

Back at Home

(Therapeutic Drumming Chronicles)

The tears appear when the brain thinks and sweats too much...so the sweat goes through eyes as tears.

-11 years old child

"Hello Martin, I was a participant in Insight 4 Seminars. Before your rhythm session, something unleashed in me and I cried three days in a row. At your session also cried to a certain point, but after a while everything stopped and I was very relieved. I would like to ask if you can explain what exactly stopped my tears and what is related to all this? Sincerely, Tanya"

The "Insight Seminars - US" branch in Bulgaria was conducting its annual "Insight 4" event. This is a one-month intensive program which includes also a highly emotional rhythm experience. I have the honor to be the Drum Facilitator who is involved in these filled with pure and positive energy events. Tanya's case was part of my second participation in the program.

The first thing I noticed in the drum circle was the crying woman. She seemed emotionally devastated. She was crying so hard that the tears drummed in sync with her hands. I thought for a second that I and the entire sound

cascade were the reason for all that, but it did not seem likely. I felt the reason for these unleashed strong emotions is long-standing. Although there were more than 60 people in the circle, I did my best to pay special attention to the women. I emphasized my attention to her with eye contact, smiles and more energy in the body language. Gradually the sounds, rhythms, and cheerful group vibration drained the rain in her eyes and the sun rose on her pale face. She was already smiling and enthusiastically resonated with the fresh mood of the group. I looked for her after the rhythm session, but she had disappeared without a trace...

I received Tanya's letter a month after the event and cheerfully answered.

I am glad the rhythm has created such a positive transformation on you. We are born pure and happy. This is our home state and our true nature. At that place, we feel comfortable and cozy. Remember your moments as a child. Over the years, under the influence of various processes and the effort to satisfy our "urgent needs" as adults, we get lost. Very often between us and our true essence opens a gap. The primordial nature of the rhythm gives a real opportunity to rebuild the damaged bridges with our true nature and beauty. When we return again to our home, we feel protected, comforted and happy, surrounded by the family love. I have seen this process take time and effort, but at the same time I have also witnessed how vibrations of the drum dispel the fears and inhibitions in minutes. That happened to you, Tanya.

During group drum playing, a unique process can be observed. Borne aloft on the wings of rhythm, we are on the one hand carried into the realm of vibrations, while on the other hand remaining in the here and now. Although we use our motor movements to create a rich sound palette in space with a wide range of dynamics and amplitude, we are also witnesses to our silent mind and silent brain. The internal dialogs cease, we have immersed our ego in the present moment and without realizing it, we perceive the pure vibrations of other people. Our conscious mind is open to accepting the unique nature of

each other person in the group and our reactions are a sign of accepting actual reality. Fear and doubts disappear, since no one is testing us, pointing at us or condemning us.

We are participating in a creative process, using our unique internal voices which create an inimitable sound picture. These are magic moments in which the participants are purified under the influence of vibrations.

Tanya's reply was quick.

How interesting... it seems that the rhythm helps to return home. And by "home" you mean heart...? Thank you for your help Martin!

Yes, Tanya had understood what I meant by this metaphor which was leading to the heart as our home. In the dynamics and confusion of modern life, we frequently forget some very simple and evident truths. It seems to have become "fashionable" for hyperactive brain activity to lead us into endless labyrinths of thoughts about whether we are valuable, valid, financial and socially competitive in this confused and messed-up world.

At the fast rate of the life we are living, we do not pick up the impulses and signals which are sent to us by the source of our real nature, life, purity, and love. Our hearts seem less and less to take part in our "thought processes", spontaneous actions and decision-taking. The metronome which measures the tempo of our life has long ago been lost under the cobwebs of our rational minds. We wander away from home, undergoing countless mishaps and hazards. We encounter misunderstanding, we feel alienated, but continue to wander, intoxicated by our own delusions.

"What is to be back at home?" and "What is home?" – I googled these two questions with intention, to get some independent of my consciousness answers. I wanted to go deeper in the subject and do serious research of the phenomena **rhythm – heart – home**.

To my amazement, a lot of materials and essays appeared on the screen. I was even more satisfied when by the younger age of the authors I realized that they are still closer to home and have not lost in the physical and spiritual sense. Here are brief excerpts from their filled with pure feelings and emotions works:

A homeless person is like a tree without roots. The home and the family are the most important support for a person. Our home gives us security and family support. The home gives us warmth on cold days and our family warms our hearts with love. They give us everything and we have to love and appreciate them because what would we be without them...drifters without purpose.

Home is where the heart is. Pictures, rooms, furniture which become part of you. The familiar smell when you open the door.

There are people with a lot of houses, but without home!

Behind the walls of our home, we feel relaxed. We can take away our masks and be real without makeup. When we are outside, we do not dare to show these feelings, but at home with our family, we relax and pour out our feelings freely.

The home is the place where we feel comfortable. This is our place of residence. The whole family gathers home after a tiring day. This is the place where I feel comfortable and where I sense the warmth of the people around me. The home is a place where everyone has the freedom of action and allows you to realize what is missing and to understand and fix the mistakes that you made during the day. I feel secure there. Many people have no home and that makes them defenseless to attack of others. In the home environment person gets the love that he/she needs to survive in the cruel outside world. You can find peace and sanity at your home and family atmosphere.

In my home I find peace, protection, attention and care of my parents. My home charges me with energy and makes me remember the beautiful moments of my childhood.

As you probably could see and sense, the keywords for equality between home and heart are love, *peace, protection, attention, care, comfort, warmth, freedom, security* and *support*. They are the absolute opposite of what we feel far from home. But while we can easily understand what we feel when we are closer or away from home, what actually happens in our bodies? If the heart is "home", then where is the place which is away from home? Does it something to do with the relationship between the brain and the heart, or lack thereof?

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Let's start with the brain, which is divided into two basic parts – emotional (instinctive, intuitive) and cognitive (conscious, rational). The first one which we "share" with all the mammals, and in some parts with the reptiles, is responsible for the survival and is closely attached to the body. The second one is aimed towards the outside world and it is called the "new brain" or "neocortex". It has evolved for millions of years and embraces the first one. It is also called "limbic brain". The emotional brain comes from ancient times and keeps the features of our ancestors. According to Darwin, evolution of a species consists of maintaining certain physical characteristics and gradually adding new. Many experts believe that we humans are doomed to live with encrypted in us features of the animals that have preceded us in the evolutionary process.

But do you think the expression "doomed" is the correct one?

Are we supposed to feel fated because we bear the “scars” of our mothers, fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers? After all, they are our family, which is deeply in our hearts and provides warmth, peace, love and security. We associate those people with the place we were born and carefully raised. This is our home. Instead of feeling “doomed”, we should rather be proud of bearing the signs of our kind and love, respect and take care of them. Probably, it is not very clear what all this has to do with the monkeys and the reptiles? At first glance a close relationship between our family and them is not obvious. Although, if we look at the issue globally and if we carefully trace the evolutionary chain, we will not only determine how close we are, but we will recall who our real home is. Leaving layer by layer the development of our existence back in time, we will inevitably come to it. It is the only and pure Nature. Our emotional brain brings deep memories of this home. Very often we remain breathless at the sight of beautiful landscapes and we are even more emotionally touched if they are connected to the place where we were born. With the evolution of consciousness and the development of the neocortex, these memories gradually fade out and push us away from home. I will illustrate all this with an example of an evolutionary process of consciousness associated with the telecommunications.

With the emergence and spread of writing, in parallel manner develops the communication over long distances. For thousands of years the messengers delivered letters for months, weeks or days until we get to the remarkable 1753. For the first time into the world appeared the theory of the telegraph. After that year we can observe the following development:

Invention or Development	Authors, Places and Dates
Theory of telegraph	Anonymous (1753) Bozolus (1767)

Optical telegraph	Chappe, Paris – Lille (1794) Sweden (1794)
Electrical telegraph	Morse (1835) Washington – Baltimore line (1843)
Telephone	Bell’s patent application (1876) First telephone station (in U.S., 1878)
Radio	First regular broadcast (in U.S., 1910; in Germany, 1913)
Television	First public broadcast (in U.K., 1936) First color TV broadcast (in U.S., 1954)
Computer networks	Internet (1992) Global television channels Mobile telephones

Fig. 1

This table shows through the eyes of telecommunications the technology advances over the past 250 years.

While the tempo of the great period before 1753 moves in relatively slow and undefined pattern of development, from the first idea of telegraph to computers, Internet and mobile phones, rhythm creates a pyramid shape – each discovery and its application takes less and less time. In other words, faster tempo, more information and... as a consequence, increasing needs to successfully absorb and process all this information. Decisively, during all these years, variety of other needs inevitably and continuously grow as an avalanche. That includes objects and services necessary to satisfy our caprices. Not surprisingly, these 250 years are part of the period of 400 years, during which the scientific world has led us to the conviction that the universe represents a mechanical system comprised of stable elemental “building blocks” and reality is that which is measurable and perceivable by our five senses. We are all pupils of the materialistic teaching that the only valid approach to the acquisition of knowledge is to reject all feelings and subjectivity and to be completely rational

and objective. This attitude to the world treats the mind and the body as separate units and divides their essence. Moreover, it declares feelings, thoughts, emotions, intuition and imagination to be worthless. This fact is rooted in the general reasons for leaving our home. The neocortex surrounds and suffocates more and more the emotional brain. Its growth and development takes us away from home. Similar to a microprocessor its six separate neural layers care for optimal data processing. This is the data of the huge and increasingly growing volume of information which is "vital" for satisfying our material whims. In this consumer marathon, evolutionary ride and race we completely lose ourselves. The moving away from home happens on 3 basic levels which creates a micro/macrocosm scale:

- alienation of our global home – The Earth;
- alienation of our family home – The Kin;
- alienation of our personal physical home – The Heart.

Along with this chronic amnesia to which the materialist model drives us, it has done nothing to free human life from suffering, poverty, illness and injustice. On the contrary, year after year these problems have become exacerbated and grown like a tumour in the organism of our planet.

By saying all that, it is not my intention to go against the technical progress, evolutionary trends and rational functions of our brain. But the more we enter into the world of technology, the greater should be our relationship with the Nature (take "nature" both as literally as an expression of the roots of our true nature and beauty). When both brains function against each other we feel in conflict with our self and the outside world. Here is what the psychiatrist David Servan-Schreiber thinks about this process:

Both parts of the brain (emotional and cognitive) receive incoming information from the outside world almost simultaneously. From now on, they

can either cooperate or contest the control of thoughts, emotions and behaviors. The result of this interaction is cooperation or competition which determines what we feel about our relationship with the world and the other people. The various forms of rivalry make us unhappy. Conversely, when the emotional and cognitive brains work together- the first one (emotional) to give direction of what we want to live through and the second one (cognitive) to move us forward on this path in the most reasonable way, we feel inner harmony - "in my life, I'm where I want to be," and that is the foundation of any long lasting experience of inner comfort.

Do you recognize the place Dr. Servan-Schreiber talks about? Is this the place we all yearn to be and where we feel comfortable? Of course, this is our home. The balance between the two brains establishes the relationship between the rational and the heart, where the emotional brain plays intermediary function. On the other hand, it is well known the stress is the scourge of the modern society. It leads to a significant disbalance in the relationship between emotional and cognitive brain, which affects negatively the first one. The destruction of this relationship also destroys the role of the emotional brain as an intermediary. The heart suffers and eventually wears out. All this leads to serious health problems.

Is this a two-way relationship? Does the heart also affect the brain somehow?

In recent years, many neurologists and cardiologists firmly defend the idea that there is an integral system "heart-brain" in which emotions constantly affect our brain, and vice versa.

At the end of the XIX century the founder of the American psychology, William James expresses the claim that we do not feel emotions in our heads, but in your bodies. According to the "Harvard" professor, the very emotion is more a state of the body and only then - sensation in the brain. All this can be explained by ordinary experience of our emotions, or how our body reacts to

different situations caused by them. Many times, when we are in love or we are nervous, we say we have "butterflies in our stomach". When we feel fear we have "stomach ache". And when we are happy and filled with hope, we feel "we have wings to fly". These expressions very accurately characterize our feelings when we are in different emotional states.

As confirmation of the above, it was found that the intestines and heart have their own networks of several tens of thousands of neurons. They function as "small minds" in the body. They are able to have their own feelings, they can change their behavior depending on them, and even to transform their selves as a result of certain experiences. In other words, they can form their own memories.

This is what Dr. Servan-Schreiber writes in connection to the fact that the heart functions as a small hormone factory:

The heart secretes its own reserve of adrenaline, which is released when it needs to operate with maximum capacity. It also secretes and controls the release of another hormone – ANF (atrial natriuretic factor), which regulates the blood pressure. Finally, it secretes its own supply of oxytocin – the hormone of love. It is released in the blood in such cases as when the mother breastfeeds her child, two people flirting, or during orgasm. These hormones directly affects on the brain functioning. The heart has senses and can really feel. When it expresses itself, it affects the whole physiology of our body, starting from the brain.

No doubt, the two-way link between the "small brain" of the heart and the emotional brain is a key factor for achieving a balance in the "heart-brain" system. This is due to the fact that "autonomic nervous system", as the strongest link in this connection, regulates all our organs, and neither the will, nor our mind can handle this function very well. But besides the influence that the heart receives from the central nervous system, it has the ability to send to

the base of the skull nerve impulses which control the brain activity. In other words, when the heart works reliably or when gets upset, it inevitably also drags the emotional brain with it.

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How could we know if our heart is upset or it function normally?

Actually, there is a device that can give us precise information about our heart rhythm. It's called "biofeedback" and it is very good example of how technology and our natural rhythms can be mutually balanced and go hand in hand. Biofeedback technology uses sophisticated electronic equipment to measure and monitor changes in our internal physiological states. The measurements offer insight into what's going on energetically in our bodies, and provide a platform on which we can make positive changes to our mental, physical and emotional states.

By using the biofeedback device we can find our way back to the heart (home), and its power could make us feel more confident and stable when it is necessary to "leave it" for a while.

A few years ago, I was a representative of the U.S. company Wild Devine and their product "Relaxing Rhythms" for Bulgaria. "Relaxing Rhythms" is a comprehensive wellness program with biological feedback created with the expert guidance from renowned wellness leaders, including Deepak Chopra, M.D., Dean Ornish, M.D. and Andrew Weil, M.D.

The program includes **iom** hardware along with interactive software that allows users to explore the mind-body connection in real time. The iom is a consumer electronic device that uses finger sensors to transmit, in real-time,

your levels of stress, tension, excitement, or calmness to the software installed on your computer.

“Healing Rhythms” measures two critical components of our physiology: Skin Conductance Level (SCL) and Heart Rate Variability (HRV). SCL measures sweat gland activity through increased perspiration in your fingertips as it rises and falls with your physical and mental stress. The increased perspiration is an indication of enhanced activity of the autonomic nervous system which is associated with increased energy. This energy might be positive, for example excitement, or negative, such as anxiety. HRV is more complex measurement that indicates the variable time between heart beats. In a state of stress, anxiety, depression or anger rests between the heart beats become irregular (chaotic). In a state of internal comfort, compassion, love or gratitude, the variability is coherent – there is an even alternation of acceleration and deceleration of the heart rhythm.

That coherence quickly affects the emotional brain, gives him security and signals that with the physiology everything is fine. The emotional brain reacts to this message, enhancing the cardiac coherence.

In connection to all this, I allowed myself to conduct the following experiment. I asked six years old child and forty two years old man to draw sea waves. Look at both paintings and the graph depicting the heart rhythm coherence:

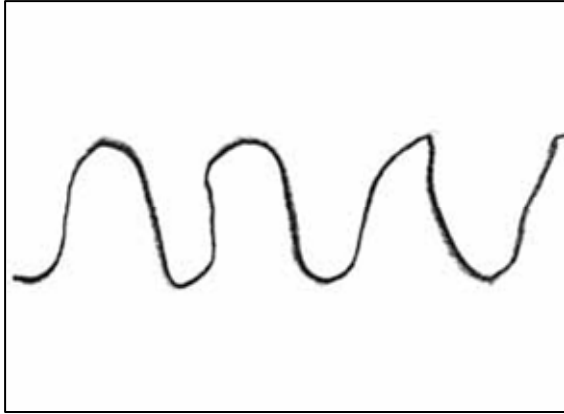


Fig. 2

Sea waves drawn by 6 years old child.



Fig. 3

Sea waves drawn by 42 years old man.

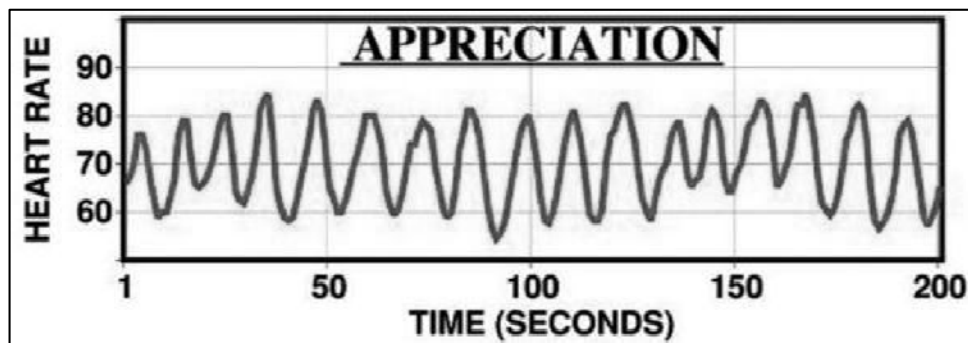


Fig. 4

The heart rhythm is in coherence state.

It turns out that the child's notion of sea waves is very close to the state of heart coherence, or to our comfort zone. This experiment is deeply connected to my concepts of emotional rhythmic patterns which I describe in my book "Rhythm Alchemy: In Search of the Philosopher's Stone".

Here's how our senses perceive the rhythmic pattern of PEACE:

Imagine you are resting on the warm sand with your eyes closed. You breathe in the salty sea air and enjoy the slow, leisurely rhythm of the incoming and retreating waves. I hope it will not be difficult to determine this emotion as PEACE.



Fig. 5

It is interesting that a child sees and feels the waves in the same way they symbolize the feeling of physical and mental health. It is remarkable how the graphic idea corresponds to a graph of coherent variability in our heart. This actually shows that children in every way feel at home. The same we could see in excerpts from their writings at the beginning of this article.

Observing the picture of the man, without difficulty, we can note its distance from the comfort of home. In this case the graphic expression becomes more complicated, troublesome and serrated. In these rising, raging and menacing waves, we cannot see and feel a certain rhythm. They rather evoke sense of anxiety, chaos and storm.

Let us now turn our attention to the emotional rhythmic pattern of ANGER as I describe it in the book "Rhythm Alchemy":

Huge black storm clouds are approaching dangerously, creating an eerie crescendo of sound. The chilling tension explodes in relentless thunder rending the sky and lightning piercing the ground. The roar of the explosion echoes in space and with its low menacing vibrations makes us tremble.



Fig. 6

For the purpose of this discussion, it will be useful to look at this picture with thunder positioned in the horizontal way. Now, let's compare the picture with the graph of the heart rate in a state of chaos:

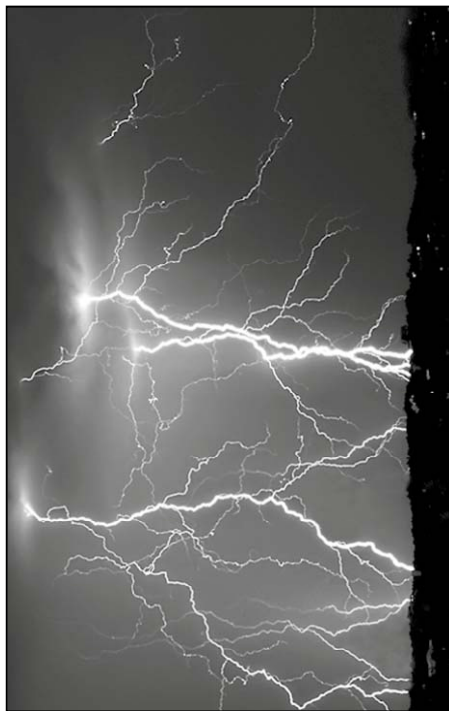


Fig. 7

Photo of thunder turned horizontally - sky (left) and ground (right).



Fig. 8

The heart rhythm is in chaos state.

No doubt, we can find very close resemblance between the two illustrations that represent anger, anxiety and stress.

It turns out that the graphics that represents the rhythm of our heart possess similar expressions in a wider spectrum, which is the Nature. Assuming the heart is our home, in its equality with Nature, once again we find evidence that the very Nature is also our home in a more global aspect. In this example, we can sense the pulse of the ancient hermetic "Principle of Correspondence", which states:

As above, so below; as below, so above.

Particle of our heart is encrypted in the universe and the universe vibrates rhythmically in our heart.

Let us go back to the biofeedback device. Its great feature is not just connected to the ability to monitor the heart rate, but also to teach us how to change this rhythm in a positive direction. After many biofeedback experiments, I found out that only by few very simple breathing exercises and just by "painting" a positive thought in mind, chaotic rhythm can be transformed into heart coherence. In recent years numerous studies show that positive emotions such as gratitude, joy and love in particular, contribute most to the heart coherence. However, the reverse effect is also valid - when you are anxious, stressed out, or upset, the smooth and regular waves become jagged and jerky. In this case the reason is the negative emotions such as anger, fear, sadness, hatred, anxiety, or even the most ordinary burning issues.

Now is the time to share with you three very easy breathing techniques that are part of the program "Relaxing Rhythms" and can quickly take you to the state of smooth waves:

- Imagine a big, beautiful and colorful butterfly. It slowly opens and closes its wings. Each of these actions is 5 seconds long, or 10 seconds total. Take a deep breath (5 seconds) and slowly exhale (also 5 seconds), while synchronizing both actions with imaginary closing and opening wings (Fig. 9). Establish firm and steady rhythm. In the program, this butterfly is animated. You can watch the flowing movements and adjust your breathing with them.



Fig. 9

- Once you have this rhythm established, just fly freely on the wings of peace and ease. Then imagine you breathe through your heart. This rhythmically pulsating organ processes inhaled air and sends it with a new and fresh power into the space. Try to hear and feel the tempo of the two different rhythms (breath–slower and heartbeat–faster), as a part of you.
- Gradually feel the warmth and expansion in your chest. Encourage this feeling through your breathing and thoughts. This is most easily achieved if you create in your mind a sense of gratitude and love. Imagine something you really love. It could be man/woman, favorite animal, dream, or even a better world.

In these three exercises we can see and feel the balanced relationship between the heart and brain. Dr. Servan-Schreiber describes the result as "a smile born in the chest and blossomed on the face" – the simple sign that coherence has been established.

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The same smile blossomed on Tanya's face in exactly the same way. I could notice remarkable transformation on her physical and mental state.

It is well known that the highly emotional playing on drums entrain all parts of the body. This is an activity that not only engages the creative and emotional potential, but includes the body as a strong power factor that has a big impact on the emotional brain. In this case, the drum serves not only as a musical instrument, but also as a device that can be used in the gym. In the course of these exercises the production of some small molecules in the brain called endorphins is increased. The endorphins have similar structure and properties to opium and its derivatives, such as morphine and heroin. The immediate feeling of comfort and satisfaction after the usage of opium is due to the fact that the emotional brain contains multiple receptors for endorphins and is highly sensitive to them. It was found that the opium is the most powerful tool against the pain of separation and death, but of course, its excessive use leads to an addiction. In order to achieve the desired effect, someone needs increasingly larger doses which make the receptors less sensitive. As a result the small daily pleasures don't make him/her happy. Perhaps you've heard the expression, that the rich people can enjoy the little things. Although, we are not talking directly about taking drugs, this example is an appropriate analogy for how the pursuit of material benefits can act as a drug. Under the influence of this drug, many people conquest more and more "victories" on the material front, and nothing else brings them joy and pleasure. *"There are people with a lot of houses, but no home!"* Do you remember this thought from the beginning of this article? Without doubt the author was thinking about this kind of people.

On the other hand, the secretion of endorphins under the influence of physical activity (in this case playing the drums) has quite different properties. The more pleasure we receive in this way, the more receptors' sensitivity is available. People, who drum regularly, enjoy simple but important everyday things and easily find their true meaning.

The collaboration of creative and physical exercises helps to reach the coherence of the heart rhythm. It has been found that regular practice leads to greater Heart Rate Variability and respectively to a fuller life.

It turns out that in a seemingly simple process, which is the group drumming, we can achieve the desired balance between the heart and the brain. And as we could already see, the love, peace, protection, attention, care, coziness, warmth, freedom, security and support were born in this very balance. This is the simple feeling to be at home after a long separation. That's what had happened to Tanya just for a few minutes. She reached a comfort zone in which everything foreign, cold and uncomfortable was melted into warm and pleasant memories. It was invaluable experience in finding the way to herself. Emotional journey in which the drum was the vehicle and the rhythm was the vital component for reaching her goal. Tanya had finally arrived back at home.

Very interesting expression of synchronicity happened, while I was finishing this article. A girl, who is a regular participant in my rhythm sessions, sent me a short poem written by her:

*My heart longs to beat in a rhythm
of the most beautiful Symphony.
It yearns to merge with your harmony.
And after each successive stroke I'm reaching you,
I know that on my way to home I'm leading too.*

This girl doesn't know anything about Tanya and my work on this article...

References:

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- *The Wild Devine Relaxing Rhythms: – 15- Step Guided Training Manual*