

Nurturing Ourselves

It is that time of year again when we can feel rather depleted after pushing ourselves through the dark, cold, damp months of winter. So I'm thinking that early February maybe the perfect time for us to reflect on all the wonderful ways in which we can nurture ourselves every day of our lives.

We can nurture ourselves on so many different levels: physical, energetic, mental, emotional and spiritual. But in this message, I am going to focus on how we can really support ourselves by brightening up our inner energy and by changing our habitual mind-set from predominantly negative to predominantly positive.

Mainstream society seems obsessed with improving our health and well-being by pumping our bodies full of prescribed drugs such as statins and beta-blockers, or by selling us all kinds of vitamin and mineral supplements.

The mainstream media is also constantly telling us what not to eat and then changing their advice over and over again. When I was a teenager, bread and potatoes were to be avoided because they were fattening while red meat was considered a really healthy food choice. A decade or so later, butter was said to be dangerous and we were all told to swap to Flora margarine.

Now the latest craze is to bang on about the terrible dangers of over-processed foods including of course over-processed margarines. Sometimes, it seems that these days the only safe food we can eat is a few raw, organic vegetables – Thanks but no thanks! I am now of the strong opinion that what we eat has far less an impact on our wellbeing than our thoughts, our emotions and our energy levels.

When Gloria and I were training with Master Jason Chan, he used to talk a lot about the fact that we have an energy body as well as a physical body. He then kept reminding us that the state of our energy body plays a key role in either protecting or damaging our physical health. He even told us that most illnesses or physical problems began in our energy body long before manifesting physically.

Well now we know – thank you quantum physicists – that at the microscopic level, our physical body is nothing but energy. We do not really have a physical

body surrounded by an energy body. We have one body that is basically made of nothing but energy. The strong sensation we have that our physical body is made up of solid matter is basically an illusion!

So let us begin our focus on nurturing ourselves this February with thinking about what we can do on a daily basis to improve the state of our energy body. The really good news is that we do not have to become a Tai Chi or Chi Kung master to create a really bright and healthy energy body for ourselves.

All we need to do is to spend just a little time each day creating a radiant flow of energy in every cell of our being. We can do this in so many different ways. One of the simplest is to take a slow, mindful walk in nature. We then just need to pause our walk from time to time, to connect to an inspiring aspect of nature, such as the blue sky, a wild flower, or a bird on the wing. We then need to breathe in slowly and deeply for a moment or two in order to absorb the joy of that moment into the core of our being.

Doing something like this regularly will naturally top up our whole being with positive, life-supporting energy. This positive energy flow will then assist us to stay mentally and emotionally strong even in the midst of life's endless challenges.

Another really easy energy practice we can all adopt is to take just a few deep breaths every morning just after we get out of bed. As we do this brief morning breathing practice, we can imagine that we are breathing in really bright sunshine as well as oxygen. We can even make this practice playful by imagining that we are an early spring flower opening all our petals as we reach up to connect to the heart-warming morning sun

See how simple this is? We just have to do some kind of daily relaxing and opening energy practice to ensure that we keep our inner energy flowing smoothly. At the same time, we need to ensure that our inner energy flow is filled with brightness so that our whole being becomes more and more radiant with each passing day. Eureka!

It is pretty easy to create a good energy flow throughout our body and it is not difficult to imagine sunshine pouring into every cell of our being. However, I do have to warn you that if you then spend most of your day moaning and groaning about the state of our world or complaining about all your personal

problems, you will quickly undo all the amazing health benefits of cultivating radiant chi flow.

Every time we entertain any kind of fearful, angry or depressing thought, it invariably pollutes or depletes our energy. So, to nurture ourselves day in and day out, we have to become much more mindful of our habitual thinking and our habitual speech. We then need to put quite a bit of effort into learning to support ourselves with positive thoughts and bright, warm words. This aspect of nurturing ourselves can be summed up as: Watch your language!

Try stopping a fearful or angry thought before it pops up in your consciousness – it's just not possible! But we can begin to counterbalance our brain's negativity bias by making a daily effort to focus on positive thinking as well as committing to having warm, loving conversations with others.

For example, if the thought, 'This world is a mess!' pops into your mind uninvited, you can learn to quickly counter it with a positive thought such as, 'But I know so many wonderfully kind and generous people who really do make a difference to our troubled world'.

Or, you notice that your conversation with a friend is full of moans and groans, so you decide to change your language. You might say to your friend for example, 'Goodness! It is such a lovely day! Let's not worry about the future right now. Let's just sit for a minute or two and really enjoy this amazing view.'

Again, you can make nurturing yourself and others with words really good fun. You can challenge yourself for example to bring love-related or sunshine-related words into at least one conversation per day. I will give you a little list to get you started: Lovely, heartfelt, kind, compassionate, grateful, warm, sunny, bright, radiant, joyful, miraculous. (Just typing these words brought a smile to my face)

Another conversation related practice which is really fun and life-enhancing is to give a warm compliment to someone who has served you in a shop or restaurant, even if the person serving you seemed a little abrupt or grumpy. What goes around comes around. So you may find to your great surprise that if you keep gently praising or consoling a grumpy person who serves you regularly, they end up being much more warm and friendly toward you. By nurturing them with a little kindness, you end up feeling nurtured by them in

return. (This has actually happened to Gloria and me with a lovely member of staff at Sainsbury's!)

Now please do not get me wrong here. Nurturing ourselves and others is definitely not about plastering on a fake smile to cover up how we are really feeling. Not at all! Whenever we are feeling upset, anxious or irritated, the key to nurturing ourselves is to allow those feelings to be there, whilst bathing ourselves in the life-supporting energy of self-compassion.

Again, this is so simple to do. You sit quietly for a minute or two, place your palms gently around your heart and imagine sending a wave of warm, kind compassionate energy out from your loving core into all the cells of your being or to the part of your personality-self who is so upset.

The other wonderful way to nurture ourselves energetically, mentally and emotionally this month is to pause several times a day to count our blessings. As we bring to mind all the gifts the universe is bestowing on us each day - such as a hot shower, a bowl of fruit, a bunch of daffodils or a walk in the park - we can rest at the centre of our heart for a moment or two and fill it with the wonderfully supportive energy of gratitude.

Gratitude is one strand of love, and so when we fill our hearts with gratitude, we are actually filling our being with the infinitely nurturing energy of unconditional love for ourselves and others.

So if you want to have a wonderful month this February, please make sure that you spend at least some time each day connecting to the life-supporting thoughts and emotions of love, gratitude and joy.

Each time we do this, we strengthen the pathways of love and joy in our system until in the very long run, being loving, joyful and grateful become our go-to feelings. How wonderful is that?

Peggy Foster
February 2024