

Holistic Health

In the western world we typically have a very narrow approach to health care. Traditional western medicine believes that diseases are caused by microscopic invaders, fungi, bacteria, and viruses, or is passed down through genetics. Western doctors look for symptoms or physical proof of disease. For example if someone has a tumor, doctors will usually try to cut the bulk of it out and then flood the body with horrid chemicals in an attempt to kill the remaining cancerous cells. This is known as chemotherapy, a good example of the practically barbaric western approach to treating illnesses. What causes diseases like this? Are there alternative approaches to treatment? Holistic medicine for one, emphasizes the need to look not only at the physical aspects of health, but also at the spiritual, emotional, social, mental, lifestyle values and environmental factors. Holistic medicine also strongly infers the need for the individual to consciously choose to heal themselves through responsibility and education. You have to decide to get better and consciously push yourself towards that goal. (www.holisticmed.com/whatis.html)

Socrates, a philosopher who lived in the 4th century B.C.E. advised against limited approaches to treating disease saying “for the part can never be well unless the whole is well.” As far back as 5,000 years ago eastern civilizations such as India and China were practicing holistic health, realizing that a body must be influenced by more than the physical and that many aspects of life play into a body’s ability to heal itself.

Jan Christiaan Smuts officially introduced the term holism in 1926 as a way of viewing living things as “entities greater than and different from the sum of their parts.” Holism was not widely known up until the 1970s, since then it has been growing in popularity (Walter).

In western societies during the 20th century something took place that drastically changed the way people saw health care. Germs were identified as the source of illness, microscopic invaders that could be killed with synthesised drugs. Most people took this to mean that they could lead an unhealthy lifestyle and rely on the marvels of modern medicine to fix any ailments they might incur upon themselves.

“A holistic approach to healing goes beyond just eliminating symptoms. For example, taking an aspirin for a headache would be like disconnecting the oil light on the dash of a car when it flashes. The irritation is eliminated, but the real problem still exists. In holistic medicine, a symptom is considered a message that something needs attention. So, the symptom is used as a guide to look below the surface for the root cause. Then what really needs attention can be addressed.” (Walter).

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention the factors that contribute to people’s health are as follows: Everyday lifestyle choices are the biggest factor, 53% of health problems are due to peoples’ choices. The second most significant factor is the environment that people live in with about 19% of health problems being caused by peoples surroundings and things that they consume. Next is heredity, 18% of health problems are due to traits or diseases passed down through generations. Finally the quality of health care is only responsible for about 10% of health related issues. These figures have been constant for the past 20 years.

Since more than half of all health related issues are caused by things we choose it is important to think about what we can control. Primarily we decide what we consume, not only in terms of food and beverages but also clothing, building materials, and house hold goods such as soaps and solvents. Almost everything in our modern society has some level of toxicity. The things we consume become the cells of which we are comprised. If the basis of our very composition is unstable or of poor quality it sets the stage for diseases to take hold and reduces our ability to fend them off (Walter).

As we are discussing holism it makes sense to realize that beyond the physical aspects of consumption we also consume things mentally or spiritually. If one is bombarded by negative images, experiences, and attitudes it will definitely bring them down emotionally but it can also affect someone physically. Just as our body can be weakened by lousy food it can also be weakened by depression or stress. For example stressing about late homework or an upcoming assignment may well result in a stomach ache or a cold. It is imperative to be aware and moderate the negative things we are exposed to. Be aware of the potentially toxic things you consume. Paying attention to what you eat is an easy place to start, genetically modified foods as well as those containing mono-sodium glutamate (MSG) are unhealthy. Another way to moderate your exposure to toxicity is to be aware of your environment and avoid certain things, such as excessive consumption of water containing fluoride or dental procedures that use fluoride in fillings or crowns. Other environmental hazards to watch out for include pharmaceuticals, cigarettes or second-hand smoke, asbestos, fluorescent lighting, toothpaste ingredients, cologne/ perfume, excessive alcohol intake, hard drugs, and even lawn/ garden care products. Simply keeping an eye on the type of

products you use and being picky about ingredients can be a big step towards a more healthy lifestyle. It is also important not to stress out about toxic things you are currently being exposed to. We all endure some level of exposure and the most healthy approach to eliminating toxic environmental factors is a relaxed gradual one (<http://www.holisticmed.com/toxic/>).

There are many approaches to holistic health. Beyond the basic principles: positive attitude and healthy lifestyle, there are numerous alternative therapies and treatments that address more than just the basic physical side of diseases. Some of the most common forms of treatment include things that seem very simple, dietary changes, vitamin supplementation, and exercise.

One of the most common therapies that is used in holistic health-care is acupuncture or acupressure. Acupuncture is an ancient practice with Chinese origins, there are written records that date back as far as 200 years B.C.E. Acupressure/puncture is normally in accordance with the age old theory of Traditional Chinese Medicine, which is strongly influenced by the principals of Daoism that essentially state that all things are interconnected and interdependent. While traditional western medicine believes that diseases are caused by a single thing such as a germ, virus, bacteria, or heredity; Traditional Chinese Medicine believes that disease is in fact caused by an imbalance in the metaphysical force known as Qi, translated as breath, energy, or vital energy. Qi circulates both around and inside of the body along specific channels commonly known as meridians. The basic idea in acupuncture/pressure is that these meridians are easily interrupted or blocked by anything from physical injury to emotional suppression. When the flow of Qi is interrupted it can cause all sorts of

problems, low energy, depression, anger, illness, pain, and a multitude of other issues. Along these meridians are points through which an acupuncturist is able to remove blockage by applying pressure (acupressure) or inserting a needle (acupuncture) (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acupuncture#Qi.2C_acupuncture_meridians_and_points).

Another alternative approach to health-care is known as color therapy. According to this approach, everything is made of energy, which is vibrating at various frequencies. Colors vibrate at different frequencies. Color therapy exposes a person to the color that is most likely to positively affect them and balance their energy.

Red is the color of energy, passion, vitality, and power. It is capable of burning cancer, drying up open sores or wounds, it can warm cold areas to reduce pain. Red is has a powerful effect on depression. Red can also help heal those with circulation or blood disease. Red is associated with anger or agitation and if someone is exposed to too much red for too long they can indeed become mad or annoyed. For this reason it is important not to expose people who already have anxiety or high blood pressure to a color that will only agitate them further.

Similar to red, orange can also be aggravating in high doses. Though slightly different from red in that it can increase immunity as well as sexual potency, it is also beneficial to the digestive functions of the body, and helpful against diseases of the kidneys and chest. When used appropriately orange will have a gentle warming effect on an individual.

Peach is simple and gentle. Those who are in search of peace may be drawn to this color, as it will help them to feel calm and balanced. Yellow is an intense stimulating color. Not only can it help you to think more clearly, it will also zap those pesky skin

problems such as dermatitis. The color of intellect, it will allow you to think more rapidly and generally stimulate your mind. Caution should be exercised when using yellow because of its intense stimulating nature, in high doses it can easily cause depression or exhaustion.

Green represents balance and is the color of harmony. It is healing for the heart and rejuvenates worn nerves. Green promotes calmness and generally helps to balance your emotions. Green is also a regenerative color, it is excellent for healing or growing because it stimulates the growth of tissues and bones. Pregnant women should surround themselves with green as it will promote an atmosphere of serenity and calm. Be mindful however, the growth inducing properties of green apply to more than just broken bones. Negative energy or emotions built up in a person can also be amplified by too much green.

Blue represents harmony, truth, and serenity. It is soothing to the mind. Blue protects, calms, re-constructs, and cools. This cooling property makes blue perfect for feverish conditions. It can also help to slow bleeding and it will help nervous irritations. It is excellent for treating burns. Watch out for too much blue, it will leave you cold, depressed, or full of sorrow.

Purple is a rich color that can aid in connecting you with your spiritual self. It has amazing ability to heal epilepsy and rheumatism. It is also good for treating mental and nervous problems. It soothes pain, penetrates allowing it to work on deep tissue and heal bones. Careful though, too much purple and you don't tend to live in this world.

Lavender assists with spiritual healing as it is the color of equilibrium. It will aid in sleep and can even be used as a tranquilizer. It is another color of replenishing

and rebuilding and it is like a tonic for your body. Too much lavender and you will be disoriented and very tired.

Other colors include white, silver, gold, and black. White will purify the body on all levels, including the highest. It has the highest charging field, which brings peace and comfort on the highest level. White represents purity and relieves pain. Silver, similar to white in that it represents peace, it also represents persistence. It is the best color to use for purging diseases or troubles from the body. Cancers of the blood and tissues are best treated with silver. Gold is a very powerful color, so much so that most people are unable to tolerate it, most require conditioning through small exposures over a period of time. Gold is excellent for curing all illnesses, it also fortifies the fields of the body and the spirit. Black is rarely used, but it is able to move someone towards a state of grace. It assists an individual in reaching the silence and peace of God. People are naturally drawn to the colors that they need to balance their lives, though concentrated color therapy is an available treatment. There are a couple of different ways to do color therapy. The more simplistic of the two is just lighting colored candles which correspond with the colors you need to balance yourself. The most common way to do color therapy is using colored light from a lamp. You just sit under the colored light as you watch TV, meditate, or whatever it is that you happen to be doing. (Color Healing 1-3).

Massage is also commonly used in holistic healing, not only does it sooth the body and ease muscle tension, it also provides emotional relief and ultimate relaxation. This sort of therapy is important in holistic medicine because it improves not only the condition of a person's body, but it also relaxes the mind and soul, aiding in the body's natural ability to defend or heal its self.

Aroma therapy involves the use of volatile plant components and other aromatic substances in concentrated essential oils to alter the patients cognitive function, mood, or their physical health. It has been used to heal people since the invention of distillation in the eleventh century. Aroma therapy works on the body in two ways, the first is the mental effects of the oils on the limbic system via the olfactory senses. The second is the pharmacological effects of the compounds in the oils on the body. Essential oils are used in various ways, the most common in the English speaking world is applying the oils directly onto the skin in a massage, bath, or compress. Another method of exposure is direct inhalation of the oils, this provides respiratory disinfection, congestion, expectoration, and can provide some psychological effects such as relaxation. The last way the oils can be used is simple diffusion which can disinfect the air or just add a nice fragrance to the environment (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aromatherapy>).

Yet another alternative approach to healing that is as old as psychotherapy itself is guided imagery, also known as active imagination, directed daydreaming, or visualisation. The idea is somewhat rudimentary, for example if you had an unidentified growth you might do some deep breathing to relax yourself, allowing painful emotions or illness that needs attention to rise to the surface to be dealt with. Once the issue is singled out, you would try visualizing a mixture created within your own body drowning the growth and healing the area. "This image of the magic solution is not as unusual as you may think, for scientifically, there is not a chemical or pharmaceutical available today that the body cannot replicate within itself." (Leviton). Another component to the idea of visualization, as well as holistic health in general is to give your body permission to heal. Before you can allow yourself to heal however, it is imperative to acknowledge

any diseases that need to be healed, physical or emotional. Once these maladies have been brought to the surface you can let go of them and help your body push them out. The body is capable of miracles, particularly when given the loving, supportive environment necessary for major healing to take place.

A big challenge to those who are seeking out alternative approaches to health care is finding a practitioner who you are compatible with, that is willing to treat you as a whole person and be your partner more than a doctor treating symptoms of dysfunctional systems of your body. It is important to be forward with your doctor, interview him, let them know that you want an adviser not a dictator when it comes to making decisions. Your primary physician is more than the person you go see for a check-up or a cold, he is your guide to help you navigate the complex and challenging world of health care. Ask lots of questions and be involved rather than treated. Know your options when it comes to choosing a primary practitioner, there are tons of options out there and you will want to find someone you click with and who meets your needs. Do your homework, hit the library and do web searches to find out as much as you can ahead of time. Get referrals from your friends and acquaintances you trust, this is an important decision as it could mean the difference in life and death (Light).

Holistic health emphasises the necessity to look at the body as a whole system, and take any and all factors influencing it into account when considering how to treat an illness or just fortify an already healthy person for optimum health. By examining the daily lifestyle choices we make, the things we consume, images and attitudes we are exposed to, our own thoughts and general outlook, our belief system, and physical symptoms of illness we can lead more healthy and happy lives. To accept and practice

the idea that we are much more in control of our own health than some might have us believe. Simply changing your attitude can result in being much more healthy. The holistic approach to health is becoming increasingly popular and more people are catching on. Many people are tired of going to the doctor and getting a bottle of pills or a shot that rarely work to really make them better, it is time to really get well.

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Color Healing