Emotions and Your Health

How Your Emotions Can Make You Sick and How Your Emotions Can Help You Heal

People often speak of the mind-body connection, but rarely think about the heart-body connection. It's true that thoughts and attitudes affect health, but so do emotions. Traditional systems of medicine recognized this fact, and linked various emotions with organ functions. They saw a person's emotional state as an important clue to overall health.

Traditional Chinese medicine, for example, makes the following associations between emotions and organ systems. Anger is associated with the liver and gallbladder, grief with the lungs, fear with the kidneys, excessive excitability with the heart and worry with the stomach. These links are also found in Western culture in popular expressions such as:

This galls me or she is filled with the gall of bitterness.
He was so scared he wet his pants.
Don't worry or you'll give yourself an ulcer.

Traditional Western herbalism also linked emotions with physical conditions. It associated excess mucus (phlegm) with an overly accommodating personality and sadness. It also associated depression with toxins (black bile) and heart disease with anger.

The simple fact is that emotional state and physical health are linked. Emotional states can cause physical illness and physical illness can influence emotions. Like the proverbial chicken and egg, it's a which came first situation. When you hold onto an emotional state excessively, it disrupts the balance of your body and when you get physically ill it affects your emotional state.

In this month's *Sunshine Sharing* we'll explore the connections between emotions and physical health. Given the current situation in the world with the COVID-19 pandemic it seems appropriate to begin with the emotion of fear.

Fear, Anxiety, Stress and Worry

Life is full of risks, both big and small. If you perceive danger or feel that there is risk involved in taking action you will feel a certain degree of fear. For example, a treatment that may help a patient get well may also have a chance of making them worse. In this situation it is natural for the patient to feel fear or anxiety because they have to decide if the risk of the medicine or surgery outweigh the potential benefits from it.

Fear in the face of any potential danger is normal and healthy. It evokes the fight-flight-or-freeze response, which primes you to fight the problem, flee the situation, or freeze until you can see a clear path out of the danger. This response activates your maximum physical potential to help you survive.

Unfortunately, fear can also temporarily deactivate logical thinking. In a real, life-threatening emergency there is often no time to consider the risks versus benefits. So, fear can cause you to simply react on instinct. If you need to seriously consider your options in a risky situation, you need to calm down so you can think clearly before determining a course of action.

One remedy that can help people think clearly when they have just experienced a frightening situation is a ***Shock and Injury FE blend*** containing flower essences of arnica, star of Bethlehem, cherry plum and red clover. This blend can help restore inner calm and detach from the hysteria

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SUNSHINE SHARING

Your guide to better health the natural way.

Vol. 31 No. 6

Important Notice

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Emotions and Your Health

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generated when people are frightened or angry. In fact, it's one of the most basic remedies for any type of acute emotional trauma or upset.

Another remedy that can help a person who is experiencing fear to calm down and think rationally is an ***Anti-Anxiety formula*** that contains magnesium, zinc and Zembrin®, an extract from the kanna plant. It's a good option for people who are prone to nervousness and anxiety when faced with scary situations.

Inaction and Anxiety

Dealing with risk takes courage. You have to make a decision and act in the best manner you can. When the fear response causes you to freeze, you can become paralyzed in the face of the threat and find yourself unable to decide what to do. This inability to take action creates anxiety. Anxiety is a shaky feeling because the body is primed to act, but you are unable to make a decision about what direction to go.

When someone is stuck in fear and experiencing anxiety, there are several remedies that can help them develop the courage to take action in spite of their fears. As one takes action in the face of risk, anxiety starts to dissipate.

A ***Fear-Reducing FE blend*** contains flower essences like mimulus, aspen and red clover. This remedy helps people confront their fears, exercise courage and decide on a course of action to solve the challenge they are facing.

Another helpful remedy is a ***Calming and Relaxing EO blend*** containing oils like atlas cedarwood, orange and lavender. This blend can calm the nerves, which helps a person to think rationally, rather than fearfully about risks. The ***atlas cedarwood*** oil in this blend is particularly helpful for reducing anxiety, while strengthening a person's resistance to stress. It promotes a calm, conscious mind which helps a person experience a sense of strength and serenity when dealing with difficult circumstances.

The Effect of Fear on Physical Health

In traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), excessive fear is said to damage the kidneys. However, the Chinese idea of kidney energy includes aspects of adrenal function. The adrenal glands sit on top of the kidneys and take the biggest hit during fearful times.

The Chinese associate this kidney/adrenal energy with something called *jing*, which can roughly be thought of as basic *life essence*. Depleting jing causes premature aging, shortening life. This happens because excessive cortisol, which is released under constant stress, is associated with premature aging.

Ongoing stress may be diagnosed as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). When someone reaches this level of stress, supporting adrenal function is important to help them regain their emotional balance and health. In fact, the feeling, "I can't take it anymore," is an important sign that one needs to support the adrenal glands.

An ***Adrenal Glandular formula*** can be very helpful in recovery from PTSD and other health problems brought on by chronic stress. It should contain adrenal substance, B-vitamins and vitamin C to help rebuild the adrenal function. Adaptogens, such as **ashwaganda**, can also be helpful, as can an ***Anti-Stress Vitamin and Mineral Supplement*** containing B-complex vitamins and vitamin C.

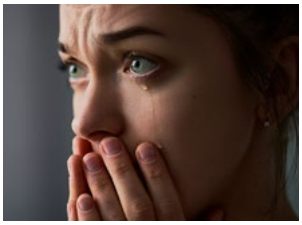
Worry and Digestion

Feeling anxious can lead a person to start worrying. When you worry, you try to anticipate all the bad things that could happen in the attempt to avoid future risk. Since no one can ever anticipate everything, worry causes the brain to constantly focus on potentially harmful scenarios. This increases anxiety, produces a constant feeling of stress, and overtime leads to feeling physically and emotionally exhausted.

In both TCM and in Western practices, worry is seen as something that adversely affects digestion. Since the stress response inhibits both digestive secretions and intestinal motility, it's easy to see the rationale behind sayings like, "Don't worry so much or you'll give yourself an ulcer." However, it's more likely that excessive worry about yourself or others will give you indigestion, gas, bloating and constipation.

So, when a person suffers from indigestion, it's important to consider their emotional state as a possible cause of their problems. They may need to learn to relax when they're eating. Taking a ***Chinese Earth Reducing formula*** with meals may also be helpful.

Grief, Sadness and Depression



It's natural to grieve when you lose someone you love or when something important to you is lost. When a loved one dies it's normal to feel sad and perhaps even depressed. Grief is a way of expressing pain and acknowledging loss.

But, when a person gets stuck in grief, it can begin to cause problems with their health. In TCM excessive grief is said to damage the lung meridian and the metal element. The metal element represents the body's defensive ability, i.e., the immune system.

While there isn't an expression in Western thought for the link between grief, lung problems and reduced immunity, there is research that suggests this link is real. A person is more prone to congestion, colds, influenza and pneumonia when they are grieving. Grief can also increase the risk of other immune disorders such as cancer, lymphoma, leukemia, lupus and rheumatoid arthritis, not to mention cardiovascular disease.

A person can also "grieve themselves to death." According to an article in *US News*, "The 'widowhood effect'—the increased likelihood for a recently widowed person to die—has been well-studied. Previous studies have shown that mortality increases anywhere from 40 to 90 percent in the three months following the death of a spouse and lingers at 15 percent during the months after." (https://health.usnews.com/health-care/for-better/articles/2018-05-03/how-grief-affects-health)

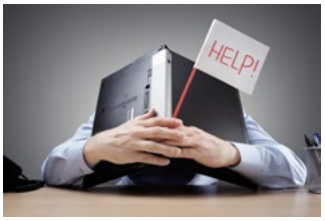
Helping People Let Go

The grieving process takes time and people need emotional support during it. In modern society people may not receive the "shoulder to cry on" they need during this time. A person who is grieving doesn't need advice, platitudes, or other shallow attempts at comfort. They just need to know that someone is willing to acknowledge their suffering and maybe just listen while they talk.

Like other emotional states, the grieving process can be assisted through the use of flower essences. A ***Grief and Sadness FE blend*** containing flower essences like love-lies-bleeding, bleeding heart and borage can assist a person in letting go of what they have lost and finding the courage to move on.

The essential oils of **rose** and **ylang ylang** can be particularly helpful for comforting the heart during a major loss. These oils also soften anger, which can often surface during severe grief. Inhaling a ***Lung Supporting EO blend*** containing oils like eucalyptus, fir and ravensara can also be helpful when a person is experiencing respiratory problems during grieving. The oils can help to open the lungs and strengthen the immune system.

Sadness, Defeat and Depression



While there are many reasons why a person can feel depressed, one of the most common reasons is grief. Depression often occurs during the grieving process. Depression can also follow a significant set-back or defeat, such as becoming chronically ill. People suffering from cancer, heart disease, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease and diabetes all have high rates of depression.

Whatever the cause, depression can leave a person feeling lethargic and unmotivated, which often means the person neglects their own self care. A depressed person tends to not eat well and may seek to make themselves feel temporarily better with junk food. They are also not likely to be motivated to exercise or do other things they would normally do to keep themselves healthy.

While it's important to look for and correct physical causes of depression, mental and emotional support is also important. Again, flower essences, like the ***Grief and Sadness formula*** mentioned earlier, may be helpful. A ***Personal Boundaries FE blend*** containing mariposa lily, pine and scarlet monkeyflower essences may also help. It can restore a person's sense of self-worth and the desire to take care of themselves.

Aromatherapy can also be helpful. For instance, ***lemongrass*** and lemon balm (melissa) are helpful for depression caused by grief. ***Rosemary*** is helpful for depression associated with aging and ***bergamot*** is a general mood lifter.

It's also helpful to use a ***Chinese Qi Regulating formula*** to lift a person's energy and help them get moving in their life again. This blend, featuring key ingredients like perilla, cypress, bitter orange and bupleurum, works on depression from multiple angles, but primarily helps to improve energy so they can start doing the things they need to do to take care of their life and health.

Additional Help and Information

For more information about the relationships between health and emotions contact the person who gave you this newsletter. You can also consult the following resources:

The Heart's Key to Health, Happiness and Success by Steven Horne

Online Emotional Healing Course (free) by Steven Horne (http://modernherbalmedicine.com/articles/handouts-and-recording-links-for-2018-online-emotional-healing-course.html)

Anger, Irritability and Aggression

Anger can arise from both grief and fear. It's the fight in the stress response. It helps you to fight back against that which would harm you. Often, it is also an expression of hurt. Someone who feels injured by another wants them to understand the pain they are feeling as a result of that injury.

In emotionally healthy people, anger is a temporary feeling. Once the situation that provoked the anger has been resolved, it is dropped and the person's emotions return to a balanced state.

When people get stuck in anger, however, they become irritable and are frequently upset over little things. They also lose their temper easily. An angry person can be overly aggressive, threatening and belittling others, and possibly even injuring them. This excess anger is not only damaging to relationships, it's damaging to the health of the person who harbors it.

In TCM, anger is associated with the liver and gallbladder meridians. Too much anger is said to damage the liver. This connection between anger and the gallbladder is acknowledged in the West when we talk about the "gall of bitterness" or say, "that person galls me."

Anger and the Heart

Excessive anger damages the heart and increases the risk of cardiovascular disease. It has long been recognized that type A personalities, who are more angry and aggressive, are more prone to cardiovascular disease than type B personalities, who are more easy going. When we talk about someone hardening their hearts towards another, it sounds like the emotional counterpart to hardening of the arteries.

Given this fact, it's interesting that there is research suggesting that people who are angry may produce higher levels of C-reactive protein (CRP), a pro-inflammatory substance. This can not only indicate the liver is stressed, the higher levels of CRP make one more prone to arteriosclerosis and heart disease. (https://www.liversupport.com/anger-inflames-liver-disease/)

Research also suggeststhat people who have family and friends (loving relationships) are less prone to heart disease and recover faster from heart attacks. Since excessive anger damages loving relationships, that makes it even more clear that managing anger is important if you want a healthy heart.

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Anger and the Liver

According to the TCM view of anger, anger and irritability can indicate that the liver is overwhelmed with irritants. The liver is the body's primary organ of internal detoxification. It processes toxins for removal from the body via the gallbladder and kidneys. It also breaks down the hormones and neurotransmitters involved in fear and aggression. So, when it can't do its job properly a person can feel galled and/or pissed off.

When a person tends to be irritable, a ***Chinese Wood Reducing formula*** may be helpful. This formula, containing herbs like bupleurum, peony and scute root, can help clear the liver and reduce these angry, irritable feelings. A ***Special Cellular Cleansing Formula***, containing gentian, cascara sagrada, black walnut and yellow dock, may also be helpful.

Reducing Anger and Irritability

Emotionally, people who tend to be angry can benefit by learning to listen and consider other people's points of view. They need to learn more compassion and empathy for those around them. An ***Anger-Reducing FE blend*** containing the essences of calendula, snapdragon and impatiens can aid this process. So can an ***Analgesic EO blend***, which reduces inflammation. Key ingredients include ***wintergreen***, ***pine*** and ***helicrysum***.

Helicrysum is especially helpful for those who have emotionally hardened their hearts due to previous abuse. It has also been applied topically over the liver to help heal serious liver diseases.

We've barely scratched the surface of the heart-body connections, but hopefully you understand that emotions can help a person discover what organs or body systems need support. Learning to deal with your emotions can improve your physical health. Here's a table of a few of these connections for your consideration.

Emotion	May Indicate the Following	May Lead to the Following
Anger, Irritability, Easy Loss of Temper	May indicate problems with the liver, gallbladder and spleen; signals a possible need to support the liver and detoxify the body	Anger may increase inflammatory responses and the risk of heart disease; it may also cause problems with the liver, gallbladder and urinary system
Fear/Acute Anxiety	Excessive fear may be linked to weak adrenal glands and depletion of the nervous system; may involve deficiencies of Vitamin C, B-Complex, magnesium and zinc	Elevates blood pressure and heart rate, causes muscle tension, inhibits digestion, interferes with rational thought, reduces immune function
Grief/Sadness	May indicate problems with the lungs and circulatory system; often found in chronic, life-threatening illness	May damage the lungs contributing to asthma, infections or COPD; reduces peripheral circulation
Worry/Chronic Stress	May indicate problems with the stomach and digestion; may involve same nutrient deficiences as acute anxiety	Weakens the nerves and adrenal glands, may cause chronic digestive weakness
Depression	May indicate problems with the thyroid, adrenal glands, liver and digestive function, may also indicate a lack of energy production at the cell level	May cause a person to not care for themslves properly, which indirectly contributes to obesity, diabetes and other chronic illnesses