

THE FOLLOWING EXCERPTS ARE TAKEN PRIMARILY FROM “THE HEALING POWER OF THE DRUM: A PSYCHOTHERAPIST EXPLORES THE HEALING POWER OF RHYTHM” BY ROBERT LAWRENCE FRIEDMAN

The drum was a primary form of communication in Africa. It was used for socialization, entertainment, dancing, communication and healing. (Babatunde Olatunji, pg. 19)

I have personally witnessed the power of the drum to relax the tense, energize the tired, and heal the emotionally wounded. I have also observed the hand drum’s extraordinary and consistent ability to create states of euphoria, induce trance, promote play, release anger and promote feelings of community and unity. (pg. 4)



Experts are beginning to believe that rhythm is critical for human development. “We are born with a need for rhythmic input,” says Kay Roskin, Ph.D., director of music therapy at Chapman University in Orange, CA. “It affects how our brain waves function and may play an important role in normal physical, emotional and intellectual development.” According to Dr. Roskam, infants who receive steady, strong rhythmic messages through rocking, coupled with loving sounds from a caregiver, have quicker visual and auditory development, and, she states, music therapists note that lullabies in every culture use a repetitive, slow, steady pattern that seems to have a universally soothing effect. (pg. 24)

Entrainment is the tendency of objects moving in a similar pattern and tempo to align with one another. Scientists have recognized this tendency through simple experiments. The most classic example is that of two swinging pendulums which over time gradually align and begin to swing in unison. Nature adheres to the law of entrainment on many levels. When birds fly together in migration patterns, they will flap in rhythm together and glide at the same times. Women who cohabit can confirm that their menstrual cycles often synchronize over a period of time. (pg. 27)



According to Lane Redmond, author of *When the Drummers Were Women*, drumming can unify or synchronize the right and left hemispheres of the brain. One of the most powerful aspects of drumming and the reason that people have done it since the beginning of being human is that it changes people’s consciousness. Through rhythmic

repetition of ritual sounds, the body, brain and the nervous system are energized and transformed. When a group of people play a rhythm for an extended period of time, their brain waves become entrained to the rhythm and they have a shared brain wave state. The longer the drumming goes on, the more powerful the entrainment becomes.

Normally outwardly focused attention generates beta waves which vibrate from 14-40 cycles per second. When awareness shifts to an internal focus, our brain slows down into the more rhythmical waves of alpha, vibrating at 7-14 waves per second. Alpha is defined by relaxation and centering. Dropping down to 4-7 cycles per second the brain enters the theta state in which there is an interfacing of conscious and unconscious processes, producing hypnagogic dream-like imagery at the threshold of sleep. Theta is the source of sudden mystical insights and creative solutions to complex situations and is marked by physical and emotional healing. People with a preponderance of theta brainwaves are also able to learn and process much more information than normal. (pgs. 44-45)



The brain is divided into two hemispheres that are basically split in their control of the thinking process. The right brain functions as the creative, visual, aural and emotional center. The left brain is the rational, logical, analytical and verbal administrator. Generally, either the right or left brain dominates in cycles lasting from brain may be generating alpha waves while the left brain is in a beta state. Or both can be generating the same type of brain waves, but remain out of sync with each other. But in states of intense creative, deep meditation or under the influence of rhythmic sound, both hemispheres may become entrained to the same rhythm. This state of unified whole brain functioning is called hemispheric synchronization or the awakened mind.



As the two hemispheres begin to resonate to a single rhythm, a sense of clarity and heightened awareness arises. The individual is able to draw on both the left and right hemispheres simultaneously. The mind becomes sharper, more lucid, synthesizing much more rapidly than normal, and emotions are easier to understand and transform. The conscious and unconscious levels of the mind interface and integrate more easily. Insight quickens and creative intuition flourishes, giving one the ability to visualize and bring into manifestation ideas more easily. (pg. 45)