

The Story of Maya Spiritual Healing

Although much was destroyed by the Spanish Conquest, the Maya managed to resist complete devastation of their culture and religion. Over the past five centuries, they have held on to their traditions, gods, and goddesses by transferring their qualities to Catholic saints and dogma, thus preserving the core of their beliefs. Some Maya communities remained outside Spanish influence, especially in Belize, Yucatan and Mexico where there were no reports of gold or silver to attract the Spaniards. While the Spanish friars destroyed about a hundred thousand Maya books on astronomy, mathematics, and architecture, the Maya secretly passed down their healing traditions orally over the past five hundred years, often by meeting in caves and secret locations. Our participation in this oral tradition will help to keep Maya medicine alive and relevant.

Contemporary Maya healers of Mesoamerica blend beliefs of the Old and New Worlds. Don Elijio's religion was a happy mix of ancient Maya beliefs and Catholicism. As a spiritual healer, he addressed his prayers to the Nine Benevolent Maya Spirits and the Four Virgins: Our Ladies of Carmen, Guadalupe, Fatima, and Lourdes. Ix Chel, First Mother of Creation, Maya goddess of medicine, childbirth, and weaving was one of his spirit guides and healing helpers.

Don Elijio once said, "Jesus, Mary, and saints like Michael and Gabriel came to this land of my people many centuries ago. When they came, the Nine Maya Spirits called a heavenly council to meet with them. They are not like you and me, you know. They are not jealous or full of envy. No, they all got together at this big meeting and decided to work together for the salvation of the people's souls. Together they answer our prayers, heal the sick, and hold our hands when we die. We pray to them, and they answer with miracles. Faith is what moves them to work for us."

PRINCIPLES OF MAYA MEDICINE

Chu'lel, or Life Energy

Everything in creation is permeated by an invisible force, or *chu'lel*, a vibrant creative current of life force. Chu'lel is a palpable vibratory emanation from a divine source that animates all of creation. Our entire cosmos is imbued with chu'lel. The most concentrated chu'lel is in dripping or spraying water, mountains, plants, springs, sacred places, rocks, the sky, humans, and the earth. In the Maya language chu'lel has the same root as *ch'ul*, or *k'ul*, a word to describe holiness, the soul, and divinity. Maya kings were called

ch'ul ahaw, “lords of the life force.” Because all of nature is imbued with sacred chu’lel energy, Maya healers use plants, stones, animals, minerals, water, and especially prayers to heal. Medicine is all around us.

Prayer is a vehicle for chu’lel, focusing it like a laser beam into the pulses and the auric field. Prayers attract and reorganize chu’lel and are within themselves a powerful type of chu’lel force that can be transmitted from one person to another.

Maya spirits, the Oversoul of the Maya people, are manifestations and purveyors of chu’lel. They answer prayers, receive ceremonies, and work with human beings when called through prayer and faith. Don Eljio described the Maya Spirits as the “Lords and Ladies” of thunder, lightning, rain, plants, animals, crossroads, and the stars and planets. He had a special relationship with the Nine Benevolent Maya Spirits. *Los Nuevos Espiritos Beneficos de los Maya* in Spanish or, in Maya, *Bolon Tiku*, sometimes called *Bolon Ik*, which translates best as *The Nine Wind Spirits* because they are perceived as airs or winds. *Ik* is the word for both Wind and Spirit in Mayan. All Primicias, Maya ceremonies of thanksgiving and supplication, are dedicated to the Nine Maya Spirits. The Maya Spirits, as well as the Deity, are the ones who answer our healing prayers and imbue all of our spiritual baths, amulets, and efforts with chu’lel. “They are not God. They are the right hands of God,” Don Eljio used to say. “They do God’s work.” He would lean forward and make sounds of thunder and flail his arms to imitate lightning. “They are the Lords of Thunder, Lightning, Rain, Corn, and the Forest.” No spiritual healer works independently of a Higher Power, a Guardian Angel, a Higher Self, a God, or a Goddess. As Spiritual Healers, we become members of a team made up of Angels, Maya Spirits, Spirit Guides, Faith, Prayer, Plants, Incense, Spiritual Baths, and Chu’lel. It matters not who your personal Deity is, only that you have a meaningful relationship with a Higher Power.

Itz

Melting candle wax, water dripping from inside of caves, raindrops, tears, and spritzing during aspersions and lustrations are examples of *itz*. All carry highly charged chu’lel that transmutes spiritual essence or celestial prana into healing energy. Itz also defines the lines of force around which the elements of creation come together to bring heaven to earth. When in the presence of itz, such as standing within a dripping cave or receiving a spiritual bath, there is a magical feeling of spiritually charged energy.

The Gossamer Veil

In the Maya cosmic view, spiritual and physical realms are a continuum separated only by what we can imagine as a curtain or a translucent gossamer veil. The *h'men*, or healer (a doctor/priest, doctor/priestess, or shaman), has the power to see and to penetrate into this realm. The two realms require regular contact to hold balance in both states. There are a number of ways in which humans can peek through the veil to communicate with the spiritual realm. Among these are prayer, spiritual baths, meditation, chanting, dream visions, ritual, and ceremony. An example of this is the sacred Maya Primicia, the ancient ceremony of thanksgiving and supplication addressed to the Maya Spirits. They partake of the offering and can communicate with the celebrants while they meditate.

What is on the other side of the veil? The Maya cosmology is complex and based on confusing sources. Don Eljio explained that the other side of the veil is where the souls of the dead dwell and the Maya spirits and mythical creatures live. He addressed the Maya Spirits as if they were his very good friends. He believed that they would be lonely if they were not actively involved in human affairs. They especially love to be called upon by healers in prayer and to receive gratitude in the form of ritual and ceremony.

*The flower, the tree,
the crystal reflect the
order of the world
and express divine
harmony.*

— LILLA BEK AND
PHILIPPA PULLAR

Reverence for Plants

Every plant has a sacred and vital spiritual force. All that springs from the sacred Mother Earth (actually the physical manifestation of Ix Chel) is naturally imbued with chu'el. Each plant has a *dueño* or *deva*, the overseer or guardian that holds a vibrational note for each plant to emulate. A divine creative force is attracted to this note, and life forms itself in that likeness. Thus does the Divine Creator find fulfillment in creation, enjoying the fruits of its creative genius.

Maya healers consider their plants as allies in healing. They talk to them as if they were human friends since they believe that dueños respond to love and affection with their own intelligence, as would any living being. While he tenderly passed his hand over a plant, Don Elijio would say, "Yo les adoro, son mis muy buenos amigos." (I adore them, they are my best friends.) Healers often develop a strong relationship with one or two plants. Don Elijio's faithful plant ally was skunk root (*Zorillo* or *Pay Che*), which he relied on when all else failed. One's plant ally can be known by a strong pulling or tugging sensation in the chest when sitting in front of the plant or it may be revealed in a dream vision. We will discuss this at length in class.

*With flowers you
paint the world,
Giver of Life.*

— UNKNOWN AZTEC
POET

Maya Spiritual Ailments

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The Maya do not separate physical from spiritual ailments. For thousands of years the Maya healing system has addressed the emotional, physical, and spiritual together. With regard to spiritual ailments, Don Elijio used to say, “La màquina no muestra” (The machine doesn’t show it).

The following are common spiritual ailments of the Maya with a brief description of each. In the Advanced Spiritual Workshop we will address additional ailments.

Susto	Fright or trauma
Pesar	Grief
Tristeza	Sadness
Coraje	Anger
El Ojo/Ojo Caliente	Hot eye
Mal Ojo	Evil eye
Envidia	Envy or jealousy
	Soul loss
	Astral fragments
	Night terrors

Assessment: La platica (taking a history) and pulse analysis

Treatments: Love, faith, grounding, prayers, plants, spiritual baths, incense, herbal teas, space clearing, amulets, laughter/humor, intuition, and ceremony

SUSTO/JAK’OOL: FEAR, FRIGHT, SHOCK

Susto is best described as a fright or sudden trauma (sometimes diagnosed as post-traumatic stress disorder). It happens to people of all ages, but is especially common in babies and children. Susto can occur in utero.

Common Causes in Children

- ▶ seeing a fight erupt between adults in the household
- ▶ bullying at school
- ▶ violent potty training
- ▶ being awakened from a peaceful nap by a loud noise
- ▶ witnessing a frightening event of any kind

- ▶ sudden loss or death of a loved one in the household
- ▶ war, famine

Signs and Symptoms in Children

- ▶ sudden change in behavior to unhappy, crabby; won't play
- ▶ change in behavior such as no interest in school or friends
- ▶ lots of fighting, crying; spends a lot of time alone
- ▶ night terrors, jumping in sleep, excessive night sweats
- ▶ unable to sleep well or for more than a few minutes at a time
- ▶ indigestion with constipation or diarrhea
- ▶ cold sweats during the day
- ▶ frequent vomiting
- ▶ fingernail biting
- ▶ strong smelling urine or green stools
- ▶ chronic skin conditions, cradle cap, diaper rash
- ▶ any confusing health condition or emotional situation

Common Causes in Adults

- ▶ a suicide or murder in the family
- ▶ being involved in (or almost being involved in) or observing a tragic accident in which someone is killed or injured
- ▶ sudden bad news
- ▶ muggings, rape, robberies, war, floods, famine, hurricanes, and tornadoes
- ▶ gratuitous violence in movies
- ▶ traumatic birth
- ▶ surgery
- ▶ sudden falls or injury

Signs and Symptoms in Adults

- ▶ easily frightened; jump at noises
- ▶ excessive thinking or thinking is clouded
- ▶ constant anxiety
- ▶ loss of trust, relationships
- ▶ feelings of isolation, alienation, disconnection
- ▶ chronic headaches or skin problems
- ▶ chronic constant state of Fight or Flight or Freeze leading to exhaustion, confusion
- ▶ increased heart rate, tensed muscles, chronic high blood pressure
- ▶ increasing and continuing exhaustion, confusion
- ▶ very poor sleep patterns, nervousness

- ▶ high blood cortisone levels/stress, high acid
- ▶ depressed systemic circulation due to tension in the tissues
- ▶ fingernail biting
- ▶ listlessness
- ▶ adrenaline rushes resulting in vasoconstriction, which lowers blood flow to organs, especially stomach and intestines
- ▶ fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue syndrome
- ▶ chronic digestive problems
- ▶ tension in the solar plexus and diaphragm
- ▶ insomnia, nightmares
- ▶ unusual or sudden weight loss or weight gain
- ▶ hormone imbalances, adrenal and thyroid exhaustion
- ▶ fertility challenges
- ▶ inability to perform or to enjoy sexual intimacy
- ▶ falling hair
- ▶ problems with eyes, ears, jaw (TMJ disorder)
- ▶ serious illness such as heart trouble or leukemia
- ▶ any confusing, undiagnosed ailment

All of the above can create an imbalance in the electromagnetic field, which decreases the body's ability to draw in good energies, or universal chi/chu'lel, as well as the release of dark, heavy vibrations. This can lead to stagnant energy and a disconnection from divine love and guidance. One way in which the body protects itself from emotional trauma is by suppression, which leads to the development of chronic muscular tension. In Western medicine this is commonly referred to as stress-related illness.

Wilhelm Reich's research led him to believe that neuromuscular armoring could lead to further physical symptoms/illnesses.

*Fear knocked on
the door;
Faith answered it;
No one was there.*

– AUTHOR
UNKNOWN

PESAR: GRIEF

Pesar is long-standing grief that doesn't diminish with time. A certain amount of grief over loss is a natural process, but lingering too long (more than three years) or too deeply can cause a detriment to daily life, work, and family and requires support. As you will see, the symptoms of Pesar mimic depression rather than the overstimulation seen in Susto. Susto and Pesar may often be experienced together, especially when there has been a deeply traumatic event such as murder, suicide, hurricane, war, or car accident.

Causes in Babies and Children

- ▶ weaning babies from the breast, especially prematurely
- ▶ loss of a parent, grandparent, sibling, or other close relative
- ▶ moving to a new home or a new school
- ▶ divorce or any family disruption in the household
- ▶ the birth of a new baby into the household
- ▶ sibling goes to school; now home alone, no playmate

Signs and Symptoms in Babies and Children

- ▶ tearfulness, crankiness, lethargy
- ▶ sudden disinterest in whatever they used to love to do
- ▶ blank stares
- ▶ eating dirt
- ▶ loss of appetite

Causes of Pesar in Adults

- ▶ death of a loved one or pet
- ▶ loss of personal possessions in a fire or flood; war, hurricane, earthquakes
- ▶ romantic loss or a broken heart
- ▶ loss of income, loss of job, foreclosure
- ▶ suicide, murder of a loved one
- ▶ car accident

*All I see teaches me
to trust the Creator
for all I do not see.*

– AUTHOR
UNKNOWN

Signs and Symptoms in Adults

- ▶ constant, deep, inappropriate mournful sighing
- ▶ cough, bronchitis, problems in lung-chest area
- ▶ shallow breathing
- ▶ prefer to be alone even if previously sociable
- ▶ disinterest in life and previous hobbies
- ▶ obsessed with past; can't move forward

TRISTEZA: SADNESS, DEPRESSION

Tristeza is a deep, unrelenting sadness or chronic depression, usually of unknown origin. The key to identifying Tristeza is that when you inquire how long the feeling has been present, the response is often, "I've felt this way my whole life, for as long as I can remember."

Causes

- ▶ to be born a girl when everyone was hoping for a boy or vice versa
- ▶ to feel unwanted or resented while still in the womb; mother may have experienced trauma or depression or may have attempted to terminate the pregnancy
- ▶ to have been abandoned in infancy or at any time during childhood
- ▶ children who grew up in an orphanage
- ▶ adopted and not feeling part of the family
- ▶ not being hugged or kissed as a child
- ▶ people who experienced a series of peer rejections in early childhood
- ▶ unloved or abused in early childhood

Signs and Symptoms

- ▶ feeling alienated, isolated, unloved, ungrounded
- ▶ don't want to do anything, don't care about anything
- ▶ fearful of everything; unable to take risks
- ▶ feel like they are in the wrong place or on the wrong planet, or not meant to be here
- ▶ feel unworthy of love or success
- ▶ life seems unfair; life has cheated them
- ▶ often express suicidal thoughts
- ▶ they feel that there is no Divine Plan for them
- ▶ often diagnosed as chronically depressed or suicidal even after decades of psychotherapy
- ▶ difficulty getting started in the morning; sleeping late; overconsumption of alcohol or drugs
- ▶ received decades of psychotherapy and may use medications (antidepressants or mood elevators) to little or no avail
- ▶ often close to tears; may start crying when asked to share their thoughts

Tristeza is often a chronic emotional state that can last a lifetime, requiring frequent spiritual baths especially when feelings of heaviness begin to arise once again. One traditional remedy of the Maya for tristeza is to go to a riverside at noon with a basket of nine white flowers, throw them over the right shoulder into the downstream current, and then watch them float away one by one.

*For we must share
if we would keep
That blessing from
above;
Ceasing to give,
we cease to have,
Such is the law
of love.*

– AUTHOR
UNKNOWN

CORAJE: ANGER

Coraje is anger that is excessive, out of context, and explosive. There is righteous anger that we all feel toward evil, as embodied, for example, in corrupt government, polluters, and sex offenders. However, coraje is inappropriate anger aimed at loved ones, innocent children, or society as a whole. People with coraje are unpredictable and often dangerously violent with hair-trigger tempers; very little sets them off. The key to recognizing coraje is “inappropriate or unfair anger.” Often the one who loves a person with coraje is the victim or focus of the anger. Coraje can cause susto in family members or employees. Chronic muscular tension that may settle in the chest, abdomen, back, or neck is common with coraje.

Causes in Adults

- ▶ severe emotional damage in the past
- ▶ often people who have been employed in the military, police, or in other occupations where they had to perform “dirty work”
- ▶ disappointing experience when younger
- ▶ being bullied as a child
- ▶ growing up in a violent household
- ▶ unexpressed anger
- ▶ unfair treatment

Signs and Symptoms in Adults

- ▶ hair-trigger temper, misdirected anger
- ▶ digestive and liver ailments
- ▶ impotence
- ▶ high blood pressure
- ▶ red face
- ▶ barrel chest
- ▶ rigid body and arms

EL OJO/OJO CALIENTE: HOT EYE

El ojo happens when a person stares fixedly at another with envy. The envious person does not intend to do harm but will stare at another with envy that can negatively affect the auric field of the object of the hot gaze. Central American people believe that some are just born with hot eyes, and if they look at your plants or your bird, they will die. If they look at your house, it might burn down. Babies, puppies, kittens, and flowering plants are hidden from them out of fear that they will cause harm. Babies, especially under the tender age of one year, are covered completely with a cotton blanket to avoid the stares of people who may not even intend to do harm.

Prolonged admiration can create a hot vibration that emanates from the magnetic field of the person, which negatively affects the recipient. Pregnant or menstruating women and blue-eyed people are believed to have especially hot eyes when they are envious. Givers of the hot eye often feel they didn't get their fair share, or there isn't enough to go around and they will be without. A person's natural beauty, new clothing, new car, or a cute baby might be the cause of someone looking with a hot eye.

*The goal of
spirituality is love.*

– ROSITA ARVIGO

Signs and Symptoms in Infants

- ▶ sudden crankiness and unusual crying
- ▶ a weeping or partially closed eye
- ▶ like to sleep on cold floors
- ▶ excessive vomiting
- ▶ rejects the breast or bottle
- ▶ fever
- ▶ slow pulse
- ▶ diarrhea with green stools or constipation with hard, dry stools

Signs and Symptoms in Children or Adults

- ▶ sudden depression or confusion
- ▶ lack of interest in daily affairs
- ▶ inability to act in the way they once used to
- ▶ newly acquired sloppy personal habits
- ▶ feeling "spaced out," as if nothing matters, or cannot connect/tune in to life
- ▶ digestive upsets

MAL OJO: EVIL EYE

One can become the victim of the evil eye in various ways. It may be something as simple as attending a social function in a new outfit that makes others jealous. The evil eye comes when the one who is envious stares at the victim while holding angry thoughts of jealousy and resentment, or stares with the desire that something harmful would happen to another. Driving a new car, purchasing a new home, getting a better job, being beautiful, or looking like a model can engender the evil eye. The difference between the evil eye and the hot eye is that evil eye is intentional and the hot eye is not.

Signs and Symptoms:

The symptoms of evil eye in children and adults are the same as el ojo but more intense.

ENVIDIA: ENVY, JEALOUSY

Envy is an emotion common to all people yet can be devastating in its effect to the person being envied.

Causes

Envidia occurs when one is subjected to a regular current of negativity projected by a person who feels envy or jealousy. Celebrities, beautiful women, movie stars, beauty queens, and wealthy people commonly experience envidia. It is chronic evil eye with many of the same symptoms, but much more intense. It is much like having a red-hot arrow penetrate your auric field, damaging it, which leads to physical illness.

*Just because you're
paranoid doesn't
mean they aren't
after you.*

– JOSEPH HELLER

Signs and Symptoms

- ▶ a lack of interest in the daily affairs of life
- ▶ whatever was a burning desire in careers or hobbies suddenly seems boring and unworthy of the effort
- ▶ compelled to move out of their home or change jobs in order to escape the episode of negativity, they feel uncomfortable near the source of the envy
- ▶ inability to save or to budget money
- ▶ often a loss of property, job, or loved ones
- ▶ will say, "I have no luck," and very often have bad luck
- ▶ lack of self-confidence; sudden sloppy personal habits
- ▶ domestic arguments in a previously harmonious household
- ▶ poor sleep patterns, often awakened by heart palpitations
- ▶ recurring nightmares with threatening themes
- ▶ lack of appetite and sudden digestive upsets

For the person who is envious, you can do the following:

- ▶ place a piece of rue or basil under your tongue and say, "I am free of envy and wish everyone good fortune." Rosita's grandmother recommended saying, "I wish I was as *beautiful* as you, and you were even more beautiful."

If you are the recipient of envy, Maya Spritual Healing and an amulet are needed to protect the auric field from this bombardment. If you know the person who is envying you, you can do the following:

- ▶ Imagine mirrors between you and them so the envy does not penetrate

- ▶ Imagine person in a cylinder of mirrors
- ▶ Imagine person on a pedestal of divine light
- ▶ Send them love and healing
- ▶ Do a spiritual bath before and after you see them
- ▶ Wear your amulet in their presence
- ▶ Put a picture of them, or their name, on your altar
- ▶ Perform a space clearing/blessing
- ▶ Sweep stairway and doorway with basil water and prayer
- ▶ Do your daily shower with prayer
- ▶ Best thing is regular spiritual baths, prayers, and incense

*There is no agony
like bearing an untold
story inside you.*

— ZORA NEALE
HURSTON

SOUL LOSS

Any of these spiritual ailments can result eventually in soul loss, a common shamanic theme. The Maya believe that the soul has thirteen parts and that illness occurs if one or more of these parts leave the physical body due to a great shock, fright, or emotional trauma. Soul loss accounts for many undiagnosed, misunderstood physical and emotional ailments. Maya spiritual healing with prayers, baths, and copal calls the soul and its fragments back into the body. Unlike other shamanic traditions, Maya spiritual healers do not have to journey to the Underworld to retrieve soul fragments.

ASTRAL FRAGMENTS

When a person is close to death, bits and pieces of the incarnate soul begin to break off and disintegrate into the ether. A loved one watching over the person in a coma or unconscious state will sometimes attract those fragments to herself or himself out of empathy. The fragments are sticky and attach to the auric field of the one standing over the bed. The person may say, “I wish I could take some of your pain” or “I wish it was me and not you.” The one who received the fragments will then act, speak, think, and even dream like the one who is close to death. This can be dangerous. If the dying person had a cerebral stroke that left part of the body paralyzed, the one who received the breaking-away fragments may have an accident such as a broken bone that results in temporary paralysis of a part of the body that mimics the effect of the stroke.

Astral fragments manifest in infinite ways depending on the life and the last moments of the one who is ill.

NIGHT TERRORS

Night terrors occur when children or adults awaken with a terrible fright in the middle of the night. They come on suddenly with no previous history of such events and may be dismissed as nightmares. During sleep the astral body is traveling, and normal defenses are down. This is a type of soul loss that can become permanent if left untreated. Children are more susceptible because their *chu'lel* is soft.

Adults with night terrors may awaken from dark and scary dreams with severe heart palpitations and a sense of impending danger. Children and babies will scream and flail their arms and are unable to be comforted.

Night terrors may be caused by the presence of lost souls, ghosts, or recently departed loved ones who may have died violently or may be a symptom of evil magic or envy.