

Those who are in the healing arts and have actually, personally “been there” in one way or another have a special power, a gift that allows them to reach deep inside another and actually repair damage that even the most complex and advanced medical techniques could not even begin to touch. To that I can attest.

Alex is a tiny woman, with a unique combination of nurturing and feistiness in her spirit. She has shiny, bright white hair, cut to her shoulders, while her wrinkle-free face is practically flawless, giving her an elusive ageless look and energy. She’s almost elf-like with twinkly blue eyes. You’d think her former career might have been that of a nymph-like dancer rather than a concert guitarist, the way she darts about the physical therapy office, rarely staying in one place for more than a second when she’s not working on a patient.

One day, while in physical therapy, I remember mentioning to her that, since my first day in New York, I’d been curious about performing in the New York City subways, but had always been too scared to do so. I’d always been curious, even before the accident, but I was now taking the thought seriously. I was now entertaining the thought of singing in the subways to actually bring in some cash. “Yeah, but still, I’m really scared,” I’d repeat to Alex over and over while lying on the Feldenkrais table.

“You should do it. What do you have to lose?” she assured me. I assumed her encouragement stemmed from her own inner strength and experience.

For almost three weeks, I’d ask myself the question, then Alex, and myself again: “Should I go? Should I do this?” Each time, I’d hem and haw and Alex would answer with conviction, “You should do it, Heidi. What do you have to lose?” For those three weeks I thought about what might be a logical answer to her question— what do I have to lose? I thought about this so I’d have a reason, a valid excuse not to go, since I was really timid at the concept of singing in the trains. And having put this quandary out to Alex and the universe, that dark and dirty place that felt so awfully intimidating and frightening, somehow still pulled at me.

At every session, I’d lie there thinking to myself about logical answers that could keep me from having to try this seemingly bizarre concept that somehow kept on tugging at me. It seemed so very foreign to everything I’d experienced and was trained to do up to this point and yet, despite what seemed to be the obvious oxymoron, I couldn’t seem to come up with any reason not to go. I finally mumbled to Alex during a session, “Probably nothing. I probably have nothing to lose by, you know, at least trying. At least trying it once.” And, who knows, maybe there’s actually something there for me. *Something I don’t know about yet*, I thought to myself, working hard at keeping the positive in the forefront. The truth is, I knew that by the end of those three weeks my entire savings would be gone and I was going to be trapped in a financial corner. New York City isn’t a place where one can even remotely survive without money. In that respect, trying out the “subway busker” thing (an artist who entertains people for money, usually by singing or dancing) grew more appealing every passing day.

I’d thought of multiple more run-of-the-mill type options for income, but I’m an artist: that’s where my heart was, what I’d been trained in, and what I do. I was still in too much pain to sit for hours in audition lines for musicals and operas. I could still only be up and out for about one to five hours at a stretch before I’d have to go home. I didn’t have the income to promote myself in the voice-over industry, which can cost thousands to get restarted in. So music, on my own, seemed to be my most ready and flexible