

The Greatest Doctor in the World

Once upon a time, in the days when China was ruled by an emperor, there lived a doctor who was so wise that he could cure any illness.



A Holistic Parable

All around his village, the people knew they could go to him with any disease, or injury, or disfigurement, and the doctor would be able to heal them. No condition was too severe for the doctor's special combination of herbs and acupuncture.

As the doctor's fame spread far and wide, the common people began to call him, "The Greatest Doctor in the World." And before too long, word of this incredible healer reached the ears of the Emperor himself.

"We must invite him to our court," said the Emperor, "for if he is the greatest doctor in the world, we must have him for our royal physician."

When the doctor arrived at the Emperor's court, he bowed low to the ground.

"What an honor to be summoned before your Imperial Majesty," said the doctor. "But I'm not quite sure why I am here."

"Well," said the Emperor, "we heard you were the greatest doctor in the world. Of course we wanted to meet you."

The doctor nodded his head, as if he finally understood something that had been puzzling him. "You have given me great face for complimenting me so. But actually I am not the greatest doctor in the world. I am very good, but there is one who is greater: my brother."

The Emperor was dumbfounded. "Your brother?" he exclaimed. "How is it that we have never heard of him?"

"Well you see," began the doctor, "all the people who come to me are already sick and suffering, so when I cure them of course they rejoice loudly and tell all their friends and family about me. But my wise brother has taught all the people in his village how to exercise like the animals of the forest, how to eat only the fresh

foods of the land, and how to stay happy in their hearts. He has taught everyone in his village how to stay healthy. No one in his village ever gets sick, and so no one ever hears about them having to get well. But this is precisely why he is truly the greatest doctor in the world."

Revelation

Think of every chapter of this book as a present to be unwrapped. The gift of the first chapter, Revelation, is *clarity*. This chapter illustrates our current paradigm of what it means to be fit, well and healthy -- and then explains in detail an alternative to that paradigm. Open this gift, and I hope to hear you say, "I now have a new way of thinking about my life and my health."



A World Without Suffering

Imagine a world in which everyone who wanted to could live to be 100 years old, free from chronic pain, injury or disease. All the people in such a world would be emotionally fulfilled and each one able to experience the joy of unrestricted movement in work and play. Think of the peace and freedom we could each individually enjoy in a world liberated from the experience of painful aging or untimely death.

What do you think it would take to live in a world in which the money now spent on hospitals, acute medical care and nursing for the elderly was not

needed, and was allocated instead to educating the young, feeding the hungry and cleaning up our environment? What would it be like to live in a world that minimized the physical suffering that now aggravates our normal human fears and insecurities?

When I dream of the future, I see a world freed from the torments of war, hatred, poverty, hunger, prejudice and violence. At the same time, I see that the problems that affect us globally are not more important than – indeed are not separate from – the challenges that we face daily in our own families and communities. How can we be expected to be kind, loving and patient when we are caught up in our own suffering?

Suffering, just to be clear, is not the same thing as pain. Pain is something we feel, a human experience just as natural as happiness or curiosity. Suffering, on the other hand, is how we choose to feel about our pain. Imagine freedom from suffering as learning to let go of the stories we make up to explain away our

hurts and fears. Our emancipation begins when we consider that all suffering has the same source: the disconnection from self. Our experience of suffering begins the moment when – somewhere, somehow – we cut ourselves off from who we are. From that instant on, we are walking around feeling less than whole, and our world feels like something is missing, or like something is wrong.

Consider instead a Holistic approach to life. Imagine learning how to flow through life joyfully aware of the interweaving of body, mind, emotions and Spirit within us – and intimately connected as well to the people, ideas and events in our lives. Suffering would fade away, like mist warmed by the rising sun and scattered by the breeze. In the following pages, I want to engage you in a conversation about what is possible in the realm of your health and happiness.

This book has four simple goals:

- 1) To introduce you to a new holistic way of looking at your life and your health;

- 2) To give you the power to choose between the Holistic approach or the Conventional approach (by explaining the details and distinctions of each);
- 3) To help you discover your BodyMind type – the unique combination of psychological and physiological characteristics that make you who you are; and
- 4) To offer you a set of basic tools that will help you begin your journey to health and happiness.

All too often our physical bodies are the first place we feel pain and suffering. It is, therefore, one of the first places we disconnect from ourselves. We start out with a complaint (I'm too fat). The complaint turns into a story, a subconscious explanation about what's "wrong" (being fat is ugly, nobody likes fat people, and I don't feel loveable when I look this way). The story becomes a reason to disconnect, and puts us in conflict with ourselves (I hate my body, but I'll feel better when I lose some weight).

The Holistic approach to life is fundamentally about being connected and whole. More accurately, you could say that the Holistic approach is about having an experience of being connected and whole. As you will see, we can never really be less than whole, although we can feel incomplete. When we talk about disconnection or dissociation, we are actually talking about being in a state of self-denial, consciously or unconsciously trying to escape from whom we authentically are.

Yet magically, the more we honor and connect to our authentic selves – the inherently perfect interwoven threads of body, mind, emotion and Spirit – the less we suffer. In short, the Holistic approach is a reflection of the most basic purpose of human life: to treat our time on earth as a voyage of Self-discovery, embracing moment by moment anything and everything that will educe, evoke and evolve the experience of our authentic self. That experience is our ticket to the future I dream about, a world in which we under-

stand that we only suffer if we choose to suffer. And what better place to begin that voyage to discover our authentic identity than in the way we relate to our material selves?

"From the beginning Western cultures have seemed almost driven to perfect the world, to make it better." -- John Bradshaw

There is nothing wrong with you.

The primary difference between the Holistic approach and the Conventional approach is that the Conventional, Western approach to fitness, wellness and health begins with the assumption that something is wrong with you that needs to be fixed or improved. The Holistic approach, on the other hand, begins with the assumption that you are already perfect, and anything that doesn't look or feel perfect is merely your perfection concealed.

Just this morning I had an opportunity to work with a young woman who has been suffering from severe lower back pain and sciatica – pain that started in

her back and radiated all the way down her leg. What struck me initially was that she was so young – early 20's – and yet she had already had surgery to relieve the pressure on her sciatic nerve from bulging discs in her lower back. Her condition doesn't usually show up in someone her age. We did some basic muscle tests, and I asked her some questions about what her doctors had done, and what they had told her.

Finally, when I had satisfied myself that I had a fairly complete picture of her condition, I gave her some suggestions about exercise to strengthen the muscles that support her back, and I gave her a quick outline of the cycle of pain, postural distortion and muscle atrophy. And then I told her what I tell all my clients. “Here's the thing, Sophie. There is nothing wrong with you. You've been in pain, and when that goes on for an extended period we start to feel like we're broken and not OK. But you are OK, and you are not broken. Remember that built into your physical and

Spiritual DNA is all the information your body needs to heal itself completely. All we need to find is the right access to let that happen.”

I could see her eyes begin to water. “Thank you,” she said. “That’s the first time anyone has ever said that to me. The doctors only told me that surgery would either work or it wouldn’t – but nobody ever told me I was OK. That really makes me feel so relieved. You’ve helped me more in 5 minutes than my doctors have done in 6 months.”

“Perfection” is a word derived from the ancient Latin *perfectio* meaning, “complete” or “lacking nothing.” I am often asked if I really believe this is true, if I believe that we are all really perfect. Obviously, the experience of being inherently perfect is rare. Most of the time we walk around with the aches, diseases and dissatisfactions that feel like evidence that there really is something wrong with us. (This is why the Conventional approach seems so reasonable.) Yet I find little uplifting or empowering in going through

life with an underlying belief that I am inherently broken or dysfunctional. So whether one really believes that they are perfect isn’t really the point.

The point is the notion of “being perfect” is a starting place, an empowering a priori assumption. After all, the purpose of all the healthy life practices we adopt is to increase our sense of vitality and joyful personal power. Starting out with the assumption that we’re perfect and whole creates the space for a whole new set of practices, vocabulary, methodologies, approaches and measurements, different than those found in the Conventional approach.

But to be entirely truthful, yes – I absolutely believe that we are all inherently perfect. It is our human nature to be complete and wanting nothing. We are born with the capacity for thought, emotion, movement and work, and connection to the Divine. We are by definition the marvelous interweaving of bodies, minds and Spirits. You can’t be improved or fixed, because you can’t get better than perfect! The

purpose, therefore, of working out, eating well and managing stress is to take steps to un-conceal our already-existing perfection.

These are the two halves of the Holistic approach in a nutshell: First, distinguish where your wholeness is concealed. Then reveal your perfection – literally “un-mask” it – in a way that has it live fully in your own experience, and in the experience of others.