

Complementary Medicine

Today I will continue the series of articles on the process of healing. After fifteen years in medical practice I can tell you that not all patients heal according to the textbooks I read while in training. What has become a fascination for me is the psychological component of healing. I have discovered that healing is dependent on a combination of factors. Those factors include physical, emotional, mental and even spiritual elements.

Several patients of mine have commented to me that they appreciate my holistic approach to healing. I feel a better description is complementary. I therefore refrain from the use of terms such as holistic, naturopathic, eastern or alternative. It makes no difference to me what patients do to heal themselves. Whether it is from a pill that I prescribe or from acupuncture, I don't care. All forms of treatment are acceptable as long as they help.

This is why I like the term complementary medicine over the other terms. Complementary does not claim to be superior. Many healing practitioners can get narcissistic and prideful about their particular field as the best or the only way to provide care. I like to practice with the attitude that all modalities are equally complementary.

Personally, I treat patients with what it is that I know works for me. I don't try to cross over into other areas in which I have no expertise. I merely educate patients that if my treatments fail, then they need to seek out other answers on their own. I will give suggestions and education and ask them to seek out the modalities that work for them.

I have no scientific data to back this up. I do, however, have a great deal of experience. Sometimes science does not provide the answer. There are phenomena that occur that are outside the realm of scientific explanation. For instance, spontaneous healings are not explained by scientific standards, but they do occur. Near death experiences where patients temporarily leave their body are also outside the proof of science.

The psychology being discussed here is called "subjectivity." It is experiential, but not measurable. To clarify this, consider a beautiful sunset. You can experience beauty in a sunset, but you can't measure it. Beauty is subjective. Next time you are at Sutter Lakeside Hospital, take a look at the landscaping, fountains, and walking trails. The grounds of the hospital are made beautiful to help the healing process.

To illustrate further, think about eating a delicious peach. Your experience of the flavor is subjective. You can't tell someone else what a peach tastes like. You must eat a peach to know its flavor.

I have a story that can help your understanding of this material. During World War II in London, many new born infants were orphaned. For safety, they were sent to countryside institutions. They failed to thrive even though all of their physical needs were met. All of the scientific standards for infant care were provided, but the babies became sick. They failed to eat, lost weight and were listless. Many of these children died.

Scientific inquiry failed to find any explanation. There were no nutritional or infectious reasons for the high mortality rate. This frustrated the doctors who had no reasonable answers. Finally it was decided to bring in some professional nannies that began to coddle and hold the infants. The nannies gave them care, attention and love.

Guess what happened? The infants began to thrive. They started eating, gained weight and the death rate dropped. I discovered this story by Dr. David Hawkins who concluded the story by stating, "This is interesting because it demonstrates the limitations of the scientific model, which excludes the very essence of life. Love is neither definable nor measurable; it cannot be weighed or located in time or space, yet, to the human infant, it is crucial."

Love as a source of healing is complementary. You can do some easy things to complement your life in loving ways. Here are some suggestions. Get a dog or a cat. Join a church. Tend a garden. Watch the sunset. Eat a peach.

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