

SYMPTOMS and CRISIS,

-

A call towards human evolution

By Donald Epstein

The purpose of a symptom is to inspire a change in behavior....

**The more intense the symptom, the more immediate and radical
the internal transformation required.**

This simple and revolutionary concept is one of the center pillars of the new wellness education paradigm and discipline. The purpose of a very intense symptom is to provide immediate and unequivocal transformation of who you have been. Many will ask, "but what type of change must I make? I don't know what my body, mind, or spirit is asking of me!" My first response to this is, "Yes, you do know. You know exactly what change is needed." The precise change necessary is most likely something just outside the comfort zone of the person you have been.

My teacher and friend, Tony Robbins, brilliantly states that there are 6 human needs we all share. He informs us that these needs guide all of our behaviors and habits. We even express illness behaviors, such as those expressed as chronic depression, anger, addictions, and pain to accommodate for these needs. Everything we do is in relationship to avoiding suffering or "getting something out of" the behavior to fulfill at least one of these human needs.

Dr. Jay Lepp & Associates
2325 St. John's Street
Port Moody, B.C. V3H 2A8

(tel): 604.939.7556
(fax): 604.936.0876

The six human needs are:

Constancy

Variety

Significance

Growth

Contribution

Love or Connection

Everyone requires varying amounts of each of these needs at different times in his/her life, and some are more important to an individual than others. However, we require all of them to live and in the personal proper proportions to thrive. I have expanded Tony Robbins application of these human needs to include the concept of symptoms and the subsequent change that our soul requires of us at different levels or stages of care. The type of transformation required is most often triggered by the way we have organized our neurological network, i.e. our operating system of experiencing our world.

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The change required by our symptom or crisis will likely be outside the comfort zone that maintains the relatively unconscious or automatic behavior commonly displayed. It is a change that challenges the constancy (or security) of the habits and routines that we perform on a day-to-day basis. Your TR, or Transformation Required (TR in acknowledgement of Tony Robbins' 6 needs), dictates that you reconsider the level of variety (or spontaneity) you allow for yourself on a moment-to-moment basis. It is a challenge to the significance that you have attached to the person you consider yourself to be. It is a threat to what you consider the ceiling to your range of connection and love for your body/mind/spirit and to others. Going beyond the symptom requires you to grow beyond your current "operating system" for experiencing the world. Ultimately with that growth, a symptom may lead a person to contribute more to others than might otherwise have been possible.

With each advancing Level of Care of NSA and each Stage of Healing accessed through Somato Respiratory Integration, a deepening level of change in

attachment to behavior is required.

Level One (Basic Care) and Stage One and Two of Healing: The TR generally centers around a change in your physical choices, such as your movement, exercise, nutrition, posture, and the degree of feedback you are aware of from your physical body (see figure 1).

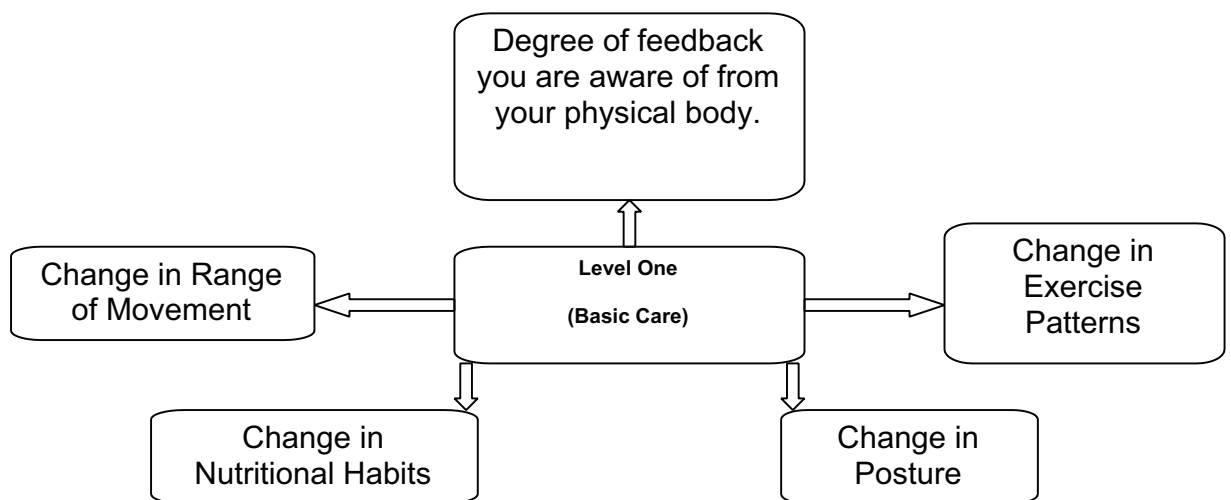


Figure 1.

Level Two of Care and Stages Three through Seven of Healing: The Transformation Required consists of change in your emotional range of perception, vocabulary, and your emotional range of expression and its connection to your body sense of these states. These transformations are a consequence of the physical or structural anchors/ triggers to the defense strategies having undergone similar transformation and dissolution (see figure 2).

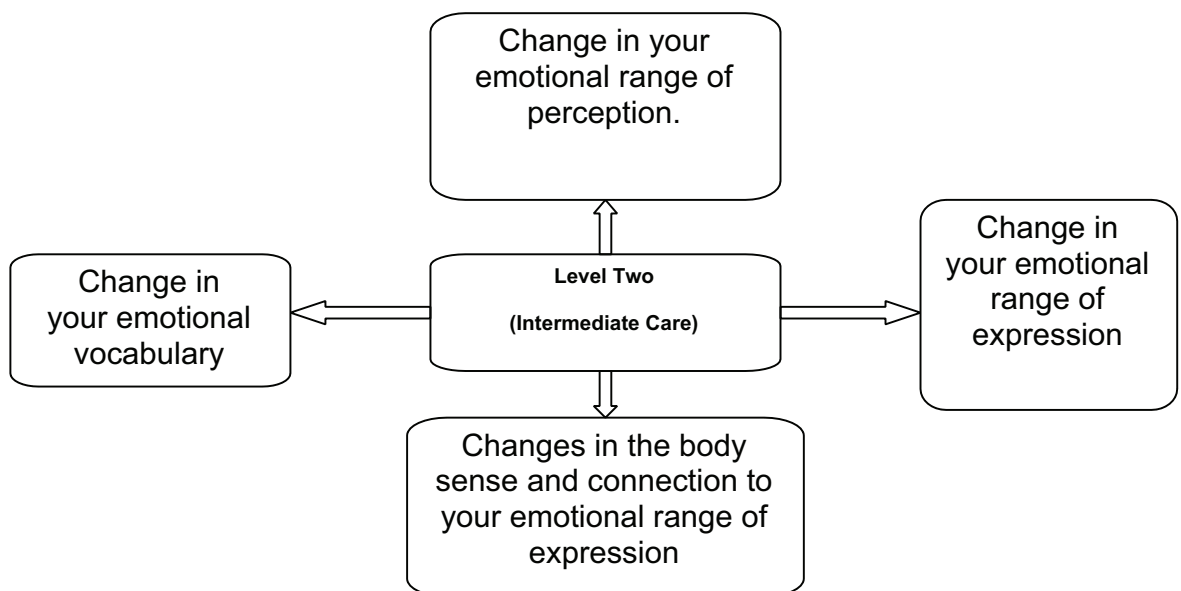


Figure 2.

This expands as NSA Level Two (Intermediate Care) advances and the Somatopsychic (Network) wave develops. As the structural anchors/triggers to your story of who you are, to the way you experience and replay your past, and to what you believe you are entitled to undergo transformation, so too does the way in which you experience the world. Individuals tend to change in the way they react to stressful circumstances. In Intermediate Care the way in which you see the world, the body from which you sense others, the container through which you need to act or react, and your ability to observe your behavior are transformed at the same time.

As Intermediate Care strategies become more fully developed, the structures (physical, emotional, psychological, and social) through which your operating systems experience and respond to stress, your inner story, your inner language, communication, and the choices you make are transformed.

Level Three of Care and Stages Eight through Ten of Healing: Here there is a radically different and relatively effortless transformation. They involve the expansion of self and the awakening of non-self. The inner heart becomes the

gateway to the soul. There is a change in how you experience yourself and others as souls. There is an expansion and awakening of the spiritual, love-based and soul-centered actions that are taken in each moment. Your choices are guided by inner knowing, gratitude, and love, rather than by emotional reactions, mental chatter, or the need to control the environment and/or others to meet your needs (see figure 3).

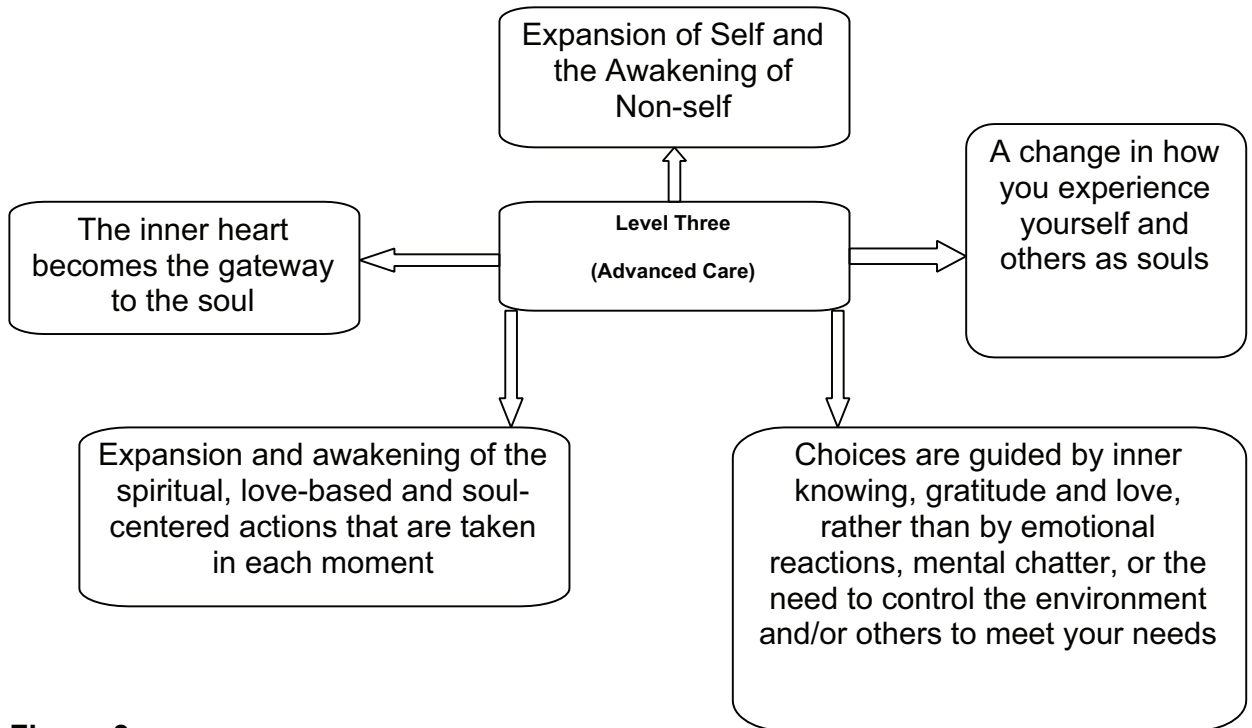


Figure 3.

Level Four of Care and Stages Eleven and Twelve of Healing: The TR in the new and developing Level Four of Care and Stages Eleven and Twelve is contribution to others and inversely, to receive and internalize the gifts of others. In this Level of Care and these Stages of Healing, we experience the threads of connection between individuals and events. We share in celebrating the knowingness, timelessness, interconnectedness, and oneness of all (see figure 4).

As the Epstein model of wellness evolves into the new tradition and practice, these principles become central to the practice of Wellness Integration, and Strategies for Evolution (WISE). Wellness education is associated with the individual's personal self-perception/belief and experience of his or her inner journey.

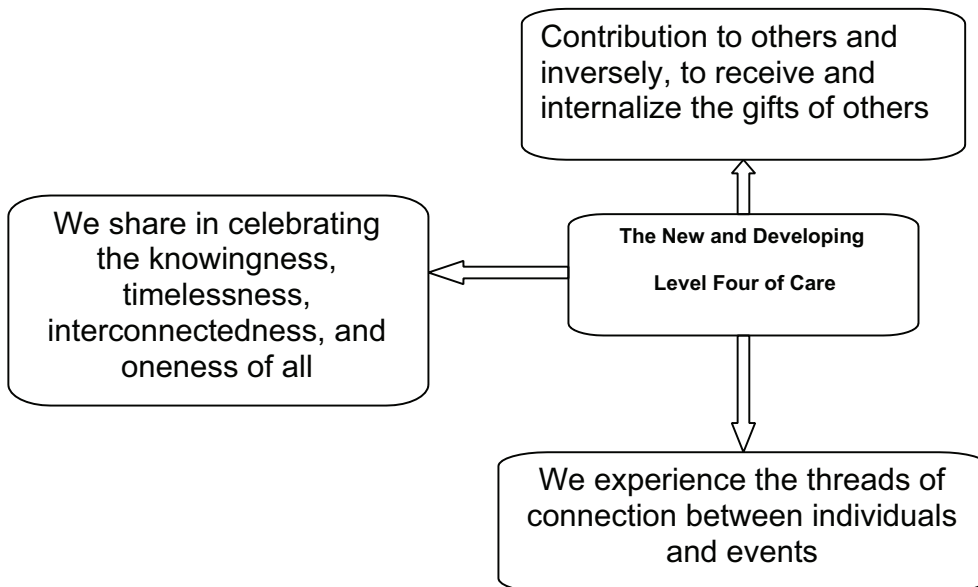


Figure 4.

Wellness is an integral state, and illness is a loss of this state. Wellness drives us to deepened states of wholeness and more effective choices for our growth and development. Illness insulates us from these states and actions. Wellness and Illness are independent of symptoms or circumstance. They are about resourcefulness, not resources. They are about the continuum between the defended self that feels unloved, inadequate, and alone to the empowered, adaptable, multidimensional being unlimited by time, space, or even culture or circumstance.

At each Level of Care and Stage of Healing, a different immediate change is necessary when confronted by a crisis or symptom. Regardless of diagnosis or treatment, transformation is required. For example, an individual may have intense back or leg pain with the accompanying belief that something is very wrong and has to be radically resolved. It interferes with work or leisure, the individual's interactions with others, her moods, and choices. It basically interrupts life as she knew it before the symptom. An example of a characteristic comment might be,

“I hurt so much. I get so angry at the things I can’t do anymore.”

In Basic Care and Stage 1-2 of healing she must ask,

“How must I be aware of, connect to, and relate to my physical body differently?”

“What physical changes must I make in life?”

If this is not considered and immediate transformative action taken, it is likely that illness will continue and deepen over time (with perhaps short intervals of being symptom free, but still internally not “well”).

In Intermediate Care or Stages 3-7, she may say,

“I get angry, and the pain worsens.”

As care progresses, this may grow into,

“When _____ happens or when I think or act in _____ way, I feel more pain.”

Later this perception may be replaced by statements such as,

“When my story about things is _____ or when I hear, see, feel, or think _____, I feel worse”,

or

“When I am being this other person, I hurt,” and finally to “I can’t be this person anymore.”

Unless the introspection and actions required for this Level of Care and Stages of Healing are addressed and immediate transformative action is taken, illness may continue to develop or deepen.

The same is true for the other Stages of Healing and Levels of Care. This is a significant departure from the model of “health care” or “wellness care” currently existing for many of the licensed professions. The practitioner does not determine the cause of the problem, treat a cause, or give any advice on specifically how to change. Since Doctors of Chiropractic are the ones currently performing NSA, we find ourselves at a crossroad.

Those licensed professionals practicing Network may choose to use this approach as wellness education care, and not as part of their practice of

chiropractic. They will utilize corrective elements, such as the correction of subluxation for Basic NSA Care, as part of the chiropractic practice in accordance with the expectations of their profession and regulatory agencies. However, as your practitioner chooses to help you evolve beyond dependence upon correction or therapeutics as your ceiling of wellness, he/she will put on a different hat or role. There will be no third party billing for these services since they are not restorative. Instead, care will be awakening, inner journey based, and aimed at your instantaneous transformation and evolution. That is beyond all disease, health, and other forms of what has been called wellness care.

Isn't it exciting that in this time of the information age, you can receive care based upon wisdom... your own.

Taking these concepts into real applications for real lives, a practice member might, for example, enter your office with intense pain. The physician may have determined that the person also has a disc herniation. The expected and legally required choice for the practitioner to suggest may be disc surgery. This is according to the current culturally accepted, albeit not scientifically supported, paradigm. You as a patient may demand immediate transformation and radical action to treat the condition that is disrupting the life you are trying to live. Considering what you have been advised about the condition, you may first attempt "conservative" treatment; you do not want to postpone surgical correction, however, because you consider it the sure bet to resolve your situation. I am not rendering medical advice here. Instead I am relaying a different perspective. I am suggesting that most often the driving force of the individual to remedy the condition is not based upon the symptom. Instead, it is based upon the desire to move from the helpless experience of illness to greater wellness. I am not suggesting appropriateness, or lack thereof, for treatment of any condition. I am instead suggesting that whatever treatment is chosen, it is vital to also consider healing, wellness, and human transformation.

Research, for example, demonstrates that in men, the number one predictor for pain and disability had nothing directly to do with the muscles, disc inflammation, or the usual blamed culprits. Instead the main factors underlying disability claims were financial insecurity, financial loss, or dissatisfaction at work. Men's identities are often associated with financial productivity, and many of their needs are met through their work. In this case, a loss of their human needs being met at work led to the experience of intense pain and subsequent diagnosis of musculoskeletal/neurological findings.

How often have you heard statements such as,

"If this pain does not go away with more conservative measures, I will then go for surgery?"

They may tell their chiropractor, "I will try you for ___ weeks, and if after this time

the pain is not under control, I will instead go for surgery.” The assumption is that surgical intervention works for the correction of the pain, the disc lesion is the cause, not a consequence of the “problem,” and that changing other contributing factors within the life of the individual will not make enough or fast enough impact on the condition. The diagnosed condition is the concern, not the advancement of the individual.

Please note that there is no consistent relationship between finding a "problem" on X-ray or examination and the cause of pain in many areas. Just because a disc is herniated does not mean it is the cause of the symptom or that surgery is the answer. It is assumed in the culture that since surgery is the most radical means of treating a symptom, it must be the most effective treatment. This is too often not the case.

TREATMENTS FOR DISC DISEASE UNPROVEN

The following is taken from an article in Spine, a highly respected medical journal.

"None of the emerging techniques for the treatment of degenerative disc disease (DDD) –spinal fusion techniques, disc replacement, intradiscal electrothermal therapy - finds unequivocal validation in the scientific literature. Scientific evidence doesn't prove that these treatments "are superior to natural history or non-operative treatment." "It should be emphasized that all of the aforementioned procedures for low back pain have unpredictable outcomes; therefore those procedures should only be considered after failure of at least six months and with the full understanding of patients who are well informed about the potential advantages, disadvantages and unpredictable outcomes."

An H, Boden S, Kang J et al. Spine 2003; 28(15S):S24-S25

Ultimately it is “us” that must change us.

The life a person is living, the choices that must be made for the point in the individual's path, the stresses to be negotiated, the human resources available at that moment in time, the structural capacity of the person, and their personal beliefs do more to influence symptoms, illness, or wellness under most circumstances than "abnormalities" found on medical examination. From this expanded perspective, treatment of a condition is very limited in its potential outcome. At times it may save a person's life or be necessary in providing the person more time to make fundamental life change. After all is said and done, it is up to the individual to transform his life and to evolve. In today's rapidly changing world, 'not transforming' is no longer an option, be it in relationship, business, or in life.

From my book *Healing Myths Healing Magic*, pages 112-116, I refer to the

Healing Myth that healing often requires drastic measure. The “Transformation Required” may manifest as the result of a slightly new perspective, a new change in habit repeated often, or by an intervention applied at the right time. It doesn’t mean that massive new behaviors have to occur immediately. It does mean that a new habit of perception, belief, and behavior needs to begin immediately, which eventually takes you in a radically different direction in life. The more intense the symptom, the more radical the internal transformation is that may be required.

This does not necessarily mean that intense radical action or internal change is initially needed. If you change the rudder of a ship by one or two degrees, it may ultimately take you to an entirely different continent. However, the actual detour is a gradual and cumulative one.

Healing Myth # 19

Healing often requires drastic measures.

When we consider life with the logical mind alone, it makes sense that if we have a small problem, we might seek an easy solution requiring a minimum of energy or expense. If we are dealing with a major problem or crisis, we might expect the solution to be complex, difficult, expensive, or risky.

Let’s consider this myth as it pertains to a study by the Arizona Cancer Center at the University of Arizona College of Medicine. In this six-year, double-blind study, participants taking selenium supplements had a 37 percent reduction of the incidence of cancer, and a 50 percent reduction of cancer mortality. Of the two hundred people studied, the group taking the selenium supplement had 63 percent fewer prostate cancers, 58 percent fewer colorectal cancers, and 46 percent fewer lung cancers than those taking a placebo.

Not a single case of selenium toxicity was reported in any of the patients studied. Yet in the same issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association in which this study was published, dire warnings were asserted by the medical community telling patients not to use this all –natural, nutritional supplement. An editorial stated: “For now it is premature to change individual behavior, to market specific selenium supplements, or to modify public health recommendations based on the results of this one randomized trial.”

I personally believe that had the study involved an expensive and dangerous treatment requiring extensive physician training, a high risk to patients, and an expensive hospital stay, the cultural mythos would have required the results of the study to be carried by the national media.

Because the selenium represented such a simple, safe, and effective solution to a complex problem like cancer, the results were largely ignored by both the media and the medical community. After all, how can something so simple,

inexpensive, and readily available help a person prevent such a complex, dangerous, and almost “incurable” condition, in spite of the billions of dollars spent per year in research by the finest minds in the world.

The Non-linear Approach to Wellness

While working within the chiropractic paradigm, I discovered the non-linear approach to wellness, and developed a form of “Wellness Care” known as Network Spinal Analysis (NSA).

To my surprise I found that a very gentle touch to the upper and lower spine can cause the entire spine to reconfigure itself. Deep respiration, along with wavelike undulations and dissipation of stored spinal tension are often associated with this gentle touch, and result in an overall enhancement of our quality of life. In the non-linear approach to wellness, a small change in our physiology produces a disproportionate response in our health and well-being.

A strong force need not be applied to create a significant change in the bodymind. In fact, I discovered that applying a forceful touch can actually inhibit this process. When I first developed Network Spinal Analysis, I found that memories of childhood hurts, accidents, or other physical or psychological traumas are often stored as tension and energy patterns in different parts of the body. This energy, confined under tension, is not unlike a powerful spring. Over time, it manifests in physically tight muscles, joint fixations, resistance to full body motion, depression, and shallow breathing. It also manifests as pain and disease.

I also observed that the more ill we are, the more energy we need to release in order to heal. The energy that is not free to circulate generates tension over time, until conditions are ripe for it to initiate the healing process. Hurts and wounds from our past build up pressure and “collect” energy from new hurts and wounds in the present. For example,

*our spouse makes a harmless remark about how we
might have done something differently, and
we respond with anger that lasts for several days.*

The remark sparks a reaction in the energy that is already “charged” by previous hurts or wounds. This energy becomes more and more blocked, denied, and isolated, until at last it is ready to be released. When the energy is released (or converted from a confined state into a freer state), it becomes available for healing, and actually helps fuel the healing process.

The non-linear approach to wellness considers the bodymind an interactive system, influenced by many factors that contribute to health or illness. The ability of our bodymind to receive, circulate, and dissipate energy, and our current and past experiences in life, significantly affect our health. In addition, our cultural story strongly influences how we interpret and respond to a given situation. The

severity of the symptoms, the duration of a condition, or the degree of pathology do not themselves determine the severity of the measures needed to be taken in order to heal.

A small change, when perceived by the nervous system, can release the stored energy and tension, allowing it to be utilized by the body for constructive purposes like healing and transformation.

When our bodymind becomes aware of the need for change, and can feel and pay attention to itself, there are many useful tools that facilitate self-awareness and act as a catalyst to enable old hurts or wounds to heal. A spinal adjustment, spinal entrainment, breathing/connecting exercises, a meditation practice, or yoga are just a few.

Healing neither requires great effort nor drastic measures. While curing or treating symptoms or disease may call for such measures, this is not the case with healing. As a byproduct of healing, we may decide to make radical changes in our life; but the decision to make such changes occurs as a result of the healing already in progress. It is by healing that we enhance our ability to make constructive changes.

.....HEALING MAGIC.....

I do not have to take drastic measures to heal. The energy that expresses itself as tension, pain, disease symptoms, or an unhappy, unfulfilled life is waiting for the opportunity to burst forth. I am ready to liberate this energy, to set it to work toward healing. I bless my symptoms, illness, and wounds because they are stepping-stones on my healing journey.

Notes

1. Bernard Lown, M.D., and Thomas N. Graboys, M. D., letter, *The New Yorker*, May 17, 1999.
2. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, Vol. 272, No. 23, December 21, 1994.
3. "Calcium Channel Blockers Under Fire," *Medical Sciences Bulletin*, April 1995.
4. Virginia Watson, "Annual Flu Shot for Seniors Debated," *Medical Tribune News Service*, May 22, 1997.
5. George Bergus, M.D., et al., "Antibiotic Use During the First 200 Days of Life," *Archives of Family Medicine*, October 1996.
6. Benjamin Schwartz, *Journal of the American Medical Association*, September 17, 1997.

"All truth passes through three stages. First it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. Third, it is accepted as self-evident."

Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860)

"Donald Epstein's work represents the epitome of "Body" work in our time; the leading edge of Body-Mind-Spirit integration. His example will transform the planet."

Candace B. Pert, Ph.D.

Author *Molecules of Emotion*

Professor of Research

Georgetown University