

## Freely vs. Free by Thuy Nguyen

Before I started this blog, I posted this on my Berkeley Community Acupuncture Facebook link. It was received very positively and so I'd like to repost here:

Today, after receiving acupuncture during my donation based shift, a patient asked me why I was "giving away" such amazing treatments for free. Don't you value your skills? She asked. Don't you want to demand that others value your skills too? Don't you want them to show you respect by paying you what you are worth? Then she saw my perplexed expression and then added, oh, I see you are trying to fix the world. You are trying to help people in need because they are lacking. That is good of you. She waited for a response but I was speechless. There was so much off in what she said to me that I didn't know where to start, so instead, I tipped my head slightly as to nod. She smiled, deposited \$5 into our money box and left. I've been thinking about what she said ever since.

I do what I do and there is no amount of money that anyone could give me to make me feel that it is an adequate match to what I have to offer. Not \$5, not \$5000. Because what I have to offer is not quantifiable. What I have to offer is myself and it not only reflects in my practice of Chinese Medicine but how I run my business. It is what has evolved over my 16 years of thinking about medicine and health and how I would like to affect and be affected by the world I live in. It is a reflection of my understanding of health and our connections with one another.

My practice reflects my faith in abundance, trust, and connection that is possible in the world that we live in and my faith in the profound healing capabilities of Chinese Medicine. I am taken by its simplicity, its gentleness, its humbleness, its accessibility, its profound depth, its quiet healing. I am heartened (especially in this day and age) to be able provide an environment where 5 complete strangers can lie down side by side to nap, relax and heal together, no strings attached. And I am amazed that day after day, people do come to do just that. That is trust. That is healing.

From this understanding, value and worth take on very different perspectives. It is only because of my understanding of the profound value of what I do that I offer it up freely. Not for free, freely. I am not doing this to fix a broken world or to give to people in need. The world is not broken, what people may or may not need is beyond my comprehension. I am simply doing this because it is the most natural expression of who I've become and of who I am.