

Medicine, Health and Healing: The Changing Paradigm

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*The problems that exist in the world today
cannot be solved at the same level of
thinking that created them.*

--Albert Einstein

There is rarely a day goes by when we don't hear a complaint about the healthcare system. While we can probably all agree that the system is in need of major change, a closer look reveals that the majority of illnesses prevalent today are directly linked to lifestyle choices. According to the Center for Disease Control, "the profile of diseases contributing most heavily to death, illness, and disability among Americans—such as cardiovascular disease (primarily heart disease and stroke), cancer, and diabetes—are among the most prevalent, costly, and **preventable** of all health problems."

With a predominance of lifestyle-related illness surely the question becomes, not what's wrong with the system, rather, what can we do to help the system? How can we each take more responsibility for our own health and well-being and not contribute to the already overburdened healthcare system?

The answer may surprise you. It is not just about following a well-balanced diet and exercising regularly, although those elements of lifestyle certainly play a key role in influencing health. Within each of us we have one of the most powerful tools available, it is something so simple yet goes the very heart of who we are – it's our thoughts and our personal beliefs. Science is now confirming that our thoughts and our beliefs have a far more powerful effect on health than we realized.

The idea that our thoughts and beliefs can and do control our biology is part and parcel of a revolutionary paradigm shift taking place today. To better understand this new paradigm and what it could mean for us let's

first take a look at the old paradigm, that is, the context in which today's medicine is taught and practiced.

Medicine is practiced within a framework called a medical model. The conventional medical model is based on biology. Biology is based on assumptions of science, and science is based on philosophy. Philosophers propose an idea and then scientists set about proving or disproving the idea. When enough science is built around supporting an idea we call this a paradigm.

The receding paradigm of western medicine has its roots in 17th century physics. From the time of Isaac Newton until the early 20th century, the scientific view of our world was a mechanical one based on "things" and their relationship to the other "things" such as billiard balls hitting each other and thereby causing movement. The human body was viewed as an elaborate biological machine that could best be understood by taking it apart and studying it. The mind was not considered to be mechanical in nature and therefore was not thought to follow the laws of physics; issues of the mind came under the purview of the church and off-limits to doctors, hence the separation of mind and body.

As a consequence of this belief system we ended up with a fragmented and reductionistic, physically oriented view of human beings. In medicine "parts" are diagnosed and solutions proposed with rarely an eye toward the relatedness of those parts. Larry Dossey, MD, quoted in from Doctor to Healer by Floyd-Davis, summarizes the old paradigm of western medicine, "basically it says that everything that happens in the body is the result of what atoms and molecules are doing. There isn't any meaning to health or illness. Whether you're sick or if you're well, it's just a matter of the atoms and molecules following the blind order of nature. No meaning, no purpose, no goals, nothing of that sort. No real place for consciousness, attitudes, emotions, feelings, thoughts, because all that is just brain stuff,

and therefore, more atoms and molecules and so on. So the whole thing leads to the conclusion that all therapies need to be physical in order to really work.”

As our understanding of science progressed the picture began to change, most noticeably around the late 1990's when the mind and body were once again re-integrated. Ushering in the era of mind-body medicine were pioneers such as Herb Benson, Candace Pert, Bernie Siegel and Deepak Chopra. We were introduced to concepts such as the relaxation-response, molecules of emotion found throughout the body, and the profound benefits of meditation, in all its forms. Bill Moyers, one of America's foremost journalists hosted a now famous 4-part television series on Healing and the Mind. The series awakened the nation to the possibilities of a health care approach that incorporated the mind in healing of the body. It sparked formation of discussion and self-help groups across the nation; it also greatly increased public awareness of the value of holistic alternatives to conventional care.

By 1998 a landmark study informed us that 83 million Americans were choosing alternative therapies, largely because they found them to be more congruent with their own philosophies and worldviews. It wasn't that people were dissatisfied with western medicine, it was that they wanted their spiritual needs addressed in the healing process. Alternative medical systems view the body, mind, and spirit as a unified whole.

Organizations involved with the future of medical education were also calling for a new approach. For example, the Pew Health Professions Commission and the Fetzer Institute established a task force encouraging the development or expansion of medical education programs to reflect an integrated biomedical-psychosocial perspective. The Commissions full report released in 1995 asserted the need for a new phrase, “relationship-centered care.” This approach underscores the therapeutic benefits of relationship and further represents the

movement toward a more holistic way of perceiving ourselves; one of connection rather than the old paradigm of separation.

Meanwhile, in the world of physics a very different worldview was formulating, one that redefined all that life has ever meant to us and catapulted us into a new paradigm. Keep in mind that physics is the foundation upon which all other branches of science must ultimately follow.

The discoveries in physics over the past fifty years have profoundly changed our understanding of the universe and the world in which we live. The new physics, called quantum theory or quantum mechanics, reveals that the basic nature of our universe is not material objects, not particles--it is vibrating energy. Turns out we live in an energy universe. There's an invisible field of energy that creates everything, including the particles that we call “cells.” In the old paradigm of Newtonian physics, what we used to think of as “empty space” in between “things” is not the case. The new physics tells us that the empty space is actually an energy field, like a big web or matrix that connects everything. To put it another way, it is the “soup” in which we exist.

Even more mind boggling is that this energy field responds to us, to the frequencies of our thoughts and emotions. As Gregg Braden writes in his groundbreaking book *The Spontaneous Healing of Belief*, “paradigm-shattering experiments published in leading-edge, peer-reviewed journals reveal that we're bathed in a field of intelligent energy that fills what used to be thought of as empty space. Additional discoveries show beyond any reasonable doubt that this field responds to us - it rearranges itself in the presence of our heart-based feelings and beliefs. And this is the revolution that changes everything.”

Let's look at more new research. In biology, the long held belief that we cannot change our DNA and basic biology is being challenged by cellular biologists. One of the early pioneers in cell biology is Bruce

Lipton, PhD. Through his research as well as others we are learning that we *can* change our biology, and even reverse genetic blueprints. Lipton's research at Stanford University's School of Medicine has shown that the environment of the cell, operating through the cell membrane, controls the behaviors and physiology of the cell. In his book, The Biology of Belief, Lipton explains how his "experiments, and that of other leading edge scientists, have examined in great detail the processes by which cells receive information. The implications of this research radically change our understanding of life. It shows that genes and DNA do not control our biology; that instead DNA is controlled by signals from *outside* the cell" including the energy "signals" from our thoughts, both conscious and subconscious, or what Wayne Dyer PhD calls "habitual thoughts."

It is this habitual way of thinking, the automatic and unquestioned ways of responding to life where we have the most opportunity to change and positively influence our health. In the book Excuses Be Gone, Dr Dyer explains his perspective on the subconscious mind. He suggests that if we consider something below consciousness then we might think it to be inaccessible and therefore beyond our ability to change. If this were the case then we remain stuck in self-limiting thought patterns and victims of early childhood conditioning. He therefore chooses to call the subconscious mind the habitual mind.

Because habits of thought begin at an early age they become so ingrained that we barely notice them as we grow up and develop. We go about our lives reacting to things based on a perception of life formed in childhood, or even in utero. Those perceptions were based in part on the beliefs and perceptions of our parents, caretakers, and messages in the media. In effect, we didn't choose most of our perceptions of the world around us, we were "programmed". As adults we have our own experiences and the ability to make choices, but first we have to become aware

that there are choices. Part of this process is identifying the existing programs that run our life.

One of the most effective tools in working with the habitual or subconscious mind is the safe and gentle process of hypnosis. The subconscious mind is the long-term memory bank. Every event, every emotion, and every sensory experience that has ever occurred in your life is stored here. With proper instruction, the subconscious mind can be trained for almost instant recall, habits and even emotions can be changed and accepted.

Creativity is also located in the subconscious part of our mind. Creativity draws on images, sensations and feelings. Guided imagery has been shown to be extremely effective for health and healing, most notably with cancer patients. Once an image is established, the subconscious mind will take that image as a command and go forward with it. This is one of the reasons to replace negative images and negative self talk with positive images and self talk.

In my work as a hypnotherapist I have seen many people improve self-image and self-confidence through the power of positive affirmations. Overcoming addictions and unhealthy lifestyle habits is relatively easy with positive self talk. In the beginning I often hear, "but it's not true, I don't feel this way" however, after repeating the affirmation many times during the day the subconscious is reprogrammed and the affirmation becomes "real". Over time, the consistent positive thoughts change the underlying emotional energy - you feel good, your mood is improved. You can learn how to transfer the positive feeling from one area of your life to all areas.

Positive emotional energy patterns transmit higher frequencies, sending "positive" messages to all of the cells in the body. This is how your thoughts become your biology. In some instances positive thinking isn't quite enough to change the underlying emotional energy. For example, if you

fundamentally believe something is bad but tell yourself you'll "think positively" the core emotional energy pattern remains negative. Thinking positively about something in this manner assumes that things aren't right, things aren't good. If they were, then why not just think straight?

When seemingly negative events happen, as the saying goes, "look for the blessing, look for the good". If something isn't working for you look at it from a different perspective. In other words change the way you look at things and the things you look at change.

If we have been waiting for the science - it is here. Illness and disease is caused not only by germs, chemical toxins, and physical trauma but also by long-term negative emotional-energy patterns of thought and unhealthy ways of relating to ourselves as well as others. Start listening in on your thoughts and notice habitual ways of thinking. Then one by one, begin to explore new and positive ways of relating to yourself, others and the world around you. Look for the good in others and in yourself - you might be surprised how your biology responds.