

The body's energy centers

Today I will continue the series of articles on the process of healing. I have fifteen years of experience in medical practice and I can say 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 to how humans heal. I have discovered that healing is dependent on a combination of factors. Those factors include physical, emotional, mental and even spiritual elements.

We are all familiar with the impact of stress on our health. Examples include the physical stress on our bodies from our work or from an injury. Just living on earth and walking for a lifetime can be stressful on our joints. My focus in this article however is the impact of mental stress. Psychological stress can contribute to a variety of medical problems including high blood pressure, stomach ulcers, migraine headaches, anxiety, depression and infertility. It also impacts the healing of the foot, which is my specialty.

The history of my interest in the field of mind/body medicine came about when I noticed how my patients healed after surgery. I observed an interesting relationship between the patients overall attitude about life and the success of my operations. What I noticed was that the technical execution of the operation could have been perfect, but the patient did not do well.

The converse was also evident, some patients healed very well with no problems, but the operation itself was less than my optimal intentions. It seemed that the technical execution of surgery was not as important as the patient's attitude. If they have a positive attitude, they will do well. If a negative attitude is present they don't tend to do as well. The surgery itself seems to be a secondary factor. This observation is not 100%, but it does have a high correlation in my experience.

Another interesting finding in my practice is when a patient comes in with no observable findings, yet an extremely painful foot. I can't seem to find anything wrong, but the patient is in terrible pain. What I uncover sometimes in these cases is a purely psychological problem that has its root in ancient Indian medicine.

In traditional Indian medicine there are seven energetic centers in the human body known as "chakras." Each chakra has a psychological connection to the mind and when there is a disturbance of mind, it will manifest as a physical problem. The part of the body in which the illness will arise is related to the specific chakra and what type of emotional problem the patient is experiencing. Interesting stuff, but not found in any medical textbook.

The foot is included in the body's first or base chakra. Each chakra has a certain spiritual connection to one's life. In the case of the first chakra, in which the feet are associated, the spiritual connection is to relationships. Symbolism is necessary to clarify this.

When we stand and walk our feet are physical and symbolic connecting points to the earth. Symbolically, this represents our connection not only to earth, but to our families,

friends and community. Disturbances in relationships therefore result in problems with the feet. The particular relationship can be to your spouse, family, children, co-workers, pets, friends or even losing a job.

Over the years I have encountered many instances where there is nothing I can detect wrong with the foot, but with questioning, the patient relates a problem with a relationship. The typical situation will go something like I recently lost my mother or father, or my dog of 13 years just died.

The patient will come to me with terrible pain which is out of proportion to my findings; but then I discover the patient has had a recent emotional loss. I will treat the patient to the best of my ability, but the resolution to the pain usually comes with time. As the patient adjusts to the loss psychologically, the pain resolves itself.

I understand many readers are thinking this is silly, but it is a classic example of clinical rather than academic medicine. It is an experience I know first hand and one I see resolve itself as the patient adjusts to their grief. Clinical medicine many times has no proof. You can't prove nor disprove these phenomena.

If I mention that a stressful job can give a patient a stomach ulcer most doctors and patients would agree that this is possible. What I see as a podiatrist is that a divorce can cause foot pain. The same relationship between the mind and body is present in these examples.

The benefit to me and my patients is in the understanding that these situations can present themselves. A good doctor needs to be open to the possibilities and respond accordingly. The worst thing a doctor can do is deny the legitimacy of psychological factors for the onset and resolution of illness.

A bestselling author in self-development is Dr. Wayne Dyer. He said once, "There is no stress in the world; only people thinking stressful thoughts." Whether those thoughts are conscious or unconscious they are powerful determinants to health and to healing. So what can you do? As always my recommendations are simple and cost nothing: breath, laugh, pray, avoid sugar, learn to meditate, and trust in your ability to heal. To find out more visit my web site at drmcquaid.com.

Matthew McQuaid, DPM is a board certified foot surgeon practicing in Lakeport. He has a particular interest in Mind/Body medicine and its impact on healing. He is an award winning author and teacher. Please share this article with a friend. For more information please call 707-263-3727 and visit www.drmcquaid.com