

## Wholeness, Health, and Healing - Introduction

David A. Carlson

March 30, 2022



Everyone wants to be happy, but no one can be truly happy if they are in poor health. Undeniably, health is one of our most precious possessions, and yet we don't seem to miss it until we no longer possess it. When young we often take our good health for granted. Yet, as we age, health concerns become increasingly important to us. A well-known medical doctor, Andrew Weil, has observed "that old people often torment themselves with three general concerns: a) they don't want to suffer; b) they don't want to be a burden to others; c) they want the remainder of their lives to be meaningful. (1) As I said, no one can be fully happy if they are sick in mind, body, or spirit, but truly we do not appreciate our good health until after we have become ill. It is better to take care of our health (health maintenance) before we have problems, and so we need to elevate our awareness about our health. This is the purpose of this essay: to reflect on some of the current thinking about health and healing, and to suggest certain habits we can adopt in order to live a healthier

lifestyle. As has been said, "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

There has been an elevation of awareness. At the present time we are witnessing a blossoming interest in every conceivable kind of healing therapy, from acupuncture to crystal therapy, to guided imagery, to massage therapy, to sound therapy, to tai chi, to yoga. (2) More people, of all ages, are becoming health conscious than ever before. And yet, sadly, for many people health is still an elusive dream. Obesity, which might be even more dangerous to health than smoking, is on the rise, and with it many related diseases. The fast-food industry continues to make effort to improve the food they serve, but many people, especially teenagers, are still "fast-food junkies." To add insult to injury, the cost of health care is increasing, and the prices of many drugs and medications are increasing. What is to be done in this situation? In the opinion of this author, our best strategy is to practice a healthy lifestyle. Good health is within the reach of most, if not all of us, if we simply adopt healthier habits.

Of course, in the original pattern of things, being created by God and living according to the original principles of life, we would be well capable of living in a state of optimal health, both physically and spiritually. Because of the fall, however, we lost that original standard, and our physical body has become subject to various sicknesses and ill health. Thus, we must now heal ourselves. The meaning of "healing," in its most general sense, is "to make whole" and the present essay is concerned with basic ideas and fundamental practices which can empower us in our efforts either to recover our health, or to maintain it, if we are well; in short, to make ourselves "whole" again. Andrew Weil says One of the tenets of the integrative medicine that I practice is that health and illness involve more than the physical body; good medicine must address whole persons, meaning bodies, minds, and spirits. (3)

After offering a brief survey of some of the current thinking about health and healing therapies, I will be in a position to offer some basic suggestions as to how we might be able to return to the original way of healthy living.

One of the truly significant keys to good health is the human mind. In my opinion this cannot be overstated. The crucial importance of the mind in maintaining health is coming more and more to be recognized in very significant ways, health begins in our mind (our attitudes, motivations, hopes,

expectations, etc.). Rather than being something entirely biological physical, it is more our attitudes and ways of thinking about ourselves and the world that significantly affect our health. We must take to heart a certain health-promoting discipline in our lives, and it carries over into good habits and lifestyle practices. This is because the body "listens" to the mind, the body listens to whatever our mind is telling it. Upon this important mental foundation is established the body's own capacity for self-healing. The notion that the body is able to heal itself is another significant key to good health. According to current research and thinking, our physical body seems to be endowed with an enormously effective healing capacity. It seems to have inherent within it a "healing system," which can unleash its incredible healing power and virtually heal itself, if the right conditions are met, such conditions including the elimination of toxins from our body, our not smoking, our keeping our weight under control, maintaining a proper diet, adequate physical exercise, etc.

One important consideration in one's achieving good health is for one to take personal responsibility. Given this, probably the first step for many people is not the latest vitamin or exercise machine, but good health counseling. With even just a small change in one's thinking, one could easily alter one's daily habits, and with this, he or she could be well on their way to dramatically improved health.

There are a number of new perspectives in the area of healing which I think it is very helpful to keep in mind. In this essay, I want to touch on some think it is very helpful to keep in mind. In this essay, I want to touch on some of the current thinking in health and healing, and then, on that basis, to introduce certain basic concepts. I do not intend to cover ground that has already been extensively covered elsewhere, apart from mentioning it. There are many excellent books (4) one can read on diet, exercise, personal hygiene, and even healthy aging. That groundwork has been laid and I have tried to include some of these books in the bibliography for the reader's reference. These books convey a lot of traditional and time-honored common tried to include some of these books in the bibliography for the reader's sense and practical advice for maintaining one's health, and for healing one's afflictions, without the attendant costs and medicines associated with repeated visits to the doctor or hospital. This is not to say that we should not go to the doctor or hospital, however. Seeking the guidance of a medical professional is sometimes necessary, even crucial. What I am saying here is that there is much that one can do "at home" to maintain good health, and reduce the need for more professional help. In any case, when one needs to see a doctor, one should certainly go to see one.

In this essay, I seek to go beyond the traditional thinking, and touch upon what to me are some exciting new areas of thought. In order to do so, I rely upon the categories outlined in Unification Thought (5), specifically: a) the relationship between the mind and body; b) the relationship between people, especially the husband and wife relationship; and c) one's relationship to one's environment. These categories, all of which emphasize the importance of relationship, provide a convenient way of systematizing current thinking about health and healing. I find this current thinking about health and healing exciting and inspiring because it brings important means of healing easily within the reach of all of us. Among the many advocates of new age healing one might include Joan Borysenko, Deepak Chopra, Napoleon Hill, Kevin Trudeau, and Andrew Weil. Let us first consider the mind and body relationship.

### **The Mind and Body Relationship**

One of the new concepts being talked about is the new understanding we have about the mind/body relationship. Joan Borysenko, Andrew Weil, and Deepak Chopra all have written books on healing which treat the mind/body connection, and these books are well-worth reading. They offer helpful insights and practical suggestions, as well as strategies and activities for the reader who is seeking enhanced health. Let me briefly consider some of their leading ideas. I will begin with Joan Borysenko.

John Borysenko is the author of *Minding the Body, Mending the Mind*, (6) and is a strong advocate of

"mind-body philosophy." She is co-founder and director of the Mind/Body Clinic, a service of the Section on Behavioral Medicine, at the New England Deaconess Hospital and Instructor in Medicine at Harvard Medical School. She notes that many studies have provided examples of the mind's power over the body. She holds that the mind seems to have a profound effect on immunity, and advocates the new science of psycho-neuro-immunology (P.N.I.). Our feelings, thoughts, and emotions are all interrelated and have a powerful impact on both our sense of well-being, and on our health. What we see . . . is a rich and intricate two-way communication system linking the mind, the immune system, and potentially all other systems; a pathway through which our emotions - our hopes and fears - can affect the body's ability to defend itself. (7)

She acknowledges the accepted notion that "we decide about our health habits - whether we exercise, what we eat, or whether we smoke or drink"(8), as part of our lifestyle. But, she further claims, "every bit as important is that our minds have the ability to spin out countless imaginings that are quite real to the body, imaginings that unleash the hormones and neuropeptides that tell the body what to do."(9) Most of us are unable to control well certain negative mental fantasies, especially those of which we are not conscious. Worse, we are often not even aware of their negative influence. For example, one should even take care not to fall asleep listening to the radio or television since this can have a certain (negative) influence on us subconsciously. She writes in an optimistic tone that: "We are already perfect - our essential core is peaceful and whole. The work of healing is in peeling away the barriers of fear and past conditioning that keep us unaware of our true nature of wholeness and love. (10) After sounding this optimistic note, she continues and says: "We are entering a new level in the scientific understanding of mechanisms by which faith, belief, and imagination can actually unlock the mysteries of healing."(11) These qualities (faith, belief, and imagination) are increasingly being seen as vitally important in the quest for health. I will investigate these special qualities more extensively in a later chapter in this volume.

Borysenko holds that our immune system can itself be conditioned. We can and do program our own minds. Conditioning is a powerful bridge between mind and body, because "the body cannot tell the difference between events that are actual threats to survival and events that are present in thought alone."(12) Thus, we should not awfulize (the "tendency to escalate a situation into its worst possible conclusion") (13) but should try and think in a more positive manner. Meditation is often helpful in this regard. "Awfulizing...can be a key factor in tipping the balance toward illness or health."(14) She also points out that "people who feel in control of life can withstand an enormous amount of change and thrive on it."(15) At the same time, "people who feel helpless can hardly cope at all"(16) with the daily responsibilities of living. It is in this connection that she writes of the importance of attitude and of having strong faith. Indeed, she notes that for many patients "the key factor seems to be that they had strong faith in something that prevented them from feeling helpless."(17) She finds that faith and belief are two of the most powerful emotions people can have, and that many patients attribute their healing to their faith or belief. She has found that "Thoughts of God, when brought to the forefront, are much more powerful than when mixed into the background of daily concerns."(18) She emphasizes that "the most pressing question for us, then, is how to reconnect with hope, faith, and love, and how to use these states for minding the body and mending the mind."(19) Again, meditation can be very helpful. These are thoughts which Unificationists should feel quite comfortable with. They certainly characterize those who are striving to practice the ideals of Unification Thought.

Finally, Borysenko reports on the findings of a Harvard study in which it was found "that mental health is the most important predictor of physical health."(20). Furthermore, "numerous studies have shown that attitude may be a mechanism of profound importance in determining the course of at least some cancers."(21) Among the attitudes she advises as ways of developing a stress-hardy personality include "commitment... control...and challenge."(22). In other words, be involved, be proactive, and believe that life's changes stimulate personal growth rather than threatening the status quo