



## Healing vs. Curing: A Holistic Perspective

Most people use the terms “healing” and “curing” interchangeably, but they really have different, although often overlapping, meanings.

Strictly speaking, “curing” is the reestablishment of physical health due to the elimination of disease. I am using “disease” here in the broad sense of “dis-ease,” referring to injury as well as illness. So when the bones in your broken leg knit you are “cured” of your broken leg, just as you are “cured” of your cancer when there are no longer any signs of cancer in your body.

“Healing,” on the other hand, is the establishment of a state of psychological, emotional, and spiritual well-being. Healing may or may not include the elimination of disease. It does, however, involve the creation of a sense of peace and wholeness as a psycho-spiritual being, and that is the real key to healing. Healing tends to be an internal process activated by your own inner wisdom.

Looked at as simply finding peace, healing seems nice but probably not all that you are seeking if you have a disease that is interfering with your life. At the very least, you would probably like to control your symptoms or bring your disease into remission. The irony of healing is that it is rare to achieve long-lasting relief of physical symptoms without emotional, mental and spiritual healing.

### *Who is most likely to be healed?*

According to Bernie Siegel in *Love, Medicine and Miracles* (see the bibliography below), writing about people who are cured of life-threatening illnesses, there are three kinds of patients:

- About 15 to 20 percent unconsciously, or even consciously, want to die
- About 60 to 70 percent perform for the doctor and obediently do what they're told
- About 15 to 20 percent are exceptional patients who refuse to be victims

It is this last 15 to 20 percent who are the most likely to be healed of their disease, whether chronic or life-threatening, occasionally even achieving a level of cure that is usually considered to be miraculous.

These seemingly miraculous healings are variously called extraordinary healings, spontaneous healing, remarkable recoveries, or spontaneous remissions. But no matter what name you choose to call them, the question is, how do such rare healings happen?

### *A holistic view of healing*

Extraordinary healing is a holistic process. Treating your physical body—only one aspect of your whole being—is not generally enough for full and lasting healing to take place. Treating your colitis, for example, may get rid of the symptoms but it will not address those underlying psycho-spiritual characteristics of your whole being that contributed to the colitis appearing in the first place. All facets of your whole being need to be addressed.

The aspects of your make-up that we often call the body, the mind, and the spirit actually form an integrated whole. Treating one part of you—in Western medicine, your body—without addressing your mental and emotional make-up and your spiritual state will not necessarily heal your problem.

Andrew Weil, in his book *Spontaneous Healing*, gives a model that looks at health from a holistic perspective. In brief:

- *Your body wants to be healthy.* In other words, health is your natural state of being.
- *Healing is a natural power.* Notice how a simple cut or bruise will heal without any special intervention.
- *Your body is a whole, and all of its parts are connected.* Those basic parts include your mind (mental state), emotions, and spirit as well as your physical body.
- *There is no separation of mind and body.* See my article on Hypnotherapy to learn more about the mind/body connection.
- *The beliefs of practitioners strongly influence the healing powers of patients.* You are more likely to achieve healing if you are working with a practitioner who truly believes you can heal.

In other words, extraordinary healing often means identifying and removing the barriers to your own natural healing power. Factors that impact your ability to heal can be psychological, emotional, spiritual, physical, or even social. I have compiled a longer list of general guidelines for healing in my Healing Checklist.

### *Extraordinary healing*

If at this point you're thinking "I doubt if my condition is curable," be aware that seemingly miraculous cures are more frequent than is commonly supposed. Medical literature often quotes pretty low frequencies for extraordinary healings, but research done by the Institute of Noetic Science (IONS) indicates that such healings may be more frequent than is normally thought. The IONS research also indicates that such cures can occur in virtually any disease at any stage of the disease, and that the frequency of cure is higher in some diseases than in others.

At this point you may be asking, "if the IONS figures are true, why are the figures quoted to me by my doctor for my disease so dismal?"

Obviously, some states of dis-ease really are incurable (old age comes immediately to mind); some injuries or congenital problems may be very difficult to cure although healing around them may still take place; and other diseases such as AIDS are very rarely cured—if by "cured" we mean they disappear completely—although even in those cases the progress of the disease might be suspended and/or life might be extended beyond what is normally expected.

Another reason for Western medicine's discouraging statistics is that many of the people who achieve extraordinary healings do so outside of Western medicine, so their cures don't show up in the medical statistics. All your doctor can quote you are statistics for people who have pursued Western medicine treatments, which are rarely holistic (although some MDs do treat the whole person) and may have lower cure rates than some CAM (complementary and alternative medicine) and integrative medicine approaches.

Considering the focus of this Web site, my own bias is probably pretty clear. I believe, based on my own experience, that some diseases that Western medicine tends to give up on can be cured, or at the very least some healing and symptom relief can be achieved, bringing you greater peace and comfort and a more fulfilling life.

There is no single formula for achieving your goals, which is why I tailor my healing work to the unique needs of each person who comes to me. Contact me if you have any questions, see below for a

bibliography, or see my links page to take you to some good web sites on holistic medicine and healing and curing. I would be glad to meet with you for a free consultation to discuss your situation and how I might be able to accompany you on your healing journey.

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