Nourishing the Energy Body

by Jule Klotter

Although many doctors and researchers have noted that emotion and belief systems play a part, perhaps a major part, in health and illness, Western medicine is just beginning to consider such non-physiological factors in the treatment of disease. Emotion, beliefs, and other non-physical qualities, such as creativity, intuition, and wisdom, originate in the dynamic chaos of the energy field, the aura, the vital life energy that surrounds and permeates each physical body. Each energy field constantly interacts with the fields of other living beings and with stimuli in the environment. Everything that affects the body must first pass through this field. Some of the information contained in the field enters our awareness via our senses, thoughts, or intuition. Much of the information, however, remains hidden, affecting the choices we make and our physiology. In her study of the human energy field, Dr. Valerie Hunt recorded brain waves, blood pressure changes, galvanic skin responses, heartbeat, and muscle contractions of subjects while aura readers observed changes in the energy field. Hunt states that changes occurred in the field before any of the other systems changes. (See Review, TLfDP #150, p. 124-26).

At the core of all matter lies energy, and the human body is no different. The energy body is a template for the physical body. Emotional energy resonates with life experiences, personal and professional relationships, and belief systems and becomes literally encoded in cell tissue. According to neurobiologist Candace Pert, emotionally-charged thoughts and experiences cause the body to manufacture different neuropeptides, chemicals triggered by emotions. Researchers at the Institute of HeartMath (Boulder, Colorado) found that heartful emotions (even emotions associated with memories) raise DHEA and IgA levels while negative emotions lower both. However we use our life energy, whether we use it to promote bitterness and fear or joy and love, manifests in our biology. Prolonged dissonance or weakness in the field leads to physical symptoms and, sometimes, to illness. Cure, without remission, depends upon relieving the disturbed energetics that underlie the physical condition. How does one address energetic factors that cannot be weighed, viewed under a microscope, or predicted? In this article, I hope to provide some guidelines or, at least, to stimulate an expanded view of health.

Many natural health techniques benefit the energy body as well as the physical one. Whole foods are rich with electromagnetic energy. Exercise, deep breathing, Qigong, Tai Chi, yoga, gardening, walking barefoot on earth, and prayer and meditation strengthen the energy field. Acupuncture, homeopathy, flower essences, deep muscle massage like Rolfing, Therapeutic Touch, Reiki, sound therapy, and other forms of energy medicine strive to address imbalances and blocks at the energy level of the body. These energy therapies can nudge an incoherent field into normalcy. Love, compassion, forgiveness are also powerful healing forces. Many doctors are aware that spiritual, mental, and emotional factors play a major role in illness and health; but, their training has emphasized the physical, and they often feel at a loss as to how to address the spirit.

Medical intuitive Caroline Myss (pronounced Mace), who has worked for many years with C.
Norman Shealy, MD, teaches about non-physical factors that affect health and spirit. In her book Anatomy of the Spirit and in taped lectures, Myss discusses a framework for addressing spiritual needs and lessons that affect well-being. As I reviewed her work, I found guidelines for maintaining health of the energy body, just as natural medicine has basic principles for physical health.

Caroline Myss became a medical intuitive in January 1982, after a spontaneous out-of-body experience. She had never desired healing powers; this new ability was very much an unwelcome, although intriguing, gift that she preferred to keep hidden. Grand Design had other plans. When she moved to New Hampshire to start Stillpoint Publishing with two partners, word spread about the insights that popped into her head whenever she heard about someone who was ill. People began to ask her to use her intuition to assess their health. Myss was extremely uncomfortable with her new therapeutic role; she did not like the responsibility that accompanied it, and she worried about the reliability of this talent. "In those early days the impressions I received," she explains in Anatomy of the Spirit, "were mainly of a person's immediate physical health and the related emotional or psychological stress. But I could also see the energy surrounding that person's body. I saw it filled with information about that person's history."

In May 1984, C. Norman Shealy, MD, neurosurgeon, developer of TENS (transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation device for pain relief), and founder of the American Holistic Medical Association, decided to test her. He called with a patient's name and age. Myss responded with images since she did not know physiology. Over the next year, Shealy called for more evaluations and helped her learn anatomy so that she could describe her perceptions with greater precision. Her years as an "apprentice intuitive" (1983-1989) and then as a professional intuitive, who worked with fifteen different physicians including Shealy and Christiane Northrup, taught her that no illness develops randomly.

Myss reviewed the intuitive assessments she had made over the years (primarily for adults), looking for emotional and psychological patterns among the various illnesses. Eventually, Myss presented these patterns in The Creation of Health (Stillpoint 1988), a book that she co-authored with Shealy (Reviewed in TLfDP #89, p.817+ & #125, p. 1260-62). These patterns give practitioners a place to start when trying to figure out the energetics of a patient's condition. For example, Myss says that chronic fatigue syndrome, energetically a disorder of the first chakra, affects people who feel very vulnerable and insecure. These people try to be all things to all people, and they connect to more people and projects than they have energy for. They finance too many people and/or projects with their energy, and the immune system weakens. The energetic component of cancer consists of unfinished or incomplete business. People with cancer tend to be more connected to the past than to the present. When energy is used to keep one's past alive instead of in the present where it is needed to maintain cell tissue, malignancy develops.

Wherever thought goes, energy and life force follow. Many of us are aware of energy circuits in the form of emotional ties and bonding to other human beings and to pets. We are less aware of how much energy we spend on past injuries, regrets, and losses. The thoughts that occupy one's mind indicate where energy is flowing. When thoughts contain an underlying fear of loss or over-identification with an object or person, energy is being lost. Being "hooked" on people or objects in a way that causes one to lose power means that "energy circuits are so thoroughly connected to the target that they no longer have the use of their own reasoning ability." (See Figure 1)
How do we disconnect our energy circuits from people or objects that sap energy? The first step is awareness. Check in often and notice where your thoughts are. Are they with you in the present, or have they drifted off to the past, the future, or with some person or object? Next, mentally cut the connection and literally call your spirit back. Calling one’s spirit back is not a one-time event; it’s a practice. (I speak from experience.) Counseling can be helpful for those struggling to let go of harmful attachments. Benefit from counseling can be enhanced by using flower essences, which work at the energy level to bring emotions and mental patterns to conscious awareness so that they can be released. "From an energy point of view, every choice that enhances our spirits strengthens our energy field; and the stronger our energy field, the fewer our connections to negative people and experiences," writes Myss. How do we know what enhances our spirits? Follow whatever intuitively feels good, has good "vibes," stirs up enthusiasm, and sends the soul, as Bernie Siegel says, "live messages." Illness can develop because a person is too negative - dwells on resentments, guilt, or burdensome thoughts to an extent that the negativity harms his/her biological well-being. Unless negative emotions, thoughts, beliefs, and/or negative use of one's personal power are released, energy dysfunction will continue; and, illness and physical symptoms are likely to recur. Not everyone who becomes sick is responding to too much negativity in his/her field. For some, illness signifies the beginning of a spiritual journey. It presents a challenge that will encourage them to develop and grow in spirit.

Although people often blame themselves for becoming ill, Myss does not believe that such blame is accurate or fair. Myss says we are beginning to get a vision of co-creating our reality; but, except for holy people like Sai Baba, we are not capable of that kind of control. Although we cannot control what happens to us, we can affect the quality of our response. Rather than blame oneself or dwell on "why me," both of which drain energy, the focus can be on what can be learned through this experience. How can I lighten my emotional life and enliven my soul? Many people who ultimately die from a disease find the journey to death a tremendously healing experience because of their attitude and the many opportunities to forgive, make amends, and release old patterns. Blame, even self-blame, depletes one’s energy field. Forgiveness restores it.

Anatomy of the Spirit

Few pay as much attention to their energy as they do to physical needs and pains. Myss wrote her book Anatomy of the Spirit to encourage people to think of themselves as energy beings as well as physical ones. The energy body, or spirit, is primarily expressed through seven important chakras, energy centers, located near the central nervous system. Eastern medicine has long recognized the existence of chakras, which are located in joints, nerve ganglion, and endocrine glands, and of meridians, energy pathways that run along the body's surface.

Eastern spiritual tradition identifies each of the seven chakras with specific challenges that arise during the quest for spiritual consciousness. The first chakra, at the base of the spine, relates to the material world. The second chakra, just below the belly button, deals with creation energy, sexuality, work, and physical desire. The third chakra, at the solar plexus, holds lessons concerning the ego, personality, and self-esteem. The fourth chakra lies at the heart and contains lessons about forgiveness, compassion, and love. The fifth chakra, at the base of the throat, relates to the use of will and self-expression. The sixth chakra, or "third eye" in the center of the forehead, deals with wisdom, insight, and intuition. The lessons of the crown chakra at the top of the head concern
After several years of conducting intuitive evaluations, Myss realized that she was unconsciously focusing on the seven main chakras. For some time, she puzzled over the chakras and Eastern spiritual tradition. If this path held truth for all humans, why didn't Western spiritual tradition have an equivalent? One day she wrote the seven chakras on a board for a workshop that she was teaching. Before her eyes, Myss saw the seven sacraments of the Catholic church float into place, corresponding to the seven chakras, soon joined by the ten sefirot of the Jewish Kabbalah or Tree of Life. These ten qualities have traditionally been organized into seven levels. Myss' unfamiliarity with the Islam tradition prevented her from including it in her book. Myss notes that "[w]hereas the sacraments and the chakras begin with the base as the number one and count upward, the ten sefirot begin with the number one at the top...and flows downward. The qualities attributed to each of the seven levels are virtually identical." Learning to embody these qualities while facing life's challenges is the essence of the spiritual journey. Viewing illness and crises as a chance to exercise these spiritual truths brings a level of meaning to the experience that accelerates healing.

Myss says that, energetically, disease begins in the lower three chakras, the ones that deal with external power. Unresolved conflicts with one's family and/or tribe (any group to which one belongs that provides a feeling of security), feelings of vulnerability about survival and access to life necessities, and being ruled by what "they" say instead of remaining true to one's path, create discord in the first chakra. Anatomically, the first chakra relates to physical body support, the base of the spine, legs, bones, feet, rectum, and the immune system. The people developing the autoimmune disease AIDS, says Myss, are those who feel victimized by their society (homosexuals and drug addicts) or who have feelings of vulnerability about survival (the poor of Africa). Self-respect, a sense of personal honor, feeds strong positive energy to the root chakra, bones, legs, and immune system. The first chakra, also, asks us to honor the tribe/family we were born into - even if life's journey has pushed us to move on.

The second chakra gets disrupted by stifled creative energy, money and sexual conflicts, power struggles, life energy directed into dead-end relationships or jobs, and control tactics that do not follow the rule to "Honor One Another." This chakra holds instances of prostitution, rape, and incest, both the literal traumas and the more common energetic occurrences. Many men and women become aware, at some point in their lives, of remaining in a disempowering situation for money or physical security, prostituting their energy. We are less aware of the energetic equivalents of rape and incest that come in the form of verbal abuse and destructive, disempowering attitudes that we direct towards others or vice versa. "Rape and incest of an energy field," writes Myss, "are motivated by the desire to cripple a person's ability to be independent and thrive outside the control of another person."

Physical organs most affected by second chakra issues include sexual organs, large intestine, lower vertebrae, pelvis, appendix, bladder, and hip area. Fear of losing control and fear of power can eventually manifest as ailments such as chronic pain in the lower back and pelvic area, arthritis, prostate or ovarian cancer, impotency, and bladder problems. Learning to honor others, instead of trying to control or dominate them, eases much of the struggle held in the second chakra. "The spiritual challenge of the second chakra," says Myss, "is to learn to interact consciously with others: to form unions with people who support our development and to release relationships that handicap..."
our growth."

The lesson of the third chakra is about self-responsibility and self-respect. This chakra houses both survival intuition, which warns of danger and negative action or energy coming from others, and self-esteem, without which intuitive guidance is ignored and discounted. Myss has found that depression often originates when people lose self-respect because they have broken a promise to themselves. Issues concerning self-responsibility, caring for oneself and others, self-esteem, fear of rejection, and an over-sensitivity to criticism eventually manifest as ailments in the abdomen, stomach, upper intestines, liver, gallbladder, kidney, pancreas, adrenal glands, spleen, and middle spine. Myss has also found that arthritis, anorexia, and bulimia often relate to third chakra issues. The third chakra demands that we honor ourselves and that we respect the everyday survival information we receive from our intuition.

Valerie Hunt refers to the third chakra as the emotional body, the area through which emotions located in the aura, such as fear and anger, enter the body. One of my many, favorite stories in Myss' Anatomy of the Spirit illustrates fear and the third chakra. When Myss met Ruth, the 75 year-old, Jewish woman was confined to a wheelchair because of arthritis. Ruth was 38 when her husband died, leaving her with two daughters to raise. Afraid of being alone and being responsible for herself, Ruth said that she did everything she could "to keep my daughters near me so I would never have to take care of myself." When her older daughter joined a Buddhist community at age 22, Ruth kept asking "After all I've given up for you, how could you do this to me?" Finally, in one such conversation, the daughter admitted, in response to Ruth's accusation, that she had tried drugs. On impulse, Ruth asked her daughter to get her some.

At age 55, Ruth took LSD and had an out-of-body experience, in which she met "a lovely being who said she was my angel. She complained to me, 'Ruthie, Ruthie, do you know how difficult it is to be your angel?'" Ruth saw a replica of herself bound with thousands of rubber bands; and, the angel told her that each rubber band was a fear that was controlling her: "You have so many fears that you can never hear me trying to talk to you, to tell you that I've got everything under control." The angel handed Ruth a pair of scissors and suggested that she free herself - which Ruth did with great delight. Before Ruth returned to her body, the angel let Ruth see the future in which she would be crippled with arthritis. "She couldn't tell me why I would have to endure this condition, just that I would have to. But she said she would be with me every step of the way," Ruth told Myss. "[A]fter that experience I never felt afraid again. I believe that my physical condition [which began about 10 years after the out-of-body experience] is a way to remind me never to have fear." In giving her condition meaning, Ruth turned a handicap into a source of inspiration.

The fourth chakra, the heart chakra, contains lessons about love, commitment, compassion, forgiveness and about hatred, resentment, bitterness, grief, anger, loneliness, and self-centerness. Holding onto the negative emotions, whether they are directed towards oneself or others, or intentionally causing pain for other people saps life energy from body and soul. Fear, also, drains and disrupts heart energy. Fear of loneliness, commitment, betrayal, fear of the inability to protect oneself emotionally, and of 'following one's heart' contribute to dysfunctions involving the heart and circulatory system, lungs, upper back, shoulders and arms, ribs, breasts, diaphragm, thymus gland. Tapping into the energy of love reduces fear. Love is a potent healing force for body and spirit, as many doctors recognize.
While heart energy resides at the fourth chakra, the mind and intellect come through the sixth chakra, located at the center of the forehead. Feelings of inadequacy, unwillingness to self-examine one's fears and shadows, and fear of truth contribute to physical dysfunctions involving the brain, nervous system, eyes, ears, nose, pineal gland, and pituitary gland. Myss says: "The energy pulsating from this chakra continually directs us to evaluate the truth and integrity of our beliefs. As we instinctively know from birth, to have faith in anything or in anyone that lacks integrity contaminates our spirits and our bodies."

The fifth chakra, positioned at the base of the throat, acts as a focal point for the heart energy of the fourth chakra and the mind energy of the sixth chakra. Its energy relates to willpower and the power of choice, the most basic manifestation of self-expression. Every area of our lives, including health and illness, is directly affected by the choices we make and how we make them. Clear decisions and true authority, as epitomized by King Solomon, come when the truth and wisdom of the sixth chakra is supported and in agreement with the emotional power of the heart chakra.

Before we make a choice, we often experience a contest, a struggle, between the emotional and mental sides of ourselves. That struggle disrupts the throat chakra. Prolonged disruption can manifest as physical dysfunctions that involve the throat, thyroid, trachea, neck vertebrae, mouth, teeth and gums, esophagus, parathyroid, and hypothalamus. Such disruptions also play a role in addiction. Without the balance and joined power of head and heart, the will lacks a leader to follow; so, it goes out in search of something to pledge its energy to, taking the form of an addiction. In her book, Myss writes: "The symbolic challenge of the Willpower chakra is to progress through the maturation of will: from the tribal perception that everyone and everything around you has authority over you; through the perception that you alone have authority over you; to the final perception, that true authority comes from aligning yourself to God's will."

The seventh chakra, at the crown of the head, relates to values, courage, humanitarianism, and the ability to see a larger pattern. It is the chakra of inspiration, spirituality and devotion, and the ability to trust life. Its lessons aim to teach us how to live in the present moment. According to Myss, energy therapies, such as reflexology, acupuncture, and homeopathy are treatments of present time. People whose energy is tied to the past do not receive much benefit from these therapies. They must first call their energy into the present by releasing the past through forgiveness of others, oneself, or an experience. Extreme sensitivities to light, sound, and other environmental factors, chronic exhaustion that is not linked to a physical disorder, and mystical depression that comes when one feels spiritually bereft signify disruptions in the crown chakra.

Caroline Myss' discussion of these seven chakras gives practitioners a thought-provoking format for working with non-physical issues that affect health. Integrity, honor, love, forgiveness, and right use of power fuel the energetic and physical body of all human beings, whether or not they respond to Eastern, Jewish, or Christian spirituality.

**Intuition**

After years of doing energetic readings for others, Caroline Myss is now teaching individuals to use intuition to evaluate their own health. Intuition is not a special talent or gift. Everyone has gut-level, third chakra intuition, says Myss; it is a survival skill. Intuition is a spontaneous knowing that tells us to trust or distrust someone, to be cautious in a given situation or to "go for it!" Intuition is
the means through which we know if we are happy or unhappy about something and if our energy is being fed, or if it is being drained. Accepting intuitive information and acting on it requires self-esteem and courage. Self-esteem, like intuition, corresponds to the third chakra. Honoring intuitive urgings in the smallest matters strengthens self-esteem and one's trust in the information, making it possible to follow intuitive guidance in more stressful situations.

Many factors can block intuition or distort its accuracy. People often discount intuitive guidance, burying the information beneath rationalization, disbelief, and fear. The information feels threatening when it conflicts with a person's belief system, tribal loyalties, or desire for a safe and happy future. Private agendas - the desire to see things in a certain way - interfere with the reception of energy information. Myss says that one of the biggest problems that people have in using intuition is the expectation that intuitive guidance comes loud and clear, as if some angel, standing next to a burning bush, will shout instructions to them. In reality, intuition comes as simple impulses and urgings: I like this, I don't like this, Yes, No. As agendas and desires for life to proceed in a desired, controllable way are released, perception and interpretation of intuitive hunches become clearer and more accurate.

Intuition often urges us to take a frightening leap of faith into the unknown. Fear and a desire for safe, non-threatening information keep many people from paying attention to valuable hunches. Intuitive advice does not guarantee a mistake-free, prosperous, love-filled, happily-ever-after life. It does, however, offer a means of learning what is true for you as an individual. Energy does not lie, but interpreting it accurately requires detachment from fear. Myss says: "Most people who come to me for an evaluation have already intuited themselves that something is wrong.... Their abilities are as accurate as mine; these people know they are ill. But since I do not share their fear, my intuitions can interpret their data better than they themselves can." Myss credits this quality of objectivity as being a primary reason behind Shealy's finding that her diagnoses were correct 93% of the time.

Medical self-diagnosis involves becoming familiar with a skill we already have. Medical intuition interprets how electromagnetic information contained in the energy field that surrounds the body is affecting a person's physical reality, including health. To check one's own energy field, Myss suggests focusing on each chakra with the question "Am I losing energy here?" If the answer is affirmative, the next question is "Why am I losing power?" Grab any image, thought, or impression that occurs. The trick is to examine these responses, rather than disregard them out of fear or because they don't fit a preconceived notion. Myss advises her students to regard themselves as information transmitting and receiving stations, reminding them that when it comes to energy, there are no secrets.

Why People Don't Heal

Myss' work as a medical intuitive has given her a unique perspective on the energetics of why people do not heal. Myss says that she used to think that everyone wanted to be healed. She no longer believes that: "Healing is very unattractive." Impediments to healing include living in the past, refusal to give up being a victim ("woundology"), and fear of change. Directing thought and energy to the past diverts vital life force from existing cells and organs that need that energy to function and heal. Healing requires living in the present, taking one's energy back from past traumas and hurts. Myss says that the only reason to nurture the past and keep it alive is because of bitterness about
what happened. Refusing to forgive a past event or person leaks energy from the body. Forgiveness heals that leak. Myss says that forgiveness has little to do with no longer blaming others for the wounds that they caused. It has more to do with "releasing the control that the perception of victimhood has over our psyches." When we can see a hurtful act as part of life process, as a message or challenge instead of a personal betrayal, vital energy flows back into the physical body's energy circuits.

People don't heal, often, because they have not released the illusion of being a victim. Too often people hold onto wounds and grief longer than is healthy. Myss points to the many support groups, such as incest support groups, in our society. Ideally, support groups help the injured make the transition toward wholeness by providing witnesses who understand their legitimate pain. Staying in such groups, however, commits one's energy to the wound, to the past. Too often, people give power to their wounds because they have found that it calls forth support from others, which is interpreted as nurturing. The wounds become a means of manipulating and controlling others. Leaving wounds behind and with them all the support and power that they provide is frightening because, these days, people tend to relate and bond with others by sharing wounds rather than through strength and love. To walk into the present without "wound currency" is to walk into an unknown world.

Healing often requires making changes in one's lifestyle, environment, and relationships. Change can be frightening. In her book, Myss writes: "It is easy to keep oneself in a holding pattern, claiming that one does not know what to do next. But that is rarely true. When we are in a holding pattern, it is because we know exactly what we should do next, but we are terrified to act on it...change is frightening, and waiting for that feeling of safety to come along before one makes a move only results in more internal torment because the only way to acquire that feeling of security is to enter the whirlwind of change and come out the other end, feeling alive again." Healing demands action. Eating properly, daily exercise, taking appropriate medicine are actions that support the physical body. Releasing the past, leaving stressful jobs or relationships, honoring one's own individual truth and gifts, and meditation/spiritual practice are actions that support the energy body. What supports the one supports the other because the physical and energetic are inextricably linked. Even the process of dying, which we all face, can become a very healing act as old wounds are released and unfinished business with loved ones is resolved.

We can splice genetic material and track the tiniest proteins, but we have just begun to learn the anatomy of the human energy field. I urge each practitioner and reader to consider the spiritual needs - love, forgiveness, integrity, right use of power - that are as important as the food we eat and vitamins we take. At least, recognize that positive and negative energies are real forces that affect physiology and that living with gratitude in a way that respects individual spiritual integrity enlivens body and soul. Philosopher Jacob Needleman in his book The Way of the Physician wrote: "Since it is knowledge plus vital energy that heals another, the more knowledge [a practitioner] obtains at the expense of acquiring access to the higher energies within himself, the worse his life and practice become."

Resources

Anatomy of the Spirit: The Seven Stages of Power & Healing by Caroline Myss, PhD
Nourishing the Energy Body


Invoking the Sacred for Healing, Guidance, Abundance & Relationships (6 audiocassettes of workshop with Caroline Myss and Ron Roth that focuses on chakras 1-4) Available from Great Lakes Training Associates, Inc., P.O. Box 30380, Indianapolis, Indiana 46230-0380. Phone 317-283-8315.


Energy Anatomy: The Science of Personal Power, Spirituality, & Health - 6-cassette lecture series with Caroline Myss that presents detailed explanation of spiritual anatomy.

Why People Don't Heal - 2-cassette lecture with Caroline Myss on links between personal power and illness, wound symbols, the four steps to healing, and overcoming blocks to wellness.

Sounds True produces taped lectures on psychology, spirituality, meditation, and health. To receive a catalog or purchase audiotapes, contact Sounds True Catalog, P.O. Box 8010, Boulder, Colorado 80306-8010. Phone 800-333-9185.


For information about Caroline Myss workshops and seminars, contact Holos Institute of Health, Rt. 1, Box 216, Fairgrove, Missouri 65648.