

The Emotional Roots of Pain and Illness

An exploration of the emotional and energetic roots of pain and illness, and the path to healing

A Story for both Therapists and Clients: “Necessary Struggles”

A man found a cocoon of a butterfly. One day a small opening appeared. He sat and watched the butterfly for several hours as it struggled to force its body out of that little hole. Then it seemed to stop making any progress. It appeared as if it had gotten as far as it could and it could go no further.

Then the man decided to help the butterfly, so he took a pair of scissors and snipped off the remaining bit of cocoon. The butterfly then emerged easily. But it had a swollen body and small shriveled wings.

The man continued to watch the butterfly because he expected at any moment, the wings would enlarge and expand to be able to support the body, which would then contract in time. Neither had happened! In fact, the butterfly spent the rest of his life crawling around with a swollen body and shriveled wings. It was never able to fly.

What the man in his kindness and haste did not understand was the restricting cocoon, and the struggle required for the butterfly to get through the tiny opening, were God’s way to force fluid from the body of the butterfly into its wings, so that it would be ready for flight once it achieved its freedom from the cocoon.

Sometimes struggles are exactly what we need in our life. If God allowed us to go through our life without any obstacles, it would cripple us. We would not be as strong as what we could have been...and we would never fly.

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Our life struggles include our illnesses and all of our aches and pains. In our culture, the most common view is that we “get” a disease or illness, as if it happened to us in some sort of random luck. We tend to say “I got arthritis” or “I got tinnitus.” This idea feeds the belief that we have no control, and are a victim of whatever illness happens to strike. The opposite extreme purports that we have created our own health problems, so we should be able, if we were aligned enough, to “un-create them.” This concept can lead to self-blame, to guilt, and to a hard determination to solve the problem. These feelings can be counterproductive, creating even more stress.

Neither of these viewpoints is completely accurate. In truth, we are not to blame for the physical symptoms we develop. Every symptom is simply a part of our process and a message from our body and spirit. Each has stemmed from old hurts and traumas, which, when healed, can lead to newfound wholeness.

In-Depth Body Psychotherapy and Subtle Energy Healing practitioners have helped countless people. Understanding and working with the emotional and energetic roots of

physical pain and illness can create deep physical or emotional healing. This takes place within the realm of subtle energy.

Subtle Energy

In In-Depth Body Psychotherapy and Subtle Energy Healing we work with the invisible to heal the impossible.

At the center of all life is a subtle energy, also known as chi, prana, spirit, vital force, or Akashic field. We are all a part of this vast dynamic web of energy. Quantum physics is leading us to understand that subtle energy is the medium that holds consciousness and connects all of us to one another. On our most fundamental level, the human mind, psyche and body are not distinct and separate from our environment, but a packet of pulsating energy constantly interacting with this vast energy sea. When we meditate, perform an exercise in visualization, or are deeply focused and “out of our own way,” we feel “in flow.” We are in touch with the field of subtle energy.

Ervin Lazslo writes about the Akashic Field, describing it as an informational, holographic energy field that binds everything in the universe together. He postulates that the entire universe consists of our history of experience, our memories and our pure consciousness.

Although matter appears solid, it is interchangeable with energy. How matter and energy are interchangeable is one of Einstein’s greatest discoveries. In fact, matter is made up of Subtle Energy. Subtle Energy is the energy that connects everything in the universe. Therefore, on a personal level, communication and parent-child relationships do not only take place in the visible realm, but in the subatomic world. Emotions that are a part of these exchanges communicate through these subtle energy frequencies, as well as through our cells and even through our DNA. The heart and brain perceive the world and record their own record of the experience in pulsating waves. So too, emotions are molecules of energy that come together, forming a response to internal or external stimuli.

For example, we experience energy when we walk into a room where two people are sitting quietly, expressionless. We can feel tension or discord “in the air.” You know these two people are upset with one another, even though there are no outward manifestations. This is not psychic ability or intuition, this is the experience of the vibrations or frequencies of subtle energy.

With this definition and understanding of subtle energy in hand, how does In-Depth Body Psychotherapy and Subtle Energy Healing work? Our therapists are dealing with energies that have created experience. They look at how the body organizes itself based on the nature of the

energy we bonded with as children. We learn how various emotional states are created, and whether our early life experiences supported the flow of subtle energy and consciousness. For example, love contains energies of warmth, softness and flow, while various forms of negativity possess energies of hardness and destructiveness.

In this therapy, we discover how our subtle energy was forced to defend itself against emotional or physical abuse. Subtle energy creates the defensive structures that help us survive the abuse. These defenses take various forms in our bodies; structures which tend to block the flow of energy necessary for good health. These defenses can be ones of collapse or compression. Or we may become frozen, formless or rigid.

We are not just working on the physical body. Since energy created the disturbance in the first place, we must work with energy to solve it. It is essential to undo the negative energy that created the defense. We must work through the trauma in order for health and wholeness to occur.

For example, imagine that as a child our aliveness and separateness was met with invasion and humiliation. Our parents did not want us to be separate or fully alive. To prevent our aliveness and separateness, they mocked, criticized or embarrassed us. In response, our energy body formed a defensive compression and density in order to deal with our parent's negative energetic and emotional force. The compression is not only experienced at a muscular level, but is also seen in our cellular structure and all how our organs are aligned. Compression can lead to specific forms of inflammation and pain. The compression may be in our intestines or colon, so that later in life we develop intestinal and stomach problems or perhaps, a spastic colon that leads to colitis. The aches and pains that we believe we have to live with are expressions of how we compressed ourselves and the resultant tension. Dealing with the trapped and unresolved emotional trauma can release the compression. The release of the compression in turn, releases our held subtle energies and therefore, creates a realignment of our body.

However we have to form in the face of abuse, we are affected down to the level of our spirit and our soul. The soul is the spark of divine consciousness that lives in each of us. It is the essence of each being that continues beyond lifetimes. The soul of this psychotherapy is the energy in each session that is beyond words, beyond intellectual knowing, where spirit brings messages of what is necessary for both client and therapist to move toward wholeness, toward enlightenment.

When we talk about working with body, emotions and spirit, these are all really manifestations of one another. They are interconnected. Summarizing, it is our subtle energy, or spirit that enables us to form

defensive structures in the first place. And in relation to healing, our spirit, which is connected to the universal web of Subtle Energy, has incredible powers to heal us and to heal the world. It is within this world of pulsating waves and frequencies that In-Depth Body Psychotherapy and Subtle Energy Healing takes place.

Our Pain and Illness Are Not Randomly Created

We are all complex, multidimensional organisms. We know that a physical ailment affects us emotionally. But left unattended, an emotional or spiritual wound can also become a physical ailment. All processes in this dynamic, multi-layered system occur at the same time; every event in every cell of our body is known to every other cell at the same time. Even our memories are stored, not only in our brain, but in every cell.

Our biological responses to emotional trauma and stress are very sophisticated. At the same time we need to understand that our targeted areas of pain and illness are not random. Our specific pains and illnesses are the result of life's emotional trauma and our responses to them, all beginning in childhood. These traumas can stem from the months of prenatal development through our early years and even onward, into adulthood.

An example to illustrate this phenomenon is how your body freezes when we are severely traumatized by violent emotional and/or physical abuse. For example, imagine that as an infant, rather than having an emotional and energetic welcome into the world, we are met with a threat of annihilation. Time stands still, our biological systems go on high alert and we can't feel anything? Our infantile perception diminishes and we can hardly breathe? Our frozenness indicates that our body has gone into a state of shock and the dissociation indicates that a part of our spirit has left your body.

Frozenness and dissociation is the way we survive the violence. These negative experiences are now frozen in time and still live in our body. They create chronic tension and stress reactions, which, over time, if left unattended, will lead to muscular pain or a breakdown of joints. Perhaps later in life we discover we now have developed arthritic symptoms.

In-Depth Body Psychotherapy and Subtle Energy Healing therapists understand that energy and matter are convertible. That is, energy can be converted to matter and matter can be converted back to energy (Einstein's theory: $E=mc^2$). To illustrate this, let's look at tumors, breast masses, and other illnesses and diseases which are results of

energy that has been blocked and stagnated. With the introduction of healing energy, light, love, comfort, or acceptance into the area of blocked matter, In-Depth Body Psychotherapy and Subtle Energy Healing therapists have had significant success in converting matter back to energy. This has resulted in masses disappearing before scheduled surgery and the remission and/or cure of many illnesses and diseases.

This is an example of our belief that every illness and disease is a message from spirit about either the physical, emotional and/or spiritual healing that needs to take place. The illness and disease are also messages of where energy is blocked in the body and a way that our spirit is bringing our attention to the block. As spirit seeks to heighten our awareness of where we are blocked, we have the opportunity to heal a spiritual/emotional wound that can allow the blocked energy (matter) to be converted back to flowing, healthy energy.

For example, let's take a quick look at the Parasympathetic and Sympathetic systems, the balance of which is so negatively affected by chronic stress. So many of us, in this rushed world, suffer damaging effects of stress, such as high blood pressure, insomnia, anxiety, fatigue, autoimmune disorders, to name a few. Healing energy can help regulate our adrenal system, which is taxed by stress. It can also calm our brain's automatic fight and flight response that stress induces. In fact, healing energy can even an increase of neural connections to the pre-frontal cortex. The pre-frontal cortex is associated with being able to mediate with the limbic, or emotional brain, and the fight and flight reptilian brain. This allows us to know when something is truly dangerous. Unfortunately, we tend to get stuck defending against "old trauma" and living as if we are in constant danger. As this rewiring occurs we become more connected to higher level functioning and spirituality. The rewiring in our brain and the balance of our nervous system enables us to live in a more balanced and healthy manner. We now find ourselves in a healing state of being.

Although our therapists can help to guide clients to deep healing, a physical healing is not always a given. Sometimes the healing is of an emotional or spiritual nature. How complete the physical healing is depends on several factors: the message our spirit is sending to us, the level of physical deterioration that exists, and our ability to live into and through our resistance and then deep into old embedded emotional hurts and trauma and the old embedded negative energies that was the original emotional abuse. As we begin the therapeutic process, even when there is physical deterioration, improvement is possible. We don't know in advance the nature and extent of the healing that can occur. In order for any healing to take place we need

to suspend judgments and obsessions and allow our body and emotions to realign into a quieter, calmer state of being.

For those readers who are interested in understanding the details of our sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems responses in relation to stress and relaxation, go to Appendix A and B.

Our therapists understand and work with the following:

➤ **Our Emotions:** As was discussed in the section on Subtle Energy, our emotions are forms of energy and expressions of our aliveness. If we support each emotion that forms in our bodies our energy flows and we are in a state of equilibrium. We then remain in a high and positive vibration. When we block our emotions, we block the energy molecules that make up the emotion. Depending on how we organized our bodies in order to survive emotional and physical abuse, the blocked energy intensifies over time. We can either become over-charged or lose our energetic charge and become under-energized. Either way, the blocking of our emotions has the potential to create a misalignment of muscles and organs, over or underproduction of hormones, misfiring of our neural system, less oxygen being carried throughout our body and limited or overactive respiratory response.

Emotionally, we all live in a dilemma; our different needs compete with one another. On the one hand, there is our biological and energetic need; an innate imperative that wants our aliveness to enjoy free expression. On the other hand, there is our need to limit this expression in order to defend ourselves, as we seek safety and protection. This energetic quandary and its resultant physical tension, in and of itself, can result in the breakdown of various systems.

➤ **The Causes of the Illness or Pain:** In working with physical pain and illness, we need to understand what the biological causes are of the specific problem. We also need to learn how the illness developed. Mostly we need to uncover the emotional stressors that were in place when we were children. This is because emotional and energetic victimizing energies (the emotional or physical abuse) manifest themselves in symptoms of pain or illness. For example, emotional and/or physical violence is an expression of hate toward the child's aliveness. At the very moment of the abuse, the parent doesn't want the child to exist. The violence is an act of annihilation. The hate, violence and annihilation become trapped in our bodies and we wind up continually hating and annihilating parts of our own aliveness. These are the energies that need to be released for a healing to take place. Pressure is created due to the battle between our need for release and its opposite, the holding against release. The result of that battle is a symptom. To achieve the release of the symptom, we need

to “uniform” or reform the physical organization that we developed to help us survive.

➤ Symptoms are Messages: On a spiritual level, symptoms are messages that block the way to our becoming one with the divine. On an emotional level, symptoms are manifestations of unconscious trauma that obstruct our path to wholeness. We need to work through the messages that our pain and illness provide. In this way we can align ourselves with our emotions and our spirit, rather than continue to fight what we feel.

➤ Faith: An essential ingredient in working with physical pain and illness is to have faith in process and to understand the multi-dimensional correlation between the physical, the emotional and the energetic. One must be open to spirit and to change.

➤ Deepest Healing: Working through emotional trauma impacts all of the dimensions of our being—physical, energetic and spiritual, as well as emotional. In this way, we receive the deepest healing possible.

All of the work that we do as clients includes accepting and loving ourselves more than we already do.

This sounds simple. We have heard all our lives that we must love ourselves, yet many of us just don’t know where to begin. Even if we do have an understanding of this concept, we often don’t know how to build it, to access it, to use it for our wellbeing. We, as therapists, help you by guiding you to create images of being surrounded by love, safety and protection. We encourage images of mother or father figures, (your own or images of perfect parents), friends, and family members from which you can accept, or “take in” a feeling of love and comfort. Or we may help you connect to whatever spirituality that is already a part of your experience. Using animal imagery, we might help you connect to an animal of bonding, a loving animal that will love and protect you. As you relax into this comfort, a feeling of peace and strength will begin to grow. Getting used to this feeling, depending on how much you had or have it in your life is key. Daily practice is vital; closing your eyes and remembering this feeling and making it your own. This begins to develop increased levels of what we call “internal support.” This is you looking after yourself, loving yourself, keeping yourself at peace.

But unfortunately, we also need to become aware of our resistance to taking in this safety and protection. That sounds like an odd statement. Why on earth would we resist feeling safe and protected?

We have become tied to old ways of doing things, including layers of armor and stiffness we have built up, as this is the only way we knew how to survive. No matter what else we do, integrating love, safety and understanding and appreciating our resistance is vital to our healing.

The Power of Imagery

Although, imagery is not the only method that we employ, it is a central aspect of the work that we do in In-Depth Body Psychotherapy. Images are messages that can come from deeper places of our own wisdom or can be messages from spirit. As we learn to dialogue with the images, we learn to welcome and respect them. We find that they have messages for us about the reason for our pain and illness and the pathways to our healing. It is important to understand that the way that we work with imagery is to help the client “embody their images.” This means that we feel each experience we have in our bodies, not just think it in our minds. It is a proven fact that imagery has the power to shift our biology. Ultimately, all of the therapy that we do focuses on the body and the subtle energies in the body.

Specific Ways that Our Therapists Work:

More specifically, In-Depth Body Psychotherapy and Subtle Energy Healing practitioners help you:

- Develop and internalize new channels of acceptance, love, safety and protection.
- Create a dialogue with the pain and illness in order to receive messages from the physical condition. At some level, you absolutely know the reason for the illness, its cause, and what would enable you to return to balance and health. We help you to allow an image to emerge from the physical condition so that it can inform you why the condition is here and what you need to understand about it. This image may be the image of an animal, a rock, a knife. There are many possibilities. Then, we help you to talk with this image, until it helps you understand what the symptom is here for and what it needs from you to heal.
- Allow an image of healing to emerge to guide you on your healing path. This image may be of a wise person or animal who will guide you toward health and well being or an image of you that walks tall, is pain-free **and** in complete glorious health. Again, there are endless possibilities.
- Create a dialogue with a spirit guide. Sometimes these are referred **to as** angels or guardians. This entity may be an ascended master or teacher, a family member who has died, or an ancestor or teacher. If this concept feels foreign to you, you may communicate

with a guide such as this by accepting that it is the higher part of yourself that is speaking, that knows best. Regardless of the guide's identity, this can be an extremely powerful addition to the process.

In the creation of a dialogue we help you in a number of ways. Some or all of these methods may prove useful:

- Ask the image what it is here for and if it has a message for you
- Become aware of whether the image that emerges possesses a victimizing/abusive or a healing/spiritual energy
- Ask the pain or the illness what it needs from you
- Ask at what age and under what conditions the pain or the illness was born in you
- Ask the spirit guide, image or the symptom itself to help you know and experience what you need to understand about the pain or the illness
- Be the abusive/victimizing energy that creates the pain or the illness. Here's an example: If someone feels their intestines tied up in knots we would help them become the force that ties their intestines in knots. We call this Victimizing Work. Victimizing Work is very important in terms of identifying and releasing the internalized negative energies that are still trapped in the body and therefore, perpetuate the symptoms. There is also more room to "take in" feelings of love, compassion, support, safety and protection when you can identify and release the negative energies.
- Allow an animal of healing to emerge to help guide you to what needs to happen for a healing to take place
- Experience how the pain is actually created in your body
- Bring light and the energy of spirit into the pain or illness
- Bring an image and energy of a good parent's love and comfort into the pain or illness
- In our practice of In-Depth Body Psychotherapy and Subtle Energy Healing, authentic emotional contact with the therapist is very important
- Create a supportive and healing community for yourself
- Reduce obsessional thinking by the development of a mindfulness practice. A mindfulness practice creates a sense of presence in the now. Only in the experience of the present moment

can we truly perceive what is real, and reduce our obsessive thinking, which is so often focused on the past or the future. The memories of the past or the worries for the future keep us from feeling alive right here, right now. The more mindful we are, the more that we are aligned in our bodies.

Reclaiming Our Aliveness: The Power of Our Heart

What does this mean, our “aliveness?” Everyone suffers periods, to a greater or lesser extent, of feeling dead, uninterested, or bored-- that everything is pointless, or rote. We all sometimes feel that we are on automatic pilot, that in actual fact we are not *feeling* very much of anything. Sound familiar? The degree to which we feel, we experience, we have joy, is our “aliveness.”

The connection to our emotional and energetic heart is the central ingredient in our aliveness, and in the reduction of stress, physical pain and illness. Our heart radiates love and warmth through our entire being. The power of love allows for the feeling that anything is possible and everything feels right. To have heart for oneself is to feel fully alive and have the experience of oneness and interconnectedness to all life. When we are in our heart we feel compassion for ourselves and for others. The feeling of oneness and the connection to the universe emanates from our heart.

For life to have its deepest meaning, we need support for a connection to our heart. This often begins with the client allowing love and comfort into his/her heart from the therapist. The therapist may also suggest the client use known love and support, already present in his life, from family, or friends, or from an icon of love such as Mother Mary. We need help to learn to be in our heart, to feel open, to feel present and to feel this joy of life. We need to feel our heart’s radiation of warmth, comfort, and passion. The meaning of life, as Joseph Campbell has observed, is the rapturous feeling of being alive at any moment. This is the state of being that can produce physical healing.

Most people pay a great deal of attention to the concerns of the heart. There are so many concepts around this: our heart’s path, or conversely, our hard-heartedness, the projection of heartlessness, the desire to be loved, or the fear of love. These take up considerable shelf space in our mind and psyche, as well as in our favorite bookstore. Without heart, life becomes only a series of disconnected or disembodied experiences. Without heart for ourselves, we live defensively and more often feel empty, meaningless, and isolated. Our defensiveness is experienced in our frozenness or collapse, in being overly rigid or overly passive, in disconnection and in depersonalization. Defensiveness can show up as blaming, as being

super-intellectual, self-castigating, depressed or in constant fear. There is any number of ways that we form defensively in order to survive in the world.

Without heart, which we also call acceptance, we lack the inner support to deal with these feelings. We remain alienated in a world that so often supports alienation. When we are caring toward ourselves and others, life becomes a continuous flow of experiences with meaning. The connection of heart with all that we do and feel provides us with a full and meaningful life.

This must be the theme in our life or we remain disconnected, without center and ground, with either inflexible or overly flexible boundaries. Too often we think change and healing should take place because we now have intellectual understanding of our issues. For too long this has been the main method of therapy available from orthodox psychology training. But without a connection to our heart, the information is just that - information, and cannot be effectively used. It is like having the computer hardware without the necessary software to process the information. With only the hardware, we remain helpless as more and more data pile up.

Darkness (negativity and acting out) and light (understanding, warmth and compassion) are natural components of every one of us. We have all been emotionally or physically assaulted by our parents, other people with whom we were in contact with, and society in general. The negative, abusive energies with which we bonded from our childhood can still have a powerful hold on us as adults. These abusive energies remain embedded in our minds, our psyches and our bodies. They are the basis for many of our beliefs, beliefs about self esteem, the way that we deal with love and intimacy, and the way that we parent ourselves and our children. On a cultural and global level this translates to the way that we deal with people who are not like us. These beliefs can only be transformed as we feel the truth of our childhood and learn how we formed our body defensively against abuse, which in our terminology includes; abandonment, shame, humiliation, anger, violence, or the concept that we were not good enough. Only then can we begin supporting ourselves into the fullness of our lives.

Our bodies are a reflection of this abuse - the abuse which caused us to live various degrees of separation from our hearts. Most people have a desire for more: to improve the quality of their existence, to feel more alive, to have better relationships, and to recapture a place of spontaneity and pleasure we all once knew or dreamed of as children.

To recapture our heart-body connection is to get to know and support the inner child with all its emotions, excitements, inquisitiveness,

traumas, assaults, confusions, and uncertainties. If we are to support our heart, and therefore our life force, we have to be aware of our childhood and its effects on how we learned to live in our bodies, in our emotions, our thoughts and our relationships. Until we learn to accept the deep knowing of how we had to live as children to protect our hearts, we can't fully accept who we are as adults. Nor can we allow ourselves to enter into the evolving process that leads to further growth, aliveness and the release of our physical symptoms.

When we integrate these qualities with our adult abilities to conceptualize, discriminate, and flexibly contain our emotions, we more deeply understand the simple truths of life. We can live more fluidly. We feel and live more authentically, rather than living our life masked, in a role of how we should look and be. At times, it is in our own best interest to express ourselves forthrightly. At other times it is in our own best interest to contain our expression and hold onto our thoughts and feelings. To have the flexibility to live either way is to not become stuck in being overly impulsive or overly withholding. We contain our feelings at times to allow for their full, ripe expression. Then, we can express ourselves, when we need to, with fullness and eloquence. Having the support to experience and express ourselves from fullness or to feel truly at ease with containing ourselves is the basis for the rapturous feeling of being alive. When we are full of ourselves, it enables us to live through stressful times with more of a sense of inner strength, direction and purpose.

The Magic of Transformation, and Healing

When we live through and release old hurts (and the trauma that caused the hurt in the first place) we no longer need to organize our bodies defensively. When we experience love, comfort and acceptance for those hurts, we are able to clear old defensive patterns, chronic tension and pain dissolves and we can relax and soften into our bodies. Our muscles and organs realign, blood and oxygen flow more freely, and hormones become regulated. No longer being in a constant state of stress and high alert, our body's innate healing power is then able to "do its work." This is the state of being where our illnesses can be healed.

Let me give you an example that may help to make this clear. Have you ever had a fight with a friend or partner, but been able to express your emotions, talk it through with **him or her**, and seen the acceptance in the eyes of your friend? Then you hug, and feel comforted. You feel close to him or her. You feel warm, and experience a sense of wellbeing. Something real has happened; a connection, an

acceptance, with love, of the others pain. There is a letting go and our body has relaxed and aligned. This is an experience of transformation.

This happens in our therapy. We work with dealing with our feeling like a victim of our pain or illness. With help, we give up complaining about our lot in life and stop being angry with ourselves and the world. We deal with the blocks toward loving ourselves and surround ourselves with acceptance, safety and protection. We are now in the process of transforming the darkness and our negativity into sweet relaxation. There is power there. The power of truth, heart, kindness, that only surrender and acceptance can bring. It is also the power of renewal that emerges when we allow our subtle energies to flow.

It comes down to the fact that it is not how we feel that is the problem, it is how we *feel* about how we feel. Therefore, our sadness, or anger, fear, need, pleasure, confusion, loneliness--all feelings--are never problems. The same is true of our pain and illness. Remember, if we treat our pain and illness as messages from our spirit regarding what old, childhood trauma need to be healed, we are continually in an evolving process that leads us toward greater light, aliveness and integration. If we treat each of our feelings simply as an aspect of our humanness, then we can share our humanness with one another. Then, all of our relationships become deeply alive and meaningful. The more people live in this way, taking responsibility for our darkness and transforming it into light, the more that personal, family, group, governmental and corporate transformation can occur.

The act of taking responsibility for our darkness is the process by which we transform negativity to power. For example, in taking responsibility, we bring the energy of acting out, which is the dispersal of molecules of energy out of one's body, back into the body. When those molecules of dark energy are met with molecules of light energy, of love and acceptance, transformation takes place.

This, in turn, transforms how we treat ourselves, our friends, and the world. Our personalities become less like clones of our parents and more aligned with our essence, our life force, subtle energies and spirit. When our life is **not** stuck in old patterns, we are freer to move, to flow with our own needs, wants and desires.

As we live more often with an open heart, we no longer feel vulnerable in relation to our open heartedness. At first, we feel vulnerable because we don't have the experience of feeling safe being this open to ourselves. When we support the newness of our vulnerability it transforms into softness. This is the softness of the child being new and alive. As we continue to work with whatever old abusive energies appear in us that wants to repudiate this level of aliveness, then open-heartedness becomes a place of peaceful power. It becomes a centered place of balance and harmony. As we continue this

purification process, our open heartedness transcends to an experience of oneness with the universe. Now we live in the experience of oneness with all people, with all living things, the Zen place of enlightenment. Understanding and compassion then radiates from our core.

When we can come to the center of our parent's and /or our own darkness and get a connection of love there, the darkness immediately transforms into power and light. It is only by allowing love into the very heart of the darkness, into the heart of our pain and illness that transformation can happen.

This may well be the next step in consciousness for mankind. On a universal level, look at the example set by the great spiritual leaders: from Jesus and the Buddha to Mother Theresa, and Nelson Mandela. Consider the effect created by the calm acceptance of darkness; the moment of transformation when forgiveness, love and acceptance met the negativity of the forces they encountered. From their gentle expressions of love and peace, came enormous strength and influence. Darkness was transformed into power.

APPENDIX A

To understand optimal health in the physical dimension is to understand that there needs to be a balance between the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. Like two children on a see-saw, skillfully balancing the board with a minimum of tension, the SNS and PNS carefully maintain metabolic equilibrium by making adjustments whenever something disturbs the balance. The SNS becomes dominant at times of stress. Inside our body the alert signal goes on and we are ready to take action. It turns on our fight or flight response. In contrast, the PNS promotes the relaxation response. When the stressful situation passes the PNS takes over and we can let down and relax. This is how we biologically deal with survival during crises and traumatic situations and return to a relaxed state when the crisis has passed.

Stress reactions reduce the body's less important functions; those not related to dealing with the emergency. Here's what takes place during the stress reaction: our adrenal glands release adrenaline and other hormones, especially Cortisol, which increases breathing, heart rate and blood pressure. This moves more oxygen-rich blood faster to the brain and to the muscles needed for fighting or fleeing. And we have plenty of energy for either, because adrenaline causes a rapid release of glucose and fatty acids into our bloodstream. Also, our senses become keener, our memory sharper, and we are less sensitive to pain.

Let's look at all of the changes as a result of our being brought to alert status in order to deal with stress:

- Acceleration of our heart rate
- Increase of blood pressure
- Movement toward either a decrease of ventilation to remain calm and resourceful or hyperventilation to prepare for battle
- Skin becomes tense as blood moves away from the skin
- Blood clotting mechanisms become activated
- Lowering of gastro-intestinal functions
- Higher adrenaline production has a suppression effect on the immune system
- Either a lowering or overactive sexual functioning...the lowering to bring more energy to fight or flee or overactive sexuality to compensate for reduced feelings of aliveness and vibrancy

Cortisol is an important hormone in the body, secreted by the adrenal glands and involved in the following functions:

- proper glucose metabolism
- regulation of blood pressure

- Insulin release for blood sugar maintenance
- Immune function
- Inflammatory response

Cortisol helps the body produce blood sugar from protein for more energy. However, excess glucose is used for lipogenesis (fat production). Interestingly, research has linked over-secretion of Cortisol to increase fat storage and obesity.

Small increases of Cortisol have some positive effects...

- A quick burst of energy for survival reasons
- Heightened memory functions
- A burst of increased immunity
- Lower sensitivity to pain
- Helps maintain homeostasis in the body

Higher and prolonged levels of Cortisol in the bloodstream (like those associated with chronic stress) have shown to have negative effects, such as:

- Impaired cognitive performance
- Suppressed thyroid function
- Blood sugar imbalance such as hyperglycemia
- Decreased bone density
- Higher blood pressure
- Increased fat which is related to increase in heart conditions, stroke and the development of higher level of "bad" cholesterol (LDL) and lower levels of "good" cholesterol (HDL).
- A cumulative effect of chronically overloading the brain with powerful hormones that are intended for short term duty in emergency situations damages and kills brain cells.

Prolonged stress with the SNS remaining active also produces...

- Insomnia
- Confusion
- Poor attention
- Forgetfulness

To keep adrenal functioning and cortisol levels healthy and under control our body's relaxation response needs to be activated. It is important, however, to recognize if your cortisol levels are high or low. High cortisol levels are the result of the response to chronic stress and represent the adaptation phase of the stress response. Low cortisol levels are the consequence of adrenal exhaustion or the exhaustion phase of the stress response.

Therefore, chronic stress, with a constantly overactive SNS can affect all of the systems of our body.

Endocrine (Hormonal System)

Digestive

Cardiovascular

Lymphatic
Muscular skeletal
Immune
Nervous
Reproductive
Urinary

APPENDIX B

Going Down The Rabbit Hole Excess Cortisol from chronic stress speeds aging, by shortening telomeres.

“Going down the rabbit hole” is a way of expressing an ever-deepening understanding that may have no end. What was previously invisible is now becoming increasingly visible. With this greater visibility comes the possibility of healing that which was thought to be incurable.

The latest research indicates that too much of a rushed, overbooked, multi-tasking, high-stress lifestyle is shortening our lifespan and stunning our immune system at the cellular level, by inhibiting the cells’ youth enzyme, called telomerase. I’m sure you are familiar with the above mentioned stressors. But another form is the continual stress induced by how we have organized ourselves in relation to the abuse of our childhoods. Stress that is related to childhood abuse and stress that is related to societal stress are not independent of one another. Each impacts the other and effects adrenal functions.

These adrenal functions that produce cortisol now have an effect on telomeres. Every cell contains a tiny clock called a telomere, which shortens each time the cell divides. Short telomeres are linked to a range of human diseases, including HIV, osteoporosis, heart disease and aging. Studies have shown that an enzyme within the cell, called telomerase, keeps immune cells young by preserving their telomere length and the ability to continue dividing.

UCLA scientists have found that the stress hormone cortisol suppresses the immune cells’ ability to activate their telomerase. This may explain why the cells of persons under chronic stress have shorter telomeres. The study reveals how stress makes people more susceptible to illness.

