

a new means of communication must be used because it is our first language, provided by touch.

- By helping to create feelings of emotional connection and reducing the emotional pain experienced by dying patients, health care providers experience in



## TOUCH WITH INTENTION: ..... INTERVIEW WITH JANICE KASHUBI .....

*"One day I was at work and I felt a pinch in my neck, like I'd slept funny or something. Eight hours later I was totally paralyzed and on a ventilator in the I.C.U. I was in the I.C.U. for six months." Janice Kashubi was a 35-year old woman who was diagnosed with transverse myelitis, a condition about which little is known. Janice was transferred from one health care facility to another before I met her in December of 1990. I had the opportunity of working with Janice for one year before she died. The following interview appeared in a Service Through Touch newsletter in 1991.*

**Irene:** Janice, you called me for a massage about a year ago.

**Janice:** I really needed the massage and I desperately asked everyone who came into contact with me for referrals of somebody who would do massage at a fee that I could afford. I couldn't afford the going rate. Someone told me about you.

**Irene:** Massage is very important for you. Can you tell us what other touch is incorporated into your day?

**Janice:** The only other touch I receive is in getting a bed bath and getting dressed in the day. But there is no actual touch. It's more like lifting the arm up and cramming it into the sleeve.

**Irene:** How does massage feel for you, Janice?

**Janice:** Oh boy! It's invigorating. It feels like it revitalizes my body. I have a tremendous problem with circulation and I just don't breathe very deeply and the blood just doesn't circulate very fast, so I am cold almost 95% of the time. One of the biggest benefits is that it warms my body up. It brings the circulation all the way through my body and I don't feel cold anymore and it lasts for quite a long time, sometimes up to two days. It makes me more aware of my body. I have problems with areas of my body being very sensitive because of neurological damage. The way I'm touched by many nurses or orderlies makes it worse. By massaging the area with real feeling, it makes it feel better.

**Irene:** So you're talking about touching with intention. Are there any other physical benefits that you register?

**Janice:** Yes! It makes my body feel centered. It makes me feel like I'm not floating.

**Irene:** It makes you feel more grounded?

**Janice:** Exactly. It also makes me more aware of my body — head to toe. Unlike a lot of paraplegics or quadriplegics, people that have no feeling, I do have feeling from head to toe. But it is really easy for me to turn off the feeling and particularly in an area that aches or is sore and just ignore it — make it a numb spot. Massage helps me be aware of that area and makes it OK for that area to be painful.

**Irene:** So what I hear you saying is that it allows you to accept your body as it is instead of cutting it off.

**Janice:** Yes, and it allows me to feel it also. To feel it in a more caring way.

**Irene:** What about your psychological benefits, Janice? Do you feel that it helps you emotionally or psychologically at all to be touched with intention?

**Janice:** Oh, it is a tremendous, uplifting feeling that I get. It's the whole body and mind and spirit revitalized. I think that one of the most difficult things that I have had in dealing with this trauma is people are kind of scared to touch me. People that might be more inclined to touch me, such as my caregivers, don't have the time or don't take the time or they don't really know how to touch. Even someone laying a caring hand on me can make all the difference in a day. The one thing that massage has really done for me is to make me feel like a whole person again.



*Irene Smith and Janice Kashubi, 1990*