

## Connecting the Mind and Body

“The witch doctor succeeds for the same reason all the rest of us succeed. Each patient carries his own doctor inside him. We are our best when we give the doctor who resides within each patient a chance to go to work”. Albert Schweitzer

- There are unconscious thoughts and emotions that may prompt not only psychological suffering, but physical pain. Thus, bringing unconscious thoughts and emotions into awareness can have a powerful healing effect.
- When the mind and body work together in harmony, the healing effects often defy conventional medical and scientific understanding.
- John Sarno in *Healing Back Pain* in which he contends that back pain is rarely the result of a structural basis. He treats back pain by requiring patients to attend four lectures on the emotional genesis of back pain. The second part of his treatment is convincing patients that their ingrained focus about their backs are unwarranted and physiologically self-fulfilling.
- Research in the field of behavioral medicine (PNI) is often inconclusive and often conflicts with each other. But there is one very common thread that flows through most of the behavioral medicine research and that is what is healthy for the mind, emotions, and spirit and also promotes physical health. Conversely, what is unhealthy for the mind, emotions and spirit tends to make you more vulnerable to recover successfully.

DISEASE = DIS EASE

There are two emotions usually associated with illness:

1. Depression Which leads to hopelessness
2. Chronic Anger Which is alienating and stressful

There are two emotions usually associated with physical health:

1. Capacity for love and intimacy Prompts feelings of security
2. Hope or faith Leads to a sense of meaning and resilience

There was a study in the 1950's that sought to investigate the link between emotional life and the likelihood of developing cancer. The study found that there was an overwhelming majority of cancer patients had suffered a devastating personal loss (death of a spouse, losing a job, having a child leave home) in the year before being diagnosed with cancer. This was found over 75% of the time.

The second pattern observed in cancer patients was a lifelong difficulty in openly expressing their needs and tendency to repress strong negative feelings such as anger. These patients tended to be cooperative and easygoing automatically

deferring to others needs even when doing so meant setting aside their own needs. This was found over half the time.

There was another groundbreaking study in the late 1950s in which cardiologists wanted to demonstrate the impact of certain emotions and behaviors on the incidence of heart disease. Many of the cardiac patients had none of the traditional risk factors (smoking, hypertension, obesity, high cholesterol, no exercises), and yet they had significant cardiac pathology. They discovered a set of traits in a vast majority of cardiac patients.

- Type A Behavior – The single biggest cardiac risk factor. Relentless drive for external achievement, insecurity, perpetual sense of being rushed, aggressive competitiveness, hostility, more time urgency.
- Type B Behavior – Easygoing, relaxed friendlier, less status consciousness, more inner directed.

There was another study in the late 1980s found a high score between high “hostility scores” on personality tests and the likelihood to develop cardiac disease.

Another study found that social support has an impact on immune function. Another study found married women have better immune functioning than recently divorced women.

Dr. Dean Ornish in 1988 addressed the mind-body approach and connection. Conventional medical wisdom holds that reversing heart disease is not possible by any means – and certainly not by changing one's behavior. He intervened at all levels:

- Body            Through diet and daily exercise
- Mind            By seeking to change people's beliefs about themselves and their own self healing capacities
- Emotions       Psychotherapy 2 X per week
- Spirit           Daily meditation and yoga

On a practical level, he found that people who feel isolated and depressed are simply less motivated to take disciplined action to protect their health such as by eating low fat diets, exercising or setting aside time for relaxation.

## The Disease-Prone Personality

Personality is the whole of your personal characteristics and all the behavioral and emotional tendencies that distinguish you from everyone else. It is the way your habits, attitudes, and traits combine to make you who you are.

Hippocrates noted a connection with cancer, heart disease and personality.

### **Type A Personality: The Coronary Artery Disease Prone Personality**

At every stage of heart disease, the state of mind appears to play a role in recovery or death. Personality and behavior play a major role in heart disease.

Definition – Type A behavior refers to the behaviors that react to the environment with characteristic gestures, facial expressions, fast paced activities, and the perception of daily events and stresses as challenges, all leading to an aggressive, time urgent, impatient and more hostile style of living.

Type A personality is an action-emotion complex that can be observed in any person who is aggressively involved in a chronic struggle to achieve more in less time.

In the late 1950's two cardiologists noticed that the chairs and couches in the office were worn out in the front, which led them to believe that the cardiac patient's were "living on the edge." They did a study and called it "the hurry sickness." They came up with two conclusions:

- There are biochemical reasons why behavior can increase the risk of coronary disease.
- Certain behavior patterns can be used as a tool for predicting who will get heart disease.

In the 1960's they started extensive research at San Francisco Mount Zion Hospital. They studied over 300 men who did not show signs of heart disease. They were tested and classified as Type A or Type B personalities. The Type A was two times more likely to get heart disease as the Type B. The Type A had more angina, more silent or overt heart attacks and more subsequent heart attacks. In 1981, as a result of this work, the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute concluded that Type A behavior was an independent risk factor of cardiovascular disease.

Eleven more studies ensued over the next decade concluded the opposite conclusion – that there was not a relationship between Type A behavior and any kind of coronary heart disease.

A second generation of studies occurred in the late 1980's. They concluded that some components of Type A behavior were harmless and even beneficial (the ability to fight and take on a task head on) and that other parts of the Type A personality was toxic. They found that the most significant impact on the early stages of cardiac disease was anger and hostility.

### **What “Causes” Type A Personality?**

- Environmental – More common in children who have parents with higher educational and occupational status. More common in boys than girls. More common among children whose mothers worked fulltime. “Hostile and angry” children tended to come from families that were less supportive, less open with their feelings, less positive and had more physical discipline
- Genetics – The neurological tendencies to depression and anxiety

### **Five Characteristics of the Coronary Prone Personality**

- 1) Insecurity of Status – Type A's accomplish more and involve themselves in more, not because of demands placed upon them, but because of demands they place on themselves.
- 2) Hyper-Aggressiveness – Excessive aggression is marked by a ruthless driving desire to prevail at all costs.
- 3) Sense of Urgency – Desire to accomplish more in a shorter time. They do everything faster. Waiting is usually not an option.
- 4) The Drive to Self-Destruction – Many Type A people seem to harbor an unconscious drive to self-destruct.
- 5) Free-Floating Hostility – “The Toxic Core” of a Type A Behavior  
The set of traits that creates major health risks for Type A is called the Toxic Core consisting of hostility, anger, cynicism, suspicion and self-involvement.

Part of the reason why hostile Type A personalities run the greater risk of heart disease is that the stress hormones that are released for the “flight or fight” mechanism are constantly secreted.

It is said that there are three parts of the coronary prone hostile personality:

- 1) Cynical mistrust of others – This is the driving force behind hostility.
- 2) Frequent feelings of anger– An emotional state of incorporating feeling from initiation, aggravation, rage and fury.
- 3) Aggressive expression of hostility toward others  
Suspiciousness - Being suspicious raises stress-induced hormones.

Excessive Self-Involvement – A person who constantly uses “I, me, mine” are at a greater risk for coronary heart disease.

### **The Emotional Effects of Type A Behavior**

- Mental depression occurs more frequently in Type A people. Hostility is noted to increase with anti-depressant medications.
- Marriage quality has an effect on heart disease risk.
- Type A personalities have weaker social networks than Type B personalities.
- The Type A who is most at risk is the minimally educated and trained blue-collar worker with little control over their environment. Others at high risk are middle managers with little real responsibility.
- The hostile Type A personality increases the risk of heart disease as much or more than standard risk factors such as smoking, blood pressure, and cholesterol. Type A men are 6 ½ more likely to have a heart attack.

### **The Type D Personality – Depressed or Distressed**

- This is characterized by the tendency to experience negative emotions and the inability to express feelings in social situations.
- Social isolation has been shown to impact the heart.
- The emotional stress of being alone causes heart attack survivors to die at twice the rate.
- Heart bypass patients who are depressed at the time of surgery are twice as likely to die in the next five years.

### **The Type C Personality – Cancer Prone**

- Physicians since the second century have considered that certain personalities are more prone to cancer.
- Landmark research has found that patients with the fastest growing tumors were the ones who were constantly serious, over-cooperative, overly nice, overly anxious, passive and apologetic. These people were like that their entire life.
- These people are essentially the polar opposites of Type A personalities. They are passive, overly compliant, and unable to express negative emotions.
- The hallmark of the cancer personality is the “non expression of emotion.” Emotions are kept bottled up inside. Many have unresolved tension with a parent or family member and they refuse to express it or resolve it.
- Cancer patients are more commonly lonely, angry, rigid, depressed, hopeless and self-sacrificing.
- Personality traits of depression has a strong link to cancer.
- Stress and cancer – the stress of life changes alone do not induce the development of cancer. But feelings of loneliness, hopelessness and feeling trapped are characteristic.

Researcher LeShan interviewed patients who were hospitalized and patients who were hospitalized for cancer. He found some similarities in life histories of cancer patients worth noting:

- They often reported a “bleak” childhood with a tense relationship with one or both parents.
- As young adults, they found something they were able to make a commitment to such as a person, a cause or a job.
- Something dramatic happened in adulthood that took away the object of emotional investment. (Spouse died, fired from job, child went astray)

### **The Ulcer Prone Personality**

- The physiology of gastric ulcers is that there is too much gastric acid present which eats away the stomach lining. Most ulcers are caused by bacterial infection. Using tobacco, alcohol, caffeine and aspirin have all been shown to increase gastric acid production.
- Ulcer patients seem to have the same number of stressful situations as people who don't have ulcers, but they perceive the situations as being far more negative than do other people.
- Ulcer personalities are characterized by excessive dependency on others and a tendency to rely on others in an unhealthy way. They tend to suffer from excessive worry, annoyance, and a fear of common situations.
- When forced with a job change or relocation, ulcer patients perceived disaster and upset, instead of seeing an adventure or positive change.

### **Rheumatoid Arthritis Prone Personality**

- As an autoimmune disease, it is characterized by the immune system turning against the body and attacking the collagen in the joints connective tissue.
- There were found to be a high percentage of cases that patient suffered from worry, work pressures, marital disharmony and concerns about relatives.

They studied twins, one with RA and one without RA. They found that the RA twin seemed to put herself under a great deal of stress. Healthy twin had a healthy marriage and the RA twin had a considerably abusive marriage. The healthy twin described herself as people persons who were easy to get to know, were active, busy, productive and enjoyed life. The RA twin were moody and easily upset, were nervous, tense, worried, depressed and high strung.

## **Ways To Reduce Your Risks of Being a Disease Prone Personality**

- Develop an awareness of your own needs
- Discover an “inner guide”
- Reframe your ideas about your feelings
- Learn the skills of emotional expression
- Take charge of your medical care
- Get as much social support as you can
- Work through your feelings of hopelessness
- Cultivate a fighting spirit

## The Disease Resistant Personality

If 25 people were exposed to the flu virus and 5 of them got sick, then most of the time would be spent studying those 5 instead of the 20 who stayed well.

### The Mechanisms of Stress

- 60% of all visits to Drs. Offices have stress overtones.
- 95 million Americans suffer weekly.
- \$150 billion per year is spent on lost work productivity

### Study Results Why Some Kids Get Sick and Others Didn't

- School aged children get sick more than non-school aged children.
- Children who shared rooms got sick more often.
- More outbreaks are noted in the early spring.
- Family crisis were often noted.
- Conclusion was that stress was four times more likely to precede infections.

*Stress, will not by itself, cause illness. How you react to stress will cause illness.*

### Stress Buffers – Things That Alleviate The Harmful Effects of Stress

- Social support
- Sense of control
- Physical fitness
- Sense of humor
- Self esteem
- Optimism
- Coping skills
- What is inside of you

### Components of Stress Resilience

- Caring love – being committed to the fulfillment of another
- Responsible free will – able to create your own experiences and influence events
- Integrity – being true to our core values (Who you are when no one is looking)
- Challenge – enjoying growth
- Hope – feeling positive expectations

### Gender Differences to Consider

- Men are not as good as women in dealing with emotions. DUH!!
- Anger and hostility
- Depression and grief
  - Alexithymia – having no words for emotions
- Substance abuse



## Personality Traits That Keep Us Well:

Hardiness – a set of beliefs about yourself, the world and how they interact q

### Three “C’s”

- Commitment – an attitude of what is happening around you
- Control – belief that you have a response that can influence events
- Challenge – the ability to see change as an opportunity for growth

## Traits of a Disease Resistant Personality

- Characterized by enthusiasm
- Alertness
- Responsiveness
- Energy
- Curiosity
- Security
- Contentment
- Continual sense of growth and resilience
- Achieving balance
- Self respect
- Good problem solvers
- Good sense of humor
- Good relationships

## Events That Precede Illness

- Distressing life situation ⇔⇔⇔⇔
- Not able to resolve the situation ⇔⇔⇔⇔
- Feels helpless and anxious ⇔⇔⇔⇔
- Weakens immune system ⇔⇔⇔⇔
- More vulnerable to disease-causing agents ⇔⇔⇔⇔
- Distressing life situation

