

AUTHOR INTERVIEW WITH DR. LOUISE MONTELLO

With Marguerite Dunne, WTBQ-AM1110 - Friday Round Table

Regarding Essential Musical Intelligence:
Using Music as Your Path to Healing, Creativity and Radiant Wholeness

Q: What is "Essential Musical Intelligence?"

LM: Essential Musical Intelligence, or EMI, is our innate ability to use music and sound to heal the body, mind and spirit. We can use music to instantly transform difficult, ineffective emotional states - pain, negative thoughts, painful feelings - as they come up in the moment so they don't block our creative energy.

Q: What's key here?

LM: Self-transformation and self-maintenance through one's conscious engagement with music and sound.

Q: What's the most important thing about EMI?

LM: There are a number of significant things. You can do it anywhere, anytime, by yourself or with others. You can also achieve self-healing through EMI. What leads to illness is the build up of body-mind stresses over the course of our lives. Music is an antidote to stress in that it provides a creative way of integrating body, mind, emotions, and spirit and allows you to become centered in the wholeness of your being. In addition, music and sound are always with you. You can instantly sing a song or hum a melody to counteract fear and/or negativity.

Q: How did you develop the concept of EMI?

LM: The six steps emerged from my clinical practice where I found that clients were experiencing spontaneous healing through using music and sound to transform negative states of mind. Over a five-year period of working with clients I began to analyze what exactly was creating these spontaneous healing experiences. And that's when I began to understand the incredible value of EMI and its six-step process.

Q: And what steps are those?

LM: The first step is becoming aware of the problem. One has to know that there is dissonance or an imbalance in the self in order to transform it. This step involves taking time throughout the day to stop and be aware of what is going on within the body-mind.

The second step involves your ability to affirm that you are precious and infinitely loved. This step is difficult for people who have been abused and/or have had their talents exploited by parents or teachers early in life.

Step three involves the discipline of taking responsibility for your mental, emotional and physical states - and believing that you can change inharmonious states. This step is also associated with the act of asking for help - trusting that you are not alone - that there are resources within us, particularly music and sound, that can help transform dissonant or inharmonic mind-body states.

Q: Who do you ask?

LM: You are literally asking for assistance from the source of healing within you - your own creative self - the part of you that knows exactly what you need. Who actually knows better what you need than you?

The fourth step involves activating the throat chakra - the center of expression and creativity. What I have found in my clinical work is that the throat chakra is really the place where transformation occurs. The throat chakra allows us to express the will of the divine, or the spiritual part of us, and what better way to do that than through music and sound.

The fifth step is to express yourself, to engage in some creative musical act that will transform the disharmonious energy within you.

Q: What do you mean by "creative act"?

LM: Either improvising, singing, turning on a piece of music, making a sound or drumming - whatever it is that you need to explore and release negative or blocked energy.

The sixth step is giving thanks for this wonderful gift of Essential Musical Intelligence, which has allowed you to heal a part of yourself that was out of balance with the whole.

Q: Yoga Sheaths - what do they have to do with EMI?

LM: The sheaths comprise the five realms of consciousness that form the foundation for human life - the Body, Breath, Mind, Intellect/Intuition and Bliss.

I use the sheaths as the framework for presenting EMI healing techniques throughout my book. In order to be completely balanced and whole, you must embrace using EMI on every level of being.

Q: So you use these six steps in every one of these realms?

LM: You activate the six steps every time you use any of the techniques in the book. The six steps are a way of preparing yourself for a transformational process.

Q: So then are what the specific teachings that you're talking about with the chakras?

LM: The chakras are a system for understanding the different realms of consciousness. From an EMI perspective, each chakra poses specific body-mind challenges that a person must work through in order to stay balanced and whole. My book revolves around the use of specific techniques to help you to work through those particular challenges on a chakra level.

Q: How have you incorporated the sheaths into the process?

LM: What I found in my clinical work is that most people do a little bit of healing on one level of being and then they get stuck. This happens because our issues do not just exist in the mind, or in the body, or in the emotions. They exist in all levels simultaneously. That is why I have organized the book around the yogic model of the "sheaths".

Q: How do the sheaths differ from the chakras? Or what is a chakra?

LM: Chakra is a Sanskrit word that means, "wheel of consciousness." According to the Eastern traditions, we have seven major chakras that are lined up along the spine at major nerve plexuses, from the base of the spine to the top of the head. Each of the chakras represent different stages where we enact the dramas of our lives, from the most primitive starting with the earth, water, and fire chakras, to the more evolved - the heart, throat, third-eye and crown center.

At each chakra level there are posed certain psychological or emotional challenges that we have to resolve before we can move to the next higher level of consciousness. Music is a great way for us to recognize and understand those emotional dilemmas and to creatively transform them.

Q: How do you do that?

LM: One way that I describe in my book is to take a look at the music you are attracted to

in your life. Music reflects the state of our inner life. For example if you're always drawn to listen to sad music, this suggests where your chakra energy may be fixated or blocked. Sadness, for example, could be related to second chakra, which has to do with relationships, longing, pleasure. And at a higher level it may have something to do with the throat chakra, which is associated with the emotion of grief and longing for the divine.

Q: So we look at music we're attracted to and then what?

LM: We look at the music that we're attracted to and that gives us a readout of what's going on in our unconscious. Once you become aware of unresolved issues in your emotional life, you can then use music as a way of exploring and transforming these issues. For example, if you're always attracted to sad music, what would happen if you created your own song that explored that sadness, or listened to a piece of music that you might avoid listening to, perhaps a happy piece of music, or improvised music that explores the dynamics of your sadness. Improvisation is a way of transforming the sadness, going into it, exploring it, and allowing the music to take you where you need to go, which is often a transformational experience.

Q: I still don't quite understand how this works, how music helps us heal. Can you flesh that out a bit?

LM: Well one of the major ways that we heal is making what is unconscious conscious. Most illnesses, most psychological problems, most relationship problems involve repressed or unacknowledged emotions and memories. Music is a way of bypassing the defenses of the conscious mind and getting to those repressed, unconscious feelings, thoughts and memories. Once we start to externalize the things that we fear, the things that we hide, then true healing is possible. It's not a quick fix kind of therapy. It's going to require some time.

Q: How much time are we talking about?

LM: However long it takes a person to explore and work through painful feeling states.

Q: I've heard you say this cuts psychotherapy time in half.

LM: It certainly does because in most forms of psychotherapy it takes awhile to get to the unconscious/nonverbal levels. In talk therapy, the patient sets up all kinds of defenses that are expressed through words, but with music you bypass the defenses of the conscious, rational mind and go directly to the emotional centers of the brain where most of our health problems originate.

Q: What kind of music helps us heal?

LM: That's a good question. There's no particular music that will heal every one person. That is why it's so important to understand your own consciousness, where your blocks are, where your chakra issues are. And the book will show you how to choose music that matches particular chakra energies, along with specific kinds of emotions and images. You can then use this music to actually unlock hidden or blocked areas in the psyche.

Q: That sounds kind of scary. I put a piece of music on and I open something I've repressed all my life?

LM: Haven't you had that experience where music altered your state of consciousness, affected your emotions?

Q: Well, yes, for a second but then the record's over and I'm back to where I was.

LM: Well that's the difference between the concept of EMI and just listening to music. When you use EMI you are consciously asking for a healing experience to occur through your engagement with music. You have to want to learn something about yourself from your musical interaction or you're not really engaging EMI.

Q: Match the kind of music I listen to with my emotional needs? Janis Joplin one day, Nine Inch Nails the next?

LM: There are two processes in the book that you will discover as you read. The first is learning how to choose music to balance your breath/energy currents, which again are related to emotional states.

Q: What kind of music would that be?

LM: Well there are five different breath energy states within our body-mind. Each breath energy state is related to particular kinds of music. So for example prana is a breath energy state that's associated with inhalation, taking in, filling up. So certain kinds of music would allow us to have that experience. For example, Bach's Air on a G String, or Pachelbel's Canon. These are uplifting pieces of music that you can use to create balance within your energy system.

Q: This sounds like The Mozart Effect? How is EMI different?

LM: From what I understand, The Mozart Effect is associated with listening to Mozart as a way of making you smarter. I believe that it is limited to cognitive, mental effects and intelligence. EMI deals with the body, spirit, and mind.

Q: Let's talk about healing the body. How does that work?

LM: I have a client who had recurring migraines. She had tried every medical and alternative technique possible - medication, biofeedback, meditation, relaxation - and nothing seemed to work. So she came in to see me and said, "I'm at the end of my rope, What should I do? I love music. How can I use music to help my migraines?" With people who have body-mind issues I often prescribe toning as a way of externalizing energy blocks that occur in different parts of the body. I asked my client to still her mind using Witnessing Technique that I write about in the book, and to tune in deeply into the painful area. After a few seconds she heard this very high pitched EEE sound and she started making the sound. I believe that EEE sound matched the vibration of the blood as it rushes up to the head in someone who has a migraine. So she connected with the sound of her migraine. And then the transformational aspect of EMI emerged where she was actually able to take the sound and bring it down into her belly where it was transformed from an EEE to an OOOHH (like OM) sound, which literally changed her physiological state and ended the intense pain of her migraine. All of this took about five minutes of her time. And she discovered it on her own. I didn't tell her, "Oh you need to make an EEE sound on the F note above middle C," or whatever. She found it within herself.

Q: Can just regular folks really do that?

LM: I have done this with hundreds of people around the world and everyone is always shocked that they can transform their own physical state through sound. But when you think about it, the body-mind is all vibration. So if you can get your mind out of the way, and allow your intuition to find the right sound, then you can heal yourself. Most of the EMI techniques involve stilling the mind before you can get to those inner states of wisdom - those intuitive states where we know that we can heal ourselves. We all have an "inner physician" within us.

Q: My mind chatters all the time. Do I have to be a meditator to be able to do this?

LM: The book takes you through a series of music and sound techniques, meditation, and body- mind awareness exercises to allow your mind to become more focused and still. As you read, you will be guided on a systematic, yet playful journey that prepares you to achieve deeper states of health and wholeness. Meditation can help you in this process but it's not necessary.

Q: Is this something I can do myself with the book or do I have to go to an EMI

practitioner?

LM: The book provides a systematic method for self-healing. If you follow each of the steps and do the practices, you will be able to use EMI effectively in your daily life. I think it could be helpful if you do these techniques with another person - a practitioner or a friend - to reinforce your skills or to do them in a group as a way of healing each other. It's always nice to have support. But it is possible to do these techniques alone.

Q: What other issues can EMI help me deal with?

LM: Everything from addiction to speaking in public to shaky relationships. You can use EMI with any problem in almost any situation.

Q: What do you mean "almost any situation?"

LM: All these techniques would need to be done in safe environment, where you felt you had the time and support to really go through a process of externalizing emotions, feelings, and memories and ultimately catharsis through your engagement with music. The EMI techniques are tools for self-exploration and healing and should be done in a sacred space.

Q: Does it take a lot of time to do this? Is this something you have to do everyday?

LM: What I've found in my life and in my clinical practice is that usually transformation through music and sound usually takes from between 10 to 45 minutes.

Q: And you have to do this everyday?

LM: You do it when you feel you have a need for it. When you recognize that you're feeling out of balance or have emotions that are plaguing you, when you feel stuck and can't get through your anger or your sadness, when you're feeling fearful and you don't know why, or you're feeling a pain in your back that won't go away after a bodywork session, when you're feeling lost and hopeless, or even when you're feeling good but want to feel even better - those are the times to tune in EMI.

Q: I can't play music and I have a terrible voice; how am I supposed to use EMI?

LM: One of the main objectives of this book is to inspire the reader to play music or improvise. Many people hear the word "improvisation" and they get frightened, but we all improvise. Anytime you're waiting for the bus and humming a tune, or you're mindlessly beating out rhythms on your desk, that's improvisation. Your body is making spontaneous music. EMI is simply a way of becoming conscious of your body's natural inclination to create sound, to create music. So whenever somebody tells me that they can't sing or they can't play music I don't believe them because everyone that I've ever worked with has the capacity to create music either through singing, toning, or drumming. Everyone can play simple instruments like the autoharp, xylophones, kazoos, shaker eggs, penny whistles or recorders.

Q: You say improvisation is just drumming on the desk but do you mean you just work with someone's drumming on the desk?

LM: When someone drums on the desk there is a bodily impulse that wants to express itself. With EMI I'm asking you to focus on that impulse and grab a drum or grab a percussion instrument and let yourself go with that impulse and see where it takes you.

I had a client who had AIDS (Kaposi's sarcoma) and he had been going through all kinds of holistic treatments to stop its progression. When he entered therapy with me, he was working very hard at being positive and happy. He thought his role in life was to make everybody feel good and to never admit to having any negative feelings. One day he came in and he was upset for the first time. He was angry. He had discovered two new lesions on his shoulder. I provoked him to explore his anger, to tell me more. I asked him how he wanted to express that anger. He grabbed an African drum, and just started tapping on it, spontaneously, without my suggesting anything. After about a minute of tapping the drum,

suddenly a whole other kind of music came through him - his passion started to flow. He was drumming from his guts. As he got in touch with that powerful part of himself - the rageful part, wild part - he broke into tears and sobbed uncontrollably for about ten minutes without stopping. Afterwards, he was amazed. He had never experienced a catharsis like that in his life - and it came through the music, through his own inner healer that guided him to do what he needed to do. And, lo and behold, the next week when he came in for his session, he was smiling from ear to ear. His lesions had disappeared.

Q: Are you saying you can cure AIDS with EMI?

LM: That's a big claim to make. I am saying you can facilitate mind-body healing through EMI.

Q: You can cure diseases and tumors?

LM: There's research that shows that a lot of autoimmune illnesses and 80% of all illnesses are stress related. So yes, when we can release emotional stress we can heal the body-mind.

Q: We're just about out of time. What do you want listeners to come away with?

LM: The key thing is that you don't have to be a musician to use this book. You can activate EMI yourself. And you don't really need to buy any expensive supplements or drugs or equipment. You just need a couple of simple instruments, a tape player or CD player and you're on your way. But the thing you have to acknowledge is that you have to practice EMI on a daily basis in order for deep healing to occur. Deep healing is not necessarily an easy process. The more you practice EMI, the easier it will become and the more balance and harmony you will feel in your life. Do follow the steps. This book provides a systematic program that has worked quite well with many of my students and clients. If you follow the system that is outlined in my book, you will heal and ultimately reach levels of bliss that you never dreamed possible.