

## Adaptive System Messengers

Reading this could prove to be a step toward a kind of learning how to learn that allows you to recognize the moment to moment capacity and healing power that is your human right to discover, and in so doing, begin to live more skillfully by using your awareness. Some of the information was discovered over 2500 years ago. Some of the modern evidence of its validity is too compelling to ignore, and offers useful and practical confirmation for anyone interested in finding out if it can also work in their particular situation.

There are many contemplative practices from healing and spiritual traditions and a variety of these were the first therapies for the easing of human suffering. When medical science began intervening in a mechanical and reductionist model several hundred years ago, the origins of and benefits derived from a variety of mind-body practices were deemphasized as the advances being made in the use of medications and surgery simultaneously took precedent. Yet about 40 years ago a renewal in the interest in these ancient practices began to capture the imagination of some medical practitioners who theorized the possibility of discovering internal systemic response potentials to stress. After numerous well constructed studies, not only was a "Relaxation Response" discovered; but what is now known is that with the regular elicitation and practice of this response, there is a positive influence even down to the level of the genetic potential toward immunity from and healing from disease. Other known benefits are increase in systemic Nitrous Oxide, which could be a heart disease protection factor, along with the lowering of blood pressure, lessening the need for antihypertensive medications, the calming of the mind and resultant improvements in the ability to make decisions with a greater sense of clarity, as well as for a first line treatment for pain and depression that allows for the lessening of addictive and side –effect laden medications.\*

Learning to work with mindfulness meditation as well as other mind-body practices and utilizing them on an ongoing basis can be part of creating the environment that not only reduces suffering, but also increases wellness through bolstering the immune system. Becoming more resilient, practitioners enjoy more ease and peace of mind. There is a synthesis of the disruption of patterns of stress, enhancement of positive belief and expectancy, the joys of living in the moment, a sense of the innate power to self-soothe, heal, and the development of self-efficacy. These, on the level of emotions, feel like self-kindness, self care and self-regard. And as it turns out, we each have internal messengers which offer to guide us to more self care, regard and kindness.

Candace Pert, Ph.D., a neuroscientist and pharmacology researcher, in studying opiate receptors in the brain, discovered that Ligands, neurochemicals which carry messages to neuroreceptors, share distinct molecular vibrations with them, not isolated to the brain; and that these substances exist in every cell of the body. This was one of the windows into the inseparability of mind and body. +

When a person becomes stressed by fear, threat, or over-exposure to difficulty, coupled with the chronic overriding of the need for rest or rejuvenation he or she will often experience a variety of symptomatic expressions that may be used as signals that amendment or adaptation are needed. Ernest L. Rossi, Ph. D., one of the most creative psychotherapeutic innovators of our time, has cited meditation as one of the restful responses connected to the application of mind-body therapy "...Healing usually involves the activation of certain gene systems that can produce the proteins and enzymes that facilitate the organic healing of the body..."\*\* The activation is prompted by these inner adaptive system messengers, vibrating within, that make up the wave nature of our consciousness. What may first appear as an alarm, triggered by the flight or fight component can also be explained as the process by which the internal barometer cues each of us toward self care and self kindness. Therapeutically, healing practitioners can teach their patients to use their symptoms as signals; cues that are present in the moment that can be read as harbingers of the need to practice skillfully so that creative choice is possible. There are parallels in the ancient meditation teachings that cover similar processes.

One such mindfulness practice, Bodhichitta, is both a skill and a being state. Bodhichitta literally means "awakened heart." The meditative practitioner is accepting of both the difficulty they /others are experiencing, the tenderness and vulnerability that they feel in response, and the patience and wisdom to allow for the moment to moment acceptance which will often come as one "keeps their seat" through the process. Thus through the difficulty, one is awakened, the mind having been prepared for the heart to be opened first, as a doorway, through the gradually increased practice of acceptance through awareness.

In the mind body practice of TFT (Thought Field Therapy), the mindful practitioner moves into the difficult emotion, for even at its heightened intensity, an opportunity for healing is also increased. "...a particular process occurs in your brain. Your brain permits your perception of the incident to become pliable and malleable. This is called neural plasticity..."++ Neural plasticity, was first suggested by the Father of American Psychology William James, in 1890, in "Principles of Psychology" , and was met with stout resistance, as it so differed from the paradigm based belief of that time that the brain does not change after the critical period of infancy. Recent findings soundly challenge that familiar paradigm by showing that many areas of the brain can change according to experience and training.

This quality of neural plasticity was observed to be highly developed in the brain scans of highly experienced meditators in Tomography scans at the University of Wisconsin, under the direction of Richard J. Davidson, Ph. D. The results of the research after an 8 week mindfulness training period indicated that meditation may change brain and immune functions in positive ways. Also other studies by Benson et al have shown that regular meditation can protect against the thinning of the cortex in aging patients.\*

Using mindfulness on a daily basis can be part of an overall acceptance strategy that incorporates learning into every possible moment. Because it can be learned quickly, and due to its orientation to transcending the always changing contents of thoughts and feelings, it can

allow the practitioner to be more fully aware of the processes of being alive. Then there is usually more than one option on choices, providing freedom, clarity and greater peace of mind. Further, it can also be adopted as a methodology at any age and in many cultures. Practicing mindfulness does not exclude any established spiritual practice.

With regard to the versatility of the approach of using mindfulness in the treatment of various medical and psychological ailments, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, National Center for PTSD includes on their website [www.ptsd.va.gov/professionalpages/mindful-PTSD.asp](http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professionalpages/mindful-PTSD.asp) an article citing the value of mindfulness in the treatment of trauma reactions#

Up until now the language that has been used to describe the processes discussed above was "the power of the mind to heal the body." May I offer a slightly different language? Perhaps our profoundly shifting capacity to understand with the use of relaxation, meditation and a medicine that restores belief could be described as the power of each person to heal and be healed through being with awareness. Such being employs the assistance of adaptive system messengers, kind and caring attention, and provides a consciousness that can transcend to this moment.

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\*Relaxation Revolution; enhancing your personal health through the science and genetics of mind body healing by Herbert Benson, M.D. and William Proctor, J.D., Scribner, A Division of Simon & Shuster, Inc., New York, 2010

+Molecules of Emotion, the science behind mind body medicine, Candace B. Pert, Ph. D., Touchstone Books, Simon & Shuster, New York, 1999

\*\*The Symptom Path to Enlightenment: The new dynamics of self-organization in Hypnotherapy: An advanced manual for beginners, Ernest Lawrence Rossi, Ph. D., Palisades Gateway Publishing, Pacific Palisades, CA, 1996

++ The Tapping Cure, A revolutionary System for rapid relief from phobias, anxieties, post-traumatic stress disorder and more, Roberta Temes, Ph. D., Marlowe and company, New York, 2006

# Potential of Mindfulness in Treating Trauma Reactions, Anka A. Vujanovic, Ph.D., Barbara Niles, Ph. D., Ashley Pietrefesa, M.A., Carrie M. Potter, B.A., & Stefan Schmertz, M.A.