

JOURNAL

OF ADDICTIVE DISORDERS

HOLISTIC APPROACHES TO RECOVERY¹

SUMMARY

An examination of holistic approaches to recovery from addictions, including a discussion of meridians, yin/yang, chakras, auras and subtle bodies, vibrational and other therapies.

ARTICLE

“What goes around, comes around.” Such a familiar statement that is often used as a declaration of justice. But what if it was true as it relates to recovery from addictions, that what goes around *does* come around?

An old occult axiom states “all energy follows thought.” Where one places their thought, that is where energy will begin to manifest. Another axiom is “as above, so below; as below, so above.” The vibrations (energy) that one focuses with one’s thought magnifies through other vibrational methods such as color, sound and fragrances. And a third axiom is “like attracts like.” The body is a microcosm which attracts inwardly those energy patterns that are needed. Energies from aroma, oils and incense, for example, will trigger a response that can strengthen (or weaken) a system, an organ or any bodily function.

Most Western medicines take care of the symptoms of a disease, preferably with a “quick fix” rather than look at the symptoms as an indication of the body being out of balance. Western medicines temporarily alleviate the inconvenience of a runny nose but by doing this, the body cannot cleanse itself of the toxins that have caused it. And rather than take Tylenol for the chronic back pain, why not delve deeper into why there is pain? The body might be saying that it is over worked, undernourished or out of balance because of emotional stress.

Holistic philosophy states that the body can heal itself. The word “healing” comes from the Greek “holos,” which in turn becomes “whole” or “holistic.” Whole not just in the physical sense but emotional, mental and spiritual as well. And healing comes from within. This means that one must take an active role in their healing process.

For this material to be of value to the (Western) reader, the reader will need to have an open mind to some not so widely practiced healing methods. Before throwing the idea of healing oneself in the garbage, first ask why it is so difficult to open one’s mind to that possibility. Could there be a block in the first chakra belief system? Did one’s family of origin plant the idea of

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“victim consciousness,” which is allowing others to control their life? It is the hope of this author that the reader will not hand over the responsibility of their health to a stranger (for who knows their own body better?). Take charge of the outcome. This material will attempt to explain in a “user friendly” way, how one’s health is their own choice. The following pages will discuss meridians, yin/yang, chakras, auras and subtle bodies and vibrational remedies. This author will introduce some ideas with the hope that the reader will use the information as a stepping-stone into their own recovery.

Meridians and Yin/Yang

Understanding the human body is complex. It is not easy to treat diseases, so preventative measures can and should be taken.

One preventative and intervening theory is the “zone theory” that was introduced to the Western World in 1917 by Dr. William Fitzgerald, a physician at Boston City Hospital. Originally, Dr. Fitzgerald was the head of the Nose and Throat Department in Central London. He ran the idea – of zones – by a colleague named Dr. Joe Riley, who found it interesting but did not pursue it. Working in Dr. Riley’s office was a therapist named Eunice Ingham who later developed the Ingham Method of Reflexology (Byers, 2001). She began using the zone theory on her patients.

The zone theory divides the body into 10 vertical zones called meridians that run from the large toe to the crown of the head, with 5 meridians on each side of the body. Each meridian corresponds to organs, skeletal and muscular systems, and other systems of the body within that zone. When “working” on the feet (or hands) in a particular meridian, all organs, tissues or systems in that zone are affected, which is why working the large toe, for example, could relieve tension that causes a headache. Or “working” an area just under the ball of the foot near the middle affects the diaphragm, and so forth.

However, more than 3000 years before Fitzgerald and Ingham was the “Yellow Emperor’s Classic of Internal Medicine” by Ilza Veith which is based on restoring balance. Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) recognizes that “everything influences everything.” TCM believe there are two energy sources: IEI is energy created through the elements of food and nourishment which flows through the bloodstream. CHI energy circulates through the body along channels called meridians. Along these channels or meridians are electromagnetic points that are used in acupuncture and acupressure.

TCM, which differs from Western medicine, say there are 14 meridians, twelve on each side of the body and two on the midline. Both support the idea that each meridian has a starting point and ending point and the end of one starts the other. These interconnected meridians keep an endless flow of energy unless there is an imbalance (physical, emotional, mental or spiritual) that can cause a disease (Andrews, 1996).

All energy is governed by three polarities, positive/electrical (yang), negative/magnetic (yin) and the neutral. The yin and yang (female and male, respectfully) is the balancing of opposites. They oppose and compliment. Much the same as the left side of the brain is the seat of logical thinking and the right side is the emotional half, but both are needed to obtain a balanced holistic viewpoint of the universe. An imbalance in yang can be balanced by yin energy stimulation, and vice versa.

Aura and Subtle Bodies

There are a variety of energy fields that surround and emanate from the physical body. Some of the energies are light, electrical, thermal, magnetic and electromagnetic which comprise the entire aura and energy systems of the body. All of the fields are formed by vibrations. The aura is comprised of two aspects, the subtle body and the energy that emanates from the body itself.

Subtle bodies are bands of energy of varying intensity that surround and interpenetrate with the physical (Andrews, 1996). Eastern philosophy believes there are 6 subtle bodies surrounding the physical body. Some Western philosophies say there are four: physical, astral or emotional, mental and spiritual. All four must be aligned and harmonized in order to have a balanced healthy being. The assumption is that problems are a result of a misalignment due to traumas, stress, strong emotions and/or poor mental attitudes, and these imbalances will ultimately manifest in physical disease.

Since all of the organs, tissues and systems of the body are comprised of vibrating atoms, all intrusions (such as of allergens) alter the vibrations. Furthermore, unbalanced emotional and mental vibrations affect the subtle bodies' vibrational patterns. In order to achieve or maintain homeostasis, vibrational remedies can temporarily restore balance. The restoration, however, may only be temporary, because one must look at the reason behind the imbalance and alter it. Some of the vibrational influences are easier to remedy than others; for example, lack of sleep, lack of fresh air, poor diet and lack of exercise are more easily and quickly adjusted. Some problems, however, may take longer to address, such as alcoholism, negative behaviors and attitudes, severe traumas and childhood memories.

Chakras

Chakra is a Sanskrit word meaning "spinning wheel of energy". Within one's body are many vortexes of energy, seven of which are considered to be major chakras. Each chakra directly affects the body's physical, emotional, mental and spiritual self:

- ❑ Aligned with the spine and just in front of the spine at the coccyx (tailbone) is chakra one. Excessive or deficient spinning of this chakra affects stability and grounding, the skeletal structure and survival. Traumas and abuses such as abandonment, physical abuse, inherited traumas from parents (war, poverty etc.) or poor bonding with mother can affect this chakra.
- ❑ Chakra two is located just below the navel and excessive or deficient spinning affects the abdomen, sexual/genital area, hips and lower back. Traumas and abuses from sexual abuse, enmeshment, rejection and alcoholic families cause an imbalance in this area.
- ❑ Chakra three is located just above the navel at the solar plexus. Excessive or deficient spinning can be caused by trauma and abuse of shaming, and domination of will and physical abuse can cause ulcers, attraction to sedatives, hyperactivity, eating disorders and a poor sense of self.
- ❑ Chakra four is located at the heart and lung area of the body. Excessive or deficient spinning can be a result of rejection, abuse to any of the lower chakras, conditional love and holding on to resentments. An imbalance can cause heart disease, lung disorders, antisocial behaviors, lack of empathy and compassion and poor boundaries.
- ❑ The fifth chakra is located in the throat, lower jaw and neck. Excessive or deficient spinning as a result of verbal abuse, excessive criticism, authoritarian parents and chemically dependent upbringing can cause a fear of speaking, shyness, excessive talking, thyroidism, neck problems, tightness in jaw and teeth problems. Many have learned "don't talk, don't trust, don't feel" (Black, 1981).

- ❑ Chakra six is located between the eyes at the brow line, and is often referred to as “the third eye.” Excessive or deficient spinning as a result of invalidation of intuition, again learned to “don’t talk, don’t trust, don’t feel” (Black, 1981) or a frightening environment (war zones, violent neighborhoods) can cause headaches, poor memory, difficulty in seeing the future or imagining alternatives, denial, poor vision, hallucinations, obsessions and nightmares.
- ❑ The seventh chakra is located at the top of the head (crown) and is responsible for intelligence, ability to perceive, open mindedness, wisdom and mastery. Trauma and abuses from withheld information, forced religion, blind obedience, lies, spiritual cynicism and apathy can cause spiritual addiction, dissociation from the body, coma, migraines, amnesia and brain tumors.

Vibrational and Other Therapies

The following is an extensive – but not exhaustive – list of vibrational and other therapies. Many of the therapies are already a part of Western Medicines. It is recommended that the reader do further research into any of the therapies prior to practicing or receiving them. A holistic approach for the recovering soul is to use both Western and Eastern practices in treatment and prevention of disease. The soul is the essence of the body. Both the soul and body need love and attention. Western and Eastern medicines together can nourish the body and soul, help it to heal and/or prevent imbalances in one’s being. Caroline Myss’ book *Why People Don’t Heal and How They Can* mentions various diseases that are a result of traumas, abuses or poor choices and behaviors.

Acupuncture

Acupuncture is based on the belief that health is determined by CHI, the vital life energy that flows through the pathways of meridians in all living things. If there is a block in the flow, disease can result. In the section on Meridians and Yin/Yang, there was a mention of electromagnetic points that run along the meridians. An Acupuncturist inserts thin, disposable needles into various points (there are some 360 acupoints in total) that will remain inserted anywhere from a few seconds to a few minutes to ½ hour.

Relief may be experienced after one treatment or it might take a series of treatments. Acupuncture has been used for pain relief, addictions, nausea associated with pregnancy and chemotherapy and mental disorders. Acupuncture is being used in many detoxification (“detox”) centers for the relief withdrawal from alcohol and other drugs, including tobacco.

According to Western scientists, acupuncture needles stimulate the production of endorphins (a neurotransmitter), the body’s own painkiller. It also inhibits serotonin and norepinephrine (neurotransmitters) and an inflammation-causing substance known as prostaglandin. Thus far, this evidence is inconclusive.

Not all states require a license or certification, and schooling varies from 1,300 hours to 2,600 hours of training. Use caution when choosing an Acupuncturist. Western physicians with little or no training are permitted to practice. There are no known side affects from the treatment itself; however, improper sterilization of needles (which has lead to disposable needles) has resulted in the spread of hepatitis B and serious bacterial infections.

Acupuncture combined with other TCM, such as herbs, is suggested. Whether there is relief or not from treatment, chronic or acute pain is a “red flag” for other serious conditions. If there is a negative experience with one Acupuncturist, one might consider trying another before making up one’s mind about this therapy.

Acupressure

Also known as “contact healing,” acupressure is similar to acupuncture, but without the needles. Acupressure is the older of the two remedies and is also believed to restore the flow of CHI along the meridians. Acupressure is a safe, simple and inexpensive treatment for the relief of pain. Although performed by skilled practitioners, it is also performed by individuals on self and others. As with acupuncture, continued pain may be a sign of serious conditions and a physician should be consulted. Relief from acute pain should be noticed after a few weeks of treatment.

Applied Kinesiology

Applied kinesiology is a recent outgrowth of Chiropractic care devised by George J. Goodheart, Jr., in the 1960's, who focused on muscular dysfunction rather than joint abnormalities. Most practitioners begin with analyzing the posture, gait and range of joint motion. Next, a test is given to determine whether a muscle can hold a given position while the practitioner uses manual pressure. And finally, the practitioner will evaluate nutritional deficiencies by touching various points along the meridians.

As for it's validity of diagnostic effectiveness, “comparisons between applied kinesiology and other diagnostic techniques have fared poorly” (PDR, 1999) There have been no major side effects noted; however applied kinesiology should only be used as an adjunct to conventional diagnosis and treatment. A practitioner must be a Chiropractor or a medical doctor, must complete 100 hours of training from the College of Applied Kinesiology and have logged 300 hours of internship. Teachers of the College of Applied Kinesiology must log 300 hours and complete 5,000 hours of practical experience, as well as write two research papers and pass an exam.

Aromatherapy and Essential Oils

Aromatherapy is the use of pure essential oils to enhance physical and mental well-being. Essential oils are highly concentrated distilled essences of plants. They can be used as an adjunct or substitute for over-the-counter or prescription medicines or used just to make oneself feel better. Since smell plays a significant role in one's perception, aromas can affect emotional, physical and mental well being.

There seems to be an association between essential oils and the release of certain brain chemicals (neurotransmitters) that affect various emotions. For example, lavender seems to release the neurotransmitter serotonin, which has a calming affect. Some essential oils having healing properties on the skin. For the best effect, essential oils should be 100% botanical and not chemical reproductions.

There are a variety of methods for extraction, such as distillation, carbon dioxide extraction, and pressing and enfleurage (a process in which a certain type of odorless oils is used to extract essential oils from petals). It is recommended that when purchasing oils buy small quantities because oxygen in 'partially filled' bottles deteriorates the oil. Also check to be sure the oils are “pure essential oils.” Oils can be applied topically or inhaled. If used topically, it is best to dilute the oils first by mixing them with other oils like olive oil, almond oil, jojoba oil or water. If the essential oils are inhaled, inhalation can be directly from the bottle or from a simmer pot, aroma lamps or diffusers. There are several books on essential oils; as well as, the Internet that list essential oils and their uses (Lavabre, 1990; Balch and Balch, 2000).

Ayurvedic Medicine

Ayurvedic (a Sanskrit word meaning “the science of life”) remedies are one of the oldest forms of medicine in the world (a 4000 year old Indian method of healing). ‘Ayur’ means life and ‘veda’ means knowledge.² It is truly a holistic remedy, incorporating exercise, breathing, diet, meditation, mental visualization, therapeutic massage, herbs, color and sound therapy and aroma therapy to help balance the body. Ayurveda healing philosophy is based on three basic types of energy called “doshas.” Vata (ether and air) is the energy of movement. Kapha (water and earth) is the energy of lubrication and structure. Pita (fire and water) is the energy of digestion and metabolism. All doshas are present in everyone and everything, but one is usually predominant in any given individual. Ayurvedic medicines see disease as an excessive or deficient vata, kapha or pita, and the presence of toxins. Balance is restored with herbs and the therapies outlined above.

Biofeedback

Biofeedback combines guided imagery and meditation for relaxation. A monitoring unit is connected to the patient by electrodes that measure pulse, blood pressure, heart rate, temperature, muscle tension and brain wave activity (autonomic functions). This method is used to measure stress and is not used as a cure.

Chinese Medicine or Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)

TCM is used mainly as a prevention of disease, but it has been known to help find ‘cures’ for many people’s illnesses. The Chinese see human beings as microcosms within a universal macrocosm (Gerber, 1988). In other words, the inner workings of humans are reflected in universal relationships to energetic flow.

One primary concept of energy flow is that of *chi* or *qi*. The Chinese feel that *chi* is an energy of both nutritive and cellular-organizational characteristics that supercedes the energetic contributions of ingested food and air (Gerber, 1988). *Chi* energy is absorbed into the human body via portals called “acupoints” and run along the meridians of the body to provide life-giving and sustaining energy. Similar to Ayurveda, TCM incorporates herbs, massage and diet with the use of acupuncture and acupressure in order to restore balance. Once the body has been balanced, the body can heal itself.

Using the Yin/Yang concept that is present in the body, TCM looks for too much Yang (or Yin). Yang is characterized as heat and light, energy, dryness and summer, while Yin is characterized as cold and shadow, blood, wetness and winter. Hence, if a person is overweight, has high blood pressure and an angry temper, the TCM practitioner will recommend cooling foods (Yin) like tofu, asparagus, bananas, cucumbers and watermelon. Likewise, if a person is listless or tires easily and is quiet, the TCM practitioner might recommend Yang foods like beef, garlic, ginger, lamb and pepper. Additionally, a TCM practitioner incorporates herbs in treatment. This needs to be closely monitored because of their intensity and power.

Chiropractic

This branch of healing arts is concerned about human health and prevention of disease. Chiropractic therapy recognizes the connection of health and the body’s innate ability to heal itself from emotional stress, from trauma, as well as from physical and mental illnesses.

² Alternative Medicine Therapies URL <http://library.thinkquest.org/24206/Ayurveda-medicine.html>.

Chiropractic medicine is concerned with the relationship between the spinal column, the neurons and the nervous system. The nervous system includes the central nervous system (brain and spinal cord), the autonomic and the peripheral nervous system. All of the body's tissues and organs are connected electrically to the spinal column which is protected by (24) vertebrae. Pathological disease may be influenced by disturbances in the nervous system. However, some factors might be improper rest, lack of exercise and improper or poor nutrition that can be easily remedied. Sometimes beyond one's control are factors like genetic/heredity factors, pollution, stress, physical traumas and bacteria/viruses. However, all affect the nervous system.

In most cases, if a healthy flow of energy is preserved or restored, the body can heal itself. Chiropractics align the spinal column via manipulation (referred to as adjustments) using touch, movement, instruments, heat/cold application and electrical stimulation, depending on the style of the Chiropractor. "Straight" Chiropractors manipulate and focus only on the spine. "Mixers" supplement manipulation with nutritional counseling and physiotherapy because they believe that disease comes from many sources and not just subluxations (misalignment) of the spine. The Chiropractic field has had much controversy over the years by Western medical associations. Even today, many Western doctors feel that "only back pain" could benefit from manipulation and that other diseases cannot. They base their thinking on the fact that there is no scientific confirmations of Chiropractic care for anything other than low back pain (PDR, 1999). In keeping with a holistic approach, Chiropractors align the spine to allow a free flow of *chi* through the meridians and unblock chakras that have helped 15 million American per year (AMT URL <http://library.thinkquest.org/24206/chirpractic.html>).

Color Therapy (Chromotherapy)

For years scientists have been studying the effects of colors on ones moods, health and thinking. Color is described as light, a visible radiant energy of wavelengths. The photoreceptors in the retina (of the eye) called cones, translate this energy into color. The retina has three photoreceptors: one for blue, one for green and one for red.

According to Dr. Alexander Schauss, Director of the American Institute for Biosocial Research in Tacoma Washington, when (color) energy enters the body, it stimulates the pituitary and pineal glands (Balch & Balch, 2000). This in turn stimulates hormones, which in turn influences the physiological processes of thought, mood and behavior. This is different from effects caused by psychological and cultural factors.

It is interesting to note that color even affects blind people who are thought to sense colors through a vibrational energy created in the body (Balch & Balch, 2000). Color vibrations have been known to relieve stress, fill one with energy, alleviate pain and other physical problems.

The concept of color is a large part of the Chinese design of *Feng Shui* (discussed later). When choosing a color for a particular mood or to relieve discomfort, one must have a particular objective in mind. For example, blue is relaxing, calming and peaceful, so one might use this color to lower blood pressure and heart rate, calm down active children in a classroom or for 'cooling' in summer. Color has been known to alleviate pain from ulcers, back problems and insomnia. Whenever possible, communing in nature (blue sky and water) can impart a feeling of oneness with the universe or one's "Higher Power."

Green, like blue, is calming and soothing but it relaxes the mind as well as the body. People who are anxious or depressed could benefit from green surroundings, as can those with nervous disorders, exhaustion, heart problems and cancer.

The color red stimulates, excites and warms the body. It increases heart rate, brain wave activity and passion. Red has been known to help with impotency/frigidity, anemia and skin problems. Persons with high blood pressure should avoid rooms with a lot of red because of the stimulation.

Colors such as pink, violet, orange, black and yellow have varying affects. Color therapy is often used in conjunction with other therapies like chakra healing. The chakra colors are red (1st chakra), orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet or white (7th chakra). When working to open or unblock chakras, stones or gems of that correlate with a particular chakra increase the vibrational healing.

Craniosacral Therapy

Craniosacral Therapy (CT) practitioners assert that certain disorders are caused by an obstruction in the normal flow of the cerebrospinal fluids that bathe the brain and spinal cord. The practitioner gently nudges the head, spine, sacrum, rib cage and limbs to reestablish the natural rhythm thus relieving associated illnesses. Some of the targeted disorders that seem to respond to CT are trigeminal neuralgia (stabbing pain in the jaw), headaches, sinusitis, visual disturbances, “mini-strokes”, vertigo, certain cases of mental retardation and traumatic brain injuries. Craniosacral Therapy is highly controversial among mainstream physicians and medical organizations. Although advocates of CT cite numerous case studies of success, physicians say it is impossible to manipulate the bones in the skull since they are fused together. Additionally, they feel whether the bones move or not, there are no scientifically controlled clinical trials to prove it's success. However, as late as 1996 the American Osteopathic Association confirmed the existence of motion around the sutures of the skull bone (PDR, 1999).

Crystal and Gemstone Therapy

The growing knowledge of the use of crystals to transmute and transform electromagnetic energy has played an increasingly important role in the evolution of technology. Crystalline technology has been used for the development of electronic systems. Bell Laboratory, for instance, used ruby crystals for lasers and holograms. Holography or energy interference patterns are used for storage, similar to the storage of information within the human brain. Phillips Research Labs in Hamburg, Germany recorded a demonstration holographic movie in a crystal of lithium niobate, opening the door for Oak Ridge National Laboratories in Tennessee where they stored three-dimensional images in a single crystal (Gerber, 1988). Later, scientists explored liquid crystals better known today as LCD displays.

Quartz crystals are useful for telling time because when stimulated with electricity, their oscillations are so regular and precise. Quartz can also be used to process various types of energies. Some of the numerous functions include reception, reflection, refraction, magnification, storage, balancing and modulation. Of particular interest is the function of quartz toward the subtle energetic healing of human illnesses. According to a crystal researcher named Marcel Vogel, a senior scientist with IBM:

“[Q]uartz crystal is a neutral object whose inner structure exhibits a state of perfection and balance..... it emits a vibration which extends and amplifies the powers of the

user's mind. Its higher purpose is in the service of humanity for the removal of pain and suffering. With proper training, a healer can release negative thought forms which have taken the shape as a disease pattern in a patient's physical body." (Gerber, Richard. *Vibrational Medicine*. Santa Fe, New Mexico: Bear & Company, 1988, pps. 338-339).

Crystals are classified into seven subtle energy systems. Each system's vibrational energy affects the seven chakras. Various stones vibrate in a yin/yang, which allows them to both give and receive. Negativity is absorbed and positive energy is sent out. Certain gemstones or crystals are used for healing specific organs of the body because they vibrate specifically with the chakras. These stones help speed up or slow down the spinning of the chakra, allowing it to balance and heal. For this to work well, the stones need to be energized and dedicated for the purpose of use. The purpose of use might be to balance, to heal a bad back, to open a blocked chakra or to heal insomnia or depression. One can place the stones (while lying down) next to the body or on the body at the chakra points. This can be done alone or in conjunction with a Reiki session, reflexology, acupuncture etc. Having as many healing remedies at one time will increase the energies for healing a particular disease or for balancing as a prevention of disease.

Exercise

Some might wonder why exercise is included in holistic remedies and therapies. The truth is, exercise is the best thing for maintaining youth and optimal health combined with proper nutrition. The entire body benefits for both physical and psychological reasons. Regular exercise improves digestion, elimination, endurance, and energy levels and lowers overall blood cholesterol. Exercise reduces stress and anxiety as well as elevating mood and increased feelings of well-being by releasing neurotransmitters in the brain. There are three purposes for many exercises: *aerobic* exercise improves the body's capacity to use fuel and oxygen; *range of motion* exercise helps to maintain joint movement; and, *strengthening* exercise helps the muscle's ability to contract and do work. Having a balance in the type of exercise will maintain the body's ability to prevent disease.

Feng Shui

Feng Shui literally means "wind" and "water". It is a study of the natural environment to encompass it in one's environment at home, office or anywhere. Feng Shui is not related to any religion or belief system. It is a scientific discipline based on the analysis of energy. Feng Shui is a closely guarded discipline used to ensure good health, wealth and power. A practitioner uses the principles of yin/yang, the five elements (wood, water, fire, earth and metal), an east/west compass, the solar system and the environment. With the compass, the practitioner determines the energy characteristics of a building, for example, and the effects on the building occupants. Next, calculations are done according to the basic principles and then remedies are prescribed. Feng Shui can be used for the energy (qi) of a city, state, country or even the world.

Guided Imagery

Guided imagery seeks to make physical changes in the body by repeatedly visualizing them. Guided imagery is a form of mind-body therapy similar to biofeedback. But unlike biofeedback, there is no scientific evidence to prove it can relieve disease. Guided imagery does, however, promote relaxation. Treatment, in a small class or a one-on-one, is not a passive experience. The patient will begin with relaxation exercises before moving to visualizations. If the patient has a specific disorder such as irregular heartbeat, the practitioner will ask the patient to visualize a regular heartbeat. If there is a tumor, one is guided into seeing the tumor shrink. Guided imagery is also known as creative imagery, mental imagery or creative visualization that

is aimed at focusing the mind on positive images that can change the body. Like other body-mind therapies, guided imagery assumes that the mind can affect the functions of the body.

Homeopathy

A diluted solution of assorted herbs, animal products and chemical makes up a remedy known as homeopathy. Controversy around homeopathy stems from the fact that the herbs are so diluted they barely contain any herbs at all. Scientists believe that homeopathy does absolutely nothing; advocates disagree. Homeopathic medicines are available without prescription allowing anyone to self-administer them. A practitioner can be a chiropractor, a physician or a self-professed expert. Remedies might include alcohol or water solutions or a sugar pill.

Homeopathy was developed in the 1800's by a physician named Samuel Hahnemann and the practice seemed to be an alternative treatment to "blood-letting," applying leeches or high doses of mercury and lead. Based on the theory of "like cures like," when given a substance that caused symptoms of a disease (such as malaria), the body can relieve the symptom. Although the theory wasn't new, Hippocrates' remedy was given a new twist. Many Hippocratic remedies were high doses, even toxic amounts of a substance. Hahnemann reduced the solutions to smaller and smaller amounts, believing "the least could be more powerful than full doses." The controversy over its value is based on the process of dilution to the point that not one molecule of the original product is in the final solution. For example, 12x on a label represents a solution diluted by 1/10th and shaken 12 times in a row (PDR, 1999). Since there are no remaining molecules, homeopathic physicians use the terms "essence", "memory", or "energy imprint." Scientists dispute these results, as there are no reliable clinical research studies.

Hypnotherapy

The power of suggestion has been found effective for many problems that hinge on emotions, habits and the body's involuntary responses. Although hypnotherapy won't "cure" cancer, it can relieve the pain associated with the disease. It is also used to counter anxiety, tension, depression, phobias, and compulsive disorders such as smoking, gambling, alcohol and other drugs. Although hypnotherapy is not for everyone, success has been noted for persons with high blood pressure, nausea from chemotherapy, severe morning sickness and muscle spasms.

In order to assess for those who are susceptible to hypnosis, there are various tools such as the Stanford Hypnotic Scale, Barber Scale, Harvard Group Scale, the Eye Roll Test, Light Test which use similar exercises. Relying on a trance-like state, the unconscious level of the mind is open to suggestions of the therapist. This trance is not some mystery, but rather a state of focused concentration similar to being lost in a book or a daydream. Native American and Africans have recognized the effects of drumming and dancing as hypnosis to relieve anxiety and hysteria.

Franz Mesmer, an Austrian physician in the 18th century, theorized that illness was a result of an imbalance of the body's magnetic force and he could "cure" by transferring magnetism from his patient's body. He waved iron rods, magnets and hands in front of his patients, using soothing words. Later, James Braid, an English ophthalmologist coined the term "hypnosis" from the Greek word for sleep; but it wasn't until the late 19th century, when Freud used it in his early work. Again revived in the 1950's, Milton Erickson used hypnotherapy for both physical and mental disorders. Today, hypnotherapy has been known to have lasting effects possibly because of the release of the neurotransmitters encephalon and endorphins. Others speculate its lasting effects are a result of affects to that part of the brain responsible for involuntary reactions. Many people avoid hypnosis because of the "show-biz" stunts that make their

subjects “walk like chickens”; however, the therapist cannot make his patient do anything he/she would not do consciously. The therapist’s goal is to have the patient’s mind solve problems, not give the patient the answers.

Light Therapy

Light therapy is a well-proven method of therapy for seasonal affective disorder (SAD) or the ‘winter blues’. Ultraviolet light has been used for treatment of psoriasis. Natural sunlight is used for jaundice in newborns; as well as, a leading source of vitamin D. White lights used for SAD are similar to the sunlight at sunset and sunrise and contain no harmful ultraviolet wavelengths.

If therapy is in an office or clinic, the patient lies on a couch under a lamp that emits 2,500 lux of illumination (half that of sunlight) and must keep their eyes open for full benefit. If treatment is at home, it is suggested that the patient use a light box. It measures 2 feet by 2 feet and encloses a full spectrum or bright light angled toward the face. The patient is advised to not look at the bulb, sitting 18 inches from the box. Sessions are 30 minutes to several hours depending on the lux of illumination. The patient can do a variety of activities such as reading, watching TV, eating or working. If being treated for a skin disorder, the patient is directed to take psoralen (orally) 1-2 hours prior to treatment. This will protect against the negative effects of ultraviolet rays. Psoralen should not be taken by those with eye problems, liver disorders or nausea.

Light therapy has been used for a millennium, treating peoples as early as the 6th century B.C. Hippocrates later had his patients recuperate in roofless buildings. In the 1890’s, physicians in sanitariums prescribed “light baths”. Since the 1980’s doctors realized the benefits for depression, lethargy and difficulties with sleeping. The circadian rhythm is regulated by the pineal gland which is controlled by the presence or absence of external light. The pineal gland is responsible for the production of melatonin which promotes sleep. Those who should avoid light therapy include persons with bi-polar disorder, persons with sensitive eyes and skin, and persons taking some medicines.

Meditation

Meditation has been used for thousands of years for relief from stress, pain, tension and anxiety. Persons with high blood pressure and chronic pain, as well as persons with headaches and asthma find relief after meditation. There are two major categories of meditation: mindfulness and concentrative. While in a concentrative meditation, a person focuses attention on a single item, sound or breath. In mindful meditation, the mind becomes aware but does not react to a variety of sensations. Both forms achieve a calm state of mind.

There has been much research in a newer category practiced more commonly in the western world, called transcendental meditation (TM). Success has been noted in treating persons with substance abuse. TM involves mental repetition of a mantra, like “om’s” and “ay’s.” How meditation works as seen in electroencephalographs (EEG) is that it boosts the intensity of the alpha waves associated with quiet. Meditation shows lower levels of hormones, lower levels of lactic acid (a by-product of tension and anxiety) and improved circulation. The downside of meditation can be with persons who are working on ego boundaries, persons who are releasing of powerful emotions or those working through complex relationship problems (PDR, 1999). Some other side effects might be the increase of fear and anxiety because in the quiet moments of thought, unsettling thoughts might “pop up”.

Orthomolecular Medicine

This therapy takes nutritional therapy a step further. Orthomolecular medicines (OM) prescribe larger than usual doses of vitamins and minerals to prevent or cure disease. Linus Spalding, winner of two Nobel prizes, developed OM in 1968, but the premise of this originated in the 1920's.³ Spalding, who coined the term orthomolecular medicine, felt that a proper balance of enzymes, minerals, vitamins, trace elements, co-enzymes etc would help the body reach a perfect balance of physical, mental and emotional stability. A patient is advised to first change to a healthier diet, eliminating refined sugars, junk food and foods with additives. The patient is to eat more high fiber foods and fewer fats from food intake. Various vitamins and mineral supplements will be added according to results from blood and urine analysis.

Orthomolecular therapy is also known as “megavitamin therapy” because of the mega amounts of intake. Traditional (Western) doctors argue the dangers from overdosing. However, a major study done from 1983 to 1990 showed 2,556 deaths from accidental overdosing on pharmaceuticals and zero over dosing from high doses of vitamins and minerals.⁴ On the other hand, as with many medicines, there can be some side effects from vitamins and minerals.

Qi Gong and Tai Chi

Although separate disciplines, both achieve similar results. Tai Chi is known as “meditation in motion” and Qi Gong is considered “slow motion exercise”. Both concentrate on motion and breath meditation in order to stimulate the flow of qi or life force energy. Qi Gong and Tai Chi have been known to relieve stress, improve fitness, balance and flexibility but they are also credited with curing cancer, heart disease, AIDS, high blood pressure, impotence and much more (PDR, 1999).

One particular study of note was done with heroin addicts in a detoxification program at the Changzhou Drug Treatment Center in the People's Republic of China from December 1998 to January 1999 (Alternative Therapies, Vol. 8, No. 1, 2002). In summary, 86 male heroin addicts (per the DSM, 3rd edition) were divided into 3 groups. All were roughly the same age and had used heroin for the same number of years. Group one detoxified with Pan Gu Qi Gong, group two detoxified with the medication (lofexidine-HCL) and group three detoxified basically “cold turkey”. Using a urine morphine test, electrocardiograms, Hamilton Anxiety Scale and a withdrawal-symptom evaluation scale from before and during a ten-day intervention, positive results were documented for those using Qi Gong. (Pan Gu was used because it is a simple form that can be learned in a few minutes and no instructor need be there when the subjects practiced.)

From day one, group one began showing fewer withdrawal symptoms, reaching its bottom at day 6 and continuing there on day 10. Group two was still well off the bottom at day 4 and finally hit the bottom level at day nine. Group three showed little relief by day 4 and never reached bottom until day 10.

Unfortunately, follow-up data for relapse was not possible. Although all subjects volunteered for the study, they all were mandated to treatment and very few agreed to follow-up work on their subsequent lives and drug habits. With little funding, this study stopped after they were released from the program.

³ Alternative Medicine Therapies: URL <http://library.thinkquest.org/24206/orthomolecular-medicine.html>.

⁴ Ibid.

Researchers surmised from this study that Qi Gong increased the blood flow in the brain, increased oxygen metabolism in the body and increased the bioelectric currents in the brain accounting for its success. But even though this study was considered a success, the researchers would like to improve the study by adding a “placebo” factor. How Tai Chi and Qi Gong work, as with many forms of meditation is by “emptying the mind” and allowing for the flow of energy.

Reflexology

As with acupoints in the body, the feet and hands also connect through meridians. Each spot on the foot (hand) correlates to an organ, tissue, nerve, and spine. Practitioners’ explanations for success vary. Some believe it reduces the amount of lactic acid in the tissues while releasing tiny calcium crystals accumulated in the nerve endings of the feet, which hold back free flow of energy. Others believe the reflex points trigger the release of endorphins in the brain which block pain, and still others feel the relaxation response opens blood vessels and improves circulation. Originally, reflexology was developed as “zone therapy” by Dr. William Fitzgerald in the early 1900’s. Later in the 1930’s, Eunice Ingham created a map of reflex points, and she is known as the founder of reflexology. Today, her nephew Dwight Byers continues her work and is considered the leading authority in the field. There are no known negative side effects but neither are there any scientific studies supporting the benefits. The results however, are very satisfactory for many patients. At the very least, reflexology stimulates neurotransmitters and relaxes the body.

Sound Therapy

One of the most known and used vibrational therapies by practitioners and laypersons is the effects of sound. Even the deaf community enjoy it (Moore & Levitan, 1993). Of the sound therapies, music seems to be number one. It can reduce heart rate, blood pressure, pain and anxiety; as well as alter moods from depression, induce sleep and reduce muscle tension. Sound is a vital force in one’s life. Introducing healing sounds through the chakra system balances one’s entire energy system. There are eight basic principles of healing sounds (Andrews, 1996):

1. Resonance – the ability of a vibration to reach out through vibrational sound waves to another body. It is through resonance we can explain sympathy and antipathy. It also allows the physical body to attune to the entities and energies of the spiritual and ethereal dimensions of life.
2. Rhythm – this is the pulse of life. The beats of the Native American drum represent the heartbeat of Mother Earth. The steady rhythm of the drums can restore the natural rhythm when out of balance.
3. Melody – a relationship cannot exist without a melody. One can see how everything is connected since one tone alone is not a melody. A mother’s hum or soft song has been used to relieve stress and pain from a child.
4. Harmony – harmony affects a more subtle and spiritual energy. The physical aspects of one’s energy align with one’s spiritual aspect. A true balance of physical, spiritual, emotional and mental is true harmony.
5. Pitch – this is the highness and the lowness of sound. It is determined by the speed of which the sound waves vibrate. The higher the pitch, the faster the one’s physical and energetic levels open to a higher degree of health. Pitch is used to shatter rigid energy patterns that may have limited one’s growth, awareness and, hence, health.

6. Timbre – this is also referred to as tone color. Timbre helps one distinguish between one sound or another, one voice from another and one instrument from another. Timbre along with pitch gives one the greatest creative effects when applying healing sounds. Again, it balances the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual aspects of one's life.
7. Accumulative and Detectable Effects – since the affects of sound are accumulative, meaning the more one is exposed to sound the greater and more permanent effect it has on one's energies. Sounds are also detectable, meaning one can discriminate between the beneficial and detrimental sounds. Criticizing sounds makes one flinch and cringe, as does the sound of a crash. Healthy people (or those seeking health) have the ability to detect the difference between soothing and unnerving sounds. They are usually drawn towards the person who speaks nicely, the music that sounds good and they avoid the negative.
8. Sound as Energy – sound in any form is energy. Sound through music, voice, etc., can be used as an effective tool for altering the electromagnetic fields and impulses of an individual and the environment. Sound restores homeostasis.

Reiki

Reiki, loosely defined, is the passage of universal life (force) energy. Reiki is the Japanese word, but it originated in Tibet. 'Rei' in Japanese means spirit, ghost and soul and can be interpreted as "free passage". 'Ki' means life force energy. In Tibetan monasteries, where holy men centered their focus on enlightenment, there hung Reiki calligraphy or symbols. A Lama would concentrate on these symbols thereby purifying his body/mind, raising consciousness and increasing awareness.

What is now referred to as Reiki was re-discovered in the 1870's by Dr. Mikao Usui. The secrets (keys) of the symbols were passed down to Dr. Chujiro Hayashi in the early 1900's, just prior to Dr. Usui's death. In 1938, with a war on the horizon, Dr. Hayashi attuned his wife Hawayo Takata in the event that he and other (male) masters were called to war. Mrs. Takata traveled extensively and taught 22 masters before her death in 1980.

Today, most Reiki practitioners follow the Usui method of Reiki. The practitioner, who has been attuned at the second level, uses the symbols when preparing and focusing the sessions. Usually starting at the crown chakra and working down the body, the practitioner holds his/her hands a few inches away from the body. Touching is okay if the client doesn't mind, but it is not necessary. As a matter of fact, when channeling energy, the client doesn't even need to be in the same room. The client could be in another city, state or country. Reiki energy knows where to go for the highest and best use. One of the advantages of Reiki is that the practitioner is also blessed as he/she channels energy. The more energy that is given, the more energy that is received by the practitioner. The symbols are given the practitioner at attuning by a Reiki master; however, anyone can send energy because "all energy follows thought."

Yoga

Yoga was developed in India over 5,000 years ago to unite the body, mind and spirit. The Sanskrit word translates as "union". In the West, it is referred to as yoga exercise, but, in actuality, it is not exercise in the true meaning of the word. At a session, usually in a group but not necessarily so, the student will begin with breathing exercises. Next, a series of posture exercises where the student will gently stretch and hold the position for a few seconds to several minutes. During these postures, the student concentrates on breathing. Finally at the end of the session, there is a period of meditation.

There are several 'styles' of yoga. Ananda yoga is good for beginners because the student learns to meditate and cultivate spirituality. Ashtanga yoga becomes more strenuous as the student progresses. This helps build stamina. Bikram yoga is a series of 26 postures in a room heated to 100 degrees. This is to promote sweating thereby ridding the body of toxins. Kundalini and Tantra yoga focus on activating the chakras. Raja yoga is also good for beginners because it concentrates more on meditation and less on positions. Sevananda yoga is truly holistic. The student uses five basic principles to unite the body, mind and spirit. These include pranayama (breathing), vegetarian diet, savasana (relaxation), study of Vedic scriptures and meditation. These are just a few of the different styles that can be used to improve fitness, increase the efficiency of the heart, lower blood pressure, promotes relaxation, reduce stress and alleviate anxiety.

Conclusion

While this course identifies a number of alternative holistic approaches to recovery, this is not an exhaustive study. All therapies seem to have the same things in common: to promote balance, prevent or intervene illness, to unite the body, mind and spirit.

Most holistic alternative medicines do not conflict with each other; however, be aware of contraindications. It is best to use herbs when prescribed by a Herbologist, to have spine adjustments from a Chiropractor, and acupuncture treatment by a licensed Acupuncturist. But balanced eating, exercise, meditation, yoga, and Reiki need only common sense.

Recovery is not about being clean and sober, it is not about not gambling, it is not about working fewer hours. Recovery is about a balance in one's life. It is about caring for one's bio/psycho/socio/spiritual health. Keeping a balance is a holistic approach for a recovering soul.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND NOTICES

This article was prepared by Karen W. Weissberg, MA, who earned her Master of Arts in Addictive Disorders degree from Breining Institute.

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