

Talking to Your Doctor About Your Superhealing 40 Day Action Plan

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Welcome and Congratulations!

I salute you for making your decision to become more proactive regarding your health and well-being.

This report was created to assist you in sharing first sharing a key element of the **Superhealing 40 Day Action Plan**, the clinically proven program that can help you to improve your health and well-being.

I encourage you first to read **Superhealing: Engaging Your, Mind, Body and Spirit to Create Optimal Health and Well-being** in its entirety, create your 40 Day action plan, notify your doctor (in writing) of your desire to discuss your plan with him/her, schedule an appointment.

I wrote the book to help empower you to take charge of your health and lead the role in decision making.

I've included sample correspondence, conversation topics, and a sample conversations, selected research studies to share with your physician to help you engage her/his support of your efforts.

While this report focuses on the mind body techniques that are at the foundation of your forty day action plan.

It's rewarding for me to know that you are ready to make a lifestyle shift based on my book.

To your optimal health and well-being,

Elaine R. Ferguson, MD

Sample Letter/e-mail to Send to Your Doctor Before Your Next Appointment

Dear Dr. _____

Thank you so much for being my primary physician. I am very excited to share with you that I've learned the importance of the choices I make in my daily life, as it relates to my health. During my next visit, I'd like to share with you my decision to become more proactively involved in my health and well-being. During my next office visit, I'd like to discuss with you an exciting program I am embarking upon to become more actively involved in my health and well-being. I've learned through reading an outstanding new book, based on the latest medical breakthroughs in fields of research most physicians and consumers aren't aware of.

I am creating a plan to change and improve my lifestyle through engaging several clinically proven techniques I have discovered will help me to do so. I look forward to talking to you, and your anticipated support.

During my next visit, I would like to share with you some of the exciting research data that inspired me to become more actively involved with my health and well-being.

I'd like to thank you so much in advance for your support!

Sincerely,

_____ Your name (signature)

Addendum (if you feel is appropriate)

If you want to prepare your doctor you can add the questions and the references or wait to the visit. You decide what will work best in your situation.

For example before you close, you can add:

Also, please find enclosed a few references of some of the research studies that are at the foundation of the lifestyle/health improvement program I'm creating. (You can select from the Did You Know section and include a few or all of the topics mentioned).

During Your Next Appointment

1. Take a copy of the letter/e-mail and ask if he/she had a chance to read it.
2. Share your excitement with your physician about your decision and the lifestyle improvement journey you are embarking upon.
3. Ask where your doctor stands
4. In response to his/her position you can:
 - a. Share your 40 Day Action Plan if he or she is receptive
 - b. Ask the included questions and share the Did you know section and or key talking points if he/she is hesitant, resistant
 - c. Leave those sections of the report if she or he is unwilling to discuss. And urge her/him to read them before your next visit.

Share Your Excitement:

You can share with your physician that you now realize that your own beliefs about what is and is not possible in terms of healing interfered with your progress in terms of achieving optimal health and well-being in the past. And reading the book has given you a doorway, and a new opportunity to reach a deeper level of awareness, health and well being thought a deeper understanding of how your body truly functions, and the factors, being the physical ones most physicians are well aware of play an important role.

Physicians tend to be more open to a conversation about lifestyle changes, in comparison to holistic, alternative, natural health topics. However, that reality is changing, and perhaps more than ever before, doctors are becoming more receptive to these ideas and concepts. As you know the **superhealing** approach encompasses mind, body and spirit, I would suggest when discussing with your physician, you should do so from a lifestyle perspective.

Fortunately, today more than ever, physicians are more open to the concepts of alternative medicine and many medical schools are now teaching courses on a variety of topics. As you know while the **superhealing** approach encompasses mind, body and spirit, most physicians aren't aware of the power of these approaches highlighted in the book.

As my book revealed and explained to you **superhealing** is your innate ability to engage and accelerate your body's powerful healing capacities through your active

participation in their expression. That means involving your mind, body, and spirit to restore the harmony that is the foundation of that allows your cells to open the floodgates of healing that are not under your conscious control. This approach allows you to draw upon a broad range of clinically proven techniques, tools, and processes that speak to your needs and personal preferences.

Superhealing emphasizes the importance and necessity of involving the whole person, all aspects of being, in the creation of optimal wellness. This approach recognizes and promotes the fundamental innate capacity of the body to heal itself, and the role your being-your mind, your body, and your spirit-play in the expression of your health and the development of disease.

The foundation is to consciously create the conditions that make **superhealing** possible in any given case of severe chronic illness or injury; we cannot guarantee success. It the fact that healing is outside our conscious control and et occurs can dissolve even our most carefully assembled beliefs system.

Ask Where Your Doctor Stands/ Questions For Your Physician

Ask your physician what is his or her opinion on the following topics, to get an idea as to how to best broach the subject with her/him.

1. What do you think about the role that my lifestyle can play
2. What do you think about the placebo effect?
3. Do you think my emotions can affect my health?
4. Have you heard about epigenetics?
5. What's your opinion of stress reduction methods?

Three possible responses:

1. Your doctor is totally open and willing to listen
2. Your doctor is skeptical, but open to continue the conversation
3. Your doctor rejects your questions and refuses to continue the conversation. You have a choice to firmly, but kindly indicate you are the patient, and your want her/his support, or you have the difficult decision of doing the program without your doctor's involvement or of finding a new doctor.

In the case of #2 and #3 responses you can ask your physician if she/he is aware of some of the latest research findings.

You can also share the letter from me to your treating physician.

Other Tips:

If you are nervous about this topic, as many patients are, don't worry, practice your conversation with a friend or family member. If you anticipate resistance from your doctor, have your responses ready. I will share with you a few of the major issues most doctors have, due to their lack of understanding, and will give you a few sample answers that should help you to respond.

I'd like to talk to you about something that's very important to me, and as my physician, I'd like to ask for your support. As mentioned to you in my message, I've decided to become more proactive. I want to improve my health. I appreciate your efforts, but have come to realize in addition to my medical care, the way I live everyday is very important, in fact it is key to my health.

I just read this book based on the latest medical research in a variety of fields from epigenetics, telomeres, nutrition, mind body medicine, wellness and health promotion, and have discovered the true power that rests within each and every cell to improve my health and well-being, based on the environment they're exposed to.

Superhealing is an integrative healing approach to transforming and transcending the physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual limitations that have been imposed on us throughout our lives. These factors lead to imbalance and chronic disease if they're not addressed in a timely manner. Once we've transcended these limitations, we all have the inborn capacity to **superheal** our lives.

What to do if your doctor isn't responsive:

You have a choice to make. It's up to you. Remember your doctor is supposed to help you. You play the most important role in your health and well-being

Urge him/ her to carefully review the materials provided: 1. The Mind/body techniques 2. The **Did You Know** section, and the selected references and/or 3. **My Dear Colleague** letter. 4. **What is Mind body Medicine?** 5. **Superhealing 40 Day Action Plan Core Mind Body Techniques:**

Resources To Share With Your Physician:

1. Did You Know That:

2. Key Talking Points About The Use of Alternative Medicine and Mind-Body Techniques

3. What Is Mind/Body Medicine

4. Superhealing 40 Day Action Plan Core Mind Body Techniques

5. My Dear Colleague letter

6. Selected References from **Superhealing**

Did You Know That:

1. More heart attacks occur on Monday morning than during any other time of the week? (If he or she answers no, you can explain this phenomena is caused by the fact that Monday mornings are the most stressful time of the week because most people are stressed about going to work) more heart attacks happen on Monday morning, between 8:00 am and noon, than at any other time of the week.

This clustering of heart attacks is uniquely human. Scientists therefore theorize that it is not linked to biorhythms, but due to the psychological meaning of Monday morning.⁵ Monday morning is the most stressful morning of the week because it's when people return to jobs of minimal, if any, satisfaction and resume other pressures typical of working.

Source: A. G. Barnett and A.J. Dobson, "Excess in Cardiovascular vents on Monday Mornings: A Meta-Analysis and Prospective Study," *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 59 (2005): 109–14.

2. Hostility is a risk factor for having a second heart attack? A study involving men who'd had a heart attack compared those who were taught forgiveness techniques to those who weren't over a two year period after the first heart attack occurred.

Source: K. A. Lawler, J. W. Younger, R. L. Piferi, E. Billington, R. Jobe, K. Edmondson, and W. H. Jones, "A Change of Heart: Cardiovascular Correlates of Forgiveness in Response to Interpersonal Conflict," *Journal of Behavioral Medicine* 26 (2003): 373–93; see also G. Affleck, H. Tennen, S. Croog, and S. Levine, "Causal Attribution, Perceived Benefits, and Morbidity after a Heart Attack: An Eight-Year Study," *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 55 (2003): 29–35.

3. Blood sugar levels in diabetics can be reduced through meditation?

Source: H. Cerpa, "The Effects of Clinically Standardized Meditation on Type 2 Diabetics," *Dissertation Abstracts International* 499 (1989): 3432.

4. Optimists are healthier than pessimists?

Source: H. A. Tindle, Y. F. Chang, L. H. Kuller, J. E. Manson, J. G. Robinson, M. C. Rosal, G. J. Siegle, and K. A. Matthews, "Optimism, Cynical Hostility, and Incident Coronary Heart Disease and Mortality in the Women's Health Initiative," *Circulation* 120 (2009): 656–62.

The simple act of writing about an emotional issue can improve your health?

Source: A. R. Herzog, M. M. Franks, H. R. Markus, and D. Holmberg, "Activities and well-Being in Older Age: Effects of Self-Concept and Educational Attainment," *Psychology and Aging* 13 (1998): 179–85.

5. The mind can reverse the aging process?

Source: Ellen Langer *Counterclockwise: Mindful Health and the Power of Possibility* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2009), 164.

6. Every drug study measures the power of the mind's belief about what it's taking compared to the actual effect of the drug? Known as the placebo effect. Most drugs are barely more active than placebos?
7. Listening to soothing music can help your body to heal?

Source: G. Bernatzky, M. Presch, M. Anderson, and J. Panksepp, "Emotional Foundations of Music as a Non-Pharmacological Pain Management Tool in Modern Medicine," *Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Reviews* 35 (2011): 1989–99; see also D. Knox, S. Beveridge, L. Mitchell, and R. MacDonald, "Acoustic Analysis and Mood Classification of Pain-Relieving Music," *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America* 130 (2011): 1673–82.

Tai chi and yoga lower the blood pressure?

Source: G. Y. Yen, G. Wang, P. M. Wayne, and R. S. Phillips, "The Effect of Tai Chi Exercise on Blood Pressure: A Systematic Review," *Preventive Cardiology* 11 (2008): 82–89; and N. R. Okonta, "Does Yoga Therapy Reduce Blood Pressure in Patients with Hypertension? An Integrative Review," *Holistic Nursing Practitioner* 26 (2012): 137–141.

8. Writing about emotional issues can improve one's health?

Source: J.W. Pennebaker, J. W., and C.K. Chung, (in press). Expressive writing and its links to mental and physical health. In H. S. Friedman (Ed.), *Oxford handbook of health psychology*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 19.
http://homepage.psy.utexas.edu/homepage/faculty/pennebaker/reprints/Pennebaker&Chung_FriedmanChapter.pdf

9. The risk of developing chronic disease, isn't predetermined by family history, i.e., my genes? The new understanding of our biology includes the fact that perception plays a role in genetic activity. You're already controlling your genes. Now and always, your mind and your lifestyle have been continuously influencing their expression.

At the end of every strand of DNA is a caplike structure called a *telomere* that prevents the aberration or loss of genetic information during cell division. Cell division is how your cells replicate and replace themselves throughout your life span.

Telomeres play a key role in maintaining the stability of your genetic codes. They are long at birth, but each time your cells divide, the process causes your telomeres to shorten. Only a certain number of replications are possible before this happens for

every time a cell replicates itself, the gene becomes shorter over a lifetime. After the telomeres reach a critically short length, usually during the later years of life, your cells will develop the inability to divide again and begin to die without replacement. So they are now considered important markers of aging, chronic disease, and mortality.

Telomeres are affected by many factors, including your cellular environment. It's been demonstrated that stress can accelerate telomere shortening and lead to early cellular aging. Telomere length reflects not only the presence of stress but also your body's response to it at a cellular level. Shortened telomere length is linked to aging, cancer, and heart disease.

Our genes are not the ultimate determinant of our health. For decades we were led to believe that our family genetic inheritance is the best indicator of our future state of health, but we now know better. Our lifestyle—in particular, our emotional lifestyle—plays a significant role in maintain the health of our cells and organs.

Epigenetics is a new field that studies the relationship the cellular environment has to gene activity. It has revealed that our internal environment of thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and emotions; our lifestyle, including what we eat; and our external environment all affect our genes. These factors have the ability to turn on and off the genetic codes that are responsible for either improving our health or making us more susceptible to disease.

Molecular biologist Elizabeth Blackburn won the 2009 Nobel Prize in Physiology as a result of her research determining that positive lifestyle changes (in particular, successful stress management) can reverse telomere shortening. Dr. Blackburn identified the enzyme telomerase, which maintains telomere length, while investigating the theory that psychological stress alters the rate of cellular aging. Her research on women determined that those with the highest levels of perceived stress had much shorter telomeres than those with lower levels of perceived stress.

It is clear that epigenetic factors affect both our short-term and long-term responses and are key in determining how well our telomeres function. Recent studies have revealed that telomeres are powerful indicators of life's great insults. They are shortened by exposure to significant abuse in childhood, and they are shortened even more each year an individual spends depressed, caring for a sick loved one, going through a bankruptcy or a divorce, and so on. Most people are living with one or more ongoing life stressors resulting from their work, relationships, and world events.

Your emotional response to stressful situations, especially to anything you perceive as a threat, can lead to a prolonged state of physiological arousal, a heightened fight-or-flight response that may affect cell longevity. A perception of threat—or even a cycle of negative thinking—triggers a cascade of negative emotional responses

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that intensify the significance of whatever seems threatening, making its presence seem even more stressful.

Sources: E. E. Epel, E. H. Blackburn, J. Lin, et al., “Accelerated Telomere Shortening In Response to Life Stress,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science USA* 101 (2004): 17312–15; E. H. Blackburn and E. S. Epel, “Too Toxic to Ignore,” *Nature* 490 (2012): 1690–92.

Key Talking Points About the Use of Alternative Medicine/Mind-body Techniques

1. Millions of people in the US and around the globe now use complementary and alternative medicine.
2. Nearly 40 percent of Americans age 18 or older reported using some form of complementary health practice? People age 50 to 59 were among the most likely to report use. According to a 2010 survey conducted by the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (part of the National Institutes of Health) and the AARP (American Association of Retired People) of people age 50 or older, 58 percent of those who reported using complementary health practices said that they had discussed them with a health care provider.
3. There are now thousands of studies that confirm the role the mind plays in health and disease.
4. Mind-body interventions are now mainstream and are being used in many hospitals, clinics and medical practices by physicians to complement conventional medical care.
5. Mind-body techniques help to save money, because they address the root cause of many diseases-stress.
6. Mind-body techniques constitute a major portion of the overall use of complementary and alternative medicine by the public.
7. According to a nationwide government survey released in December 2008, approximately 38 percent of U.S. adults aged 18 years and over and approximately 12 percent of children use some form of CAM.
8. The government estimated in 2007 that over 18 percent of the adult U.S. population uses mind-body techniques, including relaxation, mediation, guided imagery, etc.

Here's a summary of mind-body medicine, and the healing power of the mind vis-à-vis the placebo effect.

From the Desk of Elaine R. Ferguson, M.D.

Dear Colleague:

I am writing this letter on behalf of your patient _____. He/she has read my new book Superhealing engaging your mind body and spirit to create optimal health and well-being. The foundation of this program and my book is literally thousands of research studies I've reviewed over the course of my career, that have helped me to develop a broader view of health compared to what I learned in medical school.

My book highlights the latest research gleaned from a variety of disciplines including molecular biology, epigenetics, health promotion, psychoneuroimmunology, psychoneurocardiology, cellular biology, and more.

I encourage you to review the selected bibliography and other materials I've shared with your patient.

I hope that this information will help you to support your patient's efforts to improve his/her health through incorporating the simple, but powerful tools and techniques that are highlighted in the book and included in the program. It allows your patient to create a unique 40 day action plan based on personal preferences.

This work is the culmination of my almost thirty years of practicing medicine. I am a graduate of Brown University, Duke University School of Medicine and completed my residency training at the University of Chicago's Hospitals and Clinics.

I am passionate about health and have spent over thirty years researching innovative ways to help my patients improve their health and well-being. I, as have many of my colleagues have developed a broader vision of health and well-being, one that encompasses the body, mind and spirit.

Feel free to visit my websites www.drelaine.com, www.superhealingbook.com and www.howtogetwellfaster.com.

Yours in good health,

Elaine R. Ferguson, MD

What is Mind body Medicine?

Mind-body medicine encompasses a broad range of techniques and practices designed to support and enhance the mind's ability to impact health and well-being.

Mind-body medicine typically focus on intervention strategies that are thought to promote health, such as relaxation, meditation, guided imagery and hypnosis. A conscious mental process using certain techniques—such as focusing attention or maintaining a specific posture—to suspend the stream of thoughts and relax the body and mind.

Perhaps the most significant example of the power of belief is the placebo effect. A placebo is an inert substance without any medicinal value, such as a sugar pill, that is given to a person who is under the false impression that it is an effective treatment. An individual's belief alone can sometimes prompt an improvement. *Placebo* is Latin for "I shall please." Thus, the *placebo effect* is the medical term used to describe the healing power of the mind.

Traditionally, even though the placebo effect can be measured, it is explained in a way that minimizes its true power. Among researchers, the placebo effect is presented as a nuisance, an interfering human artifact that compromises the pure approach of scientific research on active substances, such a medications and surgery. As a young doctor, I learned that the placebo effect was something we "just had to live with." It was to be tolerated, not accepted as a possibility in planning a course of treatment. However, I was absolutely fascinated by the notion that the mind was so powerful. Although most people have heard of the placebo effect, I do not think many of us appreciate the opportunity it represents.

Your beliefs are quite powerful and have a direct effect on your body's responses. In fact, under the right conditions, your mind can heal your body in the absence of drugs or surgery. This is one of the most fascinating aspects of your superhealing ability.

The placebo effect is recognized as being so potent that for any new drug to be considered a valid healing agent, it must be measured against a placebo to prove its effectiveness compared to the effectiveness of beliefs. To be approved by the Food and Drug Administration, every new drug study includes a placebo, and most approved drugs actually do only a little better than placebos. But doctors and drug companies don't generally advertise this fact. As Ted Kaptchuk, a Harvard University professor and researcher who has spent his career studying the effect of placebos, has said, "Mainstream medicine uses the placebo effect all the time. Doctors don't tell you the drug they're giving you is barely better than a placebo. They all spin."

In drug studies that take into consideration the power of the mind, the statistical difference between the "real thing" and the placebo is rarely more than 15 percent.

Several studies have proved that placebo-induced sham treatments produce outcomes equal to those attributed to drugs and surgery in terms of providing relief from several common conditions. For instance, at Baylor College of Medicine, a group of orthopedic surgeons led by J. Bruce Moseley were prompted to explore the true benefits of a type of arthroscopic knee surgery that is recommended to patients with osteoarthritis when medication fails to relieve their pain. Although the surgery brings results, it is unclear to surgeons what the true physiological source of pain relief is. There is no proof that arthroscopy actually cures or halts the process of osteoarthritis. So this team of surgeons designed a study to assess the true effectiveness of arthroscopic surgery.

The Baylor College study was a double-blind design, which means that neither the subjects nor the researchers themselves knew which patients received arthroscopic surgery and which did not. There were 180 patients with degenerative knee arthritis in the study; the experimental group was given one of two kinds of authentic orthopedic surgery—one using a laproscope, the other using lavage (washing out) or debridement (removal of tissue)—and the control group was given a fake surgery.

In the control group, three scalpel incisions were made around the knee like those used in actual surgery so as to keep the patients and the medical evaluators from discovering that they hadn't been operated on. The results of all the surgeries—both of the real ones and the fake one—were the same. The findings determined that surgery mostly relieves pain because the patients believe it does.

Knee surgery for arthritis is not the only operation to be undermined when compared with sham surgery. Another study found something similar with patients undergoing a common procedure called vertebroplasty, which involves an injection into the lumbar spine. The procedure alleviated pain to the same degree as a placebo “surgery” in which the physicians tapped on the spine and piped in the smell of cement to the treatment room to make groggy volunteer subjects believe they were receiving the real treatment. Researchers found that the thirty-six volunteers who received the sham surgery did just as well as the thirty-five who got the real operation.

One of the most fascinating double-blind studies I've seen compared the placebo effect to neurosurgery for Parkinson's disease, a serious disorder marked by the brain's diminished ability to produce dopamine, the chemical that is released when we feel pleasure. The study found that those who received a real transplant of dopamine neurons experienced improvement in their movement, whereas those who had sham surgery did not. Even so—and this is the part that intrigues me—the participants' perception of having had surgery did influence their responses. In their report, the researchers stated, “Those who thought they received the transplant at twelve months reported better quality of life than those who thought they received the sham surgery, regardless of which surgery they actually received.” In other words, their beliefs improved their lives.

Researchers at the University of California at Los Angeles have also investigated whether brain activity is altered by placebos. Their study involved giving patients with major depression a placebo instead of an antidepressant drug while leading them to believe they were receiving the actual drug.

Using an imaging technique known as quantitative electroencephalography, the researchers discovered that the brain function of those who received the placebo was quite similar to the brain function caused by the antidepressant drugs. After nine weeks, the patients were classified as being medication responders, placebo responders, or, in some cases, nonresponders to either medication or placebos. Among the participants who were responders, it was found that the same brain region was changed whether they were medication responders or placebo responders.

The researchers didn't anticipate that the participants receiving the placebos would actually have detectable changes in the speed and processing of their brain functions, but they did.

The mind is so powerful that it has also been observed to exert a negative influence on patients who have been told that an inert substance might be harmful. This phenomenon is called the *nocebo effect*. I believe that physicians accidentally induce a nocebo effect by handing out pessimistic predictions to their sick patients like judges handing down death sentences in court. Patients can so easily internalize the hopelessness their doctors feel and turn it into a self-fulfilling prophecy. Fortunately, doctors are increasingly being trained in the role the mind plays in health and disease, so they know to avoid triggering negative perceptions in their patients.

The German Medical Association, it is interesting to note, actively encourages physicians to prescribe placebos. In 2010, it found that 59 percent of patients with stomach discomfort were helped by sham treatments.

Ask him/her to consider and if he or she refuses to cooperate you must decide if you are going to do this on your own—lifestyle changes usually happen that way, or if you are going to find a new, more open minded physician. Remember it is your body, and it a critical part of your health care, is your relationship with your physician.

Here's information regarding the various mind/body techniques you may have selected

Superhealing 40 Day Action Plan Core Mind Body Techniques:

Relaxation Techniques

Meditation

Visualization (Guided Imagery)

Laughter

Journaling

Positive Emotions

Relaxation Techniques

Include those practices whose primary stated goal is the elicitation of a psychophysiological state of relaxation or hypoarousal. In certain practices, the goal might be to reduce muscle tension (as in progressive muscle relaxation) in which muscles are alternatively tensed and relaxed. In other cases the primary goal is to achieve a hypometabolic state of reduced central nervous (sympathetic) system arousal.

Meditation

Meditation has been defined as the “intentional self-regulation of attention” a systematic mental focus on particular aspects of inner or outer experience. Unlike many other approaches in behavioral medicine (such as biofeedback, relaxation strategies) most meditation practices were developed within a spiritual or religious context and held as their ultimate goal of some type of spiritual growth, personal transformation, or transcendental experience, it has been determined that as a health care intervention, meditation can be taught and used effectively regardless of a patient's cultural or religious background.

The two most extensively researched forms are transcendental meditation in which practitioners repeat a silent word or phrase (a mantra) with the goal of quietly and ultimately transcending the ordinary stream of internal mental dialogue and mindfulness meditation in which practitioners simply observe or attend to (without judgment), thoughts, emotions, sensations, perceptions, etc., as they arise moment by moment in the field of awareness.

Meditation refers to a group of techniques, most of which originated in Eastern religious or spiritual traditions. In meditation, a person learns to focus his attention and suspend the stream of thoughts that normally occupy the mind. This practice is believed to result

in a state of greater physical relaxation, mental calmness, and psychological balance. Practicing meditation can change how a person relates to the flow of emotions and thoughts in the mind.

Guided Imagery

Guided imagery involves the generation (either by oneself or guided by a practitioner) of different mental image. Using the capacities of visualization and imagination, individuals evoke images usually either sensory or affective. These images are typically visualized with the goal of evoking relaxation, or with some specific outcome in mind (i.e., visualizing a part of the body improving health, or imaging oneself feeling healthy and well, etc.).

Once considered an “alternative” or “complementary” approach, guided imagery is now finding widespread scientific and public acceptance, and it is being used to teach psychophysiological relaxation, alleviate anxiety and depression, relieve physical and psychological symptoms, overcome health-endangering habits, resolve conflicts, and help patients prepare for surgery and tolerate procedures more comfortably.. Mental images, formed long before we learn to understand and use words, lie at the core of who we think we are, what we believe the world is like, what we feel we deserve, who we think will happen to us, and how motivated we are to take care of ourselves.

In the early 1970s several physicians inspired by the pioneering work of others began to develop and research contemporary imagery approaches for patients coping with chronic pain, immune system dysfunction, cancer, heart disease, and other catastrophic and life-threatening illnesses.

Teaching people to use their own imagination in this interactive way results in a remarkably empowering approach that shortens overall treatment time without sacrificing the depth and emotion so central to therapeutic growth. Since imagery is the dominant natural language of the unconscious, the clinical applications of imagery for resolved psychological issues are boundless. Imagery is an extremely powerful, yet remarkable safe and rapid therapeutic approach for mobilizing the untapped healing resources of the mind.

Writing and Health Journaling

Journaling is a term coined for the practice of keeping a diary or journal that explores thoughts and feelings surrounding the events of one’s life. Journaling, as a stress management and self-exploration tool, is not the same as simply recording the happening in one’s life, like keeping a log. To be most helpful, one must write in detail about feelings and thoughts related to stressful events, as one would discuss topics in therapy.

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Journaling allows people to clarify their thoughts and feelings, thereby gaining valuable self-knowledge. It is a good problem-solving tool; oftentimes, one can hash out a problem and come up with solutions more easily on paper. Journaling about traumatic events helps one process them by fully exploring and releasing the emotions involved, and by engaging both hemispheres of the brain in the process, allowing the experience to become fully integrated in one's mind. The health benefits of journaling have been scientifically proven. Studies have found that expressive writing: improves cognitive functioning; strengthens the immune system, preventing a host of illnesses; it counteracts many of the negative effects of stress; it decreases the symptoms of asthma, arthritis, and other health conditions.

Positive Emotions

A growing body of data ties negative and positive emotional states to wellness or ill health. The negative emotions have a damaging impact on the immune system and on health in general; this has been found true for depression, hostility, anger, anxiety, and for negative perspectives including pessimism, cynicism, guilt, hopelessness and helplessness.

Also, repression, the denial of negative feeling, is unhealthy. The adverse effects on health range from elevating blood pressure and increasing the risk of heart disease, cancer, and viruses. On the other hand, positive emotions strengthen immune function and bring good health. This has been shown for states of happiness, calm and relaxation, compassion, as well as attitudes such as hope, optimism, trust, and being in control.

Selected References (from *Superhealing Book*):

Preface

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