

LEVEL TWO OF THE

Healing Journey

Skills for Healing

Workbook

ALASTAIR J. CUNNINGHAM, OC, PHD, CPsYCH

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Introduction

General Rationale behind the Course

What kinds of changes might help slow down the course of cancer, or even stop it? It is a natural human tendency, when we get sick, to look around for someone with a simple solution who can make us well again. I understand this because I wanted it myself when I had cancer some years ago. Western medicine operates on the assumption that agents or procedures can be found that will cure disease, with the patient remaining passive. Sometimes this approach works well; often, with cancer, it does not. So we look for additional ways, and quickly find a variety of diets, nutritional substances, injectables, and psychological formulas advocated by “alternative” practitioners, and all supposed to work wonders with little effort on our part. While it is possible that some of these things have value, a moment’s reflection shows us that this is unlikely: no evidence (beyond anecdotes) is ever offered, and there is no rationale for the efficacy of these procedures. Moreover, the approaches vary from one culture to another and from one decade to the next.

However, there is a tradition of self-healing that makes sense and can be used to complement and extend our medical treatment. This is the very

old idea of healing as “making whole,” promoting harmony and integration within ourselves and with our environment. Another way of putting it is to say that we need to learn to experience ourselves fully, to become what we are “meant to be.” Most of the responsible writers on self-healing have come to this same conclusion, which amounts to a rediscovery of healing principles known for thousands of years, but temporarily forgotten with the rise of technological medicine during the twentieth century. A variety of modern psychological approaches, in combination with traditional methods, are available to help us on this path. At the Ontario Cancer Institute, Canada’s largest cancer research and treatment centre, we have developed courses based on these principles, and beginning in 1982, have offered them to hundreds of cancer patients and their family members. The courses have been extensively tested and shown to alleviate stress in most people, and there is evidence from several clinical trials in different parts of the world and from our own research that mental change of this kind can prolong life for some people with cancer.

Many Levels of a Person

A person may be described as having many “levels,” five of the most important being body, conscious mind, unconscious or deeper mind, social, and existential or spiritual (see figure 1, below). The body, while the most obvious to us, is only the most basic of our levels (and is in turn made up of molecules, cells, and organs). Out of the workings of the body, particularly the brain, comes “mind,” which we may regard as a higher level. We are conscious of a small fraction of what goes on in our minds, but unaware of much more; therefore we have shown “deeper mind,” in the figure, as a “higher” or more extensive level than “conscious mind.” Some theorists (such as Carl Jung) have argued that we are all connected to one another at the level of our unconscious or deeper minds. Moving to a still broader level, we all contribute to, and in a sense contain, a part of the social order in which we live. And beyond that, many would claim that we are embedded in an existential or spiritual matrix, which we can discover in meditation.

Each level acts on all the others—they tend to regulate one another. For example, research shows that a happy, supportive social life promotes health, while loss of loved ones often leads to illness. A peaceful mind

favours health; anxiety and depression leave us open to illness. There is nothing magical about this: it can be shown that different mental states lead to physical and biochemical differences in the body. For example, if we are anxious, our muscles are tense, there is more lactic acid in the blood, we may sweat more, our hearts beat faster, and our breathing is shallower.

Cancer cells are probably arising all the time, but are usually controlled or prevented from multiplying by our immune system and other regulating mechanisms, such as hormones, in the body. We now know, beyond doubt, that these regulating systems are affected by mental state: anxiety and stress may impair the immune system, for example, thus allowing cancers to grow. Our mental state is, in turn, influenced by our connections with other people (on the social level) and by our sense of belonging to a larger whole (on the spiritual/existential level). So it is not surprising that mental and social events should affect cancer, through their influence on the general functioning of our bodies.

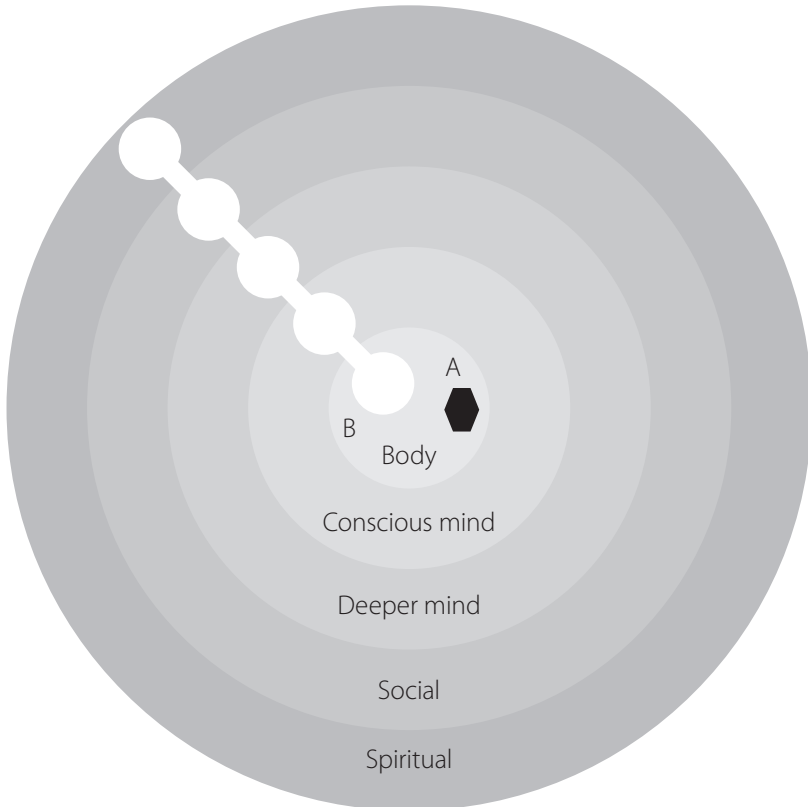
Disease as a Distortion at All Levels

Now let us take this view of health and disease a bit further. The diagram below shows, first, how our society has commonly viewed cancer, as an abnormality affecting only cells; this is represented by a spot, A, in the diagram. By contrast, the extended structure, like a party balloon, B, shows a more useful and realistic way of picturing the disease: a distortion or imbalance of the whole person, extending right out to the highest levels, influenced by and affecting one's whole life and being. To continue the balloon analogy, by squeezing the balloon at any spot we affect it at every other point; social or psychological stress or pressure may promote more rapid tumour growth. On the other hand, by letting air out of it at any level, we may eventually diminish and even remove it all, allowing the whole person to return to normal. According to this view, by working at all levels against a disease, we improve our chances of changing its impact on the body.

A positive implication of this connectedness is that we can conduct therapy at all levels of the person. Western medicine is “bottom up” in orientation: it concentrates on the body, attempting to make the whole individual healthy by changing the parts. Self-help work is “top down”: we emphasize the power of higher levels to regulate the lower. We see this power

in dramatic form in faith healing, in the placebo effect (where belief in an inert medication can sometimes promote cure), and in physical changes induced by biofeedback or clinical hypnosis. We are all capable of working, ourselves, to promote health at all of the higher levels. These higher-level changes will then affect the state of the lower levels, as when learning relaxation to diminish anxiety lowers the amount of stress hormones circulating in the blood, which in turn allows more lymphocytes to circulate and attack tumours. *Connectedness* is a word for maximum healthy interactions between the levels of ourselves. When we live in harmony with our world, our fellows, our own aspirations and self-image, and our bodies then we have the best chance of enjoying good health.

Connectedness



Cancer affects us at many levels, so we approach healing at many levels.

What Can I Do To Help Myself?

We have a wonderful tool for fostering connectedness: our own mind. Our task now becomes to “expand our awareness” so that we start to experience more directly and vividly all parts and levels of ourselves. Usually our awareness is narrowly focused on the thoughts going around in our conscious minds. However, we can use a variety of techniques to make much broader and stronger connections: for example, we can connect with the body by monitoring stress and giving attention to the effects of diet, exercise, and rest; we can become more aware of our deeper mind using imagery and self-observation; we can cultivate harmony with the social world by giving greater attention to social interactions; and we can more fully integrate with the spiritual/existential substrate of our being, through meditation and related techniques. Growing awareness allows control. We begin to have much greater choice of behaviours, attitudes, and even the individual thoughts that pass through our minds, and we can change them to promote health.

Ultimately our answers or solutions come not from other people but from within ourselves. It takes work and courage to change ourselves, and nobody could claim that it is easy. Disease and the threat of death can be great motivators, however. If you persist with this self-help work you will find, as many before you have done, that the search for health becomes part of a larger endeavour: the quest for meaning and purpose in life. As this meaning—this deep sense of relationship to all things—becomes clearer within you, physical healing may occur, but even if it does not, you will achieve greater peace of mind and find that your efforts are amply rewarded.

How the Course Is Organized

This Level Two course, Skills for Healing, follows Level One of *The Healing Journey*, which is available as a workbook and two audiotapes or CDs from www.healingjourney.ca. Level One has also been published on six videotapes, which may be obtained by following the links on www.healingjourney.ca.

You will be helped by attending classes, learning the techniques there, talking to others, and practising with the tapes at home. However, we find

that people progress much more quickly if, in addition to this work, they do some reflection and writing at home. In each lesson you will find three or four such exercises to try. For those who want to do more, there is a section called Additional Materials and Exercises at the end of each lesson.

Note on Commitment to Group and Home Practice

We are very pleased to have you in our program and hope that you will experience many benefits from your participation in the group. Your presence each week will be important, not just to yourself, but to the other members of the group, who will be stimulated by your presence, and discouraged if you are not there.

For these reasons we ask group members to commit themselves to regular attendance. We understand that if you are out of town, or very sick, this may not be possible, but otherwise we urge you to come regularly, to give the group process the best chance of having its good effects both on you and on the other members. If you can't attend, please phone Wellspring well in advance. *Please bring your manual, spare paper, and a pen to classes.* It is also very helpful to have blank paper and crayons or coloured markers on hand.

Each week we will do an exercise in class, which should then be practised at home, at least throughout the following week. You can complete the Log of Daily Practice at the end of each chapter of the manual. We will be discussing home experiences for the first part of each session, before moving on to a new technique.

With time you will accumulate a number of techniques and will have to choose among them for your daily practice. It is important, however, for the serious student to establish a regular daily routine of practice of those methods that you find most helpful.

Mind Watching and Journalling

Introduction

You may recall that in part 1 of this course we likened the mind to water: much of the time it is like a muddy torrent, rushing around, carrying all kinds of debris with it. It can feel out of control, as if there is little we can do to manage it. So if there are fearful or depressing thoughts, as often happens with illness, the constant replaying of these ideas can make us truly depressed as the body responds to what is in our minds.

If we want to change this pattern, we have to first examine, to get to know, what is going on in our minds, and clear a bit of space, before we can cultivate more helpful states of mind. A gardening analogy is a good one. Imagine a patch of soil that is absolutely choked with weeds. It would not be possible to grow vegetables or flowers there without first clearing away the weeds. Another analogy: filling our minds with unhealthy thoughts is like filling the body with unhealthy food, only worse. And we are surrounded—in the media, in what people around us say and do—with unhealthy and harmful ideas. For healing, it is vital to change this way of being, to improve our mental diet.

Main Exercises

Watching the Mind

Sit for about 10 minutes, with the eyes closed, and in quiet surroundings. Simply observe your mind, your pattern of thoughts, without trying to exert control over them. Then open your eyes and write down the main themes (it doesn't matter whether or not you remember them all). You can vary this exercise by trying to keep your mind still, or relatively so. Experience shows that *writing down* what we discover for ourselves, in all aspects of this healing work, is much more productive than simply musing about it. The process seems to clarify and concretize our insights; it also makes them available for future reference.

Reliving a Recent Event

The mind-watching process can be extended to cover all the events of your day. We will do an exercise together to get you started. After a brief relaxation, bring to mind an event from the last day or days that generated an emotional reaction in you. Try to relive it in your imagination: it will be like rerunning a movie, or video, which you can stop and start at will. What thoughts were going through your mind? What feelings did you experience? Did the situation or people involved remind you of any previous events? After these explorations, write down what you have learned.

Were you able to “observe” yourself, from the outside, as it were, interacting with others in your daily activities? Could you capture thoughts and feelings associated with the events you remembered? This detached observation of yourself becomes easier with practice—you'll soon find yourself doing it during the events themselves—and it is an indispensable preliminary to changing habits. Without self-observation and self-awareness we are like sleepwalkers, caught up in our habits without realizing what we are doing.

Journalling

The process of keeping a journal is quite simple, and your record of mind-watching exercises is one step towards it. In addition, at the end of the day, or at any other time, review recent events and write a brief account of the

main things that had an impact on you, which will often be interactions with others. In particular, record events that aroused emotions in you—anger, joy, fear, sadness, irritation, and so on. Try to recreate the scene in your mind and to discover what you were telling yourself that induced the emotional reaction. Can you think of alternative ways of thinking and behaving that, in retrospect, would have been healthier?

Discussion

Self-awareness: Watching Your Mental and Physical Habits

As the process of noting your reactions to events becomes more familiar, you will become more aware of habits that you would like to change. You can extend this exercise of watching yourself to all aspects of your life, whether stressful or not—and be pleasantly surprised at what you will learn. Try to identify feelings that are associated with events: they are much more important than intellectual ideas. For example, you might be interested in watching yourself as you meet and talk to people. Ask yourself, Do I feel nervous? Is my body reacting? Can I remember names, and if not, why not? Am I worrying about what he or she thinks of me? After awhile, this watching is like having a benevolent inner observer or witness of your thoughts and actions.

Hopefully you will continue to work at your journal, analyzing your reaction to daily events. A central area for investigation is, obviously, our relationship to other people. We tend to separate ourselves from true intimacy with others and from the world around us because of fear, and the attempts it provokes to protect our individual egos. This separation promotes illness; reintegration and connectedness favour health.

Some further topics on the “relationships” theme that you might like to examine in your daily life and in your journal are listed at the end of this session in Additional Material and Exercises.

Exercises at Home

Every week there will be several set exercises for you to try and write about. In addition there will be a more general question exploring some of the wider aspects of healing change.

Exercise 1

Do the mind-watching exercise daily over the next week.

Exercise 2

Relive a recent event, then write an account in your journal. Do this at least twice.

Exercise 3

Read “Expression of Feelings” and “More about Communication” at the end of the session in Additional Material and Exercises. Then complete the diagram of the Social Map on (p. 71) in Appendix B and write about what you have learned from it.

Exercise 4 (General)

Write about the following:

- To what extent do you feel that having cancer obliges you to make changes in your life?
- What kinds of changes do you feel you need to make?
- What would be helpful to fight the cancer?

These writings should be collected and filed in a personal journal. You can get more ideas for aspects of your life that warrant investigation by close reading of the manual, and from various self-help books (see Further Reading).

Additional Material and Exercises

Here are a number of additional exercises or projects, together with a bit more background information.

Expression of Feelings

It is vital, for good mental and physical health, to allow ourselves to identify, experience, and ultimately express our feelings, of which we are often initially unaware. This is particularly important for cancer patients: the research literature comparing cancer patients with similar people who

don't have cancer suggests that cancer sufferers tend to repress emotions.

What does it mean to “repress” emotions? Such feelings as anxiety and fear, anger and hate, joy and love are constantly “bubbling up” inside us as we interact with the world. Some of these feelings may seem unpleasant or threatening, especially fear, and to varying degrees we have therefore learned not to let ourselves experience them. It's like putting a cork in a tap: instead of a steady flow of feelings we get, at best, a small, sporadic trickle. Unfortunately, repressing the feelings we label as “bad” also inhibits expression of those we might otherwise enjoy. The result is a person who is tightly self-controlled, often tense, constricted in movement, lacking spontaneity, someone who finds it difficult to relax and enjoy the moment. Think of the people you know who fit the description, and of people who are more outgoing.

There are two stages in expressing emotions:

1. Acknowledge the emotions to yourself, letting your mind and body *feel* your reactions to events, even when they're unpleasant.
2. Express the feeling, verbally to another, or “let it out” through activity, chanting, relaxation, or writing in your journal, or just affirm to yourself that you can now let it go. Discuss how you “manage” your emotions, and how you can, if necessary, begin to do it in a more healthy way. It's at least as important as managing your financial affairs well, isn't it?

More about Communication

Good empathic communication with others depends ultimately on expressing our feelings to them in an appropriate way. And conversely, our ability to “let our feelings flow” in a healthy way depends largely on having good communicative relationships with others.

Listening At least as important as talking, listening should occupy as much time! To listen authentically we need to drop our own “agenda,” our judgments, our need to jump into the conversation with our own ideas. Instead the ideal is to be truly present, open, and patient. It helps to reflect back to others any important points: for example, X says, “I just can't stand these crowded shopping malls,” and Y reflects, “You really find crowds upsetting, don't you?” Here feelings have been aired and support has been

offered; both feel better.

Sharing Have you experienced the relief that can come from telling someone else how you really feel about having cancer, or other problems? What a burden it becomes never to share these feelings! Can you ask for someone to help when you need it, such as by listening to you? If not, why not?

Assertion Works Better than Aggression When you want to let others know that you disapprove of or are hurt by their actions, making a hostile remark such as, “That was stupid,” usually makes matters worse. Instead, use an “I” statement, letting them know the detrimental effect of their actions on you: “I felt put down when you didn’t include me in that invitation,” or, “I feel upset when I have to use a dirty bathroom.” This is a legitimate assertion of one’s own needs, quite different from aggression, and leaves the other person some room to reply reasonably—a cooperative solution can usually be worked out.

Other Ways of Communicating Our tone of voice and our body language may speak volumes. Describe some patterns that you recognize. How else do we communicate? Through touch, sex, the written word, eye contact, smell? Any others?

Planning Lifestyle Changes

In this exercise we take a look at a wide range of activities in our lives, including diet, exercise, work, leisure, and communication with others. All play a role in health, and while it can be difficult to change our habit patterns, it is encouraging to realize that there are many important areas where we can do a great deal to help our general health and so combat the cancer. Making changes in lifestyle also counteracts the lack of control many people feel they have over medical treatment. As with learning to minimize stress, or to use time more effectively, the first step in changing aspects of our lifestyle is to find out what we do at present. You will find a Lifestyle Checklist in Appendix B (p. 72) to help you with this assessment.

Two of the most important ways to look after our bodies are to make certain they get adequate exercise and nutrition. The steps in making

changes towards healthier habits are to define what I do at present, what I want to do, and how I can begin to move towards this goal. So the suggested additional exercise for this week is to keep a daily record of what you eat and what exercise you get. Then compare the results with what seems ideal and feasible for you. Then plan the first steps towards achieving your goals.

LOG OF DAILY PRACTICE

| Exercise done | Time spent (mins.) | Effects/comments |
|---------------|--------------------|------------------|
|---------------|--------------------|------------------|

Day **1**

Date:

Day **2**

Date:

Day **3**

Date:

Day **4**

Date:

Day **5**

Date:

Day **6**

Date:

Day **7**

Date:

Approximate time spent in reflection, reading, additional exercises from the appendices, or other activity related to the course during the past week: ___ hrs.

Nature of activity:

Any other comments:

Meditation

Introduction

Meditation has been known for thousands of years in many cultures and is now taught widely in the West. While it is often associated with religious faiths, there is no necessary connection. Nor is it something occult or paranormal, although its practice may lead to an expanded view of reality. What is it then? Perhaps the simplest way to describe meditation is to say that it's like listening rather than talking. Another way is to say that the meditative state is an awareness based on concentration, in the relative absence of thought. Terminology varies, but these definitions express the essence of the process.

Why is it valuable to meditate? You will probably have discovered for yourself how restless the mind is, how it races around from one idea to another. In a sense we are constantly constructing our own little worlds, telling ourselves, for example, that certain experiences are going to be difficult or unpleasant, that someone we know always behaves badly, that we are tired or getting a headache, and so on. We become locked into a few restricted ways of looking at things. Meditation provides us with an opportunity simply to be quiet for awhile, to sense our world and our place in it without these

prejudgments, and can thus open doors to radical changes in our attitudes (thought patterns). In terms of the “connectedness” we have been discussing, meditation removes some of the blocks put up by the mind that prevent us from fully experiencing the higher, transpersonal levels of ourselves (social, natural world, spiritual). It is like deep relaxation but differs from sleep in that the mind remains alert; in fact, the meditative state of consciousness is different from anything most of us have previously experienced. Good books to read about the subject are Leshan’s *How To Meditate* and Easwaran’s *Meditation* (see the reading list at the end of the manual).

What does it do for health? At the most obvious level, meditation brings relaxation, inducing a state with characteristic brainwave patterns. It has proved useful in diminishing anxiety, addictive behaviour, asthma, and hypertension. More generally, it promotes a sense of harmony and interaction that probably reflects an underlying sense of balance in the nervous and hormonal systems; invoking this balance repeatedly may help to control any disease, including cancer, where regulation is disordered. An Australian psychiatrist, Dr. A. Meares, used prolonged (2 hours), deep, daily meditation as therapy for cancer patients, and reported that of 73 people with advanced disease, 5 showed complete remission, 5 had marked slowing of the cancer growth, and a much larger portion achieved improved quality of life and significant relief of suffering. This was a clinical study with no control group (not meditating), but the results are most encouraging. To read more about mind–body research, see chapter 5 in *The Healing Journey*.

Main Exercises

To begin, sit with the back straight, either on a chair or, if you are supple enough, cross-legged on a thick pillow on the floor. Have the eyes closed, hands resting with palms up on thighs or knees. Drowsiness is more easily avoided if you are not *too* comfortable. We will take you through three kinds of focused meditation.

Breathing

Count “one” on the first breath (in and out), “two” (breathe in and out), “three” (in and out), up to 10, and then start again at “one.” If your mind

strays from the counting, bring it gently but firmly back again to the breathing.

Word Repetition

This is also known as the “mantra” technique. Select a word that has no distracting associations. “Food” would be quite unsuitable! Try “Ra-ma” (a popular Indian mantra, used by Gandhi), or “Ah-nam” (a meaningless word) and repeat it at intervals of a second or two, bringing the mind back whenever the thoughts stray.

Imagery Technique

Imagine yourself sitting quietly at the bottom of a clear lake, absolutely still. Every time a thought comes into your head, watch the bubble of air escape and move up to the surface. There are big bubbles for large distractions and small bubbles for minor ones that you “nip off” before they take your mind away from the exercise.

After a couple of days trying each technique for 5 minutes or so, select the one you like best, and practise it for 15 to 20 minutes daily. Most people find the mantra easiest. It can help to use a small timer, preset to give a quiet signal at the end of your meditation.

Discussion

Learning To Meditate

Most of us find we can’t simply quieten the mind by an act of will, so we use a focus, allowing one simple thing to take the place of many scattered thoughts. This focus can be an image, the breathing (as in our exercises at the start of each session), a prayer, a series of movements, or a simple word or sound, chanted aloud or repeatedly silently. The work of meditation—and it is work—consists of repeatedly coming back to this focus, pushing other thoughts aside. This has been described as a *passive* effort, an attempt to prevent the usual random thinking.

It is interesting to compare notes with others on your experiences. When we begin to meditate, almost all of us—even after doing it for years—come up against our mind’s tendency to wander. If this seems like

an insurmountable problem, try the thought-stopping ideas listed at the end of session 7 in Additional Materials and Exercises. Did you notice any change in quality of your mental state as time passed or at the end?

Meditation as an Active Process

In the West we frown upon apparent idleness and habitually pursue various goals with an obsessive, even frantic, busyness. For this reason, many people are initially uncomfortable with meditation, which seems like “doing nothing.” Yet most of us spend many unproductive hours each week, for example in watching television. Meditation, despite outward appearances, is an intensely active process, which has been likened to the exploration of “inner space”; it is a route to expand awareness of oneself and one’s relationship to the world. The regular withdrawal from others for a time is often rewarded by greatly improving relationships with them during the rest of the day.

Another “hang-up” of our culture is the need to be assured that we are doing things right. The value of meditation lies in the process itself; if you do this, bringing the mind back constantly to a quiet focus, then there is no right or wrong result, and indeed there should be no particular expectations of outcome. It’s worthwhile even if it doesn’t seem to go well. Having said this, it must be admitted that there are days when quietening the mind is impossible, often, unfortunately, when we are most distressed. Regular practice will diminish the frequency of these occasions.

Selecting a Mantra

The mantra has been called “protector of the mind,” a focus providing respite from the constant unproductive and often harmful rumination in which we all indulge. Different cultures and traditions have favoured different mantras; for example:

Christian

“Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me”
(or just “Lord Jesus”), “Be still and
know that I am God” (or “Be still”)

Jewish

“Shalom” (peace), “Echad” (one)

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>Moslem</i> | “Allah” |
| <i>Buddhist</i> | “Buddah,” “Om mani padme hum” |
| <i>Hindu</i> | “Rama,” “Siva,” “Krishna,” “Om” |
| <i>Without religious affiliation</i> | “One,” “Peaceful abiding” |

They are often names for the deity, and may be a form of prayer. This approach appeals to some people, but if you are a determined agnostic, use a neutral sound.

Relationship of Meditation to Other Techniques

You may notice great similarities between the state of mind you get into when you do various things: for example, the different kinds of meditation, mental imagery, and chanting. Those who practise prayer or contemplation may notice that it also brings about a similar state of consciousness. It is important not to get hung up on what is “really meditation” and what may be something else. They are all related, all beneficial. The point is to start your own exploration of your “inner space,” and you will come to know what works best for you. Not everyone can meditate in the way we have described in this chapter, so if you find, after a thorough trial, that it’s not for you, return to an approach like deep relaxation or imagery, and don’t worry! It is important, however, to practise *some* kind of mental quieting and looking within.

Exercises at Home

Exercise 1

Meditate using the tape or CD, *The Healing Journey*, in the section entitled “Meditation,” for the first 3 days of the week, then pick one of the methods and try it, without the tape, for 20 minutes on each of the remaining days. Write about your experience, as always. (If you already have an established meditation practice, by all means do this instead.)

In future weeks, use the method you have selected daily, for a month or more, then review your experience. It should be helping you reach a meditative, quiet state, while you are doing it. If you have been reading more widely about meditation, you may want to try a larger range of methods initially, but it is important to decide on one fairly quickly, then use this

without changing it for a prolonged time.

Exercise 2

Stress Checklist It is helpful to monitor our experience in order to become aware of any discomfort or stress that we may be experiencing. For many of us, stress can become habitual, and it is important to identify it for ourselves in order to address it. In Appendix B, p. 74, you will find a Stress Checklist that you can complete. It can help you assess your experience at each of the five levels: body, conscious mind, deeper mind, social, and spiritual. You can fill this out several times over the period of the course in order to note changes—improvements as well as areas that need more attention.

Complete the Stress Checklist. What thoughts or actions contribute to these symptoms? What steps can you take to minimize them?

Exercise 3 (General)

What plans do you have for your future healing work?

- To what extent do you believe that people's self-help efforts can make a difference to their quality of life, and to the progression of cancer?
- How confident are you that *you* can make the necessary changes?

Additional Material and Exercises

Steps in Making Changes or Problem Solving

When coping with cancer, one is faced by a great many decisions and challenges that can take up a great deal of mental energy, which often becomes apparent through watching the mind. The following technique can help you articulate the problem and then clarify goals and alternatives. As in all of this work, it helps greatly to write down your thoughts and decisions: it will make your wishes and commitments much clearer to you. Refer to the Strategies for Decision Making chart in Appendix B for the process of clarifying the problem and working through alternative solutions.

Example I have a small problem: lack of good communication with my physician.

Step 1 There never seems to be time or opportunity to ask the questions I want of my physician.

Step 2 I want to have frank and full talks with my doctor about my disease and treatment.

Step 3 Alternatives

- Ask for a special appointment for discussion.
- Take in a list of questions.
- Tape our discussion.
- Take a friend along.
- Change physicians if good communication proves impossible.

Step 4 Sabotage

- Fear: "I feel unworthy." "She's so busy." "It's all so technical."
- Resident skeptic: "It will never change." "I can't confront him."
- Apathy: "I can't be bothered to make the effort."

Step 5 Definition of achievement

- I have a checklist of questions answered.
- I'm no longer angry when I visualize my doctor.
- I will reward myself by going out to dinner.

LOG OF DAILY PRACTICE

| Exercise done | Time spent (mins.) | Effects/comments |
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Approximate time spent in reflection, reading, additional exercises from the appendices, or other activity related to the course during the past week: ___ hrs.

Nature of activity:

Any other comments:

Healing Imagery

Introduction

Mental imagery is the way in which we make connections between our mind and our body. For example, if you plan to visit a friend, you will probably have a fleeting image or picture of what he or she looks like, and some of the landmarks on the trip to where this person lives. Our body becomes mobilized for action by our images. The internal organs are also affected by our thoughts acting through our imagery: for example, we have all experienced how imagining a frightening scene may cause sweating and an increased heart rate.

In this session, rather than “telling” our minds what to imagine, we will explore what the cancer “looks” and feels like to our deeper minds, and use whatever we discover to improve our subsequent practice of the technique. Please review the material on the unconscious (deeper) mind in *Level One of the Healing Journey Workbook*.

Main Exercises

“Exploring” the Cancer

Get the mind and body as quiet as you can by relaxing, deepening this

state with images of going downwards, in an escalator or in some other way, and ending up in an inner sanctuary or quiet place. Then imagine taking a trip through your body to the cancer or to other sites of disease. What does it look and feel like? What is its size, colour, and consistency (soft, hard, resilient, spongy, slippery, and so on)? What feelings come up as you explore? What do your defence systems look like, and what are they doing? If you are currently receiving treatment, how does it appear? Images may be realistic and anatomical, or much more abstract and in the form of symbols. How do the defences and treatment act against the cancer?

Trust your own intuition. Some people want to mount a violent attack on the cancer cells; others prefer a gentler approach, imagining the tumours as parts of themselves that have gone astray, which they can now restrain and dissolve in some way. Some like “natural” images: we had a patient who imagined her tumour cells as jellyfish washing up on the shore where seagulls (the immune defences) could easily eat them. Another man saw the tumours as mushrooms that could grow only under certain conditions; by using his mind he felt he could change those conditions. If you are getting treatment, try to see it as specifically killing only the tumour cells, without harming the rest of the body. Finally, let yourself come back to the room and draw whatever you have imagined with crayons or coloured pencils.

“Dialogue” with the Cancer

After relaxing deeply and perhaps going to your “special place,” allow your mind to focus on where your cancer or other symptom is, or has been. Attempt to contact it or dialogue with it in some way: it may help to allow an image that represents the cancer to come up. Let it respond. If it helps and is not too scary, let yourself become the image or the cancer and look back at the rest of you. Can you find out what the cancer wants or needs? Can you supply these needs, or if not, what stops you? Once you have done the Inner Healer exercise (session 4), you may wish to bring this figure into your imagery. What does it have to say? Is it meaningful to consider making a pact or bargain with the symptoms?

Much may come out of this exercise. On the other hand, you may find it too strange or difficult to know what you are really “getting” and what you are making up. The same criteria apply here as for the other imagery exercises—it is useful if you learn something new and “feel” its rightness in your body.

Discussion

If you are working in groups, this is a time to share drawings—the leader can ask each member to explain what the various parts mean. Some people are timid about drawing, saying that they are “not artistic” or couldn’t find the right colours. Remember it is not an art competition, but a way to clarify how you see the disease. How did you feel about doing this? Did anything hold you back? Was it frightening, or interesting, or a relief? Can you do it again until you are satisfied with your imagery?

It is valuable to do the exploratory imagery and drawing a number of times. You can pin your pictures up on the wall and bring them to mind many times each day. Don’t be concerned about whether the things you are imagining are “really” possible—we all know that dogs or sharks can’t exist in the bloodstream! The point is to suggest strongly to your deeper mind that you want to mobilize your own healing power. Then let it do the rest.

Search for “Meaning” in Cancer

Does my cancer have meaning (or is it simply a meaningless event)? This is really the same as asking whether any event in our lives has meaning, or indeed, as asking whether our lives, which are the sum of a large number of events, have meaning as a whole. You can see why this question is relevant to us here: if we can discover meaning in an event, we may be able to find ways to change it.

What is *meaning* anyway? It is a difficult word, but we may say that an event or object derives meaning from its relationship to other events or objects. For example, when we look at an apple, we relate it to similar things we have seen, other apples, other fruits; we know, from experience, that it will be good to eat; we know, if we think further about it, that it comes from a tree, which in turn comes from a seed, and so on. The object is firmly embedded in a rich matrix of meaningful relationships. Now consider an event like a car accident. It may be related to the carelessness or inebriation of one of the drivers; it has connections or causes stretching right back, perhaps to an argument the driver had with his wife, or to events in his childhood, and it may have implications extending far into the future and affecting many lives if someone was killed. Again, a rich pattern of connections. We tend to think more of *causes* than of meanings, causes being easily

identified with dominant events that occur, reliably, before corresponding outcomes; they are one kind of meaning, consequences being another. Cancer, like anything else, is intimately connected with an immense web of other events, occurring both before and after the diagnosis. By uncovering some of these related events we hope to gain some control over the progress of the disease. This is discussed further in *The Healing Journey*.

Exercises at Home

Exercise 1

Do one or both of the exercises on interacting, in the imagination, with your cancer (or with other physical problems, if you do not have cancer). Draw what you see, and bring a copy of your drawings to the next class for discussion. Write about your findings as well.

Exercise 2

What we think of ourselves is of central importance to our healing efforts. If we have a deep fear of personal unworthiness, it may undermine our will to live and our drive to find what is really meaningful for us to do in life. Here are three brief exercises to help you towards a better understanding of how you view yourself.

1. List your 10 best and 10 worst characteristics. Note especially if you have trouble finding 10 good points.
2. List the five activities that you have found most fulfilling in your life.
3. Fold a piece of paper to make eight rectangles. Now in each box, write one of your roles: for example, “parent,” “accountant,” “husband,” “golfer,” and so on. Then cut the paper up and lay out the squares. Get relaxed, then ask yourself, Which can I most readily give up? and discard that piece of paper. Continue with this process, laying each piece on top of the last to form a small pile with your most vital, identifying role on the top.

Exercise 3 (General)

Write about the following:

- Do you find this healing journey work of interest in itself, or is it more a matter of having to consider it because of the cancer? If your cancer suddenly disappeared, would you continue?
- Describe any experiences you may have had that have encouraged you to continue with psychological self-help.

Additional Material and Exercises

Mental Imagery

Mental imagery is not something new and strange, but a tool that you have used for a long time in your daily life. For example, if you are planning to perform a task around the home, you will almost certainly imagine in some way what it will be like to do the job, what equipment you may need, and so on. You may use imagery much more deliberately to help yourself in various situations; for instance, if you are nervous or nauseated when visiting a doctor's clinic, rehearse the visit in your imagination some days before, going over all the details while in a deeply relaxed state. If you do this several times, you may find that when the real visit takes place, it has been connected firmly in your mind with relaxation and comfort rather than with tension and fear. This technique has been successfully used to control anticipatory nausea in some patients receiving chemotherapy. Imagery can also be very helpful in coping with medical procedures and tests, allowing you to withdraw to a safe and soothing image in your mind while the procedure is going on. Similar techniques—rehearsing desired performances—are widely employed by athletes, actors, and people preparing for possible frightening events like giving a speech.

Some people who use imagery regularly find a strong, satisfying image, and persist with it for a long time. Others may find their images changing, particularly if the state of disease changes. It makes sense to have aggressive imagery if the disease is progressing; if it is static or in remission, different kinds of pictures may begin to appeal more, such as more abstract symbols like healing light, or religious figures, or beautiful scenes involving a feeling of harmony, balance, connection with all things.

Although some of our patients request it, we are very reluctant to be specific about what images a person “should” use, mainly because it is important that people develop their own. However, I can offer some guidelines:

- The imagery needs to *feel* right, and not just be an intellectual production.
- It should suit the circumstances of your disease.
- It must seem meaningful and reasonable to you; for instance, the “defences” should be seen as agents effective against the “invader,” such as seagulls eating shellfish, T-lymphocytes destroying cancer cells, a powerful river washing away loose debris.
- It should be strong, filling you with hope, and with a sense of ultimate peace and connection to all things.

LOG OF DAILY PRACTICE

| Exercise done | Time spent (mins.) | Effects/comments |
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Nature of activity:

Any other comments:

The Inner Healer

Introduction

There is a great deal of evidence that the deeper or unconscious mind has both detailed “knowledge” or record of events in the body and great potential ability to control them. For example, with biofeedback apparatus, people can learn to control blood pressure, heart rate, brainwave patterns, smooth-muscle contractions, and even the firing of certain single nerve cells. Placebo (inert) medications, or suggestions under hypnosis, can lead to cures or healing changes in a variety of conditions, such as peptic ulcer, pain, various skin diseases, asthma, and arthritis. We attempt to use some of this potential control in our exercises with imagery. One way of contacting this inner wisdom is to imagine a figure or “healer” within, who may not only embody the potential of our deeper minds, but also serve as a route to contact our spiritual dimension.

Main Exercise

The Inner Healer

In the Inner Healer exercise associated with tape or CD 3 of *The Healing Journey*, you will be asked first to relax deeply and then to find yourself

on a path leading into the woods. There, as you wait in a clearing, imagine yourself approached by an animal “guide.” Talk to this animal, noticing your feelings toward it. The guide can then lead you deeper into the forest to a second clearing, in which there is a dwelling of some kind, inhabited by the Inner Healer. This may be a wise old person, a religious figure, somebody from your past, another animal, a ball of light, a voice without a body, or one of many other symbols. The aim is to summon this figure respectfully, and have a dialogue with it, asking for information and help, and responding with gratitude. At the end of the conversation, have the original guide take you back to the first clearing, from which you can return to your normal “reality.”

Some people immediately get powerful images and “messages” from an Inner Healer; others experience very little at first. You may simply get a sense of “presence,” without images; that’s fine. If not much is happening for you, it is likely that you are blocking the experience with skepticism or prejudgments about what should happen. We know that there is a great deal of unconscious wisdom in everyone, expressed, for example, in dreams: we all dream, although not all of us normally remember dreams. So don’t despair if nothing happens on the first few attempts, but continue to work away at the process patiently.

Discussion

A concern expressed by many of our patients is that they are “just making it all up.” This need not be a problem. Where imagery is sluggish, it is legitimate to help it along with conscious thought. The real measure of usefulness in all of the “Inner Healer” kind of work is how unexpected or novel the “messages” are. If you already consciously know all that you are experiencing, then there has been no learning; if you have had new insights and experiences, it doesn’t much matter how you arrived at them. We do the work to uncover hidden potential.

Sometimes frightening images come up. If you are working alone, you may prefer to drop them and come back to concentration on the breathing. If you wish to confront and master these images or thoughts—for the results are therapeutically valuable—it is best to work with the help of an accredited psychotherapist.

Exercises at Home

Exercise 1

The Inner Healer is a potentially powerful technique that does not, however, “work” for everyone—so don’t feel inadequate if it doesn’t for you. Try it again during the week, at least three times. If it is not helpful for you, you may be the kind of person who prefers an analytical or intellectual approach; try the exercises on “competition” and “social relationships” at the end of this session in Additional Material and Exercises. You could also try simply relaxing deeply, and bringing into your mind a picture or impression of a wise person you have known, or a religious figure, like Jesus or the Buddha, or Divine Mother, and having a conversation with this figure.

Exercise 2

Relaxation can be overlooked when learning a number of new things, but it remains, of course, vitally important. Review earlier notes on relaxation and practise your preferred technique several times. As you write about your experience, note whether you are able to get “deeper” than when you first began this work.

Exercise 3 (General)

Write about the following:

- In your life generally, do you tend to try out new things and ideas, or do you tend to be satisfied with the way things are? What would be an example of trying out something new, and your reaction?
- How much do you talk to others about what you think and feel, such as expressing anger, fear, despair? Have you talked to family about the possibility of dying?
- Do you feel you have important things still to do in life? Examples?

Additional Material and Exercises

Inner Healer Art Work

After doing an Inner Healer exercise at home, draw or paint whatever you experienced, and see if you can work out what the different figures and objects drawn may mean to you. One way of looking at drawings is to consider that everything you set down is a part of yourself. Seek help with this interpretation if you need it.

LOG OF DAILY PRACTICE

| Exercise done | Time spent (mins.) | Effects/comments |
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Nature of activity:

Any other comments:

Finding Out What I Really Want

Introduction

One of the benefits of a life-threatening illness, if we really face up to it, is that we at last realize that our lifespan is limited. From here we can say to ourselves, Well, I might as well do now what really seems satisfying and worthwhile to me; there's nothing much to lose. This attitude can lead to radical change. Perhaps we can find a goal that has lain dormant in our imagination for years, but now can be brought to centre stage as we realize that many of the old goals are somewhat hollow. It might be an occupation or skill we've always wanted to learn, or a relationship we want to change. It might be an internal change, in relationship to the world, without much external upheaval: for example, learning to be more spiritually connected, or to understand ourselves better through psychotherapy. Sometimes we feel locked into an unsatisfying lifestyle because of family or work commitments, but it is amazing what can be done even within such constraints if we are truly determined. The first, and most important, step is to become really clear about what we want. Most people never do that.

Main Exercise

What I Really Want

First relax deeply, and go to your special place. Now try the following imagination exercise:

Imagine that you have just learned you have one week to live, in fair health and without pain, after which you will die. How will you spend that time? (Assume that anything you want to do is possible.)

Additional (or Alternative) Exercise

Relax deeply, then imagine that whatever you decide to do, you will be guaranteed success and long life. What would you do?

Discussion

Talk over with others what you experienced. Was there something that gave you a sudden surge of interest and hope, an “ah-ha” feeling of excitement, before perhaps being smothered by “practical” considerations? If so, that is the thing to follow up.

Developing Goals That Include the Spiritual Level

We have raised the possibility that getting cancer might be viewed in a much broader context than is usual in our culture. While there are undoubtedly physical causes for the disease, there may also be factors operating at the higher “levels” of ourselves, as we discussed in the Introduction to this course. It is possible that the disease, in some distorted way, may be trying to fulfill some unmet need in us; this need might even be, in some cases, an unrecognized wish to die. Secondly, getting cancer might have some significance in a spiritual sense; if we think of ourselves as spiritual beings, living here in order to learn and evolve towards a much deeper understanding of our place in the universe, then illness may become a learning experience, one that propels us into self-examination. Expanding our goals to include increasing awareness and connectedness with the spiritual level may allow healing power from the spiritual level to operate in us.

Other therapists have put this more poetically. L. LeShan writes of the need for every person to learn to “sing his or her own song.” W. Brugh Joy

concludes that “the soul must learn to find its own way.” These ideas are sometimes difficult for people in our materialistic culture to understand. However, we have found that many of our patients sense what they mean and are helped by them, and that is why I offer them here.

Exercises at Home

Exercise 1

Do the Stress Checklist again in Appendix B (p. 74). Do you notice any changes since the first time you did it? What areas most need your attention, and what changes do you plan to make?

Exercise 2

Do one form of the main exercise for this session (or choose an alternate form) and write about your findings. It is worth repeating this until you feel you have learned as much as you are currently able to do; then, as with all of these techniques, you can do it again at some point in the future and see how your understanding and awareness has grown.

Exercise 3

What do you need to give up? Here’s where it hurts! To adopt new behaviours or attitudes, we need to give up old ones. Ask yourself what needs to change, and why you find it hard. Some possibilities to be analyzed in a group and in your journal:

“I’m too lazy.”

“I’m afraid to risk losing the comfort of my present ways.”

“I’m afraid that if I don’t act sick, I’ll get less attention.”

“I’m afraid to work less because . . .”

“I prefer to depend on others to cure me.”

“If I try to help myself and the disease gets worse, I will feel . . .”

“I prefer to believe in magic.”

Other ideas . . .

Exercise 4

Write about the following:

- Can you give a brief example of conflict or difficulty with others? How did you handle it?
- How do you feel about getting help from others? Give some examples.
- What feelings do you have of a need or desire to help others? Give some examples.

Additional Material and Exercises

Using Time Efficiently

For any who care what they do with their life, efficient use of time is obviously important. For someone with cancer, who is determined to do whatever possible to combat it, using time well is particularly important in cutting down stress and conserving precious energy for other things, like doing relaxation and using mental imagery. As with stress management, the first and most important step is to become *aware* of how we actually spend our time. The list below includes many ways of spending time. You can probably add to it. You might like first to guess how much time each activity occupies per day, on average, and record that estimate in the Time-Monitoring Chart in Appendix B, on p. 80.

If you want to find out more about yourself, it is worthwhile to monitor and record activities for a period of time—say three days or more. Pick days that are reasonably normal and when you feel quite well. Carry a small booklet or card with you, and at the end of each half hour or hour, write down each kind of activity you engaged in and approximately the time it occupied; it takes only a few seconds to make the note. At the end of your monitoring period, add up and record the total time, and calculate average daily time spent in each activity on your checklist. Compare your initial estimate with the actual daily measurements.

(*Note:* If you are currently receiving treatment or feeling unwell for other reasons, this list may not be relevant, and could be left for a time when you feel better.)

LOG OF DAILY PRACTICE

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Approximate time spent in reflection, reading, additional exercises from the appendices, or other activity related to the course during the past week: ___ hrs.

Nature of activity:

Any other comments:

Letting Go of Resentments

Introduction

A major obstacle to open communication and emotional expression with others is that we tend to resent them: other people almost always fail to be or to do exactly what we want. Also we fear that they will judge us. Sometimes there is a very marked gap between our wishes and their actions, and that can lead to rage (usually repressed), which “eats away” at our insides, so to speak, often for years. The result is extremely harmful to our health. The way to overcome it, and to reach a peaceful state of acceptance of others, is not to try to change them (an approach that seldom works) but to change our own attitudes. This is not an easy task, but the following exercise will give you a powerful tool to work with.

Main Exercise

The “Garden Gate” Exercise

First get deeply relaxed, and go to your special room or place. Then imagine you are sitting in a beautiful garden. A gate opens in the distance: it is a person you have long resented, perhaps even hated. See this person come slowly towards you, to stop a short distance away. Notice the expression

on his or her face, and try to get a sense of what this person's problems have been—why he or she is the way that he or she is. Imagine the person bathed in a shower of golden light. Try to imagine him or her getting what he or she most dearly wants in life! Then, if you can, imagine standing and embracing and accepting this individual, feeling your oneness with him or her, two human beings each struggling as best you can with your problems.

Discussion

After this exercise you might like to discuss how pervasive resentment is in our minds. We resent other people, but we also resent events, situations, even things. These feelings are usually “projections,” that is, we harbour a lot of anger and frustration, dating back to childhood, and we look for people or situations to “project” it on to. *An important part of the healing work is becoming aware of all this and trying to change towards greater acceptance of people and situations.* It's not that we become passive—on the contrary, the quest for greater acceptance is an intensely active struggle with ourselves. The immediate rewards of even slight success are greater peace of mind, understanding, and love for others and for ourselves.

Our Stream of Consciousness

Our conscious mind maintains a constant flow of thoughts, judgments, wishes, fears, and other ideas and emotions. In a sense, this stream of consciousness is what we believe we are. (Which would most threaten your identity—a radical change in your body, or in this mental self-talk?) These thoughts and emotions connect, through the nervous and hormonal systems, with all parts of the body. One way of pursuing self-healing is to concentrate with great intensity on the stream of consciousness, noticing and experiencing any negative and painful thoughts or emotions, expressing them to others if possible, then deliberately replacing them with life-affirming ideas. Note that we can't skip the stage of acknowledging pain and go directly to the positive, as advocated by some popular works on “positive thinking”; the emotional pain, like an infected wound, will remain if not addressed. What kinds of thoughts and feelings should I cultivate, then? This course is all about finding out what to allow into your stream of consciousness. People vary a great deal in the changes they need

to make. As you progress, you will develop your own knowledge of what is most healthy and harmonious for yourself.

Exercises at Home

Exercise 1

Repeat (preferably several times) the “resentments” exercise you did in the class. Write and/or draw what you experience.

Exercise 2

In the Additional Material and Exercises section at the end of this chapter, read Refuting Irrational Ideas and Reaction and Judgment, and write about what you have discovered.

Exercise 3

Write about the following:

- During how much of the day do you have a peaceful state of mind? What do you do to change things when you are not feeling peaceful?
- What do you notice about the relationship between your thoughts and how you feel?

Additional Material and Exercises

Refuting Irrational Ideas

We touched briefly on one kind of negativity—the many irrational ideas that come up again and again, causing a lot of stress.

Some examples:

“I must be perfect in everything I do.”

“I should be anxious about anything new.”

“It is essential that everyone likes me.”

“My happiness depends on changes outside my control.”

“My worth as a person depends on what I produce.”

“It is wrong to give time to myself.”

It can be fun to discover more of these little monsters for yourself! When one of them strikes home for you, write it down, then ask yourself, Does this really make sense? If not, what is the true situation? For the last example you might find it more realistic to say, “I need time to myself for renewal and refreshment, for the sake of my health and so that I can be a better companion to those around me.” Sometimes you can substitute short, positive affirmations for the irrational ideas, As an example, for the first one you could say, “This is the finest I have to give right now.”

Keeping a Journal

Keeping a diary or journal, not of just social events but of psychological reactions to events, is a very useful, long-term self-help technique. Meditation and journal-keeping complement one another; meditation gives you more access to formerly unconscious reactions, and journal-keeping crystallizes and captures these responses, promoting an awareness that permits change. The act of writing forces us to distinguish what is important to us, to clarify the meaning of external events for our internal life. We can also use a journal for catharsis—pouring out bottled-up emotions in a safe way. We can write imaginary letters to people we have resented. In our journal we can include diagrams, plans, notes from lectures or books, press clippings, photographs of healing images, and records of dreams. Emotional reactions that occur repeatedly are particularly significant; try to gain access to the thoughts that accompany them. Can you recall earlier events in your life that prompted this kind of response from you?

You’ll need a special notebook to serve as a journal: a ring binder is convenient, as you can then file in it drawings, clippings, and other papers. It is helpful to review the contents each month and make a summary. Sometimes, if you are living with others, there is concern about ensuring privacy for the frank description of one’s actions and thoughts; indeed, if this does not cause concern, it may be that you are not expressing things that are important. The journal can be locked away, or you can use a code for sensitive disclosures. Also, put a note on the cover requesting that others do not read the contents.

Topics To Investigate Using the “Mental Review” Technique

Competition Investigate your feelings about winning and losing (games, business deals, arguments, and so on): “How do I feel if I lose? Why do I feel this way? In the case of something trivial like a game, why does it matter? Am I diminished in some way? Is this real or imaginary? What would be a healthier attitude?”

Social Relationships with Others Considering particularly your most intimate relationship(s), ask yourself, “What are my needs from this relationship? How can and do I express them? What are the needs of my partner/spouse/friend? How can I find out what they are? How can I help that person meet these needs?”

Reaction and Judgment Watch your mind closely next time you walk down the street, looking at others. What goes through your mind when you see someone who seems very unattractive? Very attractive? (Ask yourself, Am I making comparisons in some way between that person and myself? If so, why? Think back to the questions on competition.)

Make notes in your journal after trying these exercises.

Managing Distressing Thoughts and Emotions (This section repeats much of what has already been said, but “managing” our minds is of vital importance.)

Having cancer makes all of us anxious at times. Our minds start to dwell on what might happen, the thoughts may run over and over again in our heads, like a broken record, and distressing emotions, such as fear and despair, quickly follow. This can be a very stressful and unpleasant experience, but after all, the situation really is frightening, isn't it? So how can we change it? Whether or not we can change the disease, we can certainly change our *reaction* to it.

Step 1 The first step is to find out exactly what the thoughts and feelings are that we are experiencing. You may say to yourself, I'm going to get sicker and sicker, or, I'll be in a lot of pain. And you may experience anxiety or depression. Acknowledge these unpleasant ideas, and let yourself feel whatever the emotion is for awhile, rather than trying to “put the lid” on it immediately. It may help to write down the ideas.

Step 2 The second step is to *express* the thought and feeling, to “let it go” in some way. You can:

- tell it to somebody else who is a sympathetic listener (professionally led support groups can be very helpful here);
- relax deeply, then bring up the thought or feeling and try to let it go deliberately; perhaps using an image, such as one of throwing trash into a basket, or taking large weights out of a backpack, to represent letting go of the thought;
- practise loud chanting (such as “Om”) while imagining release and relief;
- use prayer, where it fits your beliefs;
- do physical exercise, while imagining letting go;
- if you experience anger, hit a bed with a tennis racket or plastic bat.

Step 3 Affirmations are positive statements that can be used to challenge and replace repetitive and distressing thoughts. Such positive thinking has been used for thousands of years by people wanting to help themselves. Make a list of your most common distressing thoughts, and write opposite each a positive alternative. Some examples:

| Common negative | Substitute positive |
|---|---|
| This pain means my cancer is spreading. | Every body symptom is a sign of healing. |
| There’s nothing I can do to help myself. | I draw on my many skills to help me. |
| My body is getting cancer all over. | I am 99% well, only 1% sick. |
| (from the Simontons’ book) My cancer is strong, my body weak, and my treatment harmful. | My cancer is weak, my body is strong, and my treatment helpful. |

Step 4 You can devise a list of positive, nurturing statements that you can repeat to yourself daily. This practice will encourage you to focus on more optimistic and friendly self-talk.

Step 5 As you become more and more aware of your own thoughts, and familiar with the idea of managing them, you can extend this process beyond frightening ideas to other things you might like to change. For example, if you want to stop resenting someone, you could alter your self-talk about that person. Or if you find you have irrational ideas like “I can’t afford to give myself time to do these exercises,” you are free to change them. Play with this possibility, and see what you can discover!

Summary

1. Identify distressing thoughts and accompanying feelings.
2. Express them.
3. Develop alternatives—strong, positive counter-statements.
4. Repeatedly express these statements to yourself (pushing aside the negatives if necessary).
5. Learn to intercept the negatives earlier and earlier.

LOG OF DAILY PRACTICE

| Exercise done | Time spent (mins.) | Effects/comments |
|---------------|--------------------|------------------|
|---------------|--------------------|------------------|

Day **1**

Date:

Day **2**

Date:

Day **3**

Date:

Day **4**

Date:

Day **5**

Date:

Day **6**

Date:

Day **7**

Date:

Approximate time spent in reflection, reading, additional exercises from the appendices, or other activity related to the course during the past week: ___ hrs.

Nature of activity:

Any other comments:

The Spiritual Journey

Introduction

The outermost shell of the five-ring diagram in the Introduction represents the “spiritual” level. What does this mean? The word is often confused with *religious*. *Spiritual* refers to the idea that we are all part of something much greater than ourselves, that there exists a higher order, power, or level, which has been given many names: God, the Divine, the One, the Way or Tao, Cosmic Order, and so on. The spiritual journey is a learning to experience our place in this order. Religion is any codified system of rituals and beliefs about this self-transcending order; we can be spiritual without adhering to a religion, and many people adopt a religion without having had any spiritual experience. Here our purpose is not to advocate any religious system, but to help you work towards having your own spiritual experiences, and thus allow the highest level of yourself to exert its balancing, healing effects on your body and mind.

How can we know that such a level, such a healing potential really exists? We can read the works or descriptions of the world’s great spiritual figures—Christ, Muhammad, the Buddha, the long line of saints in Eastern traditions—and notice the essential similarity of the message across cultures

and at different times. However, it is our own experience that will ultimately be most convincing. How do we get such experience? It helps greatly to join some organization that is genuinely focused on spiritual growth. There are many, like the various branches of Buddhism such as Zen, the Sufi order of the Muslim faith, certain groups within the Christian church, and some kinds of “humanistic” psychology. Most religions have their regular dogmatic side, for the majority who don’t want to search too deeply, and a mystical or spiritual side. Different organizations will emphasize different practices to assist spiritual connectedness, but the basic attitudes to be cultivated are, as far as I know, similar in all of them, and might be listed as follows:

- a desire to find spiritual purpose, which becomes a central goal in life, rather than the usual search for pleasure (which does not mean that pleasure is decreased, rather that it is increased several-fold!)
- a desire to quiet the mind, in order to become more receptive, listening and connecting with the spiritual rather than following one’s own will and ego
- a desire to practise significant quieting rituals such as meditation, prayer, tai chi, yoga
- a desire to serve others in need
- a desire to practise gratitude, humility, and compassion
- a desire to open to and operate from the “heart” rather than from the “head”

Main Exercise

Mindfulness meditation: This is a form of meditation, sometimes called “mindfulness,” that is used in Buddhism and other traditions. The method is very simple: sit with a straight back, eyes closed, and without deciding on any particular focus, just *watch* the mind, noticing thoughts as they pass through, but not following them up in any way. If you find that a sensation like back pain or a sound comes to your attention, focus all of your concentration on that; it may help to repeat to yourself “back pain, back pain, . . .” After perhaps 30 seconds your mind will tire of this focus and shift to something else, such as “This isn’t working.” Repeat this new

phrase to yourself over and over, until another shift occurs. It's a bit like slowing down a film to inspect each frame for a number of seconds. In this way we become a detached spectator of our mental parade. We may get a sense of a truer, "higher" self, watching the contortions of our ordinary lower self.

Exercises at Home

Exercise 1

Practise this mindfulness meditation for the next 3 days, and compare it with your current method of meditating. Write about the experience. Then select one method and use it for the coming months.

Exercise 2

Read one or more books by a spiritual master (select a writer who has done his or her own work, not a popularizer). If this kind of reading is new to you, I would suggest any book by one of the following authors, all of whom are easy to read: Eknath Easwaran, Thich Naht Hahn, or Yogananda. If you want a specific suggestion: *Original Goodness*, by Easwaran.

Exercise 3

Write about the following:

- Have you had—or do you often experience—any feelings you would describe as spiritual?
- How do you understand the idea of a larger order, intelligence, or God?

Additional Material and Exercises

We include here some ideas on how to keep your mind "still" (relatively clear of thoughts), which may be useful.

What To Do If Your Mind Won't Be Still

If your thoughts keep on whirling when you are trying to meditate (or to relax or do imagery), there are a number of things you can try:

- Spend a few minutes writing down your problems first. Tell yourself firmly that you can come back to them later, but for now you intend to meditate.
- Experiment with relaxation techniques or tapes prior to practising meditation.
- Experiment with different times of day; early morning may be a better time than at night when you may be tired.
- Clear your mind. You can journal your thoughts and feelings just prior to practising meditation. Then after meditating you can briefly record in your journal any changes you notice or insights that you have had from your meditation session.
- Stopping thoughts is a more dramatic technique, often useful for stopping recurrent worrying thoughts. Set a timer for 3 minutes. Then allow yourself to ruminate or worry about the problem whole-heartedly until the timer rings, at which time you shout, “Stop!” snap your fingers, and empty your mind for a predetermined period. This exercise can be repeated, and the details may be changed to suit yourself. Some find it helpful to imagine a big, red STOP sign when the worrying is to cease. Over several days or weeks try to gradually decrease the time spent on ruminations.
- Imagine you have a series of knobs and dials in your mind; one is for “noise,” another perhaps for “images,” a third for “discomfort” or “pain,” and so on. Exercise control by turning the knobs up or down.

Other Ways to Practise Meditation

It is most helpful to have a room or corner designated for your daily meditation and other exercises. You could have an altar or low table with flowers, pictures of family, friends, possibly statues of religious figures, and candles to light as a ritual marking the beginning of your inner-directed attention. These cues all help to focus the mind. If you have religious beliefs, integrate them with your meditative practices.

Walking Meditation Try saying a mantra or watching the breath as you walk, perhaps in time with your footsteps, or use it while doing daily chores.

Chanting Meditation Try chanting a mantra (such as “Om” or “Rama” or “Om mani padme hum” or “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me”) out loud for 20 minutes or so. Use any tone that appeals, or a monotone. You can think about and “let out” any emotions that may be bothering you during some of this time. You may notice that your voice varies greatly in volume at different stages. At the end, sit quietly for awhile.

End-of-Day Review of Events Related to the previous exercises is the practice of sitting quietly, just before going to bed, and reviewing the events of the day while in a relaxed state. As you re-experience stressful moments, tell yourself to let them go now. This becomes a kind of meditation, which helps us more quickly into peaceful sleep.

LOG OF DAILY PRACTICE

| Exercise done | Time spent (mins.) | Effects/comments |
|---------------|--------------------|------------------|
|---------------|--------------------|------------------|

Day **1**

Date:

Day **2**

Date:

Day **3**

Date:

Day **4**

Date:

Day **5**

Date:

Day **6**

Date:

Day **7**

Date:

Approximate time spent in reflection, reading, additional exercises from the appendices, or other activity related to the course during the past week: ___ hrs.

Nature of activity:

Any other comments:

Review

This last session is a chance to review the main methods we have learned for assisting our healing using the mind. Healing, as we have discussed, is “making whole,” a return to a balanced, harmonious state of body and mind. Our conscious minds are a powerful tool to this end. Thus we have learned to use the mind to quiet and relax the body, by scanning the various muscle groups and deliberately relaxing where tension exists. We have begun to observe the flow of thoughts, which is like using one part of the mind (the “observer”) to watch another part. Mental imaging has been briefly explored, and you will have seen that it is a versatile and potent tool for affecting the state of the body and mind generally; we have used imagery for relaxation, for directing healing, for contacting an “Inner Healer,” and even for trying to access the cancer itself (a controversial use, which will not make sense to everyone). Along the way we have considered the importance of promoting harmonious social interactions, mainly through adopting a habit of open communication. The value of writing about our experiences as we proceed has been emphasized. And finally, we have begun to approach a spiritual search, through meditation and reading, a quest that will be the central focus of Level 3 of the Healing Journey Program.

Obviously, the way your journey will unfold from now on is largely up to you. If you feel well at present, the temptation may be just to forget about it, and “get on with life,” which usually means falling back into old habits, not necessarily bad in themselves, but unlikely to foster further growth. One way to assist yourself to move ahead is to plan a program of introspective work for yourself, a process that begins by defining what we most need to do. The sheet on the next page is one possible way of doing this; it’s a chart, to be completed for each of your five levels of experience (the body, conscious mind, deeper mind, social, and spiritual), on which you can answer several questions:

- What do I do now at each level of my experience?
- What would I like to achieve at any given level?
- What can I do as a first step towards achieving what I want?
- What currently stops me?
- How will I know when I’ve achieved what I want?

Listing What I Want

Level (body, conscious mind, deeper mind, social, or spiritual aspects):

What do I do now?

What would I like to achieve?

What is the first step?

Blocks?

Evaluation:

Additional Thoughts and Exercises

Healing comes from the old English *haelen*, “to make whole.” We become whole through connecting with all parts of ourselves. Another way of saying this is that healing is integration into a larger order.

The five-ring diagram, prominent in the materials we have used, shows five main levels of our being, from body to spirit. Our aim is to connect, really to feel our oneness, with all of our levels. This is an idea that has been known for thousands of years in various forms; all I’ve done here is to lay it out in a rational and usable form. Throughout the ages, many individuals

and cultures have developed ways of working at all five levels.

Spiritual Level

A transcendent order includes everything in the universe, sometimes called “God.” It may be experienced to some degree through practices such as meditation, and is the largest and hence potentially the most powerfully healing level of organization to which we can connect. Our main task in life is to learn to experience our part in this order—to diminish the exaggerated idea of separateness that afflicts most of us, and sense our belonging to this greater whole. In the Hindu tradition it is said that “the drop of water must return to the ocean!” This experience, if combined with appropriate reflection, leads us to an awareness of what we are meant to do with our lives, mentally and behaviourally.

Various traditional disciplines are designed to further this aim: yoga (union) is probably the oldest of them. Meditation, in its many forms, is crucial to spiritual connecting because it requires dropping the constant mental “interference” and “listening to what is really there.” Many other healing practices invoke the spiritual level: prayer, service to others, laying on of hands (offering oneself as a channel for God’s power), for example. For some of us, being in nature can promote this mystical sense of oneness with something much bigger than ourselves, through the quietness and the deeply felt sense of our insignificance.

Social Level

A great deal of traditional healing involves strengthening people’s social connectedness. The whole tribe may gather about the sick individual, or he may be taken to sacred places, such as ancestral burial grounds. Ritual is used to connect with earlier generations (and induce altered mental states). We have lost a lot of this way of being in the West; perhaps our nearest analogue is belonging to a caring community—a church, for example.

Deep Psychological Level

The use of psychedelic drugs, mental imagery, meditation, and other ways of producing altered states of consciousness can expand our awareness and teach us that we are part of a larger unity; for example, we can learn

that our minds are connected with the minds of other people. It becomes apparent that this “inner world” is much more extensive than we had imagined, that in fact we usually choose to restrict our conscious attention to a very small part of our possible experience, that the search (for understanding) lies within, not outside. The healing power of modern psychotherapy lies in helping us to become aware that most of what we do is driven by unconscious impulses from the “deeper mind.”

Conscious Mind

We think of our minds as accurately portraying what is “out there.” In fact, as philosophers East and West have shown us, we largely create our ideas of reality. The mind is our tool for deciding what we want to do at our higher levels; for example, we may decide to make changes in our social relationships, or to devote much more time to spiritual practices. It is important to become aware of the stream of conscious thinking, and to assert some control over it (such as changing negative ruminations into more positive ideas). But the main task at this level is to remove the obstacles that thinking generates: by asserting to ourselves that things are a certain way, we obscure the larger picture. Traditional healing almost always involves getting past regular conscious perception.

Body

Perhaps even more than the conscious mind, the body poses an obstacle to healing, because we identify so completely with it. In many traditions the body is simply seen as a concretization of spirit, a temporary coat that we put on for awhile. Yet its needs seem so compelling that they can monopolize our attention. Thus our main healing task at this level is to bring the needs of the body into harmony with our other levels. The body can also be a route to understanding the deeper mind, since what happens in our bodies is greatly influenced by mind: for example, physical symptoms correspond to certain patterns of mental activity, and we can sometimes learn to understand and change such bodily manifestations by mental introspection and imagery. In traditional healing practices the body may be starved, or used in ritual dance, or treated with drugs or special diets, to facilitate changes in mental perception. Modern medicine, of course,

treats the body in isolation from other levels, and makes changes to it with drugs, surgery, and other procedures.

In summary, what we are trying to do is to learn to experience, for an increasing proportion of our waking hours, a sense of oneness with an order that transcends ourselves. There is room for much individual variation in what we do to approach this state. However, the result is likely to be similar for all: man or woman, modern city-dweller or “primitive” tribesman. It is a feeling of being supported by love, of being surrounded and enfolded by an intensely meaningful matrix or network of connections. We *know*, with a certainty much stronger than thought can provide, that all will be well, even when we die. Our task is to foster and maintain this awareness in the face of the numerous distracting and fragmenting tendencies of the modern world.

A

What About Unconventional Remedies?

Introduction

Cancer is a threat to life, and because medicine cannot guarantee a cure, many individuals with cancer look around for additional, non-medical remedies, in the hope of improving their chances of survival. There are many confusing and often conflicting claims for the curative effects of a great variety of external agents and procedures. These may be described as “alternatives,” implying that they can take the place of traditional medical procedures or treatments, or as “complementary” or “adjunctive” treatments, to be used with medical treatments and procedures. How do we know whether any of these unorthodox therapies have value? In this brief overview, some general guidelines will be offered on the evaluation of such unconventional remedies, which rely on agents and procedures applied from the outside.

What Are Unconventional Treatments?

Many unorthodox treatments are not part of Western medical philoso-

phy. Some therapeutic systems that have been in existence for hundreds or even thousands of years, we in the West would classify as unorthodox; for example, Ayurvedic (Asian Indian) and traditional Chinese medicines. However, these systems are based on world views and methods of establishing validity that differ from our own. These longstanding bodies of knowledge must not be dismissed, but we cannot comment on their efficacy. As far as we know, there has been no systematic Western study of the impact on cancer patients of established traditional treatment methods from other cultures. Interested readers can refer to Kaptchuk and Croucher for further information on the efficacy of such treatments. Our comments are directed mainly at the most transient alternative remedies that have been used in our own society.

In Western societies, particular unorthodox treatments tend to be popular for a number of years and then be displaced by different ones (a phenomenon also seen in regular medicine). Dr. Barrie Cassileth, a leading researcher in this area, has published a useful list and critique of the “alternatives” most popular in the United States since 1800. In another study, she found the current most popular unorthodox remedies in the United States to be (in order of popularity):

1. Metabolic therapy is a group of treatments, each of which includes several elements: “detoxification” (often through colonic irrigation), special diets, and intake of vitamins and minerals. A well-known example is the Gerson regimen.
2. Diet therapy involves diet alone. The macrobiotic diet is a predominant example.
3. Megavitamin therapy administers very high doses of one or several vitamins.
4. Mental imagery is used for anti-tumour effects used in isolation from other psychological treatment.
5. Spiritual or faith healing often involves prayer and laying on of hands, with the aim of obtaining divine intervention.
6. “Immune” therapy is aimed at stimulating the immune system through injection of serum fractions, vaccines from the patient’s own tumours, fetal tissues, and other materials.

Other unorthodox remedies include wheat-grass therapy, the Kelley nutritional program, Iscador, Antineoplastons, the Livingstone-Wheeler vaccine, eumetabolic treatment, dimethylsulphoxide, hydrazine sulphate, and many others.

Commonsense Observations

Some commonsense observations can be offered on the phenomenon of alternative remedies in general.

- Since many of the claims are contradictory, they can't all be valid. For example, diets based on cooked foods are at loggerheads with others insisting that all food must be consumed raw.
- The remarkable variety and diversity of these "alternatives" might cause us to wonder if *any* of them are useful, since if any one had proved its efficacy, the rest would very likely have faded from popularity.
- There is usually a great deal of emotion surrounding the promotion of a popular alternative remedy. Why is this necessary? Can't the product's effects speak for themselves?
- An absurd attack on organized medicine, with charges of a "conspiracy" to suppress alternatives, is often associated with the promotion of specific unconventional agents. All of us are liable to cancer and would be only too pleased if a simple remedy could be found. One has to suspect that such charges, and the excessive emotionalism, conceal a basic insecurity in the advocates' positions.

Who Uses Unorthodox Remedies, and Why?

People pin their hopes on these unproven methods for many reasons: fear of death; desire for a health practitioner who will attend to all aspects of our experience of having cancer; expression of protest against physicians; less toxicity and less pain than in conventional treatment methods; reaction against the high-tech, big-business, and dehumanized approach of modern medical care.

How Can We Evaluate Remedies?

There are three ways to evaluate the effectiveness of any treatment, whether conventional or unorthodox: evidence, rationale, and consensus.

Evidence

The strongest evidence of the effectiveness of an agent comes from controlled trials. Correlative evidence is the next-best source of evidence (such as in showing that smoking causes cancer). Anecdotal evidence alone—relating stories about selected patients—cannot be conclusive but is frequently used in “alternative” medicine. Vague assertions and personal testimonials that appear in popular magazines simply have no validity.

Rationale

Does the reputed effect of the treatment make sense according to some organized scheme of knowledge?

Consensus

Is there consensus among informed people? If there is a plethora of conflicting claims, as is the case with dietary cures for cancer, we can be skeptical of individual advocates.

Some Effects of Unorthodox Treatments

- A switch from conventional to unconventional treatments is potentially harmful only if the conventional is doing some good.
- Unproven remedies may produce toxicity in the patient (such as some mega-doses of vitamins).
- There may be unnecessary expenditures for purchasing remedies and services not covered by health insurance.
- Lifestyle may be disrupted through extensive travelling or eating special foods.
- Alternative remedies may, however, provide hope and reassurance by giving people some sense of control over events amidst the chaos of cancer diagnosis and treatment.

Who Advocates Unorthodox Remedies and Why?

- Well-meaning friends and family may be driven to suggest something to alleviate their own anxiety.
- Unscrupulous advocates can exploit people for profit.
- Mass media create presentations for basically commercial reasons.
- A broad spectrum of health-care professionals may provide alternative remedies, and it is important to consider their qualifications and experience. Some recommendations came from individuals with no appropriate training, recovered patients, and others with strong emotional needs to promote alternatives.

Questions To Ask Yourself

- Do the “advocates” have truly relevant qualifications and experience? What are their motives? Are they interested in your well-being?
- Are claims that are made for a mode of treatment supported by documented evidence—not simply by assertions or anecdotes?
- Is there rationale for the treatment and some consensus about it?
- Is there a professional organization you can contact for information that can show standards for practice?
- Does the unorthodox therapy carry a high risk? Expense? Disruption to my life?

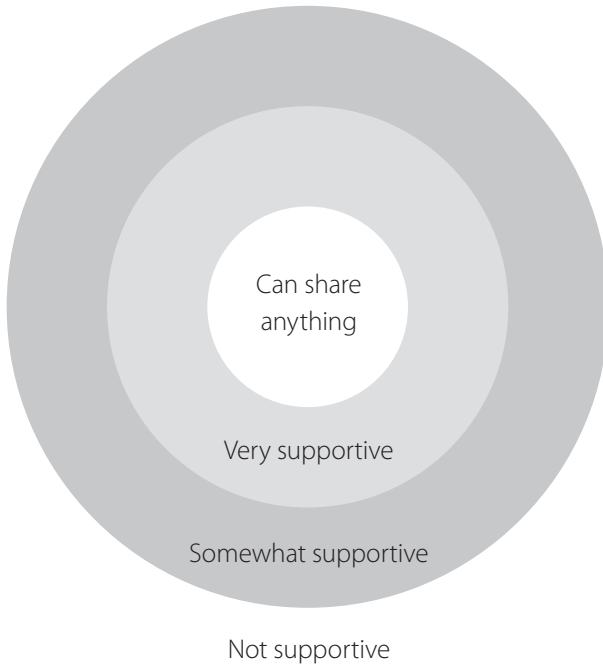
A final point: It is also important to inform your physicians what complementary therapies you are taking, because those therapies may interact with your medical treatments. For example, high doses of antioxidants such as vitamin C can interfere with the effectiveness of chemotherapy.

A P P E N D I X

B

Questionnaires and Charts

Social Map



We start here with a “map” of the people important to your life, and how supportive they are.

Place on this map the initials of the two to ten people most important in your life.

Write comments on the major figures; in particular, who is not supporting you in the way you would like, and how can you improve the situation?

Lifestyle Checklist

| Level | Statement | Extent to which this applies to me | | | | |
|----------------|--|------------------------------------|---------|-----------|--------------|-------|
| | | Always | Usually | Sometimes | Occasionally | Never |
| Body | I sleep well | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| | I do relaxation exercises daily | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| | I do appropriate physical exercise daily | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| | I eat mainly natural wholesome foods | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| | I avoid junk foods and stimulants (alcohol, candy, cigarettes, coffee, etc.) | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Conscious Mind | I am generally untroubled by anxious thoughts | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| | I pursue hobbies or recreation regularly | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | I watch only TV shows that I find truly entertaining or instructive | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| | I ask questions and express my needs freely to medical and support staff | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Unconscious mind | I do regular imagery practice | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| | I listen to my inner intuition/voice | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| | I chant, do the light visualization, or watch my breathing | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Social | I work a moderate number of hours | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| | I enjoy my work and feel secure | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| | I seek out friends and communicate freely with them | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| | I feel free to ask for love and help | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| | My family life is peaceful and fulfilling | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |

This checklist can help you assess your lifestyle and help you identify any changes you might wish to make. Circle the number that indicates the extent to which each statement applies to you.

Stress Checklist

| Level of self | Stress symptom | Discomfort level (low = 0, high = 10) | | |
|---|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------|---------------|
| | | Now | A later time | End of course |
| Body | Muscle tension | | | |
| | Headaches | | | |
| | Neck & shoulder aches | | | |
| | Other aches (list below): | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | Fatigue | | | |
| | Pounding heart | | | |
| | Problems sleeping | | | |
| | Rapid shallow breathing | | | |
| | Digestive upsets | | | |
| | Restlessness | | | |
| | Excessive sweating | | | |
| | Frequent urination | | | |
| Disturbed eating habits | | | | |
| Excessive consumption of alcohol, other drugs | | | | |

| | | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|--|--|
| Conscious mind | Confusion/poor concentration | | |
| | Forgetfulness | | |
| | Negative ideas | | |
| | Apathy/boredom | | |
| | Whirling mind | | |
| Unconscious mind/emotional | Irritability or frustration | | |
| | Feeling helpless or hopeless | | |
| | Anxiety | | |
| | Depression (feeling "blue") | | |
| | Nightmares | | |
| | Crying spells | | |
| | Little joy in life | | |
| | Avoiding others | | |
| | Loneliness or isolation | | |
| | Resentment towards others | | |
| Social | Intolerance/impatience | | |
| | Lowered sex drive | | |
| | | | |

| Level of self | Stress symptom | Discomfort level (low = 0, high = 10) | | |
|---------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------|---------------|
| | | Now | A later time | End of course |
| Spiritual | Loss of direction or meaning | | | |
| | Emptiness | | | |
| | Cynicism | | | |
| | Apathy | | | |
| | Martyrdom | | | |
| | Hopelessness | | | |

The Stress Checklist can help you assess changes that you are experiencing over time. Enter a number from 0 to 10 that describes how you are feeling for each item on the left side of the chart. Lower numbers indicate little or no discomfort, and higher numbers up to 10 indicate increasing levels of discomfort.

You can add up your numerical scores in the different categories on the chart to get a total for each category (e.g., "body"), as well as a grand total. The questionnaire can be done again at intervals to observe changes, perhaps using different colours to mark it each time. You can also modify or add to this list, of course, to make it more relevant to you.

Having done this, the next step is to plan the changes you want to make. You might like to make some entries in your journal, under the following headings:

- Activity Areas (What I do now)
- Ideal Patterns (What I would like to do)
- Changes I Wish To Make Now

Strategies for Decision Making

| Main steps | Strategies |
|--|---|
| 1. Define the current situation | Watching my mind and behaviour closely |
| 2. Define what I really want | Using relaxation and imagery Talking it over with others Collecting and organizing information Excluding negative thoughts ("That's impossible!") |
| 3. Define how I can move towards accomplishing what I want | If the problem is relatively simple or small: Make a list of alternate possible solutions Consult others as needed Choose the most appealing solution and apply it If you are considering a larger change: Define a simple concrete first step to achieving it Either now or later, define the next steps |

| | |
|--|--|
| 4. Consider how I might "sabotage" my efforts | Listen to my "resident skeptic" and write down what he says ("You can't do that" "Why not?") |
| | List ways I might delay, avoid, undermine, slip into old habits. For example, ask, "How will I prevent myself from getting what I want?" |
| 5. Define how I will know when I've achieved what I want | Define, in advance, what changes or signs will indicate success |
| | Check with others how they see my changes |
| | Decide beforehand on rewards for achieving success |

Time-Monitoring Chart

| Activities | Times spent (minutes daily) | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------|-------|---------|
| | Day 1 | Day 2 | Day 3 | Average |
| At work | | | | |
| Socializing | | | | |
| Routine tasks | | | | |
| Low-priority work | | | | |
| Productive work | | | | |
| Meetings | | | | |
| Not at work | | | | |
| Telephone calls | | | | |
| Conversation (face to face) | | | | |
| TV | | | | |
| Hobbies | | | | |
| Reading | | | | |
| Sports | | | | |

| | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Civic activities, clubs | | | |
| Other recreation | | | |
| Travel for errands | | | |
| Commuting | | | |
| Shopping | | | |
| Household chores and maintenance | | | |
| Child care and supervision | | | |
| Personal hygiene, grooming, dressing | | | |
| Sexual activities | | | |
| Daydreaming | | | |
| Drinking | | | |
| Cooking | | | |
| Eating | | | |
| Naps | | | |
| Night sleep | | | |
| Other | | | |

Further Reading

General Cancer Self-help

- Cunningham, A. J. (2001). *Beginning your healing journey: An active response to the crises of cancer*. Toronto: World Health Services Council. This kit comes with a set of six videos that cover the Level 1 program as well as the book *The Healing Journey*, and the workbook and audiotapes for the Level 1 program. On the videos, Alastair Cunningham and cancer patients from the program discuss the self-help methods and talk generally about the problems that having cancer brings. One of the tapes is an interview with two people who were diagnosed with medically incurable metastatic breast cancers over 10 years ago and are now free of disease. This kit—available through www.healingjourney.ca—is useful to people who would like to attend the Level 1 of the Healing Journey Program but are unable to.
- Cunningham, A. J. (2000). *The healing journey* (2nd ed.). Toronto: Key Porter Books. Forerunner to the present book.
- Cunningham, A. J. (2004). *Helping yourself*. Toronto: Canadian Cancer Society. A workbook and two audiotapes.
- Elliott, R. E. (1995). *Dancing with cancer: A healing through visualisation*. Dallas: Noteman Press. A remarkable account of one patient's healing visualizations.
- Epstein, A. H. (1989). *Mind, fantasy and healing*. New York: Delacorte Press. A fascinating account of the dedicated use of imagery for healing.
- Healing Journey website: www.healingjourney.ca. This site provides information about

the Healing Journey program as conducted in Toronto at the Princess Margaret Hospital.

Simonton, O. C., Mathews-Simonton, S., & Creighton, J. L. (1988). *Getting well again*. New York: Bantam Books. A very well-known early guide, emphasizing imaging.

Other Psychological Self-help

Achterberg, J. (1985). *Imagery in healing: Shamanism and modern medicine*. Boston: Shambhala. One of several fine books by Dr. Achterberg on the subject of imagery.

Assagioli, R. (1971). *Psychosynthesis*. New York: Penguin. An influential blend of modern psychology and traditional spiritual methods.

Benson, H. (1975). *The relaxation response*. New York: Morrow Press.

Benson, H. (1996). *Timeless healing: The power and biology of belief*. New York: Scribner. Herbert Benson, a pioneer in the field of mind-body medicine, describes techniques to develop the body's natural ability to relax. In this second book he uses the placebo response as an example of how our thoughts influence our physical experience.

Dossey, L. (1993). *Healing words: The power of prayer and the practice of medicine*. San Francisco: Harper. A comprehensive book by a physician on the relationship between prayer and healing.

Rossman, M. L. (2000). *Guided imagery for self-healing*. Tiburon, CA: Kramer. An authoritative guide to the use of mental imagery.

Healthy Thought Management

Breenberger, D., & Padesky, C. A. (1995). *Mind over mood: Change how you feel by changing the way that you think*. New York: Guilford Press. A treatment manual based on cognitive behaviour therapy.

Burns, D. B. (1999). *Feeling good: The new mood therapy*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

Burns, D. B. (1999). *Feeling good handbook*. New York: Plume (a division of Penguin Putnam Publishers). Drawing from cognitive theory and research, Burns's book and workbook offer concrete techniques that can help to develop a more positive outlook on life.

Carlson, R. (1997). *Don't sweat the small stuff and it's all small stuff*. New York: Hyperion Press. This simple but effective book demonstrates how our habitual thoughts and interpretations of events colour our mood and experience of stress.

Chapman, J. (1991). *Journaling for joy: Writing your way to personal growth and freedom*. North Hollywood: Newcastle Publishing. A practical book that offers tips and exercises that are illustrated by many examples of journaling work from participants in her classes.

Covey, S. R. (1990). *The seven habits of highly effective people*. New York: Free Press. A

popular book that examines how our habitual ways of thinking can create distress and inefficiencies in our lives.

Pennebaker, J. W. (1990). *Opening up: The healing power of expressing emotions*. New York: Guilford Press. Pennebaker is a behavioural scientist who has linked the expression of emotions through journaling with better health.

Sakyong, M. (2003). *Turning the mind into an ally*. New York: Riverhead Books. This is an accessible, practical, jargon-free guide to quieting the mind.

Letting Go of Resentments and Forgiveness

Abrahams Spring, J. (2004). *How can I forgive you? The courage to forgive and the freedom not to*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers. Drawing from her experience as a therapist, Abrahams offers practical advice for the person who has wronged and the person who has done wrong.

Bryan, M. (1999). *Code of love: How to rethink your family and remake your life*. New York: Simon and Schuster. Bryan offers insights and practical advice in learning to forgive our family members.

Epstein, M. (2002). *Going on being: Buddhism and the way of change*. New York: Broadway Books. Using the Buddhist approach of mindfulness, Epstein offers techniques that can shift habitual patterns of negative self-talk and criticism.

Jampolsky, G. G. (1979). *Love is letting go of fear*. New York: Bantam Books. Very simple and clear; beginning steps in adopting psychological change for spiritual purposes.

Jampolsky, G. G. (1985). *Goodbye to guilt*. New York: Bantam Books. A very clear exposition, based on Jampolsky's study of A Course in Miracles.

Jampolsky, G. G. (1999). *Forgiveness: The greatest healer of all*. Hillsboro, OR: Beyond Words Publishing. Jampolsky describes the transformations that forgiveness can bring about and offers practical strategies for letting go of long-held resentments.

Jampolsky, G. G. (2000). *Teach only love: The twelve principles of attitudinal healing* (2nd ed.). Hillsboro, OR: Beyond Words Publishing.

Lerner, H. (1985). *Dance of anger: A woman's guide to changing patterns of intimate relationships*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

Lerner, H. (1990). *Dance of intimacy: A woman's guide to courageous acts in key relationships*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

Lerner, H. (2002). *Dance of deception: Pretending and truth telling in women's lives*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers. Lerner's books describe the ways in which perceptions and beliefs can influence authentic expression of difficult feelings, such as anger, and outlines practical techniques for self-expression and forgiveness.

Maguth Nezu, C., & Nezu, A. M. (2004). *Awakening self-esteem: Spiritual and psychological techniques to enhance your wellbeing*. Oakland CA: New Harbinger Publications. These authors offer practical suggestions, visualizations, and relaxation techniques

to assist in addressing self-imposed blocks to self-acceptance.

Sofield, L., Juliano, C., & Mammett, R. (1990). *Design for wholeness: Dealing with anger, learning to forgive, building self-esteem*. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press. Drawing from the Christian tradition, these authors present a model and a case study for understanding and dealing with anger and forgiveness, and developing self-esteem.

Meditation

Bodian, S. (1999). *Meditation for dummies*. Forest City: IDG Books Worldwide. A helpful overview of meditative techniques.

Chodran, P. (2000). *When things fall apart: Heart advice for difficult times*. Boston: Shambhala Press.

Chodran, P. (2002). *The places that scare you: A guide to fearlessness in difficult times*. Boston: Shambhala Press.

Chodran, P. (2004). *Start where you are: A guide to compassionate living*. Boston: Shambhala Press. Pema Chodron is a Buddhist nun who teaches meditation techniques in a clear and practical fashion that is easily accessible to Western readers and is particularly useful for people coping with serious challenges in their lives.

Easwaran, E. (1978). *Meditation*. Tomales, CA: Nilgiri Press. Simple and excellent.

Easwaran, E. (1991). *God makes the rivers to flow*. Tomales, CA: Nilgiri Press. A collection of passages for meditative reading, selected and explained by Eknath Easwaran, a modern spiritual master.

Easwaran, E. (1993). *The unstruck bell: The powerful new strategies for using a mantram*. Tomales, CA: Nilgiri Press. In this book Easwaran describes the value of working with mantra.

Gawler, I. (1996). *Meditation: Pure and Simple*. Melbourne: Hill of Content. A simple and excellent guide on meditation.

Goleman, D. (2003). *Destructive emotions: A scientific dialogue with the Dalai Lama*. New York: Bantam Books. This book brings together recent scientific evidence of changes in the brain related to Buddhist practices of mindfulness and meditation.

Hahn, T. N. (1976). *The miracle of mindfulness*. Boston: Beacon Press. A simple, profound book on self-awareness by a Buddhist master.

Hanh, T. N. (1992). *Peace is every step*. New York: Bantam Press. A Vietnamese Buddhist monk, Thich Nhat Hanh writes clearly and profoundly on the value of mindfulness in day-to-day living.

Kabat-Zinn, J. (1990). *Full catastrophe living*. New York: Delacorte Press. A comprehensive account of the use of awareness and meditation for healing.

Kabat-Zinn, J. (1994). *Wherever you go, there you are*. New York: Hyperion.

Kabat-Zinn, J., & Kabat-Zinn, M. (1998). *Everyday blessings: The practice of mindfulness*

in parenting. New York: Hyperion Pres. Sharing their own experience as parents, the Kabat-Zinns describe how mindfulness and awareness can decrease stress and enhance family relationships.

LeShan, L. (1974). *How to meditate*. New York: Bantam Books. Practical advice from a psychologist who has been a pioneer in cancer self-help.

Radha, Swami S. (1980). *Mantras: Words of power*. Kootenay Bay, BC: Timeless Books. The use of mantra for meditation by a modern spiritual master.

Extending Our Ideas of Reality: The Paranormal

Goswami, A. (1993). *The self-aware universe*. New York: Tarcher/Putnam. A scientist explains how consciousness creates the material world.

Jahn, R. G., & Dunne, B. J. (1987). *Margins of reality*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace. A very accessible account of a long and thorough program of paranormal research, and speculations on an expanded view of “reality.”

Kason, Y. (1994). *A farther shore*. Toronto: Harper Collins. An account of near-death and other spiritual experiences in the lives of the author, a physician, and of patients in her practice.

Spirituality

Berke, D. (1995). *The gentle smile*. New York: Crossroad. A wonderfully gentle account of bringing compassion into everyday life; based on A Course in Miracles.

Boorstein, S. (1996). *Don't just do something, sit there: A mindfulness retreat with Sylvia Boorstein*. New York: HarperCollins.

Boorstein, S. (1997). *It's easier than you think: The Buddhist way to happiness*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.

Boorstein, S. (2003). *Pay attention, for goodness sake*. New York: Ballantine Books.

Boorstein, S., & Iebell, S. (1997). *That's funny you don't look like a Buddhist: Why Jews are attracted to Buddhism and how both traditions can enhance our lives*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco. Sylvia Boorstein is a practising Buddhist who also embraces her Jewish traditions.

Borysenko, J. (2002). *A woman's journey to God: Finding the female path*. New York: Riverhead Books. Borysenko outlines the spiritual development of women in the context of patriarchal religious systems and discusses the importance of spiritual re-connection.

Bynner, W. (Trans.). (1962). *The way of life (the tao te ching)*. New York: Capricorn Books. There are many translations of this beautiful, classic, sixth-century Chinese text by Laotzu (or Lao Tso).

Chopra, D. (2000). *How to find God*. New York: Random House. Chopra discusses the role of religion and spirituality in today's society and the desire of many to return

to God.

- Cooper, D. (2002). *God as a verb: Kabbalah and the practice of mystical Judaism*. New York: Riverhead Books. This is a practical and accessible discussion of the mystical practices of Judaism, including meditation, the practice of loving-kindness, and equanimity.
- A Course in Miracles*. (1975). Mill Valley, CA: Foundation for Inner Peace. A truly remarkable book for the dedicated seeker. Includes daily lessons to deepen spiritual awareness.
- Cunningham, A. J. (2002). *Bringing spirituality into your healing journey*. Toronto: Key Porter Books. This book describes Level 3 of the Healing Journey Program, complete with exercises and examples of participants' work.
- Easwaran, E. (1996). *Original goodness*. Berkeley: Nilgiri Press. My personal favourite among Eswaran's many wonderful books.
- Easwaran, E. (1996). *The undiscovered country: Exploring the promise of death*. Tomales, CA: Nilgiri Press. A spiritual approach to learning more from death; like all of Easwaran's books, beautifully written and highly accessible.
- Happold, F. C. (1981). *Mysticism*. New York: Penguin. Contains a good general discussion of the subject, and many first-hand accounts of spiritual experiences.
- Huxley, A. (1970). *The perennial philosophy*. New York: Harper and Row. A classical account of the ideas underlying all religion; a good starting point for the thoughtful beginner.
- Kornfield, J. (1993). *A path with heart*. New York: Bantam Books. A book on the spiritual journey by a well-known Buddhist thinker and writer.
- Kornfield, J. (2001). *After the ecstasy, the laundry: Hope the heart grows on the spiritual path*. New York: Bantam Books. Kornfield, a psychologist and Buddhist monk, writes about the practice of Buddhism in the context of Western culture.
- Krishnamurti, J. (1976). *Krishnamurti's notebook*. New York: Harper and Row. Krishnamurti is a modern spiritual prophet who has written many books; this one is a diary of his personal reflections.
- Lawrence, B. (1963). *The practice of the presence of God*. Mt. Vernon, NY: Peter Pauper Press. A Christian classic.
- Levine, S. (1987). *Healing into life and death*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Press, Doubleday. Levine's books bear the stamp of his own profound development.
- Levine, S. (1997). *A year to live: How to live this year as if it were your last*. New York: Bell Tower. Exactly as it says; doing the exercise.
- Mascaro, J. (Trans.). (1973). *The Dhammapada*. London: Penguin Books. The classic third-century Buddhist work on the path of liberation, love, life, and the will of God.
- Mascaro, J. (Trans.). (1988). *The Bhagavad Gita*. London: Penguin Books. A recommended translation of this Indian classic spiritual work.

- Merton, L. T. (1971). *Contemplative prayer*. New York: Doubleday. One of many fine books by an eloquent, modern Christian monastic.
- Moore, T. (1992). *Care of the soul: A guide to cultivating depth and sacredness in everyday life*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers. Moore writes about becoming the curator of one's soul by honouring one's spiritual needs in everyday life.
- Peers, E. A. (Trans.). (1991). *The way of perfection: Teresa of Avila*. New York: Doubleday. A translation of writings of the great sixteenth-century Christian mystic.
- Pine-Coffin, R. S. (Trans.). (1961). *Saint Augustine, Confessions*. London: Penguin. Many translations and editions of this classic work exist.
- Psychotherapy and The Song of Prayer* (supplements to *A Course in Miracles*). (1996). New York: Penguin. Further channelled material from the source of *A Course in Miracles*.
- Radha, Swami S. (1978). *Kundalini yoga for the West*. Spokane: Timeless Books. This monumental work is for the dedicated student who wishes to undertake personal spiritual growth from a yogic perspective.
- Radha, Swami S. (1987). *The Divine Light Invocation*. Spokane; Timeless books. Exercises leading up to the powerful invocation of light, as a symbol of spirituality.
- Tolle, E. (1997). *The power of now*. Vancouver: Namaste. A living spiritual master describes a readily understandable route to the spiritual domain.
- Wapnick, K. (1989). *Talk given on A Course in Miracles*. Roscoe, NY: Foundation for "A Course in Miracles." This is a very clear exposition of the main ideas of the course by its principal exponent.
- Yogananda, P. (1993). *Autobiography of a yogi* (12th ed.). Self-Realization Fellowship. A classical work; an account of the development of a spiritual master. Eminently readable.
- Yogananda, P. (1995). *God talks with Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita*. Los Angeles: Self-Realization Fellowship. A monumental translation and exposition of the Indian classic, by a modern spiritual master, living in the West.
- Zukav, G. (1989). *The seat of the soul*. New York: Fireside. A fine simple account of the spiritualizing of everyday life.

Assessing Unconventional Remedies

- Cassileth, B., & Deng, G. (2004). Complementary and alternative therapies for cancer. *Oncologist*, 9(1), 80–89.
- Kaptchuk, T., & Croucher, M. (1987). *The healing arts*. New York: Summit Books.

