

How to Find

Wisdom

(and Take Control of Your Health Care)

A Handbook and Case Studies

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Introduction

I got into health care because of the heart.

Now, I'm not saying that I had a heart attack, or that there is anything physically wrong with my heart. My childhood murmur has gone away, and I have a healthy, slow pulse. I'm also not saying that I got into medicine in order to help people in their times of pain. I do that now; in my practice it gives me great joy to be able to help people who are struggling. But I have to admit that a bleeding heart was not my primary motivation.

Rather, instead of need or empathy, I got into health care because of a sense of fascination and wonder- and it began with the heart. Through a series of circumstances while I was teaching high school science in San Jose, California, I ended up in a weekend seminar that explored a new way of looking at the heart's role in the body. It explored the growing understanding that the heart, rather than just pumping blood, can have dramatic neurological effects on the brain and our thoughts. In fact, the heart has its own brain-like structure, and this weekend workshop was all about using our "heart brain" to change the way we think and feel.

I thought it was pretty neat that the heart and its associated emotions of love and appreciation could help the brain function more efficiently. And I thought it was very interesting that science could show that emotions like anger and frustration can literally scramble our thinking and depress the immune system. The weekend was my introduction to the idea of mind-body medicine; a subject that I've been steeped in ever since.

But what truly blew me away was the use of my heart to directly access my body's innate intelligence. I learned how to use my heart as a doorway to a world inside my body that I didn't know existed.

It was my first taste of the power of my own intuition.

In this booklet I'd like to give you a taste of your own intuition. I will take you through a heart-based exercise that I often teach my patients. With some practice, you will be able to use this exercise on your own to give you some insight into decisions in your life.

And after giving you a bit of experience with your body's intelligence, I will place it in the context of a BodyTalk session. I will contrast this simple technique that you can do on your own with the power and complexity of a BodyTalk session in the office. They are based on the same foundation- your body's intelligence- but the results are much different.

Wisdom-based self-care

The first thing to know is that we are working with a wisdom that has been with you your entire life- whether or not you've ever realized it. To show you what I'm talking about, read the following sentence aloud:

“I want to use my innate wisdom, not someone else's.”

Great. Now, let's say you really wanted to emphasize the fact that it's *your* wisdom that is important here. Go ahead and say it again, this time using a hand gesture to emphasize the words “I” and “my.”

My guess is that you pointed to your heart. If you were really trying hard, you probably pointed to your heart twice.

Now, try it a second time. And this time, emphasize the words “I” and “my” by pointing to your brain.

Doesn't feel right, does it? When we are asked to identify ourselves with certainty and passion, we go to our hearts, not our brains.

Therefore, making a decision based on your innate wisdom is centered on your heart, not on your brain. And in fact, neurologically, your heart is a formidable “brain.” It's not as big as the brain between your ears, but in many ways it is more powerful. For example, the electromagnetic field generated by your heart is ten times greater than your brain's, and it can be measured up to ten feet away from your body.

There are certain times when the heart can profoundly influence your thoughts and literally change the way that your brain works. The science behind this phenomenon is fascinating. Much of the research has been done by the International Heartmath Institute (www.heartmath.org).

It was through this wonderful organization that I gained my first experience with innate wisdom; an experience that started me on my path to be a doctor and healer.

To put it more broadly, your heart is the gateway to your innate wisdom- all you have to do is engage it.

Exercise: “Accessing Your Heart-Based Intelligence”

Let’s get started with an exercise that I sometimes teach my patients. Beneath some of the steps, I’ve included some space for you to jot down thoughts/experiences/sensations that might come up. I have also included an example of what might happen during this experience.

As always, it is easier to do this exercise with a partner or in a group.

Step 1: Place your hand on the center of your chest at the top of your sternum (just below the bony notch where your collarbones come together).

Step 2: Breathe deeply, focusing your attention to the area just underneath your hand—the energetic area surrounding your heart.

(ex: It really helped me concentrate to put my hand above my heart. With the breathing I felt a tingling of movement and some warmth.)

The goal of the next step is to feel and experience the emotion of love, deep appreciation, and/or joy.

In order to do this reliably you will need an image that you can call upon that brings that feeling up for you. It could be the embrace of your beloved, a walk in the woods with your dog, the image of your son or daughter; really, any image of a person or experience that, when called upon, fills you with the feeling of love or appreciation.

It may be that you need to try different images before settling on one, or it may be that you have two or three different images that you rotate, depending on the situation.

Got one? Now for the good part.

Step 3: Now that you are breathing and focusing on your heart, recall the image or situation that brings you the feeling of love. Try to live the moment so that the feeling of love and appreciation wells up and naturally fills your consciousness.

How does your body feel?

What do you notice about your heart?

(ex: It took me a minute or two to actually live the image and feel the feeling of love. It kept coming in and going as I got distracted. When I was able to concentrate, I felt my chest open up a little bit and a feeling of peace came over me. My heart seemed bigger, but in a gentle way.)

Step 4: As the love or appreciation comes into your being, let your focus stray from the original image and sink into that feeling of love.

If your focus drifts, or you start to lose the feeling, gently return to the image and let the love or appreciation find its way back.

(ex: It took a little practice to be able to leave the image of my daughter and just focus on the feeling of love. I developed a kind of rhythm: concentrating on my heart and the love and then going back to the image every ten seconds or so to re-charge the feeling. Overall, staying with the love feeling felt more solid and grounded. I felt a sense of wonder at the clarity and richness of my heart.)

This exercise is also an excellent tool for stress management or for relaxing at the end of the day. The Institute of Heartmath has shown that “entraining” your heart in this way has measurable effects on your immune system, brain, and other systems of your body.

It was when reading the studies of the improvements in immune system and brain function, that I felt my life path shifting towards health care.

This exercise is also a wonderful way of strengthening your intuition. In fact, once you feel comfortable with these three steps, you can begin to directly address your own innate intelligence to make more intuitive decisions.

Exercise: “Using Your Heart as the Doorway to Intuition”

This technique can be used to bring insight into any situation or decision. For starters, though, it is much easier to try it with a simple one. At the beginning, it can be overwhelming to try and sort out a situation that is heavy with complex emotions. You will be able to do it, but it may take some help, and it will certainly take some practice.

So, for right now, think of a relatively straightforward decision that you need to make about your health. Is there a certain supplement you are on the fence about? A doctor you might visit? Or a food you have been craving that you aren't sure is really good for you?

By the way, this process is much easier with a friend, or even a group of friends. If everyone is focused on their hearts, the effect for each person is magnified. And, as one of my teachers likes to say, be willing to be surprised.

Once you've decided on a question, release it and focus on the first four steps of the heart-based meditation:

Step 1: Place your hand on your chest.

Step 2: Breathe while focusing your attention on the energetic heart beneath your hand.

Step 3: Recall your image to bring up the feeling of love and appreciation.

Step 4: Gently sink into that feeling of love, going back to the image when you need to re-gain your focus.

Step 5: After washing your heart in love for 30 seconds or a minute, ask yourself a yes/no question about the decision you are trying to make.

Step 6: Once you ask the question, let it go and return to the image that brings you love and/or appreciation.

How does your body feel?

What do you notice about your emotions?

How does your heart feel?

(ex: It took me a minute to get started. I kept getting distracted. But once I first got a strong feeling of love in my heart it got easier. When I asked myself if taking a particular supplement was a priority for my health, I tried to return to the feeling of love, but I felt a strong tightness in my chest. It also got hard to breathe. When I asked myself what this

restricted feeling meant, I got a very clear feeling of “no.” So I guess I won’t be spending my money on that supplement!)

Keep going back and forth between the feeling of love and the yes/no question. Stay aware of any thoughts, feelings, or body sensations. You can also bring the question and the love together in your heart at the same time. Literally wash the decision with love and then sit back and observe.

Like in the example above, if a strong feeling comes up and you are unsure of its meaning, ask yourself what the meaning is. Then return to your image and/or the feeling of love. It is a very simple pattern that can be used over and over again to get to new layers of meaning.

Troubleshooting the intuition-based decision

“My image doesn’t seem to be working...” Go ahead and try another one. There is no right thing or person to visualize. The feeling of love, appreciation, or joy is the important thing. It may also work to have two or three images or situations that you can rotate. If one isn’t working, move to the next. More importantly, it doesn’t have to be an image. Again, anything that brings in the feeling of love: a smell, a sound, the touch of a loved one’s hand.

“What question should I be asking?” At the beginning, make it a simple one. The more emotional baggage that comes along with the question, the more difficult it is going to be to get a clear answer. Also, try to be very clear with your question. If you are not exactly sure what you are asking, you won’t be very clear on the answer, either.

“What should I feel?” It’s different for everybody. The key is to practice it so that you get a sense of your body. I feel a tightness in my chest for a “no”, and an expansiveness for a “yes.” Some people see changes in light. Others will get a verbal response from their intuition. Often it is a combination.

“I don’t feel any difference/ it’s not clear.” Like any skill, it takes practice. It will be subtle at first, but your intuitive response will become more obvious over time. The nice thing is that you don’t need to have any special skill. We are all hard-wired for this process. Some people’s wires just need to be straightened and cleaned a bit. Besides practice, BodyTalk is a great way to lower resistance in your body to make this process easier.

This process is also much easier at first with a partner. Have someone go through the exercise with you. You and a friend can ask the same question. You can ask it for yourself, and your friend can ask about you as well. Then compare notes.

“How come negative emotions keep coming up?” These emotions are important, and space can be made in your heart for them. It is best to just sit and acknowledge a negative emotion and breathe some love into it. If you have trouble, a BodyTalk session can directly address these emotions and help your body process them.

The BodyTalk System

With the heart-based meditation, you are able to get a true understanding of what is the best course of action in a specific situation. I wanted you to experience this intelligence in order to give you a useful tool. I also wanted to emphasize that your body has an intelligence that can be directly consulted.

Getting information from the innate intelligence of the body/mind is a cornerstone of the BodyTalk System. However, whereas the previous exercise took a few minutes to get insight about one question, a BodyTalk session consists of hundreds of questions in a few minutes.

Rather than using the heart as a doorway to intuition, a BodyTalk practitioner is trained in a passive “muscle testing” procedure that requires no conscious participation on the part of the patient. With slight movements of the patients hand and arm, a practitioner can accurately obtain information about what needs to be balanced within the patient’s body/mind without the patient needing to consciously say “yes” or “no.”

The First of Three Cases of Depression

After I had been using BodyTalk in my practice for a few months, I got a call from a concerned husband. His wife, Matsuo, had recently been suffering from depression and had now started talking about suicide.

Once in the office, she admitted that she was having serious trouble as a mother and as a wife. Many times per day in recent weeks she would imagine how much better off the family would be without her around. She felt insulted and angry at even the most benign of her husband’s comments. The normal behavioral difficulties with her young son would precipitate an emotional downward spiral.

The focus of a BodyTalk treatment is isolating the patient’s priority for healing. Depression can have many causes, and our task in a BodyTalk session is to identify the most important ones and repair them.

The crux of Matsuo’s issues was that deep-down, she was frustrated as a Japanese woman trying to be a good mother in the U.S. The day to day tasks of shopping, cooking, and parenting in the American way were hard to understand, and she always felt like she was on the outside. We connected this issue to specific parts of her hormone system and dealt with the physiological “shut-down” that can come from being in a prolonged period of stress.

One week later, she had ceased being bothered by the little things. She was much more patient with her young son, and she and her husband had been able talk about where they wanted to live and raise their family. Because of Matsuo’s difficulty in assimilating into the U.S., they had been leaning towards moving back to Japan. In the past week, however, she had realized that she would rather stay here in Oregon.

Best of all, the thoughts of suicide had been less intense and much less frequent. Rather than many times a day, they had only occurred two or three times since we had last seen each other.

A month later she wrote the following about her BodyTalk experience:

I can't say exactly how Body Talk has helped, but the best way to describe it is from the very first time, my entire body, mind, and spirit felt so much lighter than before I received treatment. I felt like I was in a thick fog and could not see where I wanted to be with my body, nor could I sense what was going on around me. Each time I am treated, the fog clears a little more and I can see where I want to go and sense things around me better. After receiving treatment, I feel like my body is renewed and this helps me feel more positive about the future.

How your health is like a ball of string

I often talk about human health as a tangled and knotted pile of string. We are the sum of our experiences and those experiences create kinks and twists in our health that need to be worked out in order to heal.

Each step, bump, tumble, and jump along the way is registered in our body and has the potential for affecting our physiology. Things like the food we decide to eat every day, the way our family treated us when we were young, our accidents, our heavy metal and pesticide loads, and our genetic inheritances are obvious influences on our health.

There are also some not-so-obvious influences on our health: how we *think* about the food we eat every day, our fear and phobias, the amount of water that gets to our brains, the consciousness of our small intestines, or the communication between our immune and hormonal systems, to name just a few.

In fact, anything can affect our health; it's just a matter of timing. A snide remark from a sibling can devastate one's self-esteem and later be a major player in the development of cancer. Though it may have been one of hundreds of snide remarks, if it came at a time of hormonal and situational vulnerability, it can leave a lasting impression.

And as shown in the case above, dealing with the emotions and the situations that can cause them is only half of the job. Everything in the body is connected. Matsuo's hormonal issues were intertwined with her living situation. Treating her depression meant repairing her perceptions of herself as a mother *and* repairing the dysfunction of her hormones and brain.

So how do we "untie" ourselves? The best way to untie a ball of string is to find the free end and start working it backwards along the path that it originally followed. Grabbing and yanking on random knots is only rarely effective.

With a string, it is easy to follow the path. But with human health, where do you look? Where is the path, and how do you follow it? How is it possible to know where the knots are, and how do we know which direction to pull in order to untie them?

Our ability to transcend the conscious mind to pluck information and insight from the subconscious is at the core of the BodyTalk System. In other words, gathering information from the innate intelligence of the patient is the key to indentifying the path of the string.

And in fact, the BodyTalk System is designed in such a way that the practitioner can rapidly ask your body a series of yes/no questions. This is done with a biofeedback technique that is similar to “muscle testing,” but that does not require effort from the patient. In fact the yes/no technique even works on people who are asleep or in a coma. In this way an enormous amount of information can be gathered about the balance of communication among all the parts of your body and mind.

This information, or health care “solution,” comes directly from the intelligence in your body, but is based on the knowledge of the practitioner asking the questions. This combination of intuition and knowledge is what elevates BodyTalk to a new level of health care.

The wisdom that emerges from the combination of intuition and knowledge is the equivalent of finding the path of the tangled string.

However, BodyTalk takes the process one step further. After all, it does us little good to say “ah hah! There’s the next knot!” without having any way to untie it.

Once the individual health solution is isolated, the BodyTalk practitioner uses the most advanced and effective healing tool available to “fix” the problem: the human brain. The innate healing ability of the patient is engaged with a gentle tapping of the head and the sternum. This tapping process activates the brain and heart to heal the imbalance without any external pills, needles, adjustments, or machines.

The changes can take place immediately or over time, depending on the issue. An improvement in restricted blood flow can happen in a matter of minutes, while it may take the body a few weeks to re-build some damaged capillary beds.

Two More Stories of Depression

As you might have noticed in the last case, one of the major benefits of the BodyTalk System is that it creates a truly unique health care solution for every individual.

The following two case studies further illustrate this fact. The three patients all came to me with complaints of depression. Even though each patient experiences his or her own unique variation of “depression,” there is a similarity in the way that it affects his or her

life. Each of the patients goes through bouts of isolation and lack of motivation. The depressed mood gets in the way of their daily lives and is often cyclical.

However, through the BodyTalk process, we get to see the unique path of the life that leads to the eventual development of depression. The richness and power of the story of each person is able to surface and contribute to the healing.

A Gradual Lifting of Depression

Stephanie came to me with a number of physical complaints along with a multi-year history of depression. In the past she had always cycled in and out of feeling down, but this last bout had been nine months long without let-up. She was occasionally irritable, but often cried very easily. Almost any set-back could bring her to tears. As a result she felt lethargic and had the desire to seclude herself.

With BodyTalk, over a couple of sessions, we worked with a sense of inadequacy at work, her fear of what would happen if her numerous health problems got worse, and a few brain pathways that were misfiring.

Stephanie returned one month later and happily reported that her mood was much better immediately after the sessions. Her depression was no longer getting in the way of her work or her relations with her family.

Over the next few months we had more BodyTalk sessions, mostly focused on her numerous physical complaints. In a sense we were following the string. There were some bumps along the way, but after each session Stephanie reported her symptoms dissipating and her mood elevating.

Stephanie's case is wonderful in that it is a great example of the gradual way in which some people heal. The unwinding and untying of Stephanie's string has fits and starts, and many of her physical complaints have not resolved, but she is getting closer. And along the way, from session to session, her most pressing complaint- the priority of the case- keeps getting better.

At present, Stephanie is sleeping well and does not have any recurring anxiety attacks. We are continuing to work on her physical complaints. I am encouraged by her progress and I will relate more good news regarding her health soon when I get it.

Social anxiety and into a funk

The last case of depression I would like to offer is from Will, a local college student who was referred by his concerned parent. When I asked Will about the particulars of his

depression, he said that he felt like he had “really bad social anxiety” over which he would constantly “brood.”

Essentially, he told me that any remark or situation that made him a little sad completely occupied his thoughts. He got stuck on these issues and ended up brooding them over. His mood would continue to spiral downward until he ended up completely isolated, sitting by himself in his room. This cyclical apathy was getting in the way of his success in school and the enjoyment of his social life. With a full academic, work, and social calendar hanging over his head, Will found himself stuck in one place.

Will has had three BodyTalk sessions. His unique health care solution has centered on the interaction between his fears and his physical body. A deep-seated fear of death (related to an emergency situation during his birth) was shutting down his physiology and stressing his nervous system. These imbalances were affecting the way that his brain functioned.

During the process, I got this email from his mother:

I've seen a lot of improvement in Will, even though I don't see him everyday. When I do see him, he seems to have a definite mood improvement. He was really grateful at Christmas for all he received instead of blowing it off. He seems to have moved through the trauma of a bad relationship he had with a girl last year. He's been less argumentative with his dad. When he's here, we are all getting along better. His dad and I can both see change. Good work!

The power of BodyTalk has, for me, turned the arduous practice of medicine into a healing practice of pure joy. Where I previously had to shrug my shoulders and say “I don’t know,” I can now confidently say, “Let’s find out.”

If you are tired of having individual pieces of you treated with expensive supplements, drugs, or surgery, and would like to know more about how BodyTalk can help you, please contact me at (503) 310-2036 for an appointment or a free 15 minute consult. Phone appointments can work, too.

If you would like to read more case studies or any of the articles on my blog, please click here, or go to www.drtraviselliott.com.

About Dr. Elliott



“From the National College of Naturopathic Medicine, I received some of the best naturopathic doctoral training in the world. I had hundreds of hours of clinical training and was selected for the prestigious Family Medicine Residency Program upon graduation. During my residency, I participated in the OHSU Integrative Medicine Program as part of a team consisting of a chiropractor, a medical doctor, and an acupuncturist that collaborated to solve medical problems. I also received extensive training in classical homeopathy. Needless to say, I was excited by all the healing tools that I had in my toolbox.

Despite this background, I was frustrated in private practice by the difficulties I was having in helping patients overcome complex, chronic diseases. BodyTalk addressed all of my concerns. I now have a solution that precisely utilizes my education and experience in a safe and non-invasive way, with proven results.

The bottom line is that I now love what I do, and my patients' complex, chronic diseases are getting better. I have become the kind of doctor that I would want to visit if I were a patient.”

Dr. Elliott has been a high school science teacher in San Jose, California and a ski bum in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. He grew up in Portland and was happy to return for medical school. Any chances of leaving Portland are diminishing by the minute as the roots of friends and family grow deeper.

Travis likes reading literature and science books and doesn't dance very well. But his wife is sweet enough not to care, and his kids are too young to know the difference. As a family, they enjoy hiking with the dogs, playing in the living room, and running in the sand with friends.