



life & Health

Discover the Gift in Being Sick

Dr. Bernie Siegel says problems are "... God's reset button."¹ Illness is a dramatic signal that we need to make changes in our attitude and in our lives. Does illness happen to us willy-nilly at the whim of fate or God ... or ... Do we play a role in the creation of our illnesses?

Often—knowingly or unknowingly—we've abused our bodies with poor eating habits and a lack of exercise. How often, however, do we recognize the role emotions play in our health? "You may hear the cause of cancer and all disease is parasites, fungi, and so on. This is not entirely true. You see, in order to be susceptible to parasites, fungi and mold, your immune system has to be burdened. The number one cause of the immune system being burdened is your repressed emotions, ..." says Dr. Theresa Dale, an experienced natural health practitioner.²

A recent study also suggests emotions weaken our immune system increasing our susceptibility to the common cold. We're being exposed on a regular basis to the virus that gives us cold symptoms. The study found that stress and a lack of supportive relationships were the two main reasons people succumbed to the cold virus.³

It took many years for me to acknowledge I was repressing my emotions. I was 11 years old when my mother died. My two younger sisters and I were not allowed to go to her funeral and within days no one mentioned our mother in our presence. Some cultures do not express emotions readily and believe the best way to handle grief, anger and other strong emotions is to ignore them. I had no idea I had suppressed the grief. I should have known as my throat muscles would tighten and my voice would thicken whenever I was reminded of my mother. At 26 years of age, I visited her gravesite for the first time. I was surprised when I started crying and continued to do so for several hours. Finally in my mid-forties I realized I had suppressed the grief as well as a lot of other emotions. A turning point came one day when I switched on the television. As I flipped through the channels, a group of children discussing the death of a parent caught my attention. The children were being coached to express their feelings about their loss. I started to sob uncontrollably. It was baffling to my husband but when I finally stopped crying, it felt like I was starting to heal. Learning to openly express my emotions is not a comfortable

process. Even today many emotions cause my throat muscles to tighten and I fight to hold back tears. I am discovering the more I allow myself to feel my emotions the more I accept and love myself for who I am.

Creating Illness

Our healing begins when we are willing to look at our part in creating our illness. This does not mean we blame ourselves! It means we accept and love ourselves. We learn to acknowledge that our feelings and fears are valid. Each of us suppress feelings and sometimes feel we are horrible people to have some of our feelings. We have been taught by society, by our parents, by our religion that they are not good feelings. We need to change this. We need to recognize that these feelings have something to teach us about our fears and how we view ourselves.

If you feel resentful towards someone, start by accepting how you feel. It's okay to feel this way. It doesn't make you, or the other, a bad person. This step is important because it is part of accepting ourselves for who we are. Try to find out why you feel this resentment. What feeling about yourself is generating the resentment? Is it because that person has a quality you would like to have? This is the hard part because it forces us to be honest with ourselves.

When we start learning to face our emotions in this way, we start looking at life differently. We recognize that another person's actions or words will only bother us emotionally if we have something to learn. Eventually, we come to the point where we can thank the person we may previously have blamed for our problems. That person shed light on something we needed to look at within ourselves. Once we've learned how to deal with our emotions, we are able to extend to others love and compassion regardless of their actions or words. As we make the changes necessary for healing, many of us discover life has given us a gift. The gift of who we have become.

Four Tools For Healing

Here are 4 tools to help uncover feelings, discover the purpose for our feelings, and allow healing. When using these tools, you may want to ask three questions: What am I feeling? Why am I feeling this way? What do I have to learn?

- 🍃 *Find someone who will listen* - someone you feel comfortable talking to about your feelings. If you're not comfortable talking with someone you know, you may want to contact a member of the clergy, a 12-step group or a counselor. An imaginary wise friend is another option or talking to yourself in the mirror.

As friends or parents, many of us fall into the trap of trying to fix or make things better rather than just listening. It is important to find someone who will listen and offer a minimum of advice—someone who will validate you and your feelings.

This isn't an easy step for many of us: "One of the most common fears people have is expressing themselves honestly to other people. We fear loss of love or respect, and we can easily ignore our own needs because of this fear. If the needs are important enough, they may find a means of expression in illness or symptoms."⁴

🍃 ***The Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT)*** can also be effective and it can be done without having to share private feelings with another. For this technique it is necessary to make a statement concerning an emotionally-charged memory and repeat the statement while tapping key points on the body. EFT works with the body's subtle energy system. "Conventional psychotherapy focuses on the memory. Energy psychology focuses on the energy disturbance as well as the memory. ... Focusing on the energy disturbance ... can resolve the emotional problem so rapidly that it can be hard to believe ..."⁵

🍃 ***Write or keep a journal*** - You may find it helpful to play soft music while writing in your journal.

One study involving a group who were unemployed, found that those who wrote about their feelings of frustration, fear and hope in a personal journal, had a much higher rate of finding employment.

James Pennebaker, a psychologist, says to really get to the core of your emotion, write uninterrupted for 20 minutes for several consecutive days. On the fourth day "the experience will shake you up. Anger and grief associated with your most private and painful memory will surface, feelings you hadn't realized were still simmering inside you. By the fourth day of writing about this trauma, you'll begin to feel better. By the fifth, a sense of calm and resolution will wash over you."⁶

It often helps to imagine you are writing to someone you trust.

🍃 ***Contemplate or meditate.*** Take time every day to relax and go within.

You can use visualization during this time to help you heal. The power of visualization has been demonstrated in sports. One study out of Russia found

that athletes who spent 75% of their training time visualizing and only 25% of the time actually playing had greater improvement in their game over those who played the game 100% of their training time or with less time visualizing.

In *Healing Yourself*, Rossman says "...simply taking regular time to become relaxed and quiet in order to evaluate one's life on an ongoing basis can even eliminate the need to experience illness."⁴

The sound HU, sung softly like the word hue, during contemplation can help you tap into the answers within yourself. And, it can help you master challenging changes in your life. This sound has brought daily miracles to my life.

References

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