

# THE MEDICAL NEWS™

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## Healthy Mind & Healthy Body

*Unlock The Natural Healing Capacities Of Your Mind*

By Kay F. Walkinshaw, RHA

The first thing we must all realize is that neither drugs or mind-body techniques are cure-alls—both have their usefulness and limits and someday we are all going to make that final transition. However, the state of our minds and emotions may influence how often we get sick, how quickly we heal and, in extreme cases, whether we live or die.

What goes on in our minds influences every part of our bodies. No bodily system is immune to the effects of our thoughts, emotions and behaviors. The brain's chemical messengers transform our thoughts and feelings. Our minds and bodies are truly united. We cannot ignore the power of our minds to harm or to heal.

One must find the knowledge and discipline to bridge the gap between mind and body. The best healthcare addresses the needs of both. We must carefully select and try the most effective mind-body techniques for us to enjoy the benefits of a healthy mind and healthy body.

The power of these techniques is not the result of magic in any of our medication, but comes from taking advantage of the natural healing capacities of our mind. They are readily available, inexpensive, safe and make us feel good. This is a prescription that can only be filled by you in the "internal pharmacy" of your own brain.

Candace Pert, Ph.D., a research professor at Georgetown University Medical Center in Washington, D.C., made history in 1972 when she discovered the opiate receptor, which allows the body to use both natural and synthetic feel-good chemicals called opiates.

That lead to the discovery of an information network made up of hundreds of different



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natural chemical messengers, called peptides, as well as receptors, which receive those messages, located on the surface of the cells.

When our emotions are out of control, they prevent peptides from flowing freely where needed. As a result, processes such as breathing, blood flow, immunity, digestion and elimination become imbalanced, and the body's normal healing process is interrupted.

Our thoughts, feelings, moods and actions have a significant effect on our health. They determine the onset of some diseases, the course of many, and the management of nearly all. Our thoughts shape our overall happiness, and sense of well-being.

There are many similarities between drugs and mind-body prescriptions, but the mind-body approach offers advantages. Mind-body techniques are generally safer, have fewer negative side effects, adverse reactions, and less risk of overdosing. The most common side effects are a positive sense of well-being, increased self-confidence, and better mood. They generally cost less than long-term treatment for chronic medical conditions, and they frequently lower medical costs.

Since you often have to learn and practice new skills, the benefits may be longer lasting than with medications. It certainly gives us a

more active role in maintaining and improving our own health. Therefore, we are more in control. Also, most medications are used to treat symptoms and disease after it appears, where mind-body techniques are most effective in maintaining good health.

Formal, focused relaxation techniques such as meditation and biofeedback are also considered mind-body strategies. By reducing stress and anxiety, the continued practice of relaxation therapy generates improvements in a number of conditions, including arthritis, cardiac arrhythmias, hypertension, and the nausea and vomiting associated with chemotherapy.

It would not be an intelligent choice to select either mind-body medicine or medicine. Mental imagery, relaxation, or other mind-body techniques alone are not effective treatments for infections, cancers, heart disease, and other serious conditions.

But drugs and surgery alone are not complete for most medical problems either. Why should we then choose one when both can work side-by-side?

Just knowing something works is not enough. You must actually practice and use the techniques if you want to learn, grow and become healthier. Learning requires new actions, not just storing new information.

Can something we read make a difference? Yes. Studies show that reading and practicing self-help techniques can improve symptoms and improve over-all health. "Bibliotherapy," therapy based on what we read, can also be enhanced by classes, programs, groups and individual counseling.

Millions of years of evolution have shaped our remarkable brain to mind our health. It is at our command. Some of the most powerful prescriptions are ready for us to use now in the pharmacy of our own brain.