



CELL 42

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Healing

Body and Mind

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YOUR INNER HEALING CENTER

*You can be down, you can even be broken, but there's
always a way to mend.*

OPRAH WINFREY

WE EACH SOMETIMES NEED physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual healing. You can find methods that work for you, and help others find methods that work for them.

Jesus was a healer. He placed his hands on the sick and crippled and their illnesses and injuries vanished. There have been many healers since, but none with a fraction of his miraculous power. For guidance about how to heal, we must look to those who do their best without a direct line to the divine.

Among ancient healers of the Western world, the most celebrated was the Greek physician Hippocrates. He emphasized treating the total unique person, not just the disease or injury. Recognizing that nature's own healing power helps the body regenerate, he asserted that the physician's first commandment is to do no harm, and avoid interfering with the body's natural healing power.

In 169 CE, 600 years after Hippocrates, another great healer, Galen, made history as the royal physician to the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius.

Galen advanced our understanding of psychosomatic problems. This is the term used when events in the mind, emotions, and soul, which comprise the psyche, cause problems in the body, our somatic side. For instance, ongoing mental stress can lead to hypertension, heart attack, and stroke.

Today more and more doctors recognize what Hippocrates and Galen articulated long ago. The necessity of holistic healing is becoming a familiar

idea in mainstream Western medical practices. Author and complementary-medicine authority Dr. Andrew Weil makes the distinction that “treatment originates from outside, whereas healing comes from within.” He says, “The true purpose of medicine . . . should be to unblock the healing system and allow it to do its work.” He suggests that the best way to activate natural healing is often the least invasive and the least drastic.¹

The practical question is how to bring about such healing. In our global community we are not bound solely to Western medicine. We can research alternative methodologies on the Internet. We can get bodywork and opinions from practitioners who use Eastern traditions, such as acupuncture or ayurveda. And we can meditate, a proven way of accelerating the healing process.

Deepak Chopra reports, “Levels of cortisol and adrenaline are often found to be lower in long-term meditators, and their coping mechanisms almost always tend to be stronger than average.” Research by UCLA physiologist R. Keith Wallace showed that meditation “quickly produced profound relaxation, and significant changes in breathing, heartbeat, and blood pressure.”² Wallace also found that with several markers for biological aging, meditators who had been practicing regularly for several years had an average biological age that was years younger than their actual age. They had fewer medical problems than nonmeditators in thirteen major health categories. This may or may not mean that you will live longer if you meditate, but it suggests that at the least your health and quality of life will be higher.

Meditation can also help heal mental and emotional wounds. As psychological and emotional wounds and physical rigidities that have been invisible to us percolate upward during meditation, we can start to heal them.

Yoga master B. K. S. Iyengar says, “Ninety percent of us are suffering in some way, physically, mentally, or spiritually.”³ Suffering of the psyche often has its roots in past injuries. Without realizing it, a person may have drawn a protective mental curtain across memories of being beaten as a child, sexually abused, or shamefully ridiculed. The energy spent to keep those painful memories at bay is unavailable for healthy use. Blocking out painful memories includes tightening your muscles to create what Wilhelm Reich called “muscular armor.” Such armor stops you from saying or doing that which society decrees you must not express. It assists in keeping such emotions as anxiety, rage, and sexual excitement from breaking into consciousness. It appears in the form of muscle groups that are chronically hard and contracted to prevent the free flow of energy.⁴ The longer you maintain such

armor, which is usually involuntary and unconscious, the more psychosomatic problems you are likely to have. This can show in restrictive body postures, sore and painful muscles (or numbing that hides the pain), or chronic high blood pressure.

Fortunately, such symptoms can be reversed. Through meditation, you can let your awareness flow into areas of your body and psyche that have been off-limits. By becoming more inwardly sensitive to how certain muscles feel, you can start to release chronic contractions. With a more finely tuned mind-body connection, you can release blocked or stagnant energy. Results may vary, but you will probably feel healthier and open to a wider range of physical movement.

The rhythm of frequent meditation also creates an internal momentum that can help you heal. Conscious breathing, relaxation, unstressing, self-acceptance, letting-go of what's gone, being in the now, and mental agility are all helpful tools. They can contribute to preventing injury or illness, to healing, and to becoming whole in body, mind, and spirit. We offer the following exploration to awaken your inner healer and tap a treasury of inner resources to help you be well.

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You can sit up straight or lie down for this guided visualization. Relaxing your body and releasing tension will deepen this experience. Take at least ten minutes for this—or as much time as you like.

The Essence

Imagine that you have been given the resources to design and create a healing center. First visualize a location. Let a mental picture of the facilities, inside and out, appear in your mind. It might be a place where people simply go for healing or for personal retreats, or it might have a structured program with remedies and restorative techniques. Allow the design to unfold in your mind. If your healing center has a program, what does it include? If unanticipated ideas or images you wouldn't expect appear, let them become part of it.

Once your center is designed, with each element you've included, ask, *Does this hold a message about some way I might need healing? If so, what is it? And what, if anything, does my center say about how I'd like to help others heal?*

After you've finished your contemplation, you might write a description

of your healing center. Also jot down what messages it held for you. And stay open to other messages that may take longer to emerge.

Variations in Technique

In your mind's eye, see yourself going to a highly regarded healer who can help you. Next, discuss your symptoms. Ask the healer what is most needed for your renewal and well-being. What efforts are required to improve your health? What insights or advice are you given that make the strongest impression? Mentally affirm: *I have begun making choices that enable me to be emotionally, physically, and mentally healthy.* (Also, be open to any message that you ought to consult a real-life doctor about some issue of concern.)

Feeling Comfortable

If you stay in the same position for a long period as you sit in meditation, sometimes you might feel physical pain in your knees, back, or elsewhere in your body as a result of maintaining the position. Take your attention into the center of the pain. What is its character, size, and shape? Exactly where do you feel it? Does it change and move, or stay the same? Answer these questions with direct awareness rather than words. Next, move your attention to your object of meditation and let the pain recede into the background of your consciousness. Experiment with moving your attention back and forth from your discomfort to your object of concentration. Watch your mind and breath.

This ability to experience pain as a sensation in your meditation without being overwhelmed by it or feeling like you have to change it can be transferred to handling pain in daily life. Although the options for dealing with physical pain are numerous, the practical reality is simple: pain is challenging. If you can use meditation to help lessen its severity, you are moving toward greater wisdom.

Points in the Process

You yourself may not need healing at this time. Perhaps you are interested in healing methods or feel drawn to healing others. Amma speaks of one who heals as a person “whose legs rush to help the suffering ones, whose eyes shed tears of compassion, whose ears listen to the woes of the distressed, and whose words bring solace to those in pain.”⁵

One way to heal others is to become a skilled medical practitioner. But ordinary people without special expertise can also help others. When he

identified the wounded-healer archetype, Carl Jung recognized that we have all been wounded in some way, and can draw on understandings from our own experience to help others. Showing someone who is suffering that you truly hear her can be healing in itself. If you have suffered in a similar way, sharing your own related history can be therapeutic. The trap, however, lies in assuming that another's experience is just like yours or that what helped you will help her, too. It may or it may not. Help her discover what she needs, and what she might do.

Sometimes simple acts of love can heal. With the right intention and attitude, almost anyone can offer immeasurable hope and positive energy that can further healing.