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Self-Healing: Who is In Charge In My House?

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It is not the mountain we conquer but ourselves.
- Sir Edmund Hillary

The medical profession is claiming a monopoly on the right to treat problems that they declare only doctors are allowed by law to diagnose and treat. In Europe and the US, governmental regulations are increasingly restricting people from having access to buying and using vitamins and nutritional supplements for self-care (Codex Alimentarius, web refs). This is clearly not in the best interests of the public.

The greatest difficulty in dealing with these regulations is that the pharmaceutical and medical businesses have enormous financial resources. They are able to make major monetary contributions to politicians, and anyone wanting to counter their influence is at a great disadvantage.

I am reminded of playing Monopoly when I was a child. Whenever someone started to amass significantly large sums, it became impossible for anyone else to beat him. The one difference in the healthcare regulations challenges we are facing is that members of the public can join forces with each other to pressure their elected representatives to vote for freedom of choices in healthcare. The challenge is to organize concerted efforts to do this.

Over the years, I have been pleased to see growing numbers of people in all walks of life waking up to their potentials and abilities to care for themselves. In many cases, however, they remain in the medical model expectation that what is wrong with them has to do with disorders of their body functions.

My own experience, both personally and professionally, is that the body and mind are intimately interlinked. Most importantly, these links are active in both directions: the body can influence the mind, and the mind can influence the body. For example, when we are emotionally 'up tight' our body gets up tight and our adrenal hormones rise, in turn raising our blood pressure and in other ways stressing our bodies further. With a stressed body, our psychological state is more stressed and unstable, leaving us prone to getting more upset and more up tight on all levels of our being.

Body-mind and mind-body links

Unslumping yourself is not easily done.

- Dr. Seuss

Conventional medicine, and to a large extent conventional psychology as well, teach that the mind is a product of the electrochemical activity of the brain. Disturbances of psychological functions – including both thoughts and emotions – are explained as resulting from malfunctions in the nervous system and/or hormones of the body.

Psychology allows that tensions in the body may become habitual through pairing of perceived and/or cognitive stimuli with physical responses to these stimuli. If you see a frightening, barking dog, you may become nervous or even phobic about dogs who bark, or about any dog. This is called getting 'conditioned' to a habitual response.

My own experiences, and those of many other complementary/alternative clinicians, is that the body participates far more intimately in memories than the simple conditioning model suggests. I find that the body holds memories of experiences locked into various tissues – particularly the muscles, tendons and joints. Massage therapists, yoga instructors, and other body therapists often note that as people's muscles, tendons and joints are stretched and relax, memories are released. At times these may be very intense.

I also find that the unconscious mind will 'hitch a ride' on body sensations in order to draw the conscious attention of a person to issues that the unconscious mind wants the person to attend to. For instance, a pain caused by injury, infection or other physiological processes may be more severe or more persistent than would normally be expected. When the person who is hurting invites the pain to 'speak' about why it is hurting, the unconscious mind will usually reveal what it wants the person to be aware of.

'Susan' had intermittent, severe post-herpetic neuralgia (shingles nerve pain) in her left jaw, radiating up across her cheek and to her scalp. Strong pain pills dulled the pain a little, but she was never free of the pain. When she came to me for help, the pain had been there for more than five years, and was at a level of 9 (out of a possible 10).

Within a few minutes of dialoguing with her pain, Susan heard it say that she was being too harsh and demanding on herself, and that the pain wanted her to ease up. As she continued this dialogue, the pain reduced to a 5/10. Continuing with [WHEE](#), tapping on either side of her body while focusing on affirmations about the pain, it went down in a few more minutes to 1/10.

I have found that any pain whatsoever may convey such messages (Benor, 2009). Even surgical pain can do this.

Similarly, any other physical problem may carry messages of these sorts. An infection, a metabolic disorder or a cancer may speak in similar ways.

Give yourself what you are aching to receive.

- Alan Cohen

The question then becomes: Is the part of the body in pain crucial to the type of messages that the body conveys? There are frequent therapists' reports of particular body parts being associated with

particular types of messages. Louise Hay (1984) wrote one of the more popular books on this subject. I was at first somewhat skeptical about this, but looked up hemorrhoids when I was suffering pain from that cause myself. I was surprised to find myself strongly resonating with her interpretation that hemorrhoids spoke of feeling "there isn't enough time to complete the work that needs doing."

My subsequent experience of the specificity of body parts with particular conflicts has been mixed. As with dream interpretations, I find that while some symbols often speak of themes that are common to many people, this is far from being invariably the case. Many people have their own, personal meanings behind such symbols and body symptoms. So it is best to ask one's symptoms to speak for themselves directly, rather than laying a generic interpretation on the person who has that particular symptom.

*The time will come
when, with elation
you will greet yourself arriving
at your own door, in your own mirror
and each will smile at the other's welcome,
and say, sit here. Eat.
You will love again the stranger who was your self.
Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart
to itself, to the stranger who has loved you
all your life, whom you ignored
for another, who knows you by heart.
Take down the love letters from the bookshelf,
the photographs, the desperate notes,
peel your own image from the mirror.
Sit. Feast on your life.*

-Derek Wolcott

Conventional medicine addresses body symptoms and malfunctions as problems to be eradicated. In my experience, this is a poor choice – unless one has first asked the body what it wants us to know. Often, the symptoms will clear without further physical intervention.

This is good news for those who suffer from problems in their bodies, but is viewed by conventional therapists as bad news for their practices of prescribing medications and other interventions to eradicate the symptoms.

Prevention is even better than cure

You can only cure retail but you can prevent wholesale.
– Brock Chisholm

Attending regularly to the needs of our bodymind and thereby enhancing our normal state of health can give us protection against disorders of both body and mind. We can markedly enhance our health by having a regular program of fitness, good diet, supplements of minerals and vitamins as appropriate, rest and relaxation, and attending to stresses as they arise.

Conventional therapists are often untrained in any of the above. This is why increasing numbers of people are coming for Complementary/ Alternative therapies. This is also why conventional medicine and the pharmaceutical companies are campaigning to limit public access to these therapies.

So, in addition to attending to our personal health needs, we need to be alert and attend to protecting our collective health needs. We must make this issue a priority and vote for politicians who will support us in these goals.

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