

Healing Through the Body

By Judy Scher, D.C.

A chiropractor learns to listen to the body's story

There are different ways of thinking about how to work with a discomfort, dis-ease or ailment. Many of us have worked with the conventional idea that when we hurt, we need to fix the "problem"-as though we were replacing a broken part in a machine. In this paradigm, which I refer to as "curing", a person basically seeks treatment to feel better, to relieve the discomfort. However, this supports the assumption that parts of us are disconnected from the whole. Usually this type of treatment is effective for short-term solutions and can be life-saving, as when we need to buy more time so that further healing can occur. When this approach is used, however, as a replacement for healing, we continue to neglect the parts of ourselves that have yet to join the community within our body. Mechanistic approaches usually utilize stimulation, and/or suppression to gain the desired results. Usually the person hasn't learned anything in the process because we have sought to control the situation and desired outcome.

There are other ways of addressing our bodies-ways that are supported by leading-edge scientific explanations of matter, time and space. Ways of thinking that support the idea that the whole is more than the sum of the parts-vitalistic ways of thinking that

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are ancient, feminine in nature, invisible and that require us to support the body with nurturance, safety and

reassurance. Ways that help us say to ourselves: "I allow," "I release my resistance", "I will learn about me", "I am open to change". This perspective allows us to go into deepening wholeness, holiness, integration and healing. In this context, the word "heal", originally coming from the word "hal" or "hale", means to become "whole". The significance of striving toward our wholeness is that we start to claim all the parts of ourselves, not just the parts that feel good, but also the parts of ourselves that have been isolated, alienated and traumatized. Then we are free to feel all our feelings-not just the ones that feel good.

As a chiropractor, I facilitate the healing process with the body, primarily through the spinal structures which are literally at the core of our being. Often, when I first place my hand on someone's body and feel their spine and feel the muscles of the neck and back, I feel its resistance to movement, its sense of constriction, the lack of respiration, and the asymmetry of the shoulders and the pelvis. I acknowledge these places with a gentle touch and very specific contacts, thus telling the body I hear its story. The

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tensions and torsions reveal to my hands wounding from long ago, maybe from birth, maybe from just yesterday. One area of the spine cries. Another area may hold itself in military rigidity. Overwhelmed with trying to guard and protect ourselves, we have become so immune to what our body tries to tell us that it becomes too painful to even listen. So we close off parts of

our awareness. The messages go unheeded. And so our history marks us with misaligned posture, faulty gait, digestive problems, respiratory and immune problems, sleep disturbance, headache, depression or worse. By this time, we feel held captive by our body as it cries and moans and speaks of past neglect that can no longer be tolerated. We think our body has turned on us and has become our enemy when all along it has been supporting us and tolerating the abuses we have imposed on it.

These "problems" are our history. Our body is our diary. Our body has recorded our reaction to every fall, insult, abuse, and overuse that has happened in our life. Most of our live unconsciously. Playing out the roles that have been given to use, so we never consider that our real life might catch up with us. But it does. Our body holds our secrets and our stresses as long as it can-of the shame we felt, of the love that wasn't there, of the acknowledgment of what is. Isn't that that all of us want, to be seen and met just where we are so secrets can be let go and long-held tension released? I have witnessed that the body is simply and profoundly capable of healing, even with the most chronic challenges, if dealt with patiently and with trust in its capacity to achieve wholeness.

Time and again, I observe that the most gentle adjustments, the most specific contacts, lead to the most profound releases. Releasing in the body may come in the form of muscles letting go, body tissues changing their tone to create more space, ligaments and connective tissue shifting, bones altering their position, emotions liberating, all of this oftentimes leading to life changes. The person may shake and vent rage or cry, or just breathe into the areas that have not experienced movement in years, and then realize a new level of emotional-physical reorganization. It is a new body I feel the next time, a new experience of that person experiencing her or himself.

We cannot force healing to occur or even will it to happen. We must simply be in the path of change when it is ready to occur so that we may reap the rewards of our diligence and have compassion for the stories the body recites as it makes its way toward greater integration, understanding and wholeness.

(Dr. Judy Scher is director of the Scher Chiropractic Center, in Santa Fe, New Mexico where she utilizes, among other tools, the method of Network Spinal Analysis. This article originally appeared in the magazine Live from Santa Fe, in the May, 1998 issue)