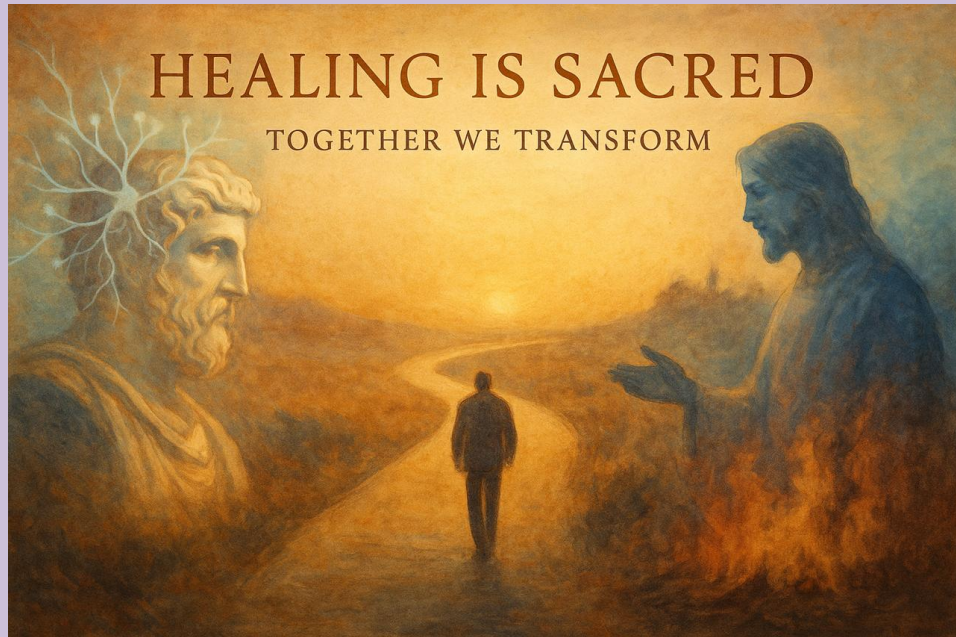


When Growth Hurts: Truth, Honesty, and the Heart of Leadership



Dr. Jeffrey E. Hansen, Ph.D.

Growth is a beautiful thing it is rarely painless. The work we are doing together is sacred, purposeful, and good. Yet because we are human, and because growth asks much of us, there are moments where it stretches us beyond our current capacity. There is tenderness in that. There is vulnerability in it. And there is also profound opportunity.

The Lord is near to the broken-hearted and saves the crushed in spirit.
Psalm 34:18

The ancient philosopher **Aristotle** understood this well. In *The Nicomachean Ethics*, he described truthfulness as a virtue not merely of speech, but of being. To be truthful, Aristotle wrote, is to align oneself with reality as it is without exaggeration or concealment, without posturing or self-protection.

- Truthfulness is a way of living in harmony with what is real.

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In organizations, Aristotle argues that truth is the foundation of trust, and trust is the foundation of **philia**, the deep camaraderie that allows people to collaborate in meaningful work. Communities flourish when they are held together by honesty. Not the harsh kind that wounds, nor the selective kind that flatters, but the steady kind that looks another in the eyes and says:

- “I am here with you in this. Fully. Truthfully.”
- But truth has a cost.

The Pain of Growth

We often use the phrase growing pains, usually without thinking about where it came from. But it comes from something profoundly physical: during childhood and adolescence, the human body sometimes grows faster than its soft tissues can easily stretch. Bones lengthen rapidly. Muscles, tendons, and fascia strain to keep up. Nerves become tender and reactive.

- The child is not breaking.
- The child is expanding.
- The pain is not a sign of injury it is a sign of the body making room for more life.
- This is precisely what we have been experiencing in our organization.

We have grown rapidly in scope, in responsibility, in depth of work, in number of hearts entrusted to us. Growth of this scale requires realignment. It requires adaptation. It requires clarity. And it requires patience.

In the nervous system, **Polyvagal Theory** shows us that growth and change activate survival reflexes. When structure shifts or expectations expand, the body instinctively asks:

- Am I still safe?
- Am I still seen?
- Do I still belong?
- Do we still know how to move together?

These are not weaknesses.
They are signs of the heart trying to remain connected while expanding.

Naming My Own Stretching

I have felt this stretching deeply.
And in some places, I have let the strain show.

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At times my tone has been more intense. At times my pacing or presence has been hurried. I have felt the pressure of growth and responsibility and at moments I allowed that pressure to escape sideways rather than downward into humility and grounding.

And so, I want to speak truthfully not as performance, not as self-flagellations, but as alignment:

I take ownership for the ways my own growing pains have affected the team.

- And I sincerely apologize.
- Not from shame.
- Not from defensiveness.

But from the virtue Aristotle names truthfulness which restores trust and strengthens relationship.

- The truth is:
- I am learning too.
- We all are.

What We Are Cultivating Together

We are doing work of profound meaning. Work of Christ. Work of restoration and freedom. Work that requires presence, integrity, and deep attunement.

The **NeuroFaith® Model** was born from the conviction that the heart, not just the brain, is the center of leadership, healing, and spiritual formation. To lead is to serve. To serve is to attune. To attune is to regulate. To regulate is to create safety. And safety is the soil where transformation actually grows.

So, as we grow as individuals, as clinicians, as staff, as a community we recommit ourselves to:

- Connection over assumption
- Respect over reaction
- Professionalism grounded in dignity
- Healthy boundaries that protect relationship
- Attunement to nervous systems, not just behaviors
- Truth spoken gently, courageously, consistently
- A heart posture of service not self-protection

This is the work.
This is the calling.

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This is the way of Christ.

Leadership United

I want to express deep gratitude to Tim and Seth brothers in leadership and in faith who have walked with courage, humility, and commitment through this season of stretch. We are unified. We are aligned. We do not lead over this team we lead with this team. And when our growth strains the system, we repair together.

- Because that is what healthy families do.
- And that is what spiritual leadership requires.

Moving Forward Together

- Growth does not mean something is wrong.
- Growth means something is alive.
- We are alive as an organization, as a movement, as a community of healers rooted in the heart of God and the wisdom of neuroscience.

In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength.
Isaiah 30:15

We will continue to grow.
We will continue to stretch.
And we will continue to stay connected while we do.

So, we step forward now

- not in defensiveness,
- not in exhaustion,

but in renewed heart.

- Centered.
- Humbled.
- Committed.
- Together.