

## The Journey from Head to Heart

In William Sloane Coffin's book *Credo* he makes the statement, "The longest, most arduous trip in the world is often the journey from the head to the heart. Until that round trip is completed, we remain at war with ourselves. And, of course, those at war with themselves are apt to make casualties of others including friends and loved ones."

As I think about this statement in relationship to individuals, I also realize that many systems with which we work are not connected to the heart, but totally to the mind. The one that I am most involved with is the broken healthcare system our president is trying so hard to repair. There are many physicians and other practitioners who are deeply concerned about our healthcare system and we have been asked to bring our knowledge and expertise to the table so the government can better understand how it can be healed.

In order to do this, the statement from William Coffin is vital to making a paradigm shift. In my experience, ever since World War II, healthcare has been directed completely and totally from the "mind"; a lot of attention has been placed on repairing the physical heart or body, but the emotional mind of the heart has been neglected. Medical students are not being taught about the importance of the trip from the head to the heart.

I was talking to a senior medical student recently. She is going to be starting her residency in June in obstetrics and gynecology. That morning at Grand Rounds, she presented the case of a family she had been working with for the last three months. The family discovered the baby had congenital deformities, but they decided to continue the pregnancy. However, at



*It seems to me that our broken medical system will never be repaired until we consciously take the journey from the head to the heart.*

asked her if the baby had a harelip. The medical student was at a loss to answer because she had not focused in on the physical aspects of the dead baby, but had all of her attention on what was going on with the parents. The baby was handed to the mother all wrapped with very little of him showing, so that the physical aspects of the delivery were very, very secondary to the emotional, heartfelt life that the parents were going through. The attending physician's comments were that the student had not done her work well since her focus was on the "heart" of the situation and not just the pathology of the process.

Our medical systems are so focused on pathology, particularly at a physical level, that it is very hard for us to take this journey from the head to the heart. We have to consciously take this jour-

ney if we are to repair this broken medical system. The head and mind are essential in dealing with diseases and pathology, but the heart and spirit are essential in dealing with the lives that people live. This young student had done it instinctively.

My foundation is helping the children of leper parents in India. Roni, a young man we were putting through dental school, was killed in a tragic accident last winter. While he was using his mind to learn the practice of dentistry, his heart was so wide open that when he found two young boys in Hardwar whose parents were lepers, he took them with him to dental school and raised them as his own. Those two boys are now with his parents and are being raised in the children's home. Roni knew that while his mind was being educated and developed, he also needed to keep his