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Understanding the mind-body connection for optimal health and healing

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Understanding the mind-body connection for optimal health and healing

Abstract

The purpose of the research paper is to understand how a person's attitudes and beliefs shape their life and influence their health and healing. It is fundamental for someone in the helping profession to gain insight into the role of love, faith, hope, and forgiveness in overall health and healing. The key to health and healing is to understand, accept, and believe in the notion of control over one's thinking and the ability to be who one chooses to be. Every day and every thought is a choice. It is crucial for health and overall wellness that individuals take responsibility for their feelings, emotions, and behaviors through the thoughts they choose.

UNDERSTANDING THE MIND - BODY CONNECTION FOR OPTIMAL
HEALTH AND HEALING

A Research Paper

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by

Molly M. Cretsinger

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Abstract

The purpose of the research paper is to understand how a person's attitudes and beliefs shape their life and influence their health and healing. It is fundamental for someone in the helping profession to gain insight into the role of love, faith, hope, and forgiveness in overall health and healing. The key to health and healing is to understand, accept, and believe in the notion of control over one's thinking and the ability to be who one chooses to be. Every day and every thought is a choice. It is crucial for health and overall wellness that individuals take responsibility for their feelings, emotions, and behaviors through the thoughts they choose.

Understanding the Mind-Body Connection for Optimal Health and Healing

Understanding how a person's attitude and beliefs shape his/her life is crucial in mental health therapy. Positive energy and thoughts such as love, faith, hope, and forgiveness have been shown to aid health and healing, just as negativity such as distrust, anger, resentment, self-pity can create illness and impede recovery (Chopra, 2004; Dyer, 2004; Jampolsky, 1999; Lipton, 2005; A. Martin, 1997; P. Martin, 1997; Pert, 1997; Siegel, 1986).

Disease appears to be ever more present, and much of society turns to prescription drugs, which can create and exacerbate emotional, physical, and mental problems (Abramson, 2004; Breggin, 2001; Breggin & Cohen, 1999; A. Martin, 1997; Stein, 2004). Society also seems to look for quick fixes – an attempt to improve behavior without improving thoughts – and to avoid personal responsibility and individual choice in decisions and actions, instead of striving to understand the connection between one's thoughts, one's behavior, and the success and health of one's life (Abramson, 2004; Breggin & Cohen, 1999; A. Martin, 1997; Stein, 2004). As John E. Fetzer stated, "The key to humanity's future lies in the productive linkage of the mind, body, and spirit," (Fetzer, 2000).

Psychoneuroimmunology (PNI) stresses this mind-body connection and includes a brief overview of the detrimental effects that psychiatric drugs have on a person's physical, mental, and emotional state (Kelley, 2001). Better

understanding this connection allows a therapist to teach clients to better heal their own suffering by emphasizing the body's natural ability to heal through the power of positive thinking (Breggin & Cohen, 1999; Dusek, 2005; Kelley, 2001).

The purpose of this research paper is to build understanding of the mind-body connection to assist clients in healing their own suffering through the emphasis of the body's ability to heal, to acknowledge the benefits of therapeutic care through love versus the use of psychiatric drugs, and to educate on the importance and the impact of personal choice in health. It is essential to understand how positive and negative energy create thoughts and shape an individual's fate.

The Mind-Body Connection

Understanding the Connection

“The mind – a manifest functioning of the brain – and the other body systems interact in ways critical for health, illness, and well-being,” (Ray, 2004, p. 29). It is clear that what we believe and expect for our self and in our life has a direct impact on our susceptibility to sickness and death and our ability to heal (Pert, 1997; Siegel, 1986). If one expects to heal and believes in one's ability to heal, one will be apt to do so (Chopra, 2004; Pert, 1997; Siegel, 1986). It is not only important to be healthy to live a fulfilling life, but it is even more crucial to *believe* that one is capable of health and healing (Pert, 1997; Siegel, 1986; Sutherland, 2001).

Because our bodies are so intelligent and with the acknowledgement that every cell in our body knows what we are thinking, it is clear that as the brain sends out messages, the body responds (Chopra, 2004; Lipton, 2005; A. Martin, 1997; Ray, 2004; Sutherland, 2001). Our experiences alter our thoughts, which alter our brains and actually alter our biology (Lipton, 2005; Ray, 2004).

Art Martin (1997) acknowledged that healing is possible through the power of the mind and emphasized the truth behind the power within. Martin made note of the intelligence of the body and that every physical ailment is a result of the mind.

The immune system is listening to every thought and all self-talk, as Siegel (1986) stated, “The state of the mind changes the state of the body by working through the central nervous system, the endocrine system, and the immune system,” (p. 3). Peaceful thoughts send messages to live while negative thoughts and unresolved conflict sends “die” messages (Siegel, 1986). There is a clear connection to the thoughts in one’s mind and the response of the body which inevitably affects the overall health of the body (Chopra, 2004; Dusek, 2005; Dyer, 2004; Jampolsky, 1999; Kelley, 2001; Lipton, 2005; A. Martin, 1997; P. Martin, 1997; Pert, 1997; Ray, 2004; Siegel, 1986; Sutherland, 2001).

Throughout Siegel’s (1986) many years of working with cancer patients, he discovered that one-fourth of all chemotherapy patients would throw up before their next appointment because of their anticipation of feeling sick. Siegel

defined this behavior as “negative programming.” Kiecolt-Glaser, Mcguire, Glaser, and Robles (2002) found that negative emotions such as resentment, depression, or jealousy can increase susceptibility to infections or delay healing. Kiecolt-Glaser, et al. (2002) concluded that the proper functioning of the immune system is crucial to overall wellness.

Siegel (1986) stated, “The resolution of conflicts, the realization of the authentic self, spiritual awareness, and love release incredible energy that promotes the biochemistry of healing,” (p.137). In short, positive thinking helps create a healthy immune system, just as a healthy immune system leads to positive thinking (Vishwanath, 1996).

Lipton (2005) acknowledged that our cells are programmable and our cells respond to the environment. Lipton discussed the importance of structuring ones environment around health in order to improve ones overall well-being. An individual chooses what to see and the ability to change his or her thinking (Bandler, 1985; Chopra, 2004; Lipton, 2005; Siegel, 1986; Sutherland, 2001). Individuals have a choice to live in fear or to live a life of love and when an individual chooses to live in love the body inevitably responds and grows in health (Chopra, 2004; Lipton, 2005; Siegel, 1986; Sutherland, 2001).

Lipton (2005) stated, “It is a single cell’s ‘awareness’ of the environment, not its genes, that sets into motion the mechanisms of life,” (p. 15). Lipton discussed the notion that every cell in our body knows what we are thinking.

Because of this, the body is directly affected by each thought, which can be beneficial or detrimental to personal growth (Chopra, 2004; Lipton, 2005; Pert, 1997). Lipton (2005) discovered that it is not our genes that determine the character of our lives, but our responses to the environment that propel life. The way to change life is by changing thoughts (Bandler, 1985; Chopra, 2004; Lipton, 2005; Pert, 1997; Sutherland, 2001).

The cells' operations are molded not by its genetic code, but by the interaction with the environment (Chopra, 2004; Lipton, 2005; Pert, 1997). Lipton (2005) established that cells are malleable and each cell is alive and has consciousness. Research shows every single cell has the genetic instructions to become a skin cell or a liver cell, or whatever cell it is, based on its environment; cells are changeable and programmable, indicating that cells respond to their environment (Chopra, 2004; Lipton, 2005; Pert, 1997). This understanding can be important in helping clients recognize the significance of self-awareness and how it leads to self-empowerment (Chopra, 2004; Lipton, 2005).

Negative Feelings, Negative Reactions

When feelings are not recognized but are suppressed and an individual masks or buries emotional pain, the result causes emotional, mental, and physical harm (Chopra, 2004; Siegel, 1986; Sutherland, 2001). Anger, as an example, is an emotion, like all other emotions, and needs to be acknowledged and appropriately expressed when felt (Chopra, 2004; Siegel, 1986). Furthermore,

according to Siegel (1986) if anger is not dealt with, it can likely develop into resentment or even hatred, which can destroy the body. If a negative emotion is addressed from the start, it need not manifest itself as disease (Siegel, 1986). It is by ignoring ones emotional needs that an individual jeopardizes their physical health (Pert, 1997; Siegel, 1986; Sutherland, 2001).

Art Martin (1997) confirmed that negative feelings send negative reactions and responses through the body to prepare for flight or fight. The body, if left in this state, begins to suppress, depress, and break down cellular structures in every cell, organ, or gland (A. Martin, 1997; Siegel, 1986; Sutherland, 2001). People should be encouraged to express anger, fear, and resentment for these emotions show that an individual is reacting to threats in their life (A. Martin, 1997; Siegel, 1986).

Siegel (1986) found throughout his work that happy people typically don't get sick. "One's attitude toward oneself is the single most important factor in healing or staying well. Those who are at peace with themselves and their immediate surroundings have far fewer serious illnesses than those who are not," (Siegel, 1986, p. 76). Being at peace means trusting in the body and the power within; just as constant worry stems from doubt, and the body responds accordingly (Jampolsky, 1999; A. Martin, 1997; Siegel, 1986). The irony, as Siegel (2005) discovered, is that by worrying so much about our health, we

jeopardize our well-being, elevating susceptibility to disease such as heart attack and cancer.

The body's immune system is weakened by stress (A. Martin, 1997; Meyer, 2004; Sutherland, 2001). If a person continually ignores stress and makes no change in their lifestyle, problems will continue to surface. P. Martin (1997) agreed that psychological factors affect the immune system which, in turn, affects physical health. Individuals must be willing to make changes in their lifestyle for optimum health and well-being because stress weakens the body and opens the door to further mental and physical illness (Meyer, 2004).

The Power of Positive Thinking

Through the research, it is clear that what one thinks and believes directly affects the health and well-being of one's life (Chopra, 2004; Lipton, 2005; A. Martin, 1997; P. Martin, 1997; Meyer, 2004; Pert, 1997; Ray, 2004; Siegel, 1986; Sutherland, 2001). Thoughts affect one's emotional, mental, behavioral, and physical well-being, which affects our futures, our relationships, and much more (Meyer, 2004). Reality is a direct result of an individual's thinking (Chopra, 2004; Lipton, 2005). Lipton (2005) stated that changing the mind, changes the body, and by acknowledging the infinite power of belief, an individual gains freedom in their life.

Isaacs (2005) stated that much of our healing comes from our own thoughts and beliefs. The author found pre-and post-surgical patients who used

imagery had shorter hospital stays and decreased pain and anxiety than those who did not and those patients used far fewer pain medications. Healing stems from our own belief in our ability to heal (Chopra, 2004; Issacs, 2005; Siegel, 1986). Isaacs (2005) declared that the brain, the mind, and one's thoughts provide the greatest support to one's healing. All and all, thoughts are crucial to healing and health (Bandler, 1985; Chopra, 2004; Dyer, 2004; Isaacs, 2005; Jampolsky, 1999; Lipton, 2005; A. Martin, 1997; P. Martin, 1997; Meyer, 2004; Pert, 1997; Siegel, 1986; Sutherland, 2001).

Two-way Street: Be Mindful of the Body

As the mind directly affects the body, so does the body affect the mind (Lipton, 2005; A. Martin, 1997; P. Martin, 1997; Sutherland, 2001). P. Martin (1997) conceded the mind and body, including immunity, is a two-way street. To find peace and feel complete unconditional love for self, one must respect their mind and their body (Dyer, 2001; A. Martin, 1997; P. Martin, 1997; Siegel, 1986; Sutherland, 2001). In doing so, it is important to be good to the mind and the body. For the mind, it is crucial to be at peace, think loving and positive thoughts, forgive, and accept (Jampolsky, 1999; Meyer, 2004; Sutherland, 2001). For the body, it is important to be healthful, which includes proper nutrition, regular exercise, appropriate rest, and time for relaxation and peace (P. Martin, 1997; Sutherland, 2001).

Meditation and muscle relaxation can be effective ways of serving the body by way of releasing energy blocks (Chopra, 2004; Dyer, 2001; P. Martin, 1997; Siegel, 1986; Sutherland, 2001). Siegel (1986) reported that muscle relaxation and anxiety cannot exist together. P. Martin (1997) acknowledged that relaxation techniques can relieve anxiety and depression. Proper relaxation affects the whole body and creates psychological well-being. As P. Martin (1997) acknowledged, when a person is relaxed their blood pressure, heart rate, and breathing rate drop.

Chiropractic care is another highly effective means to serving the body, which affects the mind and leads to overall wellness (Pert, 1997; Strang, 1984). Chiropractic doctors, through their education and clinical practice, have established a licensed health profession specific to identifying and correcting misalignments in the spine that interfere with the nervous systems efficiency to coordinate spirit, mind, and body for optimum health and healing (Strang, 1984).

Therapeutic Care versus Psychiatric Drugs

The Use of Psychiatric Drugs

The key is to understand one's thoughts in order to make effective change in life and living (Breggin & Cohen, 1999; Chopra, 2004; Lipton, 2005; A. Martin, 1997; P. Martin, 1997; Pert, 1997; Ray, 2004; Siegel, 1986; Sutherland, 2001). To understand requires patience and time to examine the self (Chopra, 2004; Sutherland, 2001). More often than not, rather than understand one's

limitations, clients turn to psychiatric drugs for a quick fix (Abramson, 2004; Breggin & Cohen, 1999; A. Martin, 1997; Stein, 2004). Frequently, people do not desire to change their behavior because that requires effort (Abramson, 2004; Breggin, 2001; Breggin & Cohen, 1999; A. Martin, 1997; Stein, 2004). Nor do most people research the side-effects of psychiatric drugs, which can be detrimental to one's health (Breggin, 2001; Breggin & Cohen, 1999; Stein, 2004). According to Stein (2004), all drugs affect the brain but do not benefit the brain. Stein found that psychiatric drugs intoxicate the mind and body and as a result constrain the brain and behaviors. According to Abboud (2005) of the Wall Street Journal, the drugs people take for mental and emotional problems are often ineffective. Although psychiatric drugs may give immediate relief to a specific ailment, the drugs will not cure the problem (Abramson, 2004; Breggin, 2001; Breggin & Cohen, 1999; Lipton, 2005; Stein, 2004). In fact, when the body is presented with a mind-altering chemical, the body responds in ways not fully understood by anyone (Breggin, 2001; Breggin & Cohen, 1999; Lipton, 2005).

Side Effects

Breggin and Cohen (1999) acknowledge that psychiatric drugs are far more dangerous than the public or the medical community realize. The drugs produce a number of serious and fatal adverse reactions (Breggin, 2001; Breggin & Cohen, 1999; Lipton, 2005; Stein, 2004). By taking psychiatric drugs, we actually harm the body's ability to heal and deal with the problem that needs to be

addressed (Breggin, 2001; Breggin & Cohen, 1999; Lipton, 2005; Stein, 2004).

Stein (2004) concurred that psychiatric drugs are not healthy and are extremely risky.

Breggin and Cohen (1999) reviewed the dangers of psychiatric drugs and recognized the necessity of taking careful steps for those who want to stop taking them. The authors found that these drugs can be detrimental and anyone taking them should fully understand the risks and side-effects.

The Brain's Reaction

Breggin and Cohen (1999) found that society does not have a clear picture of what these drugs do to the brain and the full range of effects they have. Stein (2004) dispelled the popular myths that psychiatric drugs correct chemical imbalances in the brain and nervous system. The research suggests that psychiatric drugs create imbalances, not correct them (Breggin, 2001; Breggin & Cohen, 1999; Lipton, 2005; Stein, 2004). Breggin and Cohen (1999) described what happens to the brain when Prozac, Ritalin, or Xanax are used. They found that the brain reacts as if it is being invaded by toxic substances and, as a result, the brain destroys its own capacity to respond to the drug. The brain kills some of its own functions (Breggin & Cohen, 1999). Because of these reactions, the drugs can cause irreversible changes (Breggin, 2001; Breggin & Cohen, 1999; Lipton, 2005). Because of the direct and indirect adverse effects, Breggin and Cohen

(1999) explained ways of stopping the drug use, saying first and foremost, that a patient must take it slowly.

Lipton (2005) described how drugs impact the body by stating, “Every time a drug is introduced into the body to correct function A, it inevitably throws off function B, C or D” (p. 28). Breggin (2001) found strong evidence indicating that medicines adversely affect and even destroy brain cells. Psychiatric drugs are the cause of a number of negative side effects such as agitation, hostility, abnormal thinking, hallucinations, psychosis, emotional instability, amnesia, increased anxiety, confusion, nervousness, stupor, depression, intentional overdose, and suicidal ideation (Abramson, 2004; Breggin, 2001; Breggin & Cohen, 1999; Lipton, 2005; A. Martin, 1997; Stein, 2004). There is also evidence for hair loss, drug dependency and addiction, skin disorders, blood disorders, liver disorders, abnormal movements, and convulsions, (Breggin, 2001). Iatrogenic illness (illness resulting from medical treatment) is, according to a study, the leading cause of death in the United States and adverse side effects to prescription drugs are the cause of more than 300,000 deaths per year (Lipton, 2005).

What is important is to not assault our bodies by consuming drugs, but to address specific problems and actually solve the issue by working through it (Abramson, 2004; Breggin, 2001; Breggin & Cohen, 1999; Chopra, 2004; Lipton, 2005; A. Martin, 1997; Pert, 1997; Stein, 2004; Sutherland, 2001). Abramson (2004) found patients were looking for pills to make them better as a quick fix

rather than making the changes in their lives that evidence showed to be much more effective. Lipton (2005) stated, “Harnessing the power of your mind can be more effective than the drugs you have been programmed to believe you need....energy is a more efficient means of affecting matter than chemicals,” (p. 125).

Impact of Personal Choice

PNI is the study of emotion, behavior, and health (Kelley, 2001).

According to Kelley (2001) PNI explores how one’s thoughts and actions affect one’s susceptibility to disease. The brain fundamentally serves as the control panel to the body; the body knows nothing but what the brain tells it (Chopra, 2004; Lipton, 2005; Ray, 2004). Every cell in our body knows what we are thinking (Chopra, 2004; Lipton, 2005). The brain, as the body’s first line of defense against illness, not only affects but controls the immune system, and the mind is crucial in the functioning of the brain (Ray, 2004).

Healing From Within

Bernie Siegel is a retired surgeon who worked with cancer patients for over 15 years. He discussed the idea that we all have the ability to heal because true healing comes from within (Siegel, 1986). Siegel (1986) plainly stated that the condition and state of mind has an immediate and direct effect on the state of ones body. Siegel shared much of his experiences with patients and he discovered that, more so than what he could provide the patients, true healing came from

their own belief and thoughts behind their illness. The author made note that healing is hard work, but something that cannot take place unless one believes in his/her own ability to heal. Siegel stressed the mind-body connection and emphasized that what one thinks will inevitably play out in one's body and healing process. The author discussed the idea that illness and disease stem from buried pain and emotional trauma.

According to Ray (2004), the study of PNI stated that the causes, development, and outcomes of an illness are determined by the interaction of psychological, social, and cultural factors with biochemistry and physiology. An individual's physiology and biochemistry are not separate and distinct from the rest of their life and experiences (Kelley, 2001; Ray, 2004).

Dispenza learned from his work with physics, mind, and reality that when a person changed his thinking about his health, he experienced physical changes in his health (Dusek, 2005). There is a direct link between our thinking and our level of health because our thoughts create chemicals (Chopra, 2004; Kiecolt-Glaser, McGuire, Glaser & Robles, 2002; Lipton, 2005; A. Martin, 1997; P. Martin, 1997; Meyer, 2004; Pert, 1997; Siegel, 1986; Sutherland, 2001). Specifically, happy thoughts produce chemicals that make a person feel happy (Chopra, 2004; Dusek, 2005; Lipton, 2005; Pert, 1997; Siegel, 1986).

Thoughts and Feelings

How you think is how you feel (Bandler, 1985; Chopra, 2004; Lipton, 2005; P. Martin; Pert, 1997; Siegel, 1986; Sutherland, 2001). To change your health you must examine how you think about how you feel (Bandler, 1985; Chopra, 2004; Lipton, 2005; A. Martin, 1997; P. Martin, 1997; Pert, 1997; Siegel, 1986). It is not necessarily about what coping skills a person has, but about the coping skills that individuals believe they have or do not have (Bandler, 1985; Ray 2004; Siegel, 1986). Siegel (1986) stated, “Beliefs are a matter of faith and trust, not logic. In order to change the mind, one must look within, speak, and listen to the heart and soul” (p. 32).

Dyer (2004) acknowledged the power that every thought impacts you and by simply shifting a thought to a higher level strengthens you and raises your energy. Throughout the movie “What the Bleep do we Know?” (Lord of the Wind Films, 2004), the message is clear that what is happening within us will create what is happening outside of us. A main character, who appears tired, depressed, and lethargic in the beginning, slowly realizes that she becomes what she imagines of herself. By the end of the movie, she sees herself as energetic, beautiful, and balanced and her life becomes as she sees it. The film emphasized that the only movie playing in the brain is what we have the ability to see and we only see what we believe is possible. Thought alone can change the body and our reality of the world (Lord of the Wind Films, 2004).

Meyer (2004) emphasized the idea of encouraging an individual to think about what he or she thinks about. She discussed the importance of stopping oneself and examining one's thoughts when an individual finds they are angry or depressed. Meyer (2004) found that individuals have the ability to create unhappiness and discontentment by the thoughts on which they focus and persons have the ability to create happiness by choosing peace and acceptance. Siegel (1986) reiterated that the body knows nothing but what the mind tells it.

Bandler (1985) found that the biggest mistake a person can make is in believing one's thoughts hinge on how someone else behaves. Rather than deny responsibility and choice, make a personal investment in the examination of how you feel and decide what you want for life (Bandler, 1985; Chopra, 2004; Sutherland, 2001). Bandler (1985) believed that new understanding develops from the process of self-discovery.

Siegel (1986) recognized that depression stems from a lack of love for life and self and illness is a means of escaping the thought of meaninglessness. In order to live a healthy and happy life, it is imperative that one start from within and develop unconditional love for self and respect for the body, which creates a feeling of faith and peace that enhances health and the ability to heal (Dyer, 2004; Jampolsky, 1999; Meyer, 2004; Siegel, 1986; Sutherland, 2001).

Retrain Your Brain

NeuroLinguistic Programming (NLP), as founded by Bandler (1985), focused on developing ways to teach people how to use their own brains. The main premise is to learn how to retrain your brain through reframing your thoughts (Bandler, 1985). Much of NLP works with individuals to examine their thoughts and to actually bring what they want into their mental picture (Bandler, 1985). Bandler (1985) discussed the process of brightening the positive thoughts and creating visual imagery to train your brain to focus on those thoughts versus the old and negative thoughts.

Bandler (1985) emphasized that our brain does only what it is told to do, not necessarily what we want it to do. With this knowledge it is essential to know what it is that we are telling our brain, and as a result our body, to do (Bandler, 1985; Dyer, 2004; Isaacs, 2005; Lipton, 2005; Pert, 1997; Siegel, 1986; Sutherland, 2001). Bandler (1985) likened our brain to a computer in that both require programming for effective and efficient action.

Through the use of NLP, Bandler (1985) discussed ways to reprogram the brain to accomplish positive results for one's life. He believed that once people discover why they do something, they can learn to change it. Bandler doesn't believe that people are broken; they have just learned to do the things they do. Using NLP, therapists ask their clients to teach them how they have trained themselves to believe and behave as they do; to teach the therapists how they feel

what they feel (Bandler, 1985). Bandler asked, “How do I have your limitation? Teach me to have this problem,” (p.143). The more a person understands how he does something, the more he can understand the function of his behavior and make the decision to either keep it or change it (Bandler, 1985).

Cloud and Townsend (2003) emphasized that life will take a number of directions no matter how an individual plans, so it is important to trust in oneself and in a higher power. Individuals can control how they respond to circumstances in their life (Bandler, 1985; Cloud & Townsend, 2003). Cloud and Townsend (2003) described ways to move beyond foreseen issues and problems including: for an individual to agree that they have a painful past, include others in their healing and grieving, receive forgiveness, forgive others, examine patterns and ways of living, and see one's self through new eyes. It is important to allow time to assist in healing because change is a process and often the same problems happen over and over when individuals rely on quick fixes and shortcuts rather than fully examining his or her life and making changes (Bandler, 2001; Breggin & Cohen, 1999; Cloud & Townsend, 2003).

Moving Beyond

Individuals make decisions based on the knowledge they have at that moment. As an individual learns, he gains new knowledge, which affects his ability to make new decisions (Bandler, 2001; Chopra, 2004; Dyer, 2004).

Jampolsky (1999) discussed the importance of asking “what” questions, such as,

“What can I learn from this?”, “What can I do to move forward?”, and “What did I learn that will help me in the future?” It is essential that one forgive self and others for past situations and decisions, learn from them, and move to the next level (Jampolsky, 1999).

Dyer (2004) emphasized that by changing the way an individual looks at things, the things they look at change. Dyer believed that intention is about the energy you are a part of, not an action to take. He claimed it is about aligning yourself with the universe and with intention to create peace and fulfillment. One must learn to let go of the ego, learn to *want* to feel good, and to say *yes* to life (Dyer, 2004).

Conscious Change

Individuals must be willing to participate in the process, which includes making decisions about what is best for their life (Siegel, 1986). It is essential that the client respect him or herself and treat their body and mind lovingly (Chopra, 2004; Cloud & Townsend, 2003; Dyer, 2004; Jampolsky, 1999; P. Martin, 1997; Siegel, 1986; Sutherland, 2001). Exercise, eating healthy, and getting enough sleep are all ways that share and express love to oneself (P. Martin, 1997; Sutherland, 2001). Sutherland (2001) noted that exercise balances the brain chemistry and by maintaining ones physical health through water intake, proper nutrition, supplements, rest, and relaxation, the mind is better able to tune into maintenance, health, and healing.

Siegel (1986) stated “The ability to love one self, combined with the ability to love life, fully accepting that it won’t last forever, enables one to improve the quality of life,” (p. 4). To unconditionally love one self, one must allow thoughts of peace and forgiveness (Jampolsky, 1999; Meyer, 2004; Siegel, 1986). Jampolsky (1999) discussed the concept behind forgiveness and why it can be detrimental if we do not forgive. He acknowledged that forgiveness can seem difficult, but it is essential to allow the mind to be open for freedom to surface in order to let go and move on. Forgiveness is not about condoning past situations, it is about setting oneself free from the hurt of past experiences (Jampolsky, 1999; Siegel, 1986; Sutherland, 2001). Jampolsky (1999) found that forgiveness opens the soul to love. When the soul is open to love, the body and mind are able to live through peace, hope, and love, which can directly impact healing and wellness (Jampolsky, 1999; Meyer, 2004; Siegel, 1986).

Individuals have the power within to make the change from negative, harmful thinking to positive, healthful thinking (Bandler, 1985; Chopra, 2004; Meyer, 2004; Sutherland, 2001). However, sometimes people give up, lose hope, or drown in their own self-doubt and hate (A. Martin, 1997; Meyer, 2004; Sutherland, 2001). In such cases, there are options to assist in the healing process. The first step is for an individual to make a commitment to his or herself (P. Martin, 1997; Meyer, 2004; Sutherland, 2001; Siegel, 1986). Once the commitment has been made, seek assistance (Breggin & Cohen, 1999;

Sutherland, 2001). Seek professional help through a qualified counselor because as Siegel (1986) stated, confession aids the mind and body. Individuals who allow for self-disclosure and emotional relief allow the mind clarity and release of unsolved conflict (P. Martin, 1997).

Believe in the power of the body and mind, and trust in your own ability in order to trust in others (Chopra, 2004). Building trust leads to fulfillment and Siegel (1986) found that the job of those in the helping profession is to share love for it is by acknowledging and working through an individual's pain that they are changed.

Siegel (1986) recommended that an individual take control of their life in order for him/her to discover their true path. He found that, by learning what feels right and improving one's view of the world, an individual inevitably improves their health and living.

Be open and honest with the self through journaling and daily affirmations (Jampolsky, 1999; P. Martin, 1997; Meyer, 2004; Sutherland, 2001). Allowing the mind to process the conflict and negative feelings enables the body to release unhealthy thoughts rather than suppress them (Breggin & Cohen, 1999; Chopra, 2004; Jampolsky, 1999; Lipton, 2005; Meyer, 2004; Pert, 1997; Siegel, 1986; Stein, 2004; Sutherland, 2001). Also, acknowledging feelings of thankfulness and gratitude through daily affirmations can train the brain to focus on life and healthy living (Bandler, 1985; Meyer, 2004). Expression is essential for the release of

unresolved conflict, as Freeman (2005) acknowledged, the benefits of an individual to participate in art therapy as a way to open the mind and soul toward understanding one's inner truth.

Chopra (2004) discussed the process self-discovery in order to open the self to love, faith, health, healing, compassion, and life. Chopra explains, "The universe, like any mirror, is neutral. It reflects back whatever is in front of it, without judgment or distortion," (p. 44).

Chopra (2004) believed there is no path from A to B, only the present moment. Chopra discussed one secret to life is to experience what is present. An individual must accept that they are human and will experience hardships, and with that, it is essential to let go of judgment and learn to accept and forgive (Chopra, 2004; Jampolsky, 1999).

Dyer (2001) acknowledged that all individuals have their own path and if one listens to their spirit, it will provide guidance in the right direction. Dyer (2001) reiterated the idea that thoughts become actions so it is important to make sure they are positive and promote growth. If one really wishes to change their life, they must change their behavior, which means changing their mind (Bandler, 1985; Chopra, 2004; Dyer, 2001; Dyer, 2004; Meyer, 2004; Sutherland, 2001).

Conclusion

In order for an individual to move in a healthy direction, one must surround oneself with positive people and positive thinking, listen to the body and

make changes when there is pain or tension in the body, and acknowledge when something isn't right so that the individual can focus on redirecting their thoughts. When people focus on their thinking, they are more able to visualize themselves as what they want to become. A person must decide what they want in their life in order to live authentically, love, accept, forgive, and choose happiness.

The key to life is the ability to accept one's self for all that he or she is, including one's faults and shortcomings. Through genuine acceptance comes peace, happiness, health, acceptance, forgiveness, and most of all, love, which is where true health and overall wellness begins (Sutherland, 2001).

There is, without a doubt, a direct link between the mind-body and one's health. It is apparent that what one thinks is what one feels. After all, the body knows nothing but what the mind tells it. The body is powerful beyond measure for individuals possess the ability to heal (Siegel, 1986). The power to be healthy is within.

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