

My Dolphin Mentor

By John Upledger, DO, OMM

Since my first dolphin experience in 1954, I have had a strong intuitive and instinctive desire to do more with these wonderful beings. My first encounters occurred somewhere in the middle of the Gulf of Mexico.

I was in the U.S. Coast Guard at the time, and our ship's captain would announce swim calls over the loud speaker. It was as though the dolphins heard the announcements and came to protect us. Oddly, I felt very safe and connected swimming 100+ miles offshore, even when we had seen sharks in the vicinity earlier.

Off and on over the next 30 years, I had so many positive dolphin encounters that my interest was well-maintained. Then, in 1996, we at The Upledger Institute had the good fortune to start a dolphin-therapist CranioSacral Therapy (CST) program in Grassy Key, Florida. The format was to float a patient in about four feet of water with three therapists working on the patient at the same time. Usually we had one therapist at the patient's head, another at the feet and a third at the pelvis. This left one side of the patient's body free for any dolphin that desired to join in the process. Never did we experience a dolphin's contribution as less than equal to our own.

We worked together with dolphins this way over a four-month period. During this time, I became very friendly with a particular dolphin named AJ. Actually, AJ initiated our relationship and I was more than happy to accommodate him. He would often lie very still in the water next to me while I was working with a patient. I could feel his presence even when we were not in physical contact with each other.

On one occasion, a trainer who had been observing from the pier suggested that I simply extend my left hand, palm down, upon the surface of the water. Within seconds, AJ was under my hand. He began moving so that my hand, which I held still, was rubbing up and down his back. Then he did something quite surprising. He put his blowhole - his breathing aperture - under my hand so that my palm covered it. Lore has it that you must never touch a dolphin's blowhole. Apparently the trainer agreed, because she nearly became hysterical. During her 18 years of experience with dolphins, this had never happened before. She later explained that you never touch the blowhole because the dolphin might go into a frenzy. With such powerful, energetic creatures, that could get very dangerous.

In any case, AJ kept his blowhole under my hand for a minute or so. Then he began moving his body fore and aft again for awhile before he left. During our contact, it felt as though his energy went through me. I felt empowered, and I had an innate sense that I would be able to tap into this vibrational energy and use it in the future as it seemed appropriate. Indeed, I did use it (and frequently still do) while working back on dry land at our clinic in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida. The use of this energy had become rather automatic for me. I didn't think about it much after our work with the dolphins at Grassy Key was over for the winter.

That spring, I flew to Edinburgh, Scotland, to conduct a symposium. There were about 70 therapists there, all of whom had completed intermediate-level studies in CranioSacral Therapy. At symposiums, I work on patients with difficult case histories who have been recommended by attendees. I think aloud as I evaluate and treat the patients, often inviting their therapists to join me in a "multiple-hands" therapy process.

During the morning of my second day there, I was working with a young boy who had suffered from cerebral palsy since birth. I encountered a very strong resistance to physiological motion in his head. This resistance was in the horizontal component of the intracranial membrane system (the dura mater of the tentorium cerebelli). Since I was working in a train-of-thought mode, I said aloud, "I'm going to use some dolphin energy here." The therapeutic energy input increased significantly at this time.

Ironically, during the lunch break, the audio-recording technician told me that as I applied the "dolphin energy," the static in his recording also increased significantly. He later reported that same effect each time I applied that energy over the course of the day.

After the symposium, I was approached by a conservatively dressed woman who appeared to be in her 60s. She informed me that she was a professor of physical therapy at the university in Edinburgh. She also told me she did not believe in anything that had not passed the rigors of scientific testing. Then, in a rather distressed voice, she explained that she, too, had heard the static of the dolphin energy through her hearing aid, which she had been using for over 20 years. She had never heard anything like this before. She said the static continued as I recruited dolphin energy throughout the third and final day of the symposium.

About a month after returning home from Scotland, I received a letter from the skeptical physical therapy professor. She told me that she was still did not believe in dolphin energy, but she also felt compelled to let me know that four days after the symposium, she discovered that she no longer needed her hearing aid. She said she could now hear a watch ticking with what was once her deaf ear.

She wanted me to explain what had happened. But by then, I had learned that there are many useful things you can rely on, but still can't explain. Among these are gravity, some electrical phenomena, and perhaps dolphin energy.

Thank you, AJ. You rank among my greatest mentors.