

7. SELF-HEALTH METHODS: AN OVERVIEW

In the past decade, there has been a soaring interest in "self-health" techniques and methods for many reasons: "modern" medicine has become depersonalized ... its drugs often have more side effects than benefits ... its cost is exorbitant ...

In contrast, self-health methods and techniques are usually free of cost, or nearly so. They are easy to learn and simple to apply. The "right" method brings fast relief and long-term healing benefits, while the "wrong" method does little (if any) damage. And each ailment or illness that one self-treats provides insight and growth in to his own nature as a human being.

There are many self-health techniques and methods, but they fall into four broad categories:

1. Those which depend upon mental or psychic activities ...
2. Those which require a substance be taken by mouth ...
3. Those which depend upon one or more bodily senses (e.g., sight, smell, etc.) ...
4. Those which require the use of touch.

Of these, the latter -- touch therapies -- are the easiest to use. The best known (and probably least effective) of these is ordinary massage. The sufferer, or more often a trained masseur, kneads and goads the sufferer's muscles to provide comfort, relaxation and a pleasant "glow." But it has drawbacks: you cannot give yourself a complete massage; and it has only limited uses for specific ailments. Whole-body massage -- usually called "Swedish massage" -- is best used as a means for providing comfort and release of tension.

A much more useful type of massage technique is called acupressure. This is a kind of acupuncture ... but without the needles. Instead, the fingertips are used to stimulate tiny therapy points throughout the body. There are many forms of acupressure (e.g., jin shin do, shiatzu, do-in, etc.), but the easiest, and often most effective of these is called G-Jo. This method -- which takes only minutes to learn and seconds to apply -- brings immediate relief from headaches, back pains, and nearly every other ailment that you might otherwise self-treat with aspirin or other over-the-counter remedy. I described this technique in detail in an earlier article.

Another popular form of touch-therapy is a kind of "micro-acupressure" called reflexology or zone therapy. There is a complete healing system in either foot and hand. And these, when massaged deeply enough to both find and "trigger" the most sensitive spots, will produce relief and eventually stimulate self-healing of many ailments and health problems.

Like most acupressure points, the ones which produce the greatest benefits are usually very tender to deep, specific pressure. When massaged, these "ouch points" will produce a toothache-like sensation. And typically with this deep massage comes a peculiar response -- generally a sudden sense of warmth or clamminess -- called an "acupressure reaction."

Acupressure points are usually massaged regularly over a period of time (usually for several days or weeks in a row), especially for chronic ailments, and in the beginning, the sensitivity at the points tends to grow increasingly worse. But soon, the tenderness at the acupressure point "peaks," then fades, which indicates the body's innate self-healing mechanisms have been called into action.

One of the most exciting, but complex, self-applied touch therapies is performed upon either the ear or the nose. Each of these facial appendages has a complete healing system buried within it. But here, a blunted toothpick or a wooden matchstick is used to both find and stimulate the most sensitive (and thus most effective) pinhead-sized therapy points.

But although acupressure techniques may be both effective and easy to perform, they have at least one drawback: they are, as mentioned, generally somewhat uncomfortable. Indeed, the more tender the acupressure point, the more likely it is to be helpful in bringing relief in healing. So some people have difficulty in using this self-health method.

An easier and less painful category of self-health techniques is that which uses the mouth (or two other bodily openings -- the nostrils or the rectum, whose uses are more fully described later) to ingest healing substances.

The most common and least understood medicine that we each take daily is food. Every food we consume has an effect -- good or bad -- on at least one of our vital organs and glands. Eating too much -- or a poor variety of -- food is nearly always a contributing factor to disease and suffering. And improving the diet is almost always required in any program for long-term healing and wellness. Good food, alone, cannot make us well; but good health without a balanced, moderate diet is nigh onto impossible.

For centuries, Oriental doctors have prescribed specific foods to help "reverse" (heal) various ailments -- one food to treat the lungs ... another for the liver ... yet another for the kidneys, and so forth. Food therapy is one of the most interesting and essential of the self-health sciences -- a subject which I have covered in some detail in several of my books. (Specific foods and the organs they affect are described in greater detail in our *Master of G-Jo Acupressure Home-Study Certification Program* and *Dynamic Nutrition! The Acugenics Way Of Eating For Pleasure And Health*, both from The G-Jo Institute, www.g-jo.com).

Vitamins, minerals and other nutritional supplements are the second-most popular way of "getting healthy" by mouth ... at least in the West. Nearly every Westerner has taken some kind of vitamin or mineral supplement at some time in his or her life, although such supplements have never gained much following east of Europe.

Vitamin and mineral supplements appear to work by stimulating a specific organ or gland to produce and manifest its own nutrients, rather than "extracting" a nutrient from the pill, itself. Food is thought to work its miracles the same way. This helps explain why people in all climates of the world (and who eat a variety of diets) can still have complete nutrition. Food, of course, is nature's own vitamin pill. The man-made kind are usually poor substitutes. Nonetheless, they can often provide a temporary "lift" for an ill or ailing person.

The use of medicinal plants and herbs has long been a favorite of self-healers who favor taking their medicine by mouth. There are literally thousands of barks, roots, leaves and other plant parts which have medicinal value. The study and application of medicinal herbology -- called phytotherapy -- has made a strong recovery in popularity as a alternative to more powerful (and more dangerous) drugs and medicines. In fact, many prescribed medications are indeed nothing more than intense concentrations of these plants and barks. By knowing the specific action of each herbal remedy, it is often possible to self-prescribe an herbal "formula" which works often more "deeply" -- though not usually as swiftly -- as a prescription medication.

Herbal remedies are usually taken in the form of a tea -- called an "infusion" -- over a period of several months. However, like most healers which are taken by mouth, the potential for abuse is much higher than with touch therapy. Thus, it is wise to seek professional guidance -- or at least read several books on the subject -- before self-prescribing for an ailment or illness.

Herbal infusions are often used in enemas, as well. Enemas -- or colonic irrigations -- have the benefit of both delivering a therapeutic substance as well as cleansing a "clogged" (poorly functioning) large intestine ... but here, too, the potential for abuse exists. Too much

colonic irrigation can both destroy the intestine's beneficial micro-organisms and temporarily disrupt the elimination cycle. But many people use enemas -- either with herbal infusions, strong coffee, or a variety of other warm liquids -- to occasionally cleanse and stimulate the entire system. Used in that manner, they may be particularly beneficial.

Perhaps the most complex and least understood of the self-healing arts (at least those which depend on substances taken orally) is homeopathy. This is actually the fore-runner of modern medicine and was first described to Western physicians by Samuel Hahnemann, an 18th century physician called "the Father of Medicine."

With homeopathy, minute doses of one of hundreds of therapeutic substances are taken to stimulate self-healing. The rationale is like cures like. This means that, if an herb or plant (when consumed to excess) would produce certain symptoms of "poisoning" (such as diarrhea, fever, nausea or such), then tiny doses of that same substance could be taken to cure those same symptoms, even if they did not arise from poisoning by that substance. Time and space do not permit a complete discussion of this remarkable healing method; it is every bit as complex as the medicine practiced by Medical Doctors, Osteopaths and other physicians ... but is generally safer and in many cases more effective than the medicines used by most present-day physicians.

A homeopathic preparation is made by first extracting the medicinal elements of a plant or other substance by "marinating" it in alcohol for a period of days; then by taking a few drops of this "mother tincture" and "succussing" (sharply rapping or banging) a dilution of the tincture repeatedly. This changes the molecular structure of the fluid.

Higher "potencies" are made by further diluting, then re-diluting this mixture, succussing each dilution a number of times. Surprisingly, the greater the dilution, the more powerful and deep acting the homeopathic remedy is said to be. Low potencies -- those which have been re-diluted not more than six or twelve times (called "six X" and "twelve X" potencies) are generally safe for self-prescription. Higher potencies should never be self-prescribed, unless one is well-versed with homeopathy.

It would seem that a substance so highly diluted could have little or no effect on a painful health problem. However, nothing could be further from the truth. Homeopathy is a profoundly effective healing art; but instead of "killing" the symptoms, it accelerates and purges them from the body-mind. In that respect, it is a much truer cure than most "allopathic" medicines that Western doctors presently use.

The reason that this -- and the other techniques described in this article -- work is that they affect the body-mind's subtle energy system. All living creatures are dependent upon a special, vital energy -- which the Chinese call ch'i and the Japanese call ki. When energy flows too quickly or too slowly from organ to organ, we become ill. And when this vital energy leaves the body, we are dead. The self-health techniques in this article (plus many others which are not described here) all tend to "balance" this vital life force between moving too quickly and too slowly. But it is the body -- and only the body -- which heals itself; the self-health techniques merely stimulate self-healing.

Please Note: exercise -- which is a vital component to any self-health or wellness program -- also works its benefits through the energy system, too. Energy is carried to and from the organs and glands via "meridians" or pathways found within the skin and muscles; exercise helps keep these pathways open and "unblocked" so that energy flows freely.

The third of the four healing methods which lends itself to self-application is mental manipulation. There are many ways of using the mind to heal oneself. Perhaps the most powerful

of these is heart-felt prayer -- the act of surrendering one's ills and suffering into the hands of a Higher Force (or simply begging God to be healed).

Prayer -- especially when used in combination with other more direct self-health techniques -- is perhaps the most effective, yet one of the most subtle techniques known to man. The power of prayer must never be overlooked ... at least, if one truly wishes to be well. Often, nothing more than prayer, alone, is necessary to cause self-healing.

There are several other self-dependent methods which have been used since ancient times. One of these is meditation; another is visualization; and a third is hypnosis. The latter -- hypnosis -- is best used as a self-healing method after the sufferer has first been "pre-conditioned" by a professional hypnotist using post-hypnotic suggestions. Later, the sufferer self-induces a state of "hypno-relaxation" and repeats a message or suggestion to himself to achieve the goals or health benefits he wishes. This is the most direct and one of the most useful ways for utilizing hypnosis methods, although there are others.

Meditation, on the other hand, requires no pre-programming, although it may be aided and deepened by continually repeating a mantra or specific sound, which helps to create a hypnotic-like trance. Meditation -- the act of sitting in self-observation (but without self-judgement) -- helps heal on a more subtle and less direct basis: it greatly reduces stress and tension, which have been linked to as much as 80% of all illness and suffering. When stress is reduced, self-healing often follows.

Another technique -- known as biofeedback -- is the Western version of meditation. Using a galvanic skin response (GSR) metering mechanism, the sufferer trains himself to produce alpha brain-waves -- the same "state of mind" gradually attained in meditation -- by learning to mentally reduce the moisture on his skin (there is a close correlation between skin clamminess and low-quality, stressful brain waves). Later, when the sufferer feels tense, he induces the high-quality "alpha-state," having learned to recognize what it "feels like" from his biofeedback training.

Before moving to the fourth category, I want to briefly discuss the very powerful mental self-healing method of visualization. If meditation is a passive technique, then visualization is its active counterpart. In meditation we sit and allow the mind to do as it will without becoming emotionally involved in the process. We watch ... we listen ... but we stay the detached observer of the activities happening within the mind.

With visualization, however, we take an aggressive step and "picture" that which we wish to happen. If we wish to heal a specific organ, we picture it to be so in the mind's eye. If we wish to be relieved of pain, we may see it as diminishing to only a pinpoint of fire, then visualize it leaving us as a mote of dust might blow away in a draft. Visualization is a very powerful and deep-reaching technique, so it should be used with some caution.

Our fourth and final category of self-health methods is the most subtle -- and perhaps least utilized -- of self-applied therapies. These are methods which are applied to the senses: the sense of smell ... breath ... eyesight...

Aromatherapy combines the use of the nostrils plus specific odors to stimulate self-healing. Each odor has -- by way of the lungs -- a greater or lesser effect on at least one (and sometimes several) of our various vital organs and glands. Like homeopathy, aromas work at the molecular level to cause a change in the flow of energy (indeed, certain aromas -- such as peppermint -- are contraindicated when undergoing homeopathic therapy, since they may "cancel out" the effect of the homeopathic remedy). Thus, smelling a particular substance may both

sicken or heal us ... depending on its aroma.

Flowers -- some of our most aromatic substances -- are also used to create highly subtle, almost homeopathic medicines. This process was first done by an English doctor, Edward Bach, who extracted the vital essence of 38 different flowers and carefully tested the effects of each flower remedy upon himself. These effects he recorded over his years of research. And even today, these remedies are still in use.

Subtle these may be; but their effects can be so powerful as to be potentially dangerous. In fact, it is believed that Dr. Bach -- who died a rather young man -- met his fate while testing the 39th flower remedy. Fortunately, most of us are not doing pioneer work in the field of healing, so we run little risk of injuring ourselves using subtle self- health techniques.

The use of light -- either direct sunlight, or filtered through a transparent color -- has many powerful and far- reaching benefits. This technique is called heliotherapy and is one of the most ancient and simple ways to heal various problems -- especially those of the skin. But the use of light filtered through colored gels or glass is a more unusual and esoteric way of stimulating self-healing.

Each color is said to directly affect a specific organ or gland. When the body is irradiated and "light-bathed" in that color, it stimulates the particular organ or gland to function more correctly. And since a malfunctioning organ or gland is almost invariably at the root of suffering, the use of the proper color of light can bring about deep yet safe results ... if one knows which is the "target" bodily organ.

The usual "prescription" for the use of colored light is to bathe nude in that color for 15 minutes to 1/2 hour, up to several times daily. Beneficial results are somewhat slow to follow -- usually at about the same rate that herbal therapies work -- but the effects can reach far into both the body and the mind in the process.

The last, and possibly most powerful self-health technique I wish to describe in this article is the use of breath. Yogis of old developed certain pranayama (controlled breathing) techniques to be used especially in meditation, both for relieving suffering and prolonging life. Breath is said to be the closest substance to vital energy; and controlled breathing is the most direct way to affect and balance energy flow.

Dozens of breathing cycles and techniques were developed in the East (where most self-health techniques seem to have originated), each designed to have a specific effect on the entire system. One type of breath would calm and sedate ... another would stimulate and energize ... a third would increase psychic awareness ... and various schools of esoteric thought even developed around certain breathing methods.

There are breathing techniques to cleanse the blood, to warm the body, to cool the body, to stave off hunger, and to alter consciousness in many different ways. Simple hyper- ventilation gives us a good idea of the power that merely altering the breath can have on both the body and the mind.

These are just a few of the many methods that have been used successfully around the world to stimulate self-healing and to maintain good health. I have not described any of the fascinating methods for self-diagnosis (that is, methods for defining, as clearly as possible, where and how energy has gone astray within); nor have I explained the specifics of how many of these methods are applied. Each could fill several volumes -- and my own library is filled with such texts.

Instead, my purpose in writing this article has been to introduce you to just a few of the

many alternatives to aspirin and other over-the-counter remedies you have at your disposal. It has also been my intention to assure you that it is not necessary to simply suffer along as the body slowly heals itself: there are many ways to dramatically accelerate the process ... and have relief as this occurs. All you need to do is search for some answers -- they are surely there, waiting for you.