

Colluding to Not Heal: Or, A Deficiency of Self-Love



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October 2006

Often I find myself at a roadblock when trying to help my patients and myself heal. I think of all the visits where we've talked about medications and supplements, diet and exercise, smoking and lab data, and yet not talked about the "elephant in the room"--the real issues.

It is as if we're colluding with each other, kind of a "don't ask, don't tell" about health and the root causes of our dis-ease. If I asked my new patient all the things I needed to know about him or her, it would take hours. Who is able or willing to pay for this time? If I ask a patient about their spiritual or sexual life, about their compulsions or painful relationships, will they come back for the next visit? If I am honest in telling a patient that their condition will take a few years to heal, or that they will need to come to yoga class every week, or spend many hundreds of dollars on lab tests or supplements, will they go running?

The average doctor visit is 3-5 minutes, the average psychotherapy visit is 50 minutes; how much can be truly accomplished in this limited amount of time? It's as if we're pretending to do some work, so that we can feel good about ourselves and go about our lives. But such superficiality, like a bandaid over a deep wound, cannot accomplish much; even more worrisome is that by allowing such wounds to fester, when they finally require real treatment, they are deeply established and more difficult to treat. As they say, "a stitch in time saves nine".

So, what is the root cause of our resistance to heal? If we look closely at the "reasons" that we give ourselves, the solution to such roadblocks becomes apparent.

The first reason seems to be fear, as in "if I acknowledge and open this wound, will I ever heal, or will I be consumed by the pain". This often seems to be the case in childhood trauma, which can lead to a lifetime of dysfunctional relationships, obsessive fears and compulsions, pre-occupation with bodily symptoms, and a baseline level of anxiety and/or depression. However, yogic and buddhist practices teach us that by going into the very heart of the pain and fear, using a concentrated and non-judgmental frame of mind, can reveal insights that "re-frame" such fears to reduce their paralytic effect (more on solutions below).

The next reason is "lack of resource", usually in the form of time or money. However, we all know people that make the time, and find the means, to do what they want. Under the surface of "lack of resource" is "priorities out of order". Why would we place other priorities, such as vacations, clothes, entertainment, restaurants, daily Starbucks, lottery tickets, etc, over our health? Is it that we lack faith that if we invest in our health, in our selves, we will see a "return on investment". If we spend our time and money on a good restaurant meal, rather than a yoga class or month's worth of supplements, are we assured a satisfying experience? If I put off pleasure today, will I see the results later? Americans are notoriously bad at delaying gratification. We don't put away enough for retirement and we go into tremendous debt at high cost (i.e. credit cards) just to have pleasure (or avoid pain) today. Our escape into TV, shopping and other distractions are, again, bandaids that cannot give us long-lasting peace. Addictions, more extreme versions of these diversions, are compulsions to engage in these activities to keep away painful thoughts and feelings.

Another reason we don't invest in ourselves is a strange equation that we make. It is similar to the phenomenon where we drive around for minutes to find a close parking spot, and then walk for miles at the mall. In many aspects of our lives, we are irrational creatures, acting from emotion and perception, rather than fact or truth. The way it works with health care is, "because so-and-so practitioner was not nice to me, or didn't listen to me, I'm not going to follow his/her recommendations", or "because I'm already paying a lot for health insurance, I will not pay another dime for supplements, massage, acupuncture, or non-covered services". Who are we really spiting with such thoughts and actions?

Lastly, most of us take our health for granted. The body is so perfect that until it starts to send us messages of aging, through pain or through wrinkles, we don't realize the impact that our lifestyles can have. We invest more in our homes or cars, but ultimately, our bodies are our first and last homes.

We need to do our work. Learning and healing always feels good. While we're climbing the mountain, we may sweat, slip and fall, and take some

risks, but when we get to the top, the panorama is fantastic and the vista and sense of accomplishment stays with us for a lifetime.

Many cultures believe in an after-life and/or reincarnation--what we don't accomplish in this life will need to be addressed in a future existence. However, for most of us, this is a very abstract and remote motivation.

If we don't heal for our selves, then we still have a need to heal for our families and our society. Our negative traits pass on to the next generation. Our compulsive consumption is destroying our planet. We all need to get to the root cause of our dis-ease if we want humanity to continue and to prosper.

Sometimes these issues seem so large, complex or overwhelming that we don't even know how to begin. There are many techniques of taking down a wall. If you don't have a huge wrecking ball, then you can take it down one brick at a time. Establishing clear goals and priorities, using a journal (see my previous article on this topic), getting professional help and joining a community (including a yoga class, for example) are all techniques that can help.

Most of our problems in modern society are multi-factorial. That recurrent back pain or persistent anxiety is not just mechanical or psychological, it also resists healing because the foods we eat are inflammatory, the TV news is stress-producing, we don't sleep well, our hormonal systems are confused by the toxins in our air and water, and we haven't adequately explored how much our sub-optimal patterns of thought, movement and energy came from our parents and have been passed on to our children. Therefore, as we develop plans to simplify and heal, we need to address each of these components of health. Each aspect of our program will contribute a few percentage points to the healing curve. If you can heal just 5-10% per year, you will see exponential growth of your health. Wouldn't you invest in an bank account that assured you that rate of interest?

Mahatma Gandhi first said "God is Truth", later changing his statement to "Truth is God". Others say "God is Love" and "Love is God". So, let's think of the Grand Equation as Truth = God = Love. Its about loving our selves enough to invest in our lives, seeking out Truth and Love rather than letting fear and other rationalizations keep us on the surface for decades and generations.

IMPORTANT NOTE: This general information

should not be used to make decisions about medical care without the involvement of a qualified practitioner.

For More Information

- O See Dr. Cheikin's related articles on: Stress, The Courage to Heal, Journaling and other topics
- O Dr. Cheikin's website, www.cheikin.com, has helpful articles on related topics
- O Dr. Cheikin offers Workshops on Journalling, Chronic Pain, Weight Management and other topics, and classes in yoga, meditation, and other styles of personal health and wellness. Call to be placed on Dr. Cheikin's contact list or if you wish to host a Workshop.
- O Cameron, Julia: [The Artist's Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity](#). Penguin, 1992. ISBN 0874-776-945. A great way to begin self-examination through journalling.
- O Becker, Ernest: [Denial of Death](#). New York: MacMillan, 1972 (1997), ISBN 0684-832-402. This Pulitzer Prize winning book offers profound insights into what lies behind many of our fears.
- O Peck, M. Scott: [The Road Less Traveled](#). New York: Touchstone, 1978 (1997) ISBN 0684-847-248). This highly popular book is about priorities, personal authenticity and discipline.
- O Weiss, Brian: [Many Masters, Many Lives](#). New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988, ISBN 0671-657-860. Dr. Weiss offers a very interesting story and perspective on the topic of past and future lives.

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