

How Love Heals: The healing power of a loving, peaceful heart



Article by **Kerstin Zettmar**

I grew up in the 60s on a small dairy farm in Sweden. During hay harvest my Grand Mother's brother Knut would help out. Knut was a shy and simple man of few words, but whenever we would gather around the table for a meal he would smile and say, "Nu ska vi vara glada for da blir det roligt", which loosely translates to "Now, let's be happy because then things will be enjoyable." For a sensitive, asthmatic and serious girl, like me, that sounded odd and backwards. How could one decide to be happy, I pondered? Waiting for things to be fun so one could get happy made a lot more sense in my young, melancholic mind. But it turns out that uncle Knut was on to something. I don't think the term intention was commonly used back then but that was basically what he was talking about. He was asking us to set an intention to be happy and call me a slow learner but now, some 45 years later, I get it.

In 2003 a conference was held at MIT where The Dalai Lama and a group of scientist shared discoveries that had been made about the nature of mind and what role the brain plays in people's perception of the world. One study showed that when there is a lot of activity in the right side of the prefrontal lobe, we tend to have a "glass half empty" kind of attitude. If, on the other hand, the main brain activity is in the left prefrontal lobe we see things with a more positive "Glass half full" approach to life. The monks around the Dalai Lama had the highest rate of left prefrontal lobe activity ever seen in a laboratory. When they focused on filling their minds with a sense of compassion and nothing else, the activity in their left prefrontal lobes went off the charts. In following 8-week study novices that meditated daily on compassion were also able to move the brain activity over to the left prefrontal lobe to a measurable degree. Life events can change the set point a person is born with. If, for example,

an optimistic man loses a leg he may become depressed for about a year, but then he begins to see things brighter again. And if a pessimistic woman wins the lottery, she feels happier for about a year, but then the set point sneaks back to where it was, that is, unless she meditates or consciously set an intention of creating peace and happiness inside, regardless of outer circumstances.

"Our separation from each other is an optical illusion of consciousness."

-Albert Einstein

For a long time, science taught us that we were isolated, separate creatures and that what you were feeling inside had no effect on the outside world. Well, it turned out it is not so. Things do not change very quickly in the scientific world but most scientists are now in agreement that we are all part of an energetic field. We still do not have one clear name for this field. Max Planck was the first scientist to identify and speak about this 1944. He called it the Matrix. Others have called it The Devine Matrix, The Zero point Field or simply The Field. I find it intriguing that there seem to be a lot of similarities now in the language between quantum physics, quantum mechanics and the teachings of old spiritual masters that spoke of how we are all connected. Scientific studies now imply that when we cultivate happy and peaceful emotions inside ourselves, we do not only feel better subjectively but become agents of healing for everyone on the planet.

"Science and art shall not blot out apart in the heart that each woman and man knows..." - **JP Jones**

Studies in Psycho Neuro Immunology have verified that the inner images and feelings can affect our Immune system.

Let's take the bad news first and look at how stress-producing emotions can create illness. Unprocessed chronic anger is supposedly the most damaging emotion for the heart. Living in fear, long term depression and always being in a hurry takes a toll as well. These feelings activate the Autonomic Nervous system, prepare us for fight or flight, restrict the blood vessels, and send masses of stress hormones like Adrenaline and Cortisol into the bloodstream. If that happens only occasionally, no harm was done, but when that becomes a way of life it is very harmful to our physical health.

Some people have a tendency to deny their feelings, isolate, and hide in their intellects and that is just as harmful to the body as being overly caught in an emotional flood. Drowning uncomfortable feelings in compulsive behavior of any type, or simply putting a lid on them, come at a cost. Something underneath the conscious surface always knows the real state of affairs and creates rumbles in the basement of the body/mind.

Dr. Eyesneck and his colleagues have conducted a landmark long term study at the University of London that has shown that chronic, unmanaged emotional stress is six times as predictive of cancer and heart disease as other risk factors such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and smoking, but is also much more responsive to intervention".

So what exactly is it about setting an intention to generate positive emotions that can help to create physical health? The word is Coherence. Positive emotions, like loving kindness, create Coherence in the heart rate variability pattern and that is extremely beneficial. That means both branches of the nervous system work together in harmony

having a positive effect on all the biological systems of the body. This leads to greater vitality. The brain begins to entrain with the heart facilitating greater mental clarity, an increase in creativity, intuition and a sense that it is possible to manage life's challenges with fluidity and grace. Coherence aids in pain reduction and makes it easier to sustain emotional balance. This state also produces the hormone Oxytocin that has been nicknamed the "Love hormone" since it has been discovered that when there are large quantities of Oxytocin in the bloodstream we feel calm and peaceful and get interested in bonding with and caring for others.

"I know a cure for sadness. Let your hands touch something that makes your eyes smile." - Mirabai

You may have heard the saying "The longest journey most people will ever take is about 17 inches long- from the head to the heart." Maybe so, but studies in Socio Neurology have confirmed that a healthy human actually is hardwired for empathy and compassion. If that is a fact, how come we do not see more kindness around us? The answer may be found in an experiment made at the Divinity School of Princeton University. Half of the students were asked to prepare a practice sermon on the parable of "The good Samaritan". The other half was given another topic not directly connected to empathy. All the students were asked to go over to another building on campus to give the sermon a few minutes later. There was a man planted on their path, stooped over and moaning as if in severe pain. The question was: Would the students who had been mentally focused on the importance of caring for others be more willing to stop than the other group? Answer: No. What made the difference however was when the students were given more time to get over to the building. Then

more people from both groups stopped to help. A sense of being in a rush often diminishes our feeling function. Without that, we have no compass to deeper, more altruistic values.

"The heart has its reasons of which reason knows nothing of."

-Blaise Pascal

Spiritual traditions have long held the heart as the seat of the emotions and the physical home for the soul and now science seems to agree that the heart is a very powerful organ indeed. Measurements of the electric field around the heart show that it is 60-100 times stronger than the electric field around the brain. The magnetic field around the heart is about 5000 times stronger than the magnetic field around the brain! Each person has an electromagnetic field surrounding the body and it reaches out into the world between 5-10 feet. What we call "I" does not stop at the surface of the skin by a long shot.

In 1991 a scientist named Andrew Armour discovered that the heart has its own nervous system with neurons, neurotransmitters, and proteins just like the brain. It is also part of the endocrine system and has the ability to produce, for instance, as much of the peace and calm hormone Oxytocin as the brain. Armour coined the phrase "Heart brain" since the heart has an independent ability to learn, feel, sense and even remember!

At the University of Arizona, there is currently very interesting research taking place on a sample of more than 300 heart transplant recipients to determine the incidence of cellular memory. Dr. Paul Pearsall and Dr. Linda Russek have already published a paper where 10 cases of

heart/lung transplant recipients claim to have had changes in food, music, art, sexual orientation, career, and recreational preferences after their transplants. There were also cases of specific instances where the recipients had perceptions of names and sensory experiences related to the donors.

One case worth mentioning is that of an eight-year-old girl who received a heart from a 10-year-old girl who had been murdered. After the transplant, the little girl experienced severe nightmares of a man murdering her donor. Her dreams were so vivid and traumatic that psychiatric help was sought. The detailed and specific nature of the girl's dream images eventually got the mother and psychiatrist to decide to contact the police and with the help of what the girl told them they caught the murderer. The location of the weapon, the clothes he wore and everything else the little girl said was completely accurate.

"Come out of the circle of time and into the circle of Love"
-Rumi

Several studies have confirmed that when a group shares a common experience of consciousness, the effects of that experience can be detected beyond the group itself. In 1972, 24 different cities with populations over 10,000 in the US experienced meaningful changes in their communities when as few as one percent of the population meditated and induced a feeling of peace in their hearts. In 1993 a group of 4000 meditators came to Washington DC for a three-week long meditation. They notified the officials and told them to look for a drop in the violent crime rate during this period. The officials laughed but lo and behold, during the third week of the meditation retreat the violent crime rate dropped by 23%. This phenomenon is called "The

Maharishi effect” in honor of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi who stated that when one percent of the population practiced the meditation technique he taught it would lead to a reduction of violence and crime in that population. One percent! That is not very much. In a city of 30,000, it would take 300 people to reduce violence for the rest of the citizens and the astonishing thing is that the violently prone folks would not even need to know that anything different was taking place. They would not know what hit them, so to speak.

So, it seems that my uncle Knut, as well as many yogis and otherwise men and women through the ages, instinctively knew what science now finally is able to measure with high tech equipment. One of, these, in my mind, most impressive machines is the Random Number Generator. There are about 50 Random Number Generators placed worldwide that have the ability to register when large numbers of us are synchronized in our feeling states. When millions of people are feeling the same thing and are focused on the same intention, it registers on this instrument that works kind of like a global Seismograph. “Emotional earthquakes” are registered during sad events like the funeral of Princess Diana and horrific events like the Terrorist attack on Sept 11th, but also during positive events when large groups of people come together to pray peacefully as during the Ramadan, The Kumb Mela or the Billion Voices for Peace

Meditation. The intensity and sincerity of the feeling are what matters and what create the signal that these instruments can pick up. Negative feelings like hate, greed, fear, and anger dissolve the connectivity and create separation and isolation. Love, compassion and a feeling of peace, on the other hand, strengthen the Coherence level

of the Field, affecting everyone positively. The question becomes: What do we choose to focus our minds on, love or fear? It is late in the game, but collectively I believe we have the power to heal the world we live in. Love is a force to be reckoned with. It is the glue that holds the Universe together.

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