

Healing Arts Report

Examining Alternatives in Health and Healing

Volume 1, No. 11

Dear Reader,

With an ever-increasing number of alternative and integrative therapies, I am often asked why I think there is a changing medical paradigm. Aren't all these therapies just additional techniques?

It may appear that way. Nothing about alternative therapies changes a person's world view -- at first. What often happens is that a person chooses a new therapy, either out of curiosity or because they were not able to get the help they wanted from conventional providers, and has a healing experience that is somehow more mysterious and involving than popping a pill. The experience may raise so many questions in a person's mind that their life actually becomes re-directed. The search for understanding sends them on a quest that is more encompassing than the wish to get over a bad cold.

An educator in holistic medicine recently said to me, "Okay, what is your story? Everyone has a story of how they got into this field." She had just told me about her husband who'd had Parkinson's disease. With the help of alternative therapies, they had been able to lower his need for conventional drugs to the point where he was taking the minimal dosage. This is unheard of for someone who has had Parkinson symptoms for a long time. He had gotten rid of all his symptoms except the oldest -- the shaking -- and had a much better quality of life than he had since his original diagnosis. He lived to be 84. Their efforts also gave them a vivid appreciation for holistic thinking and eventually took her down a new career path.

A young man raised in the environment of an alternative health clinic told me how shocked he was to learn recently that rheumatoid arthritis was considered incurable because he grew up seeing people with this illness get

better all the time. Others have described their search for better health with glowing and thankful eyes.

Most of the stories I've heard involve a new world view, one where people take a different kind of responsibility for their lives, not just their health. They realize that life and health are not separate. Coincidentally, an individual who tries an alternative therapy often reaches a new understanding of the value of meditation, craftsmanship, tolerance, creating a sustainable environment, or the need for meaning. The new health paradigm is still revealing itself through the broadening experiences we're having with new and ancient therapies.

Biofeedback, used for influencing unconscious body processes, is one of the therapies that caused a sensation and then seemed to fall out of favor. It touches on many relevant issues regarding the changing paradigm -- self-care, mind as the builder or healer, the value of subjective experience, personal growth, intuition, self-esteem, and improving relationships. We need to re-examine this "old" topic with fresh awareness of its implications.

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Biofeedback: Creating Psychosomatic Health

Elmer Green, Ph.D., physicist, biopsychologist, and pioneer researcher in biofeedback, explains that if psychosomatic illness is evidence of an unhealthy mind-body split, its opposite -- psychosomatic health -- could also become a tool for better health. All we need to do is choose "to make it so." According to Green, the simple exercises of biofeedback train a person to develop a link between their conscious and unconscious, voluntary and involuntary processes, cortex and subcortex, and even between reason and intuition. Biofeedback works at the interface of these worlds.

Our mental, physical, autonomic, and neuromuscular health can all be improved. Through biofeedback we can cure some conditions and ameliorate others. It is useful for stress management, cancer, and high blood pressure (see *Healing Arts Report* 1:7). If there is any element of psychosomatic disease, such as stress, biofeedback training can help. In addition, using biofeedback for self-regulation of physiological problems also causes changes in the personality because the body and mind are essentially integrated. When a person sees how simple intention can influence internal processes, they face life with a new sense of empowerment.

Is Equipment Necessary?

Biofeedback may still conjure up images of sterile windowless laboratories where people are hooked up to expensive equipment that beeps and blinks at them while they try to change some internal physical process. However, according to Patricia Norris, Ph.D., director of the Life Sciences Institute of Mind-Body Health in Topeka, Kansas, we often don't need any equipment at all in order to practice. The body has its own strong sensations and in just a few minutes a day, a person can learn to recognize when changes occur.

To illustrate this, she suggested this exercise during a recent interview. "Rest your hands on a desk or in your lap, palms facing toward you, with one hand cupping the other. Relax,

breathe deeply, and simply think about their warming each other." In a few moments I felt a tingling and a definite increase in warmth. She suggested doing this for about five or ten minutes a day to practice. "Sure cure for a headache," she added brightly.

To further illustrate the mind-body connection, Norris said, "If you think of your eyes, they water." Then she suggested feeling the salivary gland under the tongue. "Remember going to the dentist and how they have that tube in your mouth to suck up the saliva?" Before she finished the sentence I was swallowing my saliva. "Remember how talking about yawning made everyone yawn? Your autonomic or involuntary nervous system is more responsive than your body is to learning how to ride a bike. I tell people that if they can walk around, they can control their autonomic system."

Resistance to Taking Control

The idea that we can control our autonomic processes, such as heart rate or digestion or our illnesses, may provoke resistance if it is construed as a condemnation. The notion that a patient could control his symptoms might be interpreted as 'blaming the victim' for his illness.

Norris, who has worked with many cancer patients, says that even a heavy smoker who gets cancer does better to move away from self-blame. Instead, the good news is that he can do something about it. Responsibility means ability to respond. He can help himself with biofeedback. Norris's book *I Choose Life: The Dynamics of Biofeedback and Visualization* describes dealing with cancer. It is also useful for learning about biofeedback techniques and includes some of her personal experiences using them.¹

If a person has low self-esteem and doesn't feel in control of his life, this belief presents a special problem for the health practitioner teaching biofeedback. In their book, *Beyond Biofeedback*, Alyce and Elmer Green describe helping a woman get to a place where she can make a choice that, for some, will be the difference between a life of illness or health.²

This woman was pessimistic about being able to raise the temperature of her hands, believing that what works for others wouldn't work for her. They begin with attempts to warm

her hands by using autogenic phrases to help her relax -- "I am beginning to feel quite relaxed My feet, my ankles, my knees and my hips feel heavy, relaxed and comfortable" The biofeedback temperature gauge goes down and Green shows it to her. He congratulates her on her control. When she points out that the gauge is going in the wrong direction, he explains that it did what she told him it would, that it wouldn't work for her even if others could do it. "Obviously you have a remarkable degree of coordination between conscious and unconscious processes," he tells her. She is taken aback by his interpretation and decides to try harder. Her temperature goes down even further. In frustration she gives up trying and her temperature starts going up. Green explains the lesson: We should give up and not try to force the involuntary nervous system like we do our muscles. "You must learn how to visualize what you want to have happen and then allow the body to do it."

As the temperature of her fingers continues to rise, she becomes so excited that it starts to go down again. He explains the next lesson. Keeping your 'cool' keeps you relaxed. He tells her to keep visualizing what she wants the body to do and then let it do it. Green displays a sensitivity that keeps him from falling into an adversarial role. He supports her and doesn't let her drift into projecting failure.

The Greens's Early Research

Beyond Biofeedback is an easy-to-read melding of autobiography, medical history, and science. In it, Elmer and Alyce Green write about their research at the Menninger Clinic in Topeka. At that time, the Greens met a number of unusual people who could control processes within their bodies that we generally think of as uncontrollable and they decided to try some experiments. Two of the people the Greens tested were Swami Rama and Jack Schwarz. The scientists found that although a process may be automatic, that didn't mean it couldn't be influenced by conscious intent. Examples include changing the number of heartbeats per minute, changing the temperature of extremities, or controlling whether a puncture wound would bleed or not.

By studying the meditative or focusing

processes, the brain waves, skin temperature, and heartbeats of yogis and others with the ability to influence their autonomic system, and combining these observations with relaxation techniques, the Greens were able to develop methods for teaching ordinary people to do some of them. The more common and useful tasks include increasing the temperature of the hands to cure Raynaud's disease and migraine headaches, and teaching breathing and relaxation techniques to people with asthma. They also taught people with functional diarrhea to control their bowels by using sound equipment to amplify the internal rumblings as a guide to awareness.

The Future of Medicine

Dr. Norris, who was the Clinical Director of the Biofeedback and Psychophysiology Center at Menninger, and who is also the Greens's daughter, describes biofeedback as the strongest avenue into the mind-body relationship. The future of health care is in the area of self-regulation and natural therapies. Biofeedback has a huge role to play in providing inexpensive non-pharmaceutical techniques for dealing with common health problems.

Norris is even using biofeedback to help children with learning disabilities stop using medications, such as Ritalin, in twenty to twenty-five sessions. The children are taught to change the ratio between their beta and theta brain waves by increasing the beta waves, and to increase their sensory-motor brain rhythm.

Green emphasizes that biofeedback training, prayer, meditation, hypnosis, and autogenic training are all ways of training the unconscious. He describes a hierarchy of psychological states with respect to self-regulation for physiological processes. He arranges the actions in this way:

- **Hope.** Needed to initiate action
- **Hypothesize.** Make an assumption in order to test its empirical consequences.
- **Believe and then to know.** Anyone having had an experience with biofeedback is propelled from hypothesis to knowing all at once.

Norris reiterates, "A person can learn to have some control over any process that can be

constantly monitored and fed back. Whether we know it or not, we control our bodies continuously with our thoughts, feelings, and intentions.”

For more information, write the Life Sciences Institute of Mind-Body Health, 2955 S.W. Wanamaker Drive, Topeka, KS 66614, or call 785-271-8686.

HEALING CONCEPTS

Psychokinesis for Health

In the book, *Remote Viewers: The Secret History of America's Psychic Spies*, author Jim Schabel describes a series of psychokinesis or PK (mind-over-matter) parties in the Washington, DC area, initially given by a West Coast defense consultant, Jack Houck.³ At these gatherings, participants would learn how to concentrate on a piece of cutlery until it bent. To warm up, they would concentrate and then physically bend pieces of tableware with about one-tenth of the physical power it ordinarily takes. This occurred about ten years after Uri Geller popularized the idea of spoonbending with his stage act.

For Major General Albert Stubblebine, commander of INSCOM (the army's intelligence and security command), this was a way to prepare his people for any exotic psychic military technologies the Soviets might throw at them. Participants occasionally included current celebrities from the intelligence world, such as John McMahon, now deputy director of the CIA, and General Thompson, now a directorate chief at the Defense Intelligence Agency. Being a participant in spoonbending, however, did not always create a supporter out of a skeptic. Some military personnel found it frightening.

While the generals were interested in spying and perhaps influencing the actions of their enemies, Jack Houck, currently a systems engineer for a large aerospace company, is more interested in how we can change our mindsets and what that could do for our quality of life. The concept has application to other dimensions of life such as overcoming illness, making difficult changes in life, or learning new skills.

Attending a PK Event

Before people actually try spoon bending, Houck prepares participants for a new experience. This includes over an hour of laughter-filled theory about psychic phenomena, scientific descriptions of what occurs in the metal cutlery, and a history of how he came to be organizing such events.

Although more esoteric, the personal effect of spoonbending is similar to the changes in beliefs that biofeedback produces on its practitioners -- a new sense of empowerment. Houck tells the story of how he hadn't expected much to come of his first experiment when he invited a group of neighbors and friends to join him. He used his grandmother's old silver, for which his mother still has not forgiven him. Children, he noticed, were less invested in their preconceptions and did better than the adults.

Last year, the International Society for the Study of Subtle Energies and Energy Medicine sponsored a spoonbending event at their annual conference. The raucous party gave people a taste of changing their expectations. Houck taught over one-hundred participants to bend spoons using 'mind over matter.' They accomplished this task at first by using physical pressure. After some practice, the experimenters used only mind power. In spite of new expectations, when the tines of a fork slowly bent forward, shrieks of amazement filled the air.

In a recent phone interview, Houck described why he thought this particular party was a 'good' one. "There was a large number of people, they didn't know each other, and they were responsive." The room was large enough to allow everyone to sit in a circle about three deep, which seems to focus the energy. "When people are with others they don't know well, they are less inclined to hold onto their habitual beliefs and behaviors. When I see spouses sitting next to each other, I try to separate them. Being even just a few chairs away helps them let go of subconscious patterns. Often, the woman will bend a spoon first and then the guy gets interested."

Houck explains that another advantage of a large group is that they tend to pay less attention to him. They're "out there having fun and seeing what their peers are doing. . . . Believe me, the ambiance is totally different in a group of only fifteen people who are sitting

there trying to analyze what's going on.”

Application to Healing

Houck believes that the method he teaches to bend cutlery is quite similar to that used by hands-on healers. Pens he passes out to participants are imprinted with full instructions:

- **Connect** - with the spoon from a focused point of concentration in your head and pulled down through the neck and arms and into the ware;
- **Bend, Bend, Bend** - to be yelled (or spoken softly and politely); and
- **Let Go!** - distract yourself before doing the bending.

He compares how a hands-on healer would 1) focus on the person they are healing, 2) state his wish or prayer for healing (often internally), and then 3) disconnect by taking their hands and attention away. Houck mentions that it has happened a number of times at his psychokinesis events that someone will suddenly shout, “My back pain is gone!” Although Houck has participated in research, he has never been able to quantify the characteristics of what he believes is an electromagnetic field created by intention. Perhaps, when he retires, he will have the time and funding to conduct good research.

While many doubt this phenomena and seek ‘proof,’ Houck puts application at the top of his list of importance. Providing a scientific model is second and far down the list is the need for proof. He holds about two ‘PK’ and remote viewing (psychic seeing-at-a-distance) parties a month, giving people the opportunity to let go of being skeptics by having the personal experience of doing it themselves.

Jack Houck, M.S., has a degree in aeronautical and astronautical engineering from the University of Michigan. He has researched paranormal phenomena and was host for the TV show “Mind Power.” He can be reached at 5821 Woodboro Drive, Huntington Beach, CA 92649-4962.

To receive information about the next conference sponsored by the International Society for the Study of Subtle Energies and Energy Medicine, phone 303-278-2228.

HEALTH NEWS

Vaccine Safety and Chronic Illness

The National Vaccine Information Center sponsored The First International Public Conference on Vaccination in September 1997 in Alexandria, Virginia. It was attended by over 500 people from six countries. This organization grew from the feelings of deeply-pained and angry parents whose children suffered or died from vaccine reactions. It now has been given the long-awaited public support of scientists and doctors who want to see:

1. Informed consent to vaccination in all states in an atmosphere that allows for open inquiry, the free exchange of information, and the right to philosophical exemption to vaccination.
2. Government funding of independent, non-governmental researchers to investigate reported links between vaccination and chronic illness.

Mark Geier, M.D., Ph.D., president of Genetic Counselling and Research, Inc., spoke for a number of scientists who made it clear that they were not against vaccines. They believe that the good accomplished in saving thousands of lives far outweighs the rare cases of irreversible brain damage or death.

Nevertheless, he warns us that it is still critical we do not become complacent about vaccines. They need constant improvement to make them safer and more effective. Also, problems that are encountered in vaccines need to be shared openly among scientists, doctors, and consumers.

Geier presented many charts indicating an unusually high incidence of adverse reactions associated with DPT vaccination. The vast majority of them occur within the first day, suggesting a cause-and-effect relationship.

Geier summarized additional points that many scientists are calling for:

- improvements in reporting and follow-up on problems;
- retrospective research going back 40

years, which would be a valuable tool in uncovering information about the rise of chronic illness;

- quality control of contaminants, such as other viruses hidden in animal tissue used for culturing; and
- study of sensitive genotypes which would identify people more susceptible to ill effects from vaccines.

There were also attendees at the conference who were against all vaccinations. Some of those included distressed parents who reported unusual reactions in their children after a first, second, or even a third vaccination. Many had been told by a doctor that they were overly protective, when, in fact, they were observing helplessly as their child suffered permanent brain-damage or death.

Among scientists, too, there were those who believe that vaccines are yet another dangerous toxin being added to an almost endless list of pollutants which are severely compromising everyone's immune systems. They believe these toxins are lengthening the list of chronic diseases which are overwhelming health care systems worldwide. Nevertheless, even some of these scientists are not necessarily against the concept of vaccination. The issue for them is proper manufacture and testing.

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Gulf War Syndrome

Howard B. Urnovitz, Ph.D., founder and Science Director of Chronic Illness Research Foundation and a microbiology specialist, recently discovered that the blood of sick Gulf War veterans contains rare genetic material that the blood of healthy individuals does not. He theorizes that it comes from the combination of viruses and pollutants to which these soldiers were exposed. Once a person's genes have been ruined, then all other insults to the body multiply the destructive effects.

Urnovitz, developer of an FDA-licensed 10-minute blood test and a urine test for HIV-1 antibodies, described the amazing capability of viruses to exchange genetic material, shift, and re-combine. He described an HIV vaccine experiment in which 767 people were given only a protein -- not a live virus -- and 31 of them came down with HIV infection. He also pointed out that unlike many other viruses, it is not known on which chromosome HIV integrates. These are some of the reasons he concludes that HIV is a multifactorial, multi-step, living bio-hazard and not the result of a single cause.

Supporting Urnovitz's concepts was the presentation by James J. Tuite III, Director of the National Gulf War Research Foundation. According to Tuite, the combination of multiple vaccinations (each soldier received from eight to fifteen vaccinations in a very short amount of time), fallout from the chemical research production and storage facilities destroyed during the war, radiological exposures, synthetic chemical poisoning, and pesticides all complicate the soldiers' immunological picture.

Tuite would like to add the following improvements to vaccine administration:

- genetic testing to identify those likely to have dangerous reactions
- co-exposure testing for exposures likely to cause immunosuppression

In his study of peer-reviewed literature over the last twenty-five years, he has found much evidence of the synergistic, chronic effects that multiple exposures have on the immune system. At the same time, there is no research specifically studying the unintended consequences of multiple vaccines in combination with infectious disease, pesticides, and other

immunosuppressive exposures, many of which are colorless and odorless.

For more information about National Vaccine Information Center programs and conferences, phone 703-938-0342.

Mark Geier provides pre-natal genetic counseling at Genetic Consultants, 301-770-5300.

James Tuite, III is an international security consultant and can be reached at 703-914-2075.

HEALTH EDUCATION

Unique Certificate Program in Holistic Health

What may be the first Holistic Health Care graduate certificate program is now in its seventeenth year at Western Michigan University, an accredited state university. The program is multidisciplinary and consists of eighteen semester hours. In recent interviews, director Molly Vass, Ed.D., and Louise Forsleff, Ph.D., faculty member, described the university's unique approach. Unlike most college classes, these classes are heavily experiential. They focus on self-care, learning how holistic health complements conventional medicine, and how to share this information with others. Students are asked to apply what they are being taught by participating in their own health care. This contrasts with conventional medical training where school faculty have felt the need to be increasingly vocal about the unhealthy life style medical students are required to adopt.

Journaling and meditation are part of the experience in most classes. Journal writing includes relating class experiences and assignments to one's own life. Other activities include dream work, sand-tray art, art therapy, movement, diet, exposure to various kinds of body therapies, and counseling. Another great resource the school draws upon are the remarkable lecturers who speak at the nearby Fetzer Institute, an organization which promotes research in mind-body health care methods.

Field Placement

The holistic certification program appeals to self-starters. Students find their own field placements, often choosing one in their own

home town with employers for whom they have worked. Health care workers are especially motivated to go for certification if their place of employment holds promise for the development of holistically-oriented programs. These include counseling, hospital and home nursing, and occupational and physical therapy settings.

Compassion is an important part of the program. It means responding sympathetically to where students are and helping them along. Students are taught to relate to patients in a more personal way. Because of this they sometimes learn something about a patient that is critical to their health. A student whose placement was in a locked psychiatric ward, for example, was told by a patient that the patient was bulimic, a fact the doctors hadn't known.

Mindfulness and Discernment

Director Molly Vass points out that the volume of information in the area of holistic health is overwhelming and of decidedly uneven quality. "We spend a lot of time talking about inner discernment and how to use that to meet outer information. For example, what if you had cancer? What do you do from there? We talk about intuition, meditation, contemplation, asking oneself, 'What do I need?', 'What am I ready for?' Then we connect inner discernment with the outer world."

Vass describes how she and faculty member Tom Holmes work with mindfulness in their classes. They examine how mind, body, spirit, community, and environment relate to health and healing. Most important, they encourage the students to examine through discussion, contemplation, and their journals what their own relationship is to these issues. In addition, these topics are revisited during different courses which allow the students to appreciate their own developing understanding and application.

All faculty teach inner-listening to process information in a more discerning way. They listen to the body. Students actually listen to the heartbeat and they use visualization techniques. Some of the meditations focus on organs of the body, such as the heart or lungs. The purpose of the journal is to help clarify what students know to be true for themselves. The students are learning to listen to what they need in the moment. After connecting with

their own wisdom, they focus on how to discern what is accurate and important about information coming from the outside. They learn about where information can be accessed -- internet, research, journals, conferences, and from leaders in the field who have done years of research.

After looking at options, they are encouraged to ask 'How invasive are the procedures? What are the side-effects or contraindications? What are the complementary ways to look at what is available in both conventional and alternative systems? If you have an illness, what is appropriate for you in the context of your own life? Vass points out that one can be swept away from one's inner balance by an alternative health provider as easily as by a conventional one.

When asked about the direction of the program, Vass describes her satisfaction. The university's multiple class locations spread the word and attract more participants than might happen if they were operating from a single location. Holistic classes on and off campus have grown from ten students to almost 1,500. Faculty from more conventional settings sit in on their classes and incorporate what is useful into their own programs. Although they have been encouraged to teach the holistic program at distant locations, Vass believes this would miss the point. Each situation is different and needs to develop from its own context. Vass, Tom Holmes, Paula Jamison, and Gay Walker

are currently collaborating on a book, *Seeds of Awakening*, based on their experiences of developing the holistic program. "We spend a lot of time contemplating in the garden," says Vass with obvious pleasure, "and milkweed is our image of how we awaken."

For more information about Western Michigan University's Graduate Certificate Program in Holistic Health Care and their summer institute, phone 616-387-3800.

For information about The Fetzer Institute and their journal of mind-body health, Advances, phone 616-375-2000. Website <http://www.fetzer.org>.

Best wishes,

Barbara June Appelgren

Barbara June Appelgren

END NOTES


1. An earlier book by Patricia Norris is *Why Me? Harnessing the Healing Power of the Human Spirit*. Dr. Norris also recommends *Biofeedback: Principles and Practice for Clinicians*, ed. John Basmajian (Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1985). This book has good technical information and is still readable by the lay reader.
2. Elmer and Alyce Green, *Beyond Biofeedback* (New York: Delacorte, 1977).
3. Jim Schnabel, *Remote Viewers: The Secret History of America's Psychic Spies* (New York: Dell, 1997).



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