

DISEASE VS. ILLNESS

by Peggy Maddox

DISEASE VS ILLNESS.....What is the difference? Take a few moments to think over your definition of disease and your definition of illness

In February and March of 1987, I participated in a nursing study tour of Kenya, Africa. In addition to studying cross-cultural definitions of health and illness and how they influence nurse-patient interaction, we discussed the distinction between "disease" and "illness" as conceptual framework for care. As Touch For Health Instructors we have an opportunity to play an important role in helping others deal with illness.

First let us define disease and illness. DISEASE is the diagnosis of sickness via a bio-medical model. ILLNESS is sickness from the patient's point of view. Many hours can be spent in discussion of which comes first - each person's case is unique and must be handled as such. A patient, often, does not become ill until he is given a "disease" diagnosis. For example, a person may feel in good health and after a routine visit to the doctor learn he has a tumor and immediately he becomes ill and many other symptoms appear. Another person may constantly complain of illness they feel they are suffering and have a medical examination and be disease free.

We, as Touch For Health Instructors, have muscle testing techniques to use to ask the body questions. Our bodies are fantastic computers - they give us the answers we need - often it takes getting the six inches between our ears (the ego) out of the way. The techniques in Touch For Health can assist us in re-balancing the bodies energies.

Many books and articles have been written on the importance of our thought influences on our

health. Norman Cousins in his book Anatomy of an Illness illustrates the power of positive thoughts and their effects on the immune system. Mr. Cousins says, "Laughter is internal jogging to keep us fit." Discover magazine, February 1987 has an excellent article on how science is investigating the power of our thinking on the immune system and the benefits from positive thinking. In Sheldon Deal's book, New Life Through Nutrition, he states:

"In order of sequence, the five things that affect your health more than anything else are:

Number One: The thoughts that you think, be they expressed or unexpressed.

Number Two: The air that you breathe.

Number Three: The water that you drink.

Number Four: The exercise that you get.

Number Five: The food that you eat, or whatever you stick into your mouth, whether you call it food or not.

Why are we interested in these five points at all? Why are we interested in physical health at all?

Most of us, I think it's safe to say, believe in some type of superior intelligence, and that there is some type of life after death, something that survives the body, be it spirit or soul, whatever you call it; that, if this be the case, we as spiritual entities are walking around in this body, for x number of years, and this body serves us as a vehicle, a mode of transportation, here on this plane of existence.

The condition of this vehicle that we use greatly determines our pleasure or our sorrow while we are using it. In other words, the ideal condition would be to have this body of ours in such condition that were we unaware of its presence.

We wouldn't have to waste any time fixing it, patching it, doctoring it, nursing it, or coaching it along, hoping that it would get up one more morning for us.

Some people will tell you, "Well, I have more important things to do. This material world doesn't mean anything to me. I've got places to go, things to do, and people to see." But they're going to have to carry this body with them anywhere they go.

Some people say, "I'd rather meditate than mess around the kitchen trying to fix up a protein drink or something." Well, if you've ever tried to meditate with your back or your stomach hurting, it's a little hard to do. Regardless of your beliefs, regardless of your pursuits, regardless of what you want to do in life, I'll guarantee you you can do it better if you are using a body that does not bother you, a trouble-free machine."]

As holistic health practitioners and/or coming from the medical field we have several questions we ask someone coming to us for help. Most of these questions are routine on a pre-typed form: where is the pain? when did it happen? etc. During the study trip we received a set of eight questions to ask someone suffering from an illness. I feel the answers would give us insight and give the client insight to the total problem and give them a feeling of participating in the recovery process. I believe we have all the answers within ... here are some tools that will be helpful at getting to the core of the problem:

QUESTIONS TO ASK A CLIENT ON FIRST INTERVIEW

1. What do you think has caused your problem?
2. Why do you think it started when it did?
3. What do you think your sickness does for you?
How does it work?
4. How severe is your sickness?
5. What kind of treatment do you think you should receive?

6. What are the most important results you want to receive from the treatment?
7. What are the chief problems that your sickness has caused for you? Medically? On the job? Socially?
8. What do you fear most about your sickness?

After listening to the above answers - you may gain insight to belief systems that are unique and very important to your client possibly due to cultural, religious, etc. upbringings. It will also help you to evaluate the proximate (nearest) and ultimate (furthest) causality of the illness.

Part Two will be a slide presentation of some of the Health Care Facilities in Nairobi: District Hospitals, The Flying Doctors Facility, and Home for Disabled Children with informative facts about the culture and health care system.

While in Nairobi I presented an hour presentation on Hi Tech Hi Touch - to a nursing and business group. My emphasis was on modern technology and the value of touching and demonstrating Touch For Health - I left several Touch For Health Tee Shirts at various hospitals and road stops throughout Kenya. During my travels I found a beautiful race of people - very fluent in English with Swahili as conversational language between each other. I found Kenya to be as beautiful as the movie "Out of Africa" and very primitive when we were on photographic safaris.

Peggy has been a Touch For Health Instructor for 10 years. Teaching classes in Southern California at Loyola Marymount University, Harbor College, Torrance Adult Schools, Jewish Community Centers and lectures at UCLA, El Camino College. Since Touch for Health is approved for nursing credit she has taught hundreds of nurses and participated in many nursing studying tours and given Touch For Health Lectures in China, The Soviet Union and this year to Kenya, East Africa. ■