

PROPOSAL

Working title - 'The Healer'

Genre - Documentary

Length - Approx. 75 minutes

Production time - 1-2 years

Subject - A film about alternative healing, the people who practice it, and those who receive it.

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Synopsis - There's no script, just a process that will allow stories to emerge. I intend to visit healers with a video camera, ask them to describe and demonstrate what it is they do, and ask to be put in touch with the people that they practice upon, and then intuitively feel for the story that wants to emerge.

This process, and the chemistry of the person, place and time involved when I switch on the camera should create the conditions where information and stories can emerge quite naturally and spontaneously. Straight away it begs the questions - How and why the healer became a healer? What form of healing do they practice? How does it work? What can and can't it cure? What are the factors that influence which people and ailments a particular therapy can and cannot cure? What are the back-stories of the people who visit the healers? What are their ailments, and why did they first arise? What's the relationship between the healer and those they heal? And, how in the months that follow a healing session, do the clients respond to the various treatments? Are they cured, or do their ailments persist? Something strange or beautiful... funny or unexpected... dramatic or mysterious seems likely to occur during the course of shooting the film. And perhaps one particular character will emerge who is particularly captivating, like a golden thread in the tapestry of the film. This approach is a gamble, because it's like setting out in a ship with no charts for navigation, but that's also the beauty and the magic of the process, and the reason why I'm so eager to make the film. It's a tantalizing mystery waiting to be revealed.

What Therapies will I be Exploring? - All those commonly referred to as 'alternative', 'holistic' and 'complimentary'. Namely those that involve things like past and between life regressions, Reiki, Shamanic healing, kinesiology, pressure points, meridians, chakras, Chi, Prana, light, colour, sound, magnetism, crystals, herbs, consciousness, faith, belief, spiritual beings, the cleansing of malevolent entities, the manipulation of the body, and the laying on of hands. Anything that has the power to heal, that's not considered conventional Western medicine.

How will I find interviewees? - I intend to use four different channels to connect with alternative therapists and the people they treat. Firstly, I will simply research the therapists who advertise online and in local magazines and newspapers, and contact them directly by email and phone. Secondly, I will place ads in online forums, libraries, and local magazines and newspapers, asking for therapists and those who have interesting stories and first-hand experience of alternative healing to get in touch. Thirdly, by word of mouth, i.e. asking other therapists, people who have received therapy, and friends and colleagues if they know of any alternative healers or people with stories about healing who might be willing to speak on camera. And lastly, I've discovered a forum called the 'Positive Living Group', who meet once a month on the Island (see <https://en-gb.facebook.com/positiveliving.isleofwight/>) to listen to guest speakers talk about healing and holistic living, and to network and organise projects and events. I've made an agreement with the organiser of that forum to set-up a YouTube channel for them, film 12 talks over the next 12 months, and upload those talks to their new YouTube channel, to help them reach a much broader audience. The main benefit of attending these meetings will be to connect with alternative therapists and arrange interviews, but the organiser has also given permission for me to include sections of these talks in my film, should I wish to (assuming the various speakers give their permission).

Putting People at Ease - I realise that being interviewed on camera is an unusual and potentially uncomfortable situation. And so I try to make the process as painless as possible - even enjoyable. How? To begin with, I invite interviewees to choose the location of their interview, and suggest that they choose somewhere they feel comfortable. Secondly, it's just me that arrives, not a film crew with lots of bells and whistles, to minimise how intrusive the occasion feels. Thirdly, I use a very small set-up - just a little camera on one tripod, and microphone on another, no bright lights in people's faces for example. I try to create a situation that feels more like a friendly conversation, than a formal interview. In fact, people often forget that the camera's there after the first few minutes.

Establishing Trust - The process of documentary film-making creates an unusual dynamic. It connects strangers together for a brief moment in time, and asks for an deep and often personal exchange of information, before the two parties go their separate ways. A process that wouldn't be possible if trust couldn't be established, which is why trust is something that I'm extremely conscious of, and always trying to cultivate. Firstly, by speaking truthfully and always doing what I say I'm going to do, which I hope comes across to some degree when I meet people. Secondly, by having the right intentions - namely trying to affect positive change in the world, rather than trying to get rich or famous. I obviously want as many people as possible to watch my films, but I try to remove myself from the story, and always make my films freely available, rather than try to sell and make money from them. And lastly, I employ a series of safeguards, to ensure that interviewees retain control of their interview footage. These safeguards are as follows - I ask interviewees directly after an interview if there was anything that they did or said that they'd prefer to have edited out of the film. I also use my own discernment in the editing stage, and if I think a comment could potentially embarrass, upset, or harm an interviewee or another innocent party, then I will edit that part out. And

thirdly, I always show interviewees the edited footage of their interview, and give them a final opportunity to have edits made before the film's released, to help ensure there are no unpleasant surprises, and they can see exactly how they're going to be portrayed in the film.

These are the principles and procedures that I observe to help cultivate trust, and to express my appreciation of the time and valuable insights that others freely give.

How might this film benefit the world? - The more I learn about alternative therapies, the more convinced I become that they represent the future of healthcare. They're often cheaper, less invasive, involve fewer side-effects, and are more effective than their conventional counterparts. They tend to focus more on the causes of a disease, rather than the symptoms that arise from it, which seems to be a huge advantage over, and a monumental failing of conventional Western medicine. And it's by testing this hypothesis that I intend to create real value. If this hypothesis is proven true, then the film will have helped to demystify an extremely complex subject, and connect people that have ailments to the practitioners who can help them, and practitioners to the clients that they need to continue practicing their therapies. And should the hypothesis be proven false, and the information gathered suggest that alternative therapies are only effective in a small number of cases and to a limited degree, then I will have helped to educate people about the limitations of these therapies, so that they can avoid wasting their time and money on inappropriate and ineffective treatments. Either way, I'd consider the film to be of value to the world. But perhaps the greatest value will arise from the unexpected people and events still waiting to be revealed. I intend to work intuitively and spontaneously, and to seize all opportunities, and if feelings count for anything, I have a strong feeling that something intriguing may occur.