

# HEAL *for* REAL

*How I HEALED from*  
“INCURABLE” DISEASE



PETER WINSLOW

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**The following pages are excerpts from  
the first few chapters of**

# **HEAL FOR REAL**

**These sample pages provide an overview  
of the author's healing journey and a glimpse  
of the wisdom garnered along the way.**

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# HEAL FOR REAL

## A YEAR OF HEALING A LIFETIME OF WISDOM

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#### SUMMARY

#### EPILOGUE

# INTRODUCTION



**S**ome call it a miracle. Yes, it was an amazing journey from degenerative disease to consummate health, a transformation from depression and dysfunction to well-being and true love. But, a miracle? It was simply the result of following a specific course of action.

Parts of my story may not be easy to read. It wasn't easy to write, and it certainly wasn't easy to live. For years, I battled Ankylosing Spondylitis, chronic pain and depression, substance abuse, and behavioral addictions. These are conditions modern medicine cannot cure, so I made it my business to cure myself.

At first, I approached my goal as you'd expect, waging war and summoning the will and weaponry to suppress the symptoms of disease. I soon found this strategy to be greatly limited, though it offered an astounding and

## INTRODUCTION

useful revelation: The “warrior” is an archetype of a personal struggle, a war waged against *oneself*.

The warrior mentality goes something like this: It’s me against *my* disease; me against *my* fears, me against *my* world. But when you wage a war against yourself, who wins? Thus a dilemma, an enigma in a puzzle wrapped in the mystery of incurable disease.

OUR GRAVEST CHALLENGES OFFER  
OUR GREATEST OPPORTUNITIES.

I changed my perspective and set out on a different path to healing. With the right attitude and attention, I conquered degenerative disease, chronic depression and crippling despondency. Most importantly, I found the template through which lasting health thrives in the body. In my opinion, healing from many “incurable” conditions is no miracle, because almost anyone can follow the steps to do it. This book lays out a clear example and account, in precise detail, of exactly how I beat the odds—and how you can too.

Born into this world, you’ve embarked on a hero’s journey. Life really is an epic adventure, so prepare for action. You are about to discover a deeper level of your own power and wisdom.



## CHAPTER ONE



# SEIZE OPPORTUNITY

A near-death experience can produce strange phenomena. If you have ever watched your life flash before your eyes, you will never forget it, and you may well remember it now. You experienced every second of every minute, in every hour of each day, each week of every month and all year of every decade of your entire life—right up to and including this very instant—*simultaneously* and in immaculate detail. It's a complete mind-bender that defies reason; staggering, confounding, and impossible to describe in human language. Like some sort of speed-reading or speed-*sensing*, it's a hyper-experience in warp drive akin to reading every word in an encyclopedia while drinking from a fire hose during a train wreck in a split second, flat.

The sensory overload was incredibly intense as I rode the emotional coaster. Then, the seismic spike of adrenaline settled into an eerie, sedative calm as the

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vision faded into ether. The phenomenon seemed to transmit a profound moral and message mixed within madness; a sense of *abandoning myself* completely, a dimension divorced from logic, beyond thought, belief and human emotion, a place I had not beheld before.

I then passed into observing deep desperation and the uselessness of completely blowing a tremendous opportunity. I simply knew, without knowing how, that my life had been utterly wasted. I had watched the whole lot of it like watching a movie and saw no rationalization, no excuse and no way to justify it. Until that moment, I thought mine a normal life, but this odd and perturbing odyssey left me with the clear and sinking feeling that I'd completely missed the calling and purpose that life could offer.

Calling and purpose? Isn't the purpose to do one's damndest for wealth and comfort? The notion seemed profound as a kindergarten finger painting class compared to this mind-warping heart breaker. As if someone had shoehorned the proverbial "judgment day" into my brain, I witnessed a surreal trial in which I alone was judge, jury and defendant. The verdict proved clear as crystal that I hadn't passed muster in the game of life. That's it, game over, I lose.

The vision vaporized into thin air and I slammed back into conscious awareness. Oh, right—I'm hurtling to my death....

The heart-in-your-throat cardio sledgehammer pounded as adrenaline jammed my survival instinct into high gear. One moment I was out in the rain, up on the roof of my house patching a leak; the next, a slipshod

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shingle busted loose beneath me and I flew over the eave, through the air and headlong into destiny. With a fitful twist of form and good fortune, I managed to land squarely on my two feet and stick it like a gymnast. The sudden impact crushed me like an accordion into a full squat; I smashed my backside down hard on the rocky floor and bounced up to a standing conclusion that would have garnered perfect tens from any peanut gallery. As I ricocheted off the hardpan desert mud, I felt a deep and unsettling “pop” in my back, like the snapping of a twig; I braced for the pain to crash down and knock me into next week, but it never came.

Then it hit me... I had just survived a near-death experience. Thunderstruck, I pondered the misstep that could have cost me dearly, even taken my life. I felt it was no accident; the vision was a catalyst for an awakening, a *waking dream* in which I watched myself from outside my body and beyond all control. In an uncanny instant, I witnessed things from an entirely different perspective, somehow *observing myself* from the outside.

In a trice between time and eternity, a truth was revealed. I didn't know it then, but it was a turning point that would change my life forever. The trick is to absorb the epiphany for what it's worth and translate it into meaningful action. The event told of purpose, hinted at the very meaning of my life, but I chose to bask in the personal entitlement and thrill of invincibility that comes with the itinerate gratitude of surviving a dangerous feat unscathed. That's right... I'm bulletproof.

What a rush! There was no injury to speak of, just a mild throb that faded in and out for the rest of the day.

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Morals and messages are cryptic, confusing, and all too easy for a twenty-year-old man to ignore. The shock and awe faded away, and I went back up the ladder to tack a tacky patchwork to the roof of the ramshackle cottage in the high desert between Vegas and Phoenix.

TRANSLATE THE EPIPHANY INTO  
MEANINGFUL ACTION.

The next morning I was jolted awake by the sound of someone screaming bloody murder. Consciousness blazed in on a blinding white light, and the pain of a thousand blowtorches fired flames inside my body. I realized that the person screaming their lungs out... was me. Paralyzed by a contiguous muscle spasm from neck to feet, I had been screaming in my sleep. As I choked back the wails that could wake the dead, a doomsday scenario paraded through my mind. Had I been poisoned, maybe bitten by a spider wielding a deadly neurotoxin? I clambered for answers and suddenly remembered the snap I felt in my spine when I hit the deck the day before. Did I break my back? Couldn't have... if I'd broken something I would've known immediately, right?



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The E.R. doc studied the pictures carefully. His telling grimace gave me a clue that it wasn't good. "Is it my hips?" I asked nervously.

"Not your hips," he observed, "it's your back. Ruptured discs, lumbar four and five. Bulging out and impinging the sciatic nerve. It'll take a while to settle. I'll write you a script to help with the spasms. Go home and lay on your back with your legs elevated, knees bent, until the pain and swelling go away."

"How long will that take?" I wondered out loud.

"Could be a couple of weeks, maybe a month..." he returned. Then he offered the advice I would field repeatedly for the next ten years: "Don't lift anything heavy and remember to take your pills. At this point there's nothing we can do."

I felt I had no choice; I simply had to accept it and believe him. After all, he was a doctor—and doctors are people who tell the rest of us how it is. I knew that if they don't have the answers, nobody does.

### **On Your Feet, Hit the Street**

Days passed into weeks. The pain and spasms didn't let up at all; the medication hardly made a difference, and the damp and punishing winter weather only worsened the stiffness and pain. There was no point in returning to my job in construction; I could barely walk, much less roof a house—and if I couldn't keep up I'd be sent packing as soon as the boss got wind of it.

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After two months of lying on my back in the rain soaked hovel, I was out of a job and out on the street. Pain or no, I had to get off the couch and get moving. Evicted from my home, financially busted, with no car and unable to work, I had to find a way to survive. With no insurance and no support from friends or family, I found myself bumming around in podunk towns, wearing out my welcome wherever I went.

It took little time for me to alienate my acquaintances and the opportunities they once afforded. When you're disabled and needy, offering little in return for the favors good people give you, it takes real talent to sponge off them for long. Reluctantly, I took to the streets—sleeping in boxes and abandoned cars, eating garbage and doing my damndest to kill the pain by way of intoxication. I learned that alcohol doesn't really dull the discomfort and distress as much as it builds apathy; you just don't give a damn about the pain as much as you do when you're sober.

But alcohol came at a premium, and I was flat broke. With no money or friends to enable my cravings, I began self-medicating by sniffing chemicals—glue, refrigerant, shoe polish—whatever I could find in the acrid, overflowing garbage bins in the industrial district. For months, that was my *modus operandi*. Then one day I found myself huffing gasoline to get high, and it finally sunk in. I had hit the skids and nobody, not even I, gave a damn.

Enslaved to a pernicious habit of substance abuse, I was barely able to admit it to myself or anyone else. I was physically and emotionally corrupt, a living victim of

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circumstance with tombstones in my eyes. There was no way out; victimhood was the name of the game. I'm not responsible for what's happened to me and nobody can do anything to change that.

Angry at God and myself for this miserable turn of the screw, I nose-dived out of sanity and into suicidal ruminations and behaviors. What's the meaning of this life anyway? I mean, when it comes down to it, what's the point?

I got used to waking in the middle of the night in strange and seedy places, heavily intoxicated, unable to remember where in hell I was or how I got there. It's incredibly spooky, a fiendish, freakish feeling... confused and disoriented, waking up from a bad dream into a real nightmare.

Yet it was in the still of those creepy and hopeless nights that it happened. In the witching hours of dark desperation and eerie insanity, I could sometimes hear it... a voice emanating from deep inside, urging me to take heart. "You're gonna make it, don't give up," it said.

I'll tell you now—I've heard many scary voices in my head, the surreal hallucinations of destitution and depravity. Serious addiction possessed me body and soul, and I had lost the very things I once imagined could never be taken away—self-esteem, self-worth, personal dignity, freedom and even the will to live.

Yet this faint inner voice was something completely different; it was as if an apparition of sorts had beamed into my consciousness, emanating from my core, radiating light into the shadows of my twisted imagination. It would take many years to ferret out the

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chestnuts, but I sensed at the time in the depths of my being that I had stumbled upon the conduit through which love and healing make their way into heart and mind.

From my eerie ordeals, I also learned that the dark and terrifying experiences we endure ultimately serve us, by revealing that deep within us lives an aspect that transcends the pain and suffering of life. I had once heard someone say that real beauty is so deep within that you have to travel through the shadow to reach it. Such is the darkness and light of life; the depth of desperation one feels is inversely commensurate with the heights of ecstasy one can attain.

I also learned that comfort and consolation are not found in escape or denial. By facing our challenges, win or lose, we recover the treasure. An inner voice of love and integrity arises beyond the tribulations that seem so important, yet make no difference to the world when we're gone.

I had no idea how to label this voice, but I knew it wasn't limited to a religious belief or mental concept. I now know it's a beneficent and powerful inner force, ever-present and available when we most need it, realized in a meaningful relationship we make with *ourselves*.

I survived on the streets for many months, intoxicated day in and day out, suffering mental torment and developing destructive behaviors that I have since learned are criminally insane. I lived and learned as much as I want to know about the dark side of human nature, from my own experience and from the homeless people I befriended in those challenging times. I found it isn't ever

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obvious or formulaic just how people end up on the street; even the most wretched of them were happy once. Many had been productive members of society before they landed on skid row.

I came to see victimhood in a manner that struck like a crushing hammer on a resilient and resonant piano string. For instance, I knew how it felt to be judged a total loser by the people I cared most about, and it was exceptionally difficult to deal with. Yet it led to the advent of meaningful insight and purpose... how could I make a positive impact on those who judged me as I drifted in and out of their awareness?

Darkness and desperation morphed into the motivation and calling to help those who truly need it. Today, I thank the universe that my life took the drastic turns. The turbulent and trying events I lived through led me directly to where I needed to be. Without the challenges, I might never have found the way.



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**Excerpts from  
Chapter 2**

**DIAGNOSIS AND CURE**

**HEAL FOR REAL**

**BY PETER WINSLOW**

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The victim mentality saturated my mind and body, even showing up to persecute me in my sleep. The pain was worst at night, and I'd often awaken from night terrors, in fits of agony caused by muscle spasms and severe sciatica. I took to sleeping in a sitting position to quell my symptoms, but the relief was only temporary; I swallowed fistfuls of painkillers and washed them down with liberal smatterings of melancholy and booze. I shopped doctors of all stripes—general practitioners, chiropractors, specialists, others—and they all offered the same conclusions and the same advice: Don't lift anything heavy, don't bend over and don't stop taking your drugs.

The heavy labor jobs of my recent past had taken a toll on my condition. Some doctors recommended surgery to remove the problematic discs, but a friend of mine had recently undergone that procedure and ended up worse off than before. He urged me to seek an alternative, but there were none available in the realm of modern medicine. With a little practice, I learned that both life and medical procedures come with no guarantees. At the time, the majority of patients who went in for back surgery had come out worse for the wear, so I chose to carry myself through the muck and mire by downing gallons of liquid denial in an attempt to strong-arm the pain.

### **Down for the Count**

Four years after rupturing the discs in the great fall, I got the heart-breaking news. If you've been knocked off

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your feet by a devastating diagnosis, I know how you feel because, like you, I've been there. Nothing can prepare you for the tidal wave of shock and denial that rocks your world when the verdict comes down, the judgment that severs what few remaining threads of hope you had for redemption and a better life.

An extensive blood analysis confirmed I had acquired Ankylosing Spondylitis, or Marie Strumpel's Disease, a degenerative rheumatoid arthritis of the spine known to be chronic and pernicious. The doctors related quite clearly that this is an incurable disease, and the prognosis was well defined.

Well, no wonder I hadn't found relief from the pain and anguish—I had a bona fide disease! The revelation gave my doctors a new focus of attention, and it gave me a completely new self-image. The diagnosis sunk deeply into my bones, literally and figuratively: *I have spinal arthritis...* I must accept it. Treat me accordingly and be glad it's not you! My anemic self-image spiraled down a dark and dismal drain as I put on that damaged suit of clothes and tailored it to fit. I had finally found my identity, and there was no escaping it—victim, addict, arthritis sufferer.

For nine long years, I battled the demons of victimhood: Clinical depression, despondency, chronic addiction and debilitating pain. I learned to sleep sitting upright because lying down always brought on excruciating muscle spasms. The therapies, treatments and medications I took couldn't stop the progression of the disease. My doctors assured me there is no cure for arthritis, and I just had to cope with it. I spent days at a

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time in bed, sometimes crying, always paralyzed in pain and depression, and there were times I couldn't get around without a wheelchair. Pain and depression, depression and addiction, addiction and pain—my mind and body played a sinister game of tag, pitting me against the disease and the disease against me. In one way or other, the whole bloody lot of it amounted to me waging a never ending battle against some aspect of *myself*.

### A Still Small Voice

Somewhere amid the demons and degradation, it would sometimes rise to the surface—the still, small voice emanating an image of peace like a lotus flower emerging from the mud: “You’re going to make it. Don’t give up... take up the mantle of courage and do what you must to fulfill *your purpose*.”

I’d often argue with myself for hours at a stretch... my purpose? What kind of crap is that? I’ve seen the writing on the wall. Like everyone else, I just want to make as much money as I can and get to the finish line of life with as little pain as possible. Hell, if I’m not mistaken, that is the meaning of life. That’s my purpose. I had once been told that there isn’t a problem you can think of that money won’t solve, and I bought that rot—hook, line and sinker. My life had little meaning beyond the drive for material gain; with that, I figured I could at least earn the respect and admiration of the people around me, and maybe even bag a wife and provide for a family. Like many others, I was living a superficial existence, defined

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by my fears and personal judgments. It's little wonder to me now that I became a victim of mental illness and physical disease.

I reached the breaking point time and again, and I remember thinking—this is it. I've had it... I can't go on this way anymore. God, whoever or whatever you are, if you're there, if you exist, please... ease my pain and suffering, or take me out of the game right here and now. I'm thirty years old; I've lived a long and full life, and now I'm done. If there's nothing more than this, to hell with it. I'm ready to cash in my chips. Let's get it over with.

Through many long nights of pain, anguish, and suicidal ruminations, I would sometimes hear the authentic voice inside me as it telegraphed more strongly and precisely. It felt like a broadband receiver tuning in to a frequency from beyond my own reckoning. On those dark and punishing nights, I would sometimes imagine myself as a needle sliding up and down the bandwidth on my old car radio, the dial on an analog receiver picking up a faint signal from somewhere in space. The more I quieted my mind and listened for the intuitive voice of guidance, the larger and louder it got.

I came to the end of my rope, truly ready to give up the ghost. During the utter desperation of a suicide attempt, it arose again... the inner voice, saying that the medical treatment and advice I'd gotten was not the last word or authority on my condition, and there was indeed another way.

The epiphany came down from on high like a bolt out of the blue. Sitting still, taking it easy, taking drugs and wallowing in victimhood was futile. What I needed was

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love, laughter, liberation from intoxication and the will to convert the energy of divine discontent into a positive course of action. I simply had to find and employ the beliefs and behaviors that would lead to what I wanted to feel. The voice of intuition said I would find the strength to leap over lack and limitation if I truly made the effort, but I must first develop a vision greater than anything I had dreamt before.

Deeply motivated, I set out on a journey of introspection, education and personal growth. One of the first things I learned was that my dire and desperate situation had indeed served me well. The agonizing experiences kept knocking me down until I took notice of something larger than my own ego, something even larger than life itself. Hardship and disease had led me straight to the holy grail of healing—the ability to quiet the mind and cultivate the still, small voice of wisdom within me.

I made the tough decision. I decided to *trust myself* and the inner voice of personal salvation. What else could I do? After all, it's been said that when you've got nothing, you've got nothing to lose.

## Nothing to Lose

At first I really didn't know how to begin or what to do, but my plan was to change my mindset and strengthen my body. Healing became the ambition and goal of my life, but how could I make it happen?

Years earlier, I received *The Secret of the Ages* by Robert Collier. I picked it up and began to re-read it.

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Among other things, the esoteric book describes the basic techniques of creative imagery and guided visualization, insisting that this is how literally everything we create comes into being. I was a tad skeptical, hell—doubtful that a simple technique like visualization could help me very much, but I had resolved to do anything and everything to realize my goal, and nothing was off the table or out of bounds at that point. I began to wonder... can I use this stuff to begin the process?

As I read the messages contained in that insightful gift, it dawned on me that to create healing and growth, I'd have to ditch the belief that I'm a victim, a statistic of an incurable and degenerative disease with symptoms of chronic pain. It wasn't a matter of denying that self-image and resisting the old thoughts, feelings and beliefs that went with it, but *replacing* them with a bigger picture of who I really am. I had to create new beliefs and follow through with the habits and behaviors to support them.

I'd asked for change, and now it was imminent. The mission was to replace the old programming with a new belief system and to support that system with a new attitude, strong motivation, positive action and abiding inner faith. So be it.

One short year after I adopted the new beliefs and behaviors, it happened. After a decade of suffering with chronic disease, depression and despondency, I awoke one morning completely free of pain. Soon I was running, bodybuilding, dancing, and enjoying a vigorous new level of health and activity. I cultivated a strong and confident expectation of optimal wellness, much more than a positive attitude thing. The fact is, positive thinking only

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works if it's consistent with your dominant self-image. What I created was a clear and defined course of action to produce total transformation in my body, mind and even my speech, and the results were amazing. As you might imagine, I was ecstatic about it. A deep and satisfying passion burned through me like fire through a rice paper factory.

The doctors were stunned when the follow-up tests showed no trace of the arthritic Ankylosing Spondylitis in my body. In one year, I had beaten addiction, depression and the “incurable” disease that once had brought me to my knees.

One of the first things I realized was healing isn't something *they* do to you; it's something that happens within you. Healing is an inner power that helps you develop an understanding of your life and what you're here to do. What could be more meaningful than that?



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**Excerpts from  
Chapter 3**

**THE PATH**

**HEAL FOR REAL**

**BY PETER WINSLOW**

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## **Your Instinctive Inner Intelligence**

Think about this: After you've eaten, you digest the food, right? So how does your body digest and assimilate what you eat, and then eliminate the waste without you ever knowing how it works?

The answer is that you don't have to know, because the work is done by an intelligence that lives within you. Call it what you want—nature, instinct or higher awareness—this “inner intelligence” exists in every living creature on earth. It's there now, working below your consciousness and directing your bodily functions without you paying any attention to it. But what's really interesting is that your inner intelligence *pays close attention to you*.

Your inner intelligence responds to your thoughts and emotions, and for better or worse, you're communicating with it all the time. Here's an example you may be familiar with: Studies show that stress can disrupt the normal function of the human digestive system. Stress is a *mental* condition that affects the body; mental and emotional stressors can create physical symptoms like loss of appetite and ravenous eating binges. Stress also impairs the proper absorption and uptake of nutrients, and causes a host of irregularities with elimination and excretion of waste from the body. Alleviating the mental stress that can cause these digestive problems will usually result in restoration of proper function. Toleration of everyday stress is a key indicator for balance and proper

## THE PATH

function of the myriad of mechanisms at work in our bodies.

Let's use this information to get a better understanding of what healing really means. Your body's inner intelligence directs a series of regulating mechanisms, collectively called *homeostasis*, which constantly moves you in the direction of health and wellness, including proper tissue repair and rejuvenation. If you cut your finger, you can watch as the wound seals itself back together over time. This is a clear example of the healing property you carry within you. It's ever vigilant, always at work in you and through you, regardless of the medical treatments you take. People who are born with congenital defects or genetic abnormalities may have further concerns to consider, but the healing essence of homeostasis is present in every living being or they wouldn't be alive at all. The fundamental survival mechanism we call "healing" exists in every form of life on the planet, both plant and animal.

By looking at the healing intelligence from this perspective, you open yourself to a larger and richer concept of what true and total healing can mean. Drop your limiting beliefs, expand your awareness and think of the healing essence as a form of higher consciousness, an aspect of instinctive intelligence that literally watches over you with intention and benevolence. It's the spirit that directs an incredibly complex and delicate balance of the physical and subtle energy systems in your body that maintain intricate relationships with each other and work together for the greater good of the whole organism—you.

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I've found it helpful to think of this description of healing not in terms of science, but as a philosophy. *Philosophy* means the love and pursuit of wisdom. This wisdom brings with it an awareness of unconditional self-love, a deeper experience of an inner power that protects you and wants you always to be well.

I know it can be difficult or controversial for some to think of healing this way. Many people don't buy the idea of a higher consciousness or a meaningful connection between the mind and body. This may be due to the fact that western medicine takes a mainly scientific approach to healthcare. For years, medical schools taught their students that the mind had little or no effect at all on the body, and that something as nebulous as "stress" couldn't possibly alter the complex functions of physiology and chemistry at work in a human being. Medical professionals have admitted that they just didn't see how it could be that simple. Today many practitioners are redefining their practices to include mind-body and other holistic models for stress relief, and recognizing the significance of these strategies.

When we speak of *healing*, we're talking about something that can't be accurately quantified by scientific control groups and empirical data. Healing is something that ultimately rests with the individual. Statistics for it are uncertain and variable; medical practitioners are at best only able to state the odds for it. If you're given good chances for success, you feel better, more confident, with an expectation of a happy outcome. That makes a big difference to your inner intelligence; it takes your

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thoughts and feelings and works them out to their logical conclusions in the body.

EVERY SCIENCE BEGINS AS PHILOSOPHY  
AND ENDS AS ART.  
—WILL DURANT

When you're willing and able to incorporate the linear left-brain sciences of modern medicine with the right-brain functions of attitude, art and imagery, you'll achieve success beyond the baseline of either alone. This is work we must do for ourselves, but unfortunately, most people aren't even aware of it. Some people cannot entertain these beliefs at all, even when their lives may depend on it.

It may surprise you to learn that healing is a concept rarely discussed in allopathic medical schools. These institutions are engaged in expanding the citadels of medical research and education by discovering new and amazing technologies that assist the medical professions. Medical education focuses on the physical sciences that govern matter and molecules, the tissues they can observe with the tools of technology. They discover ways to interact with the body and they translate their findings into methods of *treatment*.

*Healing*, on the other hand, is what you do. You already own the healing intelligence free and clear; the doctor doesn't prescribe it, and nobody can sell it to you.

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The power of healing is with you now, and it will never leave until you die and your body no longer needs it. Cut the finger on a cadaver and the wound won't sew itself back together because the healing intelligence has "left the building" along with the life force itself.

This means that the healing essence in living tissue is linked to the source of life within us. It has never been defined conclusively by modern science or agreed on by the world's cultures and religions. The essence that does the healing in our bodies hasn't been seen under a microscope, and that's why evidence-based mechanical medicine doesn't focus on it directly.



THE POWER OF HEALING  
IS WITHIN YOU.

Medical doctors are trained to think of the human body as a machine. To fix one, they can troubleshoot the problem, repair or replace the defective parts, and let the instinctive intelligence of the patient take over from there. It's often a successful approach to treatment, yet it doesn't account for what the instinctive intelligence is, or what it does. Studies show that healing from illness and injury is directly affected by the disposition and outlook of the patients themselves. The fact remains that with any treatment, there is never a guarantee of healing.

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There are a number of interesting and complex phenomena at work inside us, and unexpected results from medical treatments will occasionally happen. It's been documented, for example, that a liver transplant recipient who never much cared for french fries suddenly felt wicked cravings for them soon after the surgery. When the surgical staff investigated the situation, they learned that the donor was a man who frequently enjoyed fried foods. They began to wonder... could the liver itself cause the cravings and even affect the behaviors of the recipient? There's something going on here that's a lot more interesting than the physical nuts and bolts of anatomy, don't you think?

### **The Roadmap**

Did you know that the body you lived in yesterday is different from the one you're in today? In a process called *cellular mitosis*, the cells in your body birth new cells repeatedly and die off naturally throughout your entire life. The fact is that in a few years you'll have a completely rebuilt body altogether. Some cells reproduce faster than others; the cells that lined your stomach two hours ago have already been replaced with new ones whose daughter cells will soon be born. Your body reinvents itself again and again throughout your lifetime, and it's plainly evident when you watch a youngster grow up and age over the years. What you're watching is the process of cellular growth and regeneration that occurs with the passing of time.

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### YOU BUILD A WHOLE NEW BODY EVERY FEW YEARS.

Your brain cells, called neurons, are programmed a bit differently than other cells. They adapt to their environment depending on what you learn and what new behaviors you acquire. In a process called *neuroplasticity*, the map-like structure of the brain cells can be remodeled; doctors often document it when studying patients who've suffered head injuries and have since created new neural pathways to compensate for the loss.

In cases of head injuries that cause blindness, neuroscientists have observed amazing changes in the brains of the victims. Using functional MRI's and brain imaging scans, they've isolated electromagnetic energy emitted by the visual cortex, representing approximately one-third of the brain, and found that this region has adapted and retrained itself in these patients to supervise completely different skills. Neuroplasticity is the process by which many people stricken with blindness develop their highly acute senses of hearing, touch, taste and smell. These people are often able to master completely new tasks and creative endeavors that the rest of us find challenging or even impossible to do.

Until the mid-1990's, it was believed that brain cells do not regenerate beyond the formative years of development, after about two or three years of age. We

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now know that's incorrect. Through a process called *neurogenesis*, brand new neurons are created when you enrich your environment by taking up new and interesting tasks like studying a foreign language, learning to play a musical instrument or practicing meditation. Tackling challenging skills like these helps to ward off Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia. The process also increases cognitive abilities and rebuilds memory function. This means that new and challenging mental activities enhance neuroplasticity in the brain. Here's the catch: Doctors say the initial changes are only temporary, because you have to be *emotionally engaged* in the process to retain the results.

Permanent plasticity happens when you feel deep emotions like passion, élan, savior faire and a zest for life in the new adventure, because positive thoughts and a sense of well-being are critical for the release of the specific neurotransmitters and other brain chemicals that enable the changes to stick. Your new skills must be taxing and highly motivating for the results to be permanent. It's another good example of the conscious communication you send to your instinctive intelligence. In this case, it needs you to choose to feel passion and motivation before it can make the health benefits of your new activities lasting and permanent.

Neuroplasticity can be either positive or negative. Here's an example of negative plasticity: Many elderly people are understandably afraid of falling. Trying to avoid an accident by looking down at the ground in front of them while they walk narrows their field of vision, which in turn trains the brain to decrease physical

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coordination and balance. Fear is the motivating emotion, the passionate fuel that powers the process and makes it permanent. The resulting changes in the brain actually impair normal mobility and increase the likelihood of a fall, the very outcome they had focused on, but tried to prevent.

Neurologists tell us that chronic pain is also an example of negative plasticity. It's the result of the brain repeatedly firing signals over specific neural pathways until what was once temporary information has now become a habit. It's like driving a truck on a muddy dirt road; the more you drive over them, the deeper the grooves become. The repeated pain sensations construct an "information superhighway" on the roadmap of the brain, but it's not necessarily a permanent fixture. You have to adopt the new habits, behaviors and activities that replace the old patterns to change the brain-terrain permanently.

As the mature cells within you constantly give birth to new ones, you're actually building an entirely new and different body every few years. The work is alive and ongoing throughout your lifetime, and you can take an active role in the process. Physical exercise is an excellent way to participate, and mental exercises are helpful as well. If you want to create a healthier body than the one you have now, you really can do it.

As you work with your doctors and other healthcare professionals, you can help yourself even more than you might know. If you believe they hold all the cards and have a monopoly on your condition, then you're about to

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abandon that tripe. Wittingly or not, you are contributing to the success or failure of their treatments every day.

To improve and strengthen yourself and your constitution, form a clear mental image of what you want to accomplish. Then do what you can to support the mission. There are many things that only you can do for yourself, and a good way to start is to communicate positive messages to your inner intelligence. In an increasingly toxic environment, this is something for you to take very seriously. The good news is that it's easier than you think.



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**We hope you enjoyed this preview of**

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