

Thoughts on Sickness and Healing, Part 1

By Patricia A. Muehsam, M.D. Last Updated: November 28, 2010 Created: May 31, 2010

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Healing is that process of allowing for our return to wholeness, this mending of our brokenness. (Photos.com)

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While doing research for a book project, I happened upon some inspiring writings that I'd like to share with you: thoughts on sickness and healing. What follows are some of these words of wisdom.

In part 2, I'll share a few suggestions on how you might apply these ideas in your daily life.

On sickness. "All Sickness Is Homesickness" is a book written by Dianne Connelly on illness, healing, and living. She is a scholar and practitioner of five-element acupuncture.

She writes: "All sickness is homesickness; homesick for ourselves and for each other. ... It is a call home to the ground of being. ... All of our daily events, events born of the day, are our journey manifest, our call to come home."

Rachel Naomi Remen, M.D., a physician with spiritual leanings, suggests that for Westerners without a spiritual framework or practice, illness can be a "form of meditation"—an opportunity to become quiet, to reflect, and to reevaluate our lives.

On healing. The etymology of "heal" comes from the Anglo-Saxon root meaning "whole."

I like to think of healing as a returning home to a state of wholeness. We are always whole, but we may not feel whole.

We may feel broken, incomplete, in need of mending. Healing is that process of allowing for our return to wholeness, this mending of our brokenness.

Ted Kaptchuk, O.M.D., a scholar of traditional Chinese medicine and author of "The Web That Has No Weaver," writes: "Genuine healing is a journey ... into a broken and hurt self, the purpose of which is to encounter a depth of humanity deeper than the tragedy of any illness ... into disorder and brokenness, whether it is curable or incurable, to find an intactness and reconciliation that profoundly reflects and manifests the genuine self. ...

"Healing is a crucible to encounter the source of our being in worst times; it is our genuine and potentially intact response to chaos, anguish, and suffering ... an opportunity to uncover the truth of who we really are. ... Healing is not something we do only when we are sick; it is part of the process and journey of life."

Lovely, prosaic, and poetic as these notions may seem, they may seem difficult to apply, given the practical realities of our daily lives.

In Part 2, I'll offer suggestions on how to experiment with these ideas: on ways to be with sickness and to find healing—all paths to finding your way home.

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Thoughts on Sickness and Healing, Part 2

By Patricia A. Muehsam, M.D. Last Updated: November 28, 2010 Created: June 7, 2010

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Journaling can be a good way to slow down and be present with what is going on for you. (Photos.com)

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In Part 1, I shared some thoughts on sickness and on healing: thoughts of my own and thoughts of others that have inspired mine.

As I reflected, lovely, prosaic, and poetic as these notions may seem, they may feel difficult to apply given the practical realities of our daily lives.

Here, in Part 2, I'll offer suggestions on how to experiment with these: on ways to be with sickness and on ways to find healing—all paths to finding your way home.

First, experiment with being in the moment. Be in this very moment as you read these words. Not in the next moment, not in the past moment. Not in your thoughts of the future, worries, or reflections on the past. Just be here in this moment.

Being with the breath can be the easiest way to experience being in the moment. See "The Omnipotent Power of Breath," theepochtimes.com/n2/content/view/30474/

Experiment with meditation. It's not about not having thoughts or quieting the monkey mind. It's just another experience of being in the moment. Take a class. Read this article: theepochtimes.com/n2/content/view/34154/

Try journaling. Write off the top of your head whatever you are thinking and feeling. Journaling can be a good way to slow down and be present with what's going on for you.

Then try writing about your dreams and desires. Don't limit yourself. Don't let any circumstances of your present life inhibit you: finances, relationships, health concerns, work, or geography. Write in the present tense.

Be intimate with yourself. Love, accept, and cherish yourself unconditionally. All of you. Your blemishes, your tarnish—all of you. Your fears, your insecurities, your anxieties, and your upsets. Accept and cherish them all. Be gentle with yourself as you would with a child or a beloved pet.

Be even gentler with yourself. Delete "should" from your vocabulary.

Feed your inner child. Dialogue with a picture of yourself as a young child, real or imagined. Ask the little one what he or she needs. Try to give yourself some of that.

Explore intimacy with another: the intimacy that reveals your true self, that self that you allow yourself to love and cherish—unconditionally. Blemishes, tarnish, fears, insecurities, and anxieties. All of you. If this notion is a hard one for you, or it feels scary or stressful, then just consider becoming friends with a pet. Or a child.

And speaking of children, take time to watch them play. Feel their spontaneity, their unselfconsciousness. Breathe some of that in. Experiment with being a little childlike, a little bit, every day.

Experiment with faith. Experiment with surrendering. If you're a non-believer, then pretend. Pretend that you are not in charge. Experiment with surrendering to something greater than yourself, even if it's just the

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