In this groundbreaking volume, David Schenck and Larry Churchill present the results of fifty interviews with practitioners identified by their peers as "healers," exploring in depth the things that the best clinicians do. They focus on specific actions that exceptional healers perform to improve their relationships with their patients and, subsequently, improve their patients' overall health. The authors analyze the ritual structure and spiritual meaning of these healing skills, as well as their scientific basis, and offer a new, more holistic interpretation of the "placebo effect."

Recognizing that the best healers are also people who know how to care for themselves, the authors describe activities that these clinicians have chosen to promote wellness, wholeness and healing in their own lives. The final chapter explores the deep connections between the mastery of healing skills and the mastery of what the authors call the “skills of ethics.” They argue that ethics should be considered a healing art, alongside the art of medicine.