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Editorial Musings

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It wouldn't surprise me at all if occasionally alternative practitioners get a bit discouraged about giving advice, even when it is eagerly sought. I am not such a practitioner, but as I have long followed their advice, to the benefit of my own health, I occasionally offer suggestions. I did so recently, when a dear friend, my own age and previously in good health, rather suddenly became ill to the point of disability. When her husband—who has a rather distrustful attitude towards alternative medicine—described her symptoms to me, I was immediately reminded of another woman I had known who had experienced similar symptoms.

Thus, I had to ask myself, knowing the inborn skepticism of this man, whether I should offer any suggestions or not. Because I was deeply worried about my friend, his wife, I chose to tell him that he would be wise to disconnect much if not all of his electronic devices when not in use. He should urge his wife not to keep her cell phone nearby when she was sleeping, and ideally, not to carry it on her person when she left the house. I had previously asked for and was given a list of practitioners who deal with this particular type of problem on a regular basis, and I shared this list with him. But I could tell from his tone of voice that he was unlikely to pursue this issue outside of allopathic medicine.

After a few days, I emailed the husband to ask if any progress had been made. His reply was that none of the practitioners was in town and therefore he “could not consult” with them. I pointed out that he could call and set up a zoom meeting, but that suggestion went nowhere. In short, he had closed his mind. He had not done any research to determine whether the syndrome his wife was displaying might indeed respond to my suggestions, nor had he learned that many others, including my other woman friend, had found relief by pursuing the recommended course of action. When I spoke with his wife, however, she seemed more open to what I had to say, adding that she would consult her rheumatologist. In my own personal medical life, however, I have yet to see an allopathic physician open to what they often call “woo-woo” solutions.

We all need to be on guard against a natural tendency to reject outright that which is new and, at least initially, incomprehensible. These days, online research is comparatively simple, with many reputable sources readily available. Why close one’s mind to a solution that, although perhaps radically different from what is familiar, just might work? Why not at least give it a try? More than once, my own naturopathic chiropractor used incomprehensible (to me, anyway) strategies to overcome my various physical problems, all to good effect. Quite honestly, I never understood how or why what he did worked so well! But there was no denying that his incomprehensible solutions to my various aggravating problems caused those problems to disappear, permanently.

I hope my friends will reconsider what I had to offer and will open their minds to at least the possibility that following the suggested course of action might indeed help the problem. Above all, however, I hope that all of us will remind ourselves that keeping an open mind is essential to finding effective solutions to problems that “regular medicine” may not be able to deal with successfully. Many alternative medicine practices may seem strange and new, even to fellow alternative practitioners. But as I can attest, these “strange and new” solutions can be very effective indeed.

Bio:

Dr. Kendra Gaines received her doctorate in English Literature from Northwestern University in Chicago, Illinois. She taught at Northwestern, as well as University of

Michigan, before moving to Tucson. At the University of Arizona, she served for 16 years as Senior Tutor and Instructional Specialist in, first, the Department of English, and then at the UA's Writing Skills Improvement Program. Dr. Gaines has taught at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base for almost 30 years, teaching for Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Chapman University, Park University, and Pima College. Dr. Gaines teaches online as well. She is completing her seventeenth-year teaching both English and Philosophy courses for Colorado Technical University. She has also been teaching online for Park University, work which has included several blended (both online and in person) courses and is a full Professor of English at Akamai University.

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