbled across while getting lost on a walk through town, the providential flyer announcing a macrobiotic lecture forgotten in the car by a friend. Some people are ill and looking for a new healthier direction to explore; some are searching for a different work sphere that can incorporate more of who they are; while others are intent on living life significantly differently from the ways of their parents. And many are searching for a new embracing cosmology in which to

place their lives in the context of the greater whole. As unique as we all are in our search, so we are unique in our understanding and expression of yin and yang. We each have our own set of magic spectacles through which to view the mysteries of the universe. Isn't it wonderful! How valuable we can be to each other on the quest.

An Accident

The way I first came across macrobiotics was, of course, totally by accident, almost sixteen years ago in London, England. I was twenty-two years old and at a spiritual impasse in my life – you

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know the kind I mean? Having recently, and rather impetuously, quit a highly successful career in ballet (to which I had devoted over twelve years of my life) because I could find no soul at the top, I was drifting in that seemingly eternal state of aimlessness – that time of wandering when you simply surren-

der all personal will and allow the universe to guide you whichever way it wills.

I was studying all manner of weird and wonderful things with childlike openness and delight. One day I was in a different part of town when I came across this funny old schoolhouse. There was a flyer on the door that said, "Sufi Dancing – free." I remember standing there at the door feeling the universe giving me a gentle, but persistent nudge from behind. "Go on" it seemed to say, "Check it out." So I did.

It didn't take me very long to notice that there was something different going on here. It was palpable. Something about the people – they seemed to sort of flow . . . gracefully, peacefully. I didn't know this in my head, I felt it in my body. I wondered quietly around this labyrinthine building, reading all the notices, watching, smelling the food cooking in the kitchen, listening to the music floating down the stairs. And all I knew was that somehow I had come home. That these people felt right, like they were my people. And that I should stay.

I worked and studied at this center, the Community Health Foundation of London, for two years, covering all three levels of the Kushi Institute training program. Simultaneously, I delved deeply into psychosynthesis, psychotherapy, and also rediscovered my true passion for dance through Anna Hal-

prim's Natural Dance Work. It was a most joyful time of self-discovery, and the flexibility of Taoism as my model allowed me to find a wonderful synthesis of three ways of accessing wisdom: One, through the alchemy of changing one's blood (through diet) and therefore one's consciousness; second, through accessing the self via one's emotional life and meditation; and third, through exploring spirit by way of intuitive body movement.

The Hardest Part

In my macrobiotic studies the hardest part for me was the cooking. I hated cooking! So I kind of wriggled out of it by eating all my food at the Center's cafe. Finally, I got tired of that so I decided there was no alternative but to do the infamous 10-day brown rice fast. I figured I could at least handle cooking that much. Little did I know that my stubbornness would lead me directly to a miracle (the bigger the front, the bigger the back). Over those ten days, I really got the power of macrobiotics. All that I had previously studied suddenly

became real and grounded in my experience. As the days went by, I became more and more sensitive to the energies of the world around me, and began to become more in-synch with the rhythms of the Tao. I began to truly learn how to move with the flow of life. The culmination of this experience came early one morning (about the ninth or tenth day) as I sat meditating on the flat rooftop of my house. It was about 5 am and there were lots of birds beginning to sing.

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There was one little bird in particular, chirping its little heart out nearby. The shift was soft and easy when I suddenly knew what the bird was singing – we were connected – and then I was the bird singing. And then I was the whispering breeze, the leaves on the tree, and the sun breaking through the clouds. And they were me. It was the experience of Oneness. We were all one. So beautiful. Magnificent. Holy.

I was so exhilarated by this experience that after who knows how long, I rushed downstairs and outside – tears and laughter bubbling forth – and ran at top speed through the sleeping neighborhood. I was singing with sheer joy for the beauty of the morning, of the moment, singing for the wonder of it all. Celebrating the new day and life as the birds knew so well how to do.

I know that we all have experiences like this, breakthroughs in consciousness when we get a glimpse of how all things are connected at the source in the web of life. But this time, rather than simply by accident, I knew that I had found a tool to help me in attaining that awareness. I knew now without a doubt that food was indeed powerful medicine! Of course, it didn't mean I had to live on brown rice alone. But it did clarify that if I maintained a diet focused on a variety of radiant whole foods, I would have a greater opportunity of quieting the constant chatter of the small mind, in

order to connect to the deeper voice of the Tao.

Not long after this experience, I decided to leave the diverse realms of study I'd absorbed myself in and throw myself back into the very physical world of dance full-time. I left London to join a large, well-known travelling circus in Mexico. The unknown beckoned and I was off and running. At first, the people in the circus company (from all over the world) definitely thought me a little odd with my one suitcase half-full of miso, umeboshi, kuzu, and sea vegetables. They watched me while I brewed strange teas and soups in the hotel rooms. They watched me quietly meditating in the dressing room between shows. But over time they stopped feeling put-off by my being different and we had great fun together. In fact, I inadvertently became the troupe's natural health counselor simply because a lot of the troupe members were often sick or injured and they noticed I wasn't.

It was there while touring Mexico that I read *Black Elk Speaks* and found such deep resonance with his words. I felt I'd found another kindred spirit who spoke of things I'd always sensed in my heart to be true. I was overjoyed. And it was then I knew that my life would be dedicated to the unfolding of consciousness, both in myself and in others via whatever pathways felt right and good and whole.

Since then, I've explored various religions and philosophies, tribal traditions, mythologies, and Jung's psychological models. I also continue to explore the shifting of consciousness through dance, art, music, and poetry. Taoism and macrobiotics are so beautiful because they can embrace all of the arts and in fact help me to understand them better, more fully. In learning the order of nature, the arts communicate deeper and deeper levels of freedom. And for one who stubbornly hates confinement of any kind, but most particularly the confinement of belief systems, it gives me a lot of room to move and breathe and experience my being. □

Julie Tara lives with her husband and children in Boulder, Colorado.

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