

## What is Real Healing?

“Take two pills and call me in the morning.” This is the common joke we hear about doctors, but this pretty well sums up our attitude toward how healing should take place. When we are presented with a symptom, there should be a pill that we can take that will remove the displeasure of the effect.

Now, I know a lot of you will groan when I go over some old territory about what pains and aches are all about, but well,... just read faster. When you have a pain response, it is a signal, much like an alarm, that something is wrong with the system. If you have a sharp pain the problem will probably be more acute and emergent. If the pain is more dull and diffuse, like an ache, it will probably mean that the pain is more chronic and diffuse (spread over a larger area) etc.

If we were monitoring alarms in a warehouse and one or more of them went off and all we did was to turn off the alarms, then we would be considering the alarms the problem and not the fire or the possible breakdown in the system that needs to be attended to. So the resolution in this course of Healing 101 is to attend to the problems and not just turn off the alarms.

Now in Healing 102 we have to try and get you to see that the problem is not always where the alarm goes off. Many people come into the clinic complaining of a back, leg or shoulder problem, headaches and so on and expect me to find the problem and fix it in the same area as the alarm.

This makes a lot of sense if you just fell down and twisted your leg or ankle that the sprain is the problem and that is the level it should be treated on acutely. However, if the pain has just developed over time and reached a critical mass or got acute when you sneezed or picked up a piece of paper, then the problem is more than likely with a chronic condition that is more internal.

This is where we introduce you to the concept of body-mind, or the holistic body. In the west we tend to see the body as a separation of systems. We see the skeletal and muscular system as separate and functional, the organs as a bunch of separate systems that perform internal functions such as digestion and excretion detoxification and blood flow etc. and we see the head as thinking, governing, emotional and sensory. As a whole we are not taught to see much of a crossover effect of all of these systems.

Oriental medicine has never seen this separation of systems. What we feel and what we think affect the ways our organs function, and the ways our organs function will affect the way our body works and this is all joined together by a system of energetic pathways called meridians. Modern research, in fact, is starting to show that the body communicates with itself through a system of neuropeptides. These neuropeptides may or may not involve the brain, but in fact we are now finding that signals are as likely to be sensory information fed to the brain instead of the reverse as we had always thought. This revelation of this automatic system of intercommunication of the body lends itself more to the traditional Chinese system than the unrelated functional system we have been trained to think of.

For instance we get a frontal headache that won't relent. That we may treat this as a problem of the stomach is quite a surprise to most people. That the present condition of the stomach is related to a particularly worrisome situation that we've currently encountered is to many people unfathomable. That we may be prone to be more

worrisome in nature may be locked into the malady of our stomach and the interrelatedness of this to its organ brethren.

The last and saddest news of all is that if it is a serious and interrelated problem, we usually don't just start feeling better. We may feel better if we take a pain suppressant, but if we are going to solve a problem at its source we are opening a can of worms that is not always pleasant.

The effects of a condition may develop over time and may change and progress. We are often aware of parts of the condition, but we don't do anything about it until it gets so bad that it is hard to live with. When we reverse the underlying dysfunction of the body, the body will most often re experience the symptoms we had on the way to it getting to the stage it is in today. It is hard to predict what path, if any, this will take in any one person.

This rocky road of healing that may not be much fun in the journey is called a *healing crisis*. In homeopathy they would describe it as a "reverse order of cure." This means that in the healing journey we will go back through symptoms that we experienced on the way to our present state. I explain to patients that if the room we are standing in is a state of sickness, then we are going to have to reverse our path and go back through the door of sickness before we can find health. Of course we try to do that more quickly, but this is the rub.

Many patients will want to quit treatment as soon as the symptoms begin to be resolved. It is a bit like throwing a banquet to celebrate losing weight. This kind of attention to healing or dieting is always disastrous.

As a case in point, let me tell you a story about my mechanic who is a very honest fellow. I used to have an economical 'beater' of a car which I dearly loved. Another mechanic warned me that it would need a head gasket and suggested that we might as well do the valves at the same time. When I talked to my mechanic about it, he said that if we were to do the valves on an old car like that, it would probably cause so much compression that it would probably do damage to the lower end, the pistons and connecting rods. So, in the name of good money sense, he suggested just doing the head gasket or more likely to just look for a different car. I wisely took the second option.

Transferring this analogy to the patient, I find that most of us just want to fix the part that sticks out without regard to the possible consequences of not taking care of the underlying problem.