

IN PURSUIT OF WELLNESS:
SEARCH FOR THE INNER MECHANISMS OF THE
HEALING RESPONSE

Abstract: A team of researchers is exploring the innate processes of humans which may lead to a new science of healing, revealing how psychological, physical, attitudinal, spiritual and other aspects of lifestyles may affect an inner self-repair system.

This paper deals with the origins of the WELLNESS concept and delineates the various components which are involved with WELLNESS.

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How do we heal? What innate processes induce self-repair?
How does placebo, belief, or the will to live affect recovery?

These and related questions are being explored by a team of researchers whose aim is to develop a new science of healing -- a current project titled INNER MECHANISMS OF THE HEALING RESPONSE. The work is being funded by the Institute of Noetic Sciences (from the Greek "no-os" meaning mind or intelligence), under the guidance of Brendan O'Regan, vice president for Research.

Regan tells us that "a wide body of evidence suggests that extraordinary healing takes place, which implies the existence of an unknown self-repair system"; that "it's as important to discover the inner healing mechanism as it was to discover the nervous system and the immune system."

The WELLNESS concept in the holistic health movement evolved empirically. A highly successful University of California statewide conference was held about five years ago, titled IN PURSUIT OF WELLNESS, which included distinguished educational, health professionals and government sponsors.

The Conference was an outgrowth of exploration by many diverse factors, seeking to build a new methodology and conceptual structure for our understanding of health. Just as we have built an enormous body of knowledge on the ways of degeneration of the body, we may now begin to build the complementary body of knowledge regarding the ways of regeneration, self-repair and maximum health and well-being.

We are indebted to Dr. Edgar Mitchell, the astronaut who was the sixth man to walk on the moon in 1971. As his spaceship began its descent to earth, and seeing the earth floating in the vastness

of space he had, in his words, a "peak experience." He wrote that seeing "how peacefully, how harmoniously, how marvelously the earth seemed to fit into the evolutionary pattern by which the universe is maintained ... the experience of divinity became almost palpable, and I knew that life in the universe was not just an accident based on random processes." He resigned from the Navy shortly thereafter and a year later he founded the Institute of Noetic Sciences, to study the nature of human consciousness and human potential. It was Mitchell's Institute which took its first step in 1976 by funding a project called THE SEARCH FOR THE SUPERHEALTHY - an attempt toward a positive definition of health.

The concept of WELLNESS suggests a state of being - much more than the absence of pain or disease. It is a positive affirmation of life - the quality of feeling joyous, energized, hopeful and loving! And it is in this context that the fledgling concept of WELLNESS becomes most important.

We have gradually realized that the old adage of "an ounce of prevention..." is not just some nicety we'd like to tack on to medicine but it may well be the core of an essential next step in the evolution of our health care systems. Of course, part of the reason that people have regarded prevention as not much more than a "nice idea" was that people with an orientation toward disease found it hard to see how the "prevention" ideas could be transformed into something workable, with support from science, and the likelihood of its being applied. So one of the essential shifts in perception that had to happen was to make the connection between the idea of prevention and the concept of wellness.

So why is all this important, you ask? There are undoubtedly many reasons. One of the common denominators between why we have had a hard time conceptualizing a science of prevention and with building a conceptual structure for wellness, superhealth, or whatever choice you may prefer - is the missing link in all of this - that is, our inability to discern the nature and operation of regenerative processes in the human being.

True, we have been aware of ^{the capacity of} other species to regenerate, but it is only in recent years that scientific exploration of the capacity in humans has been undertaken. More recently still, have we been able to see self-repair in general, whether through psychological processes initiated through the placebo response - or by physical processes involved in fitness, nutrition or stimulation of the immune system. Spontaneous remission, for example, is the strongest demonstration of an internal self-repair system ... and what of the miracles we have seen through our work with TOUCH FOR HEALTH!

Many of us in the healing professions are familiar with exciting new and ancient techniques to facilitate the WELLNESS program. We teach them, practice them, lecture on them. Permit me to cite just a few of the myriad aspects involved in WELLNESS:

- * Through Biofeedback, Meditation, Hypnosis - we can control functions of the autonomic nervous system and functions heretofore considered involuntary, such as lowering blood pressure, decreasing heart rate, cooling or elevating the temperature of the skin;
- * Through Guided Imagery and Visualization - natural opiates for pain may be released such as endorphins and enkephalins (molecular

substances which produce morphine-like effects); also gross symptomatic dysfunctions may be alleviated;

- * Through Laughter - emotional stress as well as physical dysfunctions may be reduced (i.e., cardio-vascular and respiratory systems);
- * The honored role which Nutrition plays and its profound influences on allergies and other important dysfunctions;
- * Touching as a therapeutic agent: the pain/pleasure skin response;
- * Play - the research of Dr. Ashley Montagu, Anthropologist;
- * Love - emotional and physiological ramifications; effects upon babies who are deprived of love;
- * Breathing and Movement - importance of cerebro-spinal fluid, etc.;
- * Right/Left Brain function - functions for learning, creativity, memory, etc.; the emerging field of Psychoneuroimmunology which links the brain to the immune system;
- * The Biology of positive emotions, such as humor and hope - and the recognition that positive goals and purposeful work substantially contribute to a sense of Wellness;

and TOUCH FOR HEALTH - both for purposes of demonstration of many of the above, through muscle testing - attitudes, nutrition, touching, love, etc -- and for assisting in the self-repair process through techniques such as Cross Crawl, ESR, K27s, Meridian Tracing, etc.

And, finally, I am pleased to report that the holistic movement is moving out into the political and social aspects of global health. There is a growing recognition that we need to concern ourselves with - in addition to personal responsibility - social responsibility. From a significant paper delivered at the Mandala Conference two years ago,

titled Ecology, a Medical Political Perspective, Dr. Samuel S. Epstein, a medical doctor and Professor of Occupational and Environmental Medicine at the University of Illinois Medical Center; also an internationally recognized authority on toxic and cancerous effects of chemical pollutants in air, water, soil, food and the workplace, author of over 250 scientific publications - said, in part:

The principles of holistic medicine include the unity of the body and mind, the need to develop humanistic medicine, to supplement interventionist and orthodox medicine, not to replace it but to supplement it. Inherent in the principles of wellness and disease prevention, and paramount amongst them is the theme of personal responsibility.

However much personal responsibility you assume in your life, how can you prevent some madman pressing the nuclear button? However much personal responsibility you assume, what can you do to stop massive contamination of the planet, or air, water, food and the workplace?

Is it possible that emphasis on personal wellness and prevention has obscured the limitations of what you can do personally? If a young man goes to work in a chemical plant, he can eat yogurt, he can jog five miles a day, and he can avoid all known hazardous activities but he may be doomed to cancer or sterility from chemicals to which he is unknowingly exposed in the workplace ... Therefore it strikes me that it is necessary to extend the concept of personal responsibility into social responsibility.

So - all of us here are engaged in - and witnessing - a profound revolutionary paradigm shift in the knowledge, development and acceptance of a new science of healing. All of us can be deeply proud of the fact that we are among the pioneers in the holistic health field who are teaching folks how to tune in, turn on, and enjoy a richer quality of life through WELLNESS.

And all of this just points up what we've known for a long time now -- that we TOUCH FOR HEALTH-ers are among the most advanced, intelligent, and loving folks in the whole wide world!