

The Healing Response and the Potentiation of the Self

Imagery & Mind-Body Perspectives

by Nimrod Sheinman, ND

Every therapy is guided by its concepts about change, healing and transformation. These felt shifts are the experiences we're all looking for. Without them, especially when things 'go wrong', we feel blocked or stuck. We yearn to maximise our healing potential. Imagery processes and their symbolic language are remarkable tools to get 'unstuck' and to transform illness into a self-healing journey.

The Symbolic Language

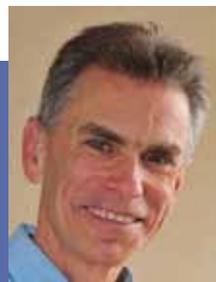
'The soul never thinks without a picture.' Aristotle

Through Imagery's symbolic language, all of our invisible realms – feelings, sensations, thoughts, personality traits and hidden potentials – can be seen, felt, touched and communicated with. It is a universal, personal and collective language with its own unique syntax. Knowing this language enables us to discover new choices, realise new insights, free inner resources and reconnect with meaning and life. Carl Jung, the world-famous Swiss psychologist, explained that symbols and images are the psychological mechanisms to transform energy. 'You must give birth to your images... they are the future waiting to be born', said the famous poet Rainer Maria Rilke.

Disease May Tell Us a Story

'The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in seeing with new eyes.' Marcel Proust

'Our dis-ease may tell us a story not just of our cells but of ourselves', said American journalist and author Marc Barasch in his book *The Healing Path*, in which he described the healing stories of dozens of people, himself included, for whom serious illness became a catalyst for profound personal change. It seems there is a strong connection between our biography and our biology, between our personal myth and our healing path. Imagery, guided and interactive, enables us to investigate the conscious and unconscious stories with 'new eyes'. Imagery can thus become a catalyst for narrative-based medicine, helping us not only to know who we are, but also to become what we may be. 'Healing may not be so much about getting better, as about letting go of everything that isn't you... and becoming who you are', says physician and author Rachel Naomi Remen.



Nimrod Sheinman is an international expert in mind-body medicine and imagery-based therapy, specialising in transforming illness into a self-healing journey. He is the founder of the Israel Centre for Mind-Body Medicine, and is scheduled to visit Australia in August 2011. Register now for his two day workshop 'Guided Imagery and Mind-body healing' to be held 9-10 August in Melbourne or for his three day intensive for Health Professionals 'Imagery-based Therapy and Mind-body Medicine in Clinical Practice' which will be held 5-7 August in Melbourne. For more information see our website www.gawler.org or call 03 5967 1730.



Communicating with Symptoms

'Perhaps all the dragons in our lives are princesses, who are only waiting to see us act, just once, with beauty and courage. Perhaps everything that frightens us is, in its deepest essence, something helpless that wants our love.' Rainer Maria Rilke

A basic premise of mind-body medicine (as well as Buddhist Psychology), is that the river of life courses through each of us, bringing every experience known to humankind. As one therapist wrote: 'Life moves through you, except when it doesn't... Life is great, but sometimes it hurts like hell...'

What can we do about it? One skill to develop is what the Buddhists call the agency of 'mindfulness', a learned skill of enormous importance in mind-body therapy. Mindfulness is not so much a 'doing' as a 'being with'. In mindfulness, we shift from judging or reacting to the negative experience, and paradoxically choose to give it space, to let it be, to open a 'safe space' for it inside.

The next premise in the healing equation suggests that each negative experience may return, until a human presence is brought to touch it with love and with acceptance and then to integrate it. The challenge is to develop practices for welcoming, listening deeply, accepting, understanding and expressing whatever life is giving us. That's where 'communicating with symptoms' through Guided Imagery can be utilised – the skill of inviting an image representing the symptom (the illness, the pain or the anxiety) or 'the symptom maker' (such as a negative, judgmental or critical inner figure), and maintaining a disciplined and precise conversation with it.

Then, through the inner imagery dialogue, we come to understand the power of the stories we tell and our possibilities for using these stories for better health. As wrote Marc Barasch in *The Healing Path*: 'If we tread our path with heart, illness's dark passage may give us a glimpse not only of what it is like to become whole, but what it means to be fully human.'