

## YOUR VERY GOOD HEALTH

Murray McGrath



The well-known, so-called 'Laughter Doctor', Patch Adams M.D., when quoted as saying "laughter is the best medicine", responds: "No, the best medicine is friendship."

From birth we are immersed in a world that conveys to us many unfortunate messages, including the notion that when we are ill we need medical remedies. Feeling ill does bring needs, but they can be most effectively served by supportive, friendly and loving relationships. Even the doctor should, in my opinion, be your expert friend.

However, true to human nature, there are always those who will take advantage of the needy and, when there is an opportunity to make money (for example, the germ theory of disease), a profitable business comes into being. How common is this phenomenon?

It is important to acknowledge that the vast majority of doctors and other healthcare professionals are, or at least start off being, caring dedicated people who bestow huge benefits on their patients in spite of the inappropriate and often harmful methods of medical science.

So, what's the answer? It came for me over 40 years ago when I encountered and was convinced by the philosophy of the Kingston Clinic in Edinburgh, Scotland. Simply put this says that, if you look after yourself with good and appropriate food, exercise and rest, and, if your relationships, interests and occupation are positive and happy, you have an excellent chance of being healthy. You will develop understanding and confidence in your health. You will realise that it is normal to have the capacity to be well, that being ill now and then is part of being healthy and that healthy bodily processes require time. Rather than reacting with fear, take an interest in your illnesses, viewing them as having a purpose, even when it is hard to understand. You may then develop calm confidence, enabling your vital bodily functions to work at their best. Every time you come through an upset of health without medical intervention, your confidence grows and your emotions become more positive. I myself have not used any medical remedy or treatment (apart from cataract surgery) since discovering this approach. I have been ill on a number of occasions, sometimes apparently quite seriously, but have always recovered without any form of medical attention.

Positive beliefs and emotions are the keys to a healthy happy life. If your beliefs are positive, your emotions will be also, and every cell in your body will respond. If you have a pain, ask yourself: "What does that mean to me?" If it means "something's wrong, it's going to get worse unless I get a cure", you will suffer more and for longer. If it means "something is happening that needs to happen", you will suffer less and for less time. But you may ask, "What if it is something serious?" The most damaging thing to any upset of health is to be told by a doctor that it is something serious. The resulting reaction not only inhibits healthy bodily functions, but can bring about unhealthy developments. An unfortunate number of people die unexpectedly quickly after being diagnosed with cancer or heart disease. This is a very sad side-effect of medical practice. The fear resulting from such a diagnosis affects your every cell and bodily function. If you doubt the effect of emotions on the body, consider how the placebo effect is present in every area of medical research. Science is now proving the truth of these assertions. Rigorously designed scientific experiments involving placebos in the form of inert pills, saline injections, sham surgery, inactivated heart pacemakers and others have shown dramatic benefits. What is the explanation? The "meaning" of treatments to those treated determines the effects. Those who benefit "know" they are being cured if everything about the process suggests it to them. They believe it. So, all the bodily functions are enabled to work at prime efficiency and wonderful results can ensue. Orthodox drug treatments are also affected by these influences. Properly designed scientific experiments have shown that when the doctor believes in the drug, it becomes more beneficial. The belief is subtly transmitted to the patient. Similarly, old drugs become less effective

when new versions come along. Meanings for people of different nationalities and cultures can vary to a surprising degree affecting the way they respond to placebos and drugs. <sup>[1]</sup>

And it turns out your genetic inheritance plays only a minor role in determining your health. Culture, upbringing and life experiences, and the way you react to them are the main influences, and in the case of the developing foetus, those of the mother. <sup>[2]</sup>

So, what can we learn from all this? If the secret of health and happiness lies in our beliefs and the meaning we attach to the experiences we encounter in life, how can we achieve positive, healthy, happy beliefs and avoid attributing negative meanings to happenings and observations? The answer lies with each individual. You, the reader, must find your own way of dealing with this challenge. Seek to understand it through observation, particularly of yourself, relevant reading, contemplation and meditation. Discussion with others, irrespective of whether they agree with you, can stimulate new ideas and understanding. Writing about one's beliefs clarifies thinking. You can experiment. Try a different way of reacting to minor health upsets. In the end, you should be able to find the path that looks and feels right. Consider every new idea that comes along, but accept only what you feel will lead you to a better understanding, a more truthful awareness. Set the rest aside for another day, but don't forget that finding your truths requires a mind open to ideas that initially may seem alien.

Self-observation and study hold an almost infinite potential for finding new understanding of your life. Of course, it isn't easy. Passively observing oneself is a skill that can take a lifetime to perfect, and the most important thing in life is not what happens to you, but how you react. Your reactions depend on what your experiences mean to you. So, watch how you react, think about why and ask the question "Is this really how I want to be?" If you are honest with yourself, it is a fascinating study. And what you believe in can become 'yourself', rather than a placebo.

But be patient.

#### **References**

1. Moerman D. (2002) Meaning, Medicine and the 'Placebo Effect, Cambridge University Press
2. Lipton B. (2005) The Biology of Belief, Distributed by Hay House

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**Murray McGrath** was born and brought up in Edinburgh. He practiced as an optometrist, specialising in contact lenses. He has lived and studied the philosophy of the Kingston Clinic (the alternative to medicine) for 40 years. He also ran a vegetarian, yoga retreat centre in the Scottish Borders, and a Natural Health Centre in Edinburgh. Currently he is working on a book, **Your Guide to Health and Happiness**, a down to earth look at the meaning of your life.