

How To Heal A Situation

by Serge Kahili King

A long time ago, before Captain Cook came to Hawaii, there was a hero named Maui, who was born on Kauai. One day he was paddling his canoe from Oahu island to Kauai—which takes about 24 hours—and he asked himself, "Why can't the islands be closer together?" So when he arrived on Kauai he went to see his mother. Her name was Hina and she lived in Fern Grotto.

"Mom," he said, "How can I bring all the islands together?"

She said, "You have to find and catch the great whale *Luehu* and hold onto him until he circles the islands. Then pull your fishing line until they draw together, but you must get the help of your brothers, and you must always face forward.

"Okay," said Maui, "I can do that." So he went and got his brothers, Maui, Maui, Maui, and Maui and he pulled down his magic fishhook, *Manai a ka lani*, from the sky (you probably know it as the constellation Scorpio). They got the fishing line ready, got the canoe ready, and paddled out into the Kaieiewaho Channel between Kauai and Oahu. They searched for days and days in all the eight seas of Hawaii, and finally had to go out even farther than that, and at last they found the whale *Luehu* swimming by the little island of *Nihoa*, far to the northwest. So Maui threw his hook, the whale caught it, and *Luehu* pulled the canoe rapidly through the ocean. More days passed as the Maui brothers paddled and pulled and tugged and guided the whale to surround the islands.

When they were again off the coast of Kauai, they started back paddling while the first Maui carefully pulled on the line. *Luehu* was getting tired and it looked like success was near as the islands moved closer. Then a canoe bailer, *Kaliu*, floated past the

canoe and the eldest Maui, the steersman, quickly picked it up and tossed it behind him in case it might be needed. However, the canoe bailer was actually a mischievous spirit, an *e'epa*, who turned into a beautiful woman.

The whole population of Kauai was on the shore to watch the event, and when they saw the woman they began shouting and exclaiming at her beauty. The Maui brothers kept facing forward until the paddlers couldn't stand it any more and turned around to see the woman. At that moment, *Luehu* felt the weakening of the pull and gave one last thrust forward. The first Maui was surprised and pulled too hard and the line broke, and *Luehu* got free and the islands drifted back again. And we know the story is true because the islands are still far apart today!

So, now, what can we learn from this story? As in most Hawaiian legends, there are hidden meanings in the names of things. *Luehu*, the name of the whale, means "scattered." *Manai a ka la*, the name of Maui's fishhook, means "a needle for stringing flower leis." In this sense, the island were like flowers that had to be strung together, perhaps culturally, politically, or economically.

The fishing line was *aho*, meaning "breath, to breathe, or to put forth great effort." The full word used was "ahonui," meaning "to put forth great effort over time," or "to persevere."

Nihoa, the small island, means "Jagged, like a tooth," and there is a saying, "The cliffs of *Nihoa* stand firm against the wind." This indicates persistence.

But the canoe bailer, *Kaliu*, means "a leaky canoe bailer." The leaking was the leaking away of attention to the purpose.

The story was saying that the way to heal a situation is to hold fast to your purpose no matter what. But how to do that? I'll give a short modern story to illustrate. Some years ago I participated

in producing a self esteem video for the Department of Education in Hawaii. It was intended for high school students. My part was a section of a workshop I did, but the best part was something else.

When I was watching the video, I saw a young girl dancing the hula with several other girls. The view was from the waist up and they were all very graceful. But then the camera pulled back, and the girl in the center only had one leg! She was just as graceful as the others, even with that problem. Imagine the persistence, the perseverance that must have taken.

So how did she go through all the pain and suffering to learn that balance? The answer is simple, but the process is not easy. She did it because of her love for the hula. In other words, she had a love for something that was so strong it pulled her through the trials and disappointments, and effort. The same applies to anything important we want to accomplish in life. What keeps us going is our love for something that is more important than anything else. Otherwise, we get distracted like the Maui brothers did, or we lose interest, or we decide it's too hard.

When you are getting to the point of deciding it's too hard, you focus on why you are doing what you are doing. What the reason is, or the motivation. It's as important as you decide it is. You need to remind yourself of your aims regularly, whether you are climbing a mountain, learning a skill, or healing yourself.

Remember, there's no rule that says you *have* to continue. But you have to *want* to or you won't.