**Radically Reversing Arthritis Part II: Healthy Mind, Healthy Body by Gary Null**

While the quality of what we put into our bodies along with proper and consistent exercise are essential for good health, there is one thing that cannot be missing if we want true and lasting health – *a positive mindset, which includes an orientation toward health rather than disease*. Ralph Waldo Emerson said: "Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm." Along these same lines, Abraham Lincoln said: “Determine that the thing can and shall be done, and then we shall find the way.”

One’s mental position about their life and health challenges is potentially the most important aspect in determining their ability to recover health. Luann Pennesi, R.N., M.S., Director of Metropolitan Wellness, tells every one of her clients, “Do not personalize disease, which means do not lose your identity to it. Disease can be temporary when we understand what our body is aiming to tell us, and then take positive actions to give it what it needs to heal itself.” Positive, focused thinking, indeed, is what will enable you to embrace. What we are presenting here is not just a way to deal with your arthritis, and other diseases, it is a way of living that will enable you to eradicate it while minimizing your risk of future illnesses for life. If this is of interest to you, then you will adopt an “I can” attitude; and it will guide you to make the choices that are essential for a joyful, fulfilling life free from chronic disease.

Science abounds in support of how our thoughts affect our biology. As we have established in the previous section on stress, if you are worried, stressed and fearful much of the time, your body’s functions, including your immune system, are being compromised. Not only this, but it may determine whether you manifest an illness related to a genetic predisposition. A study conducted by Massachusetts General Hospital and the Genomics Center at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Centers found that the mind can actively turn on and turn off genes. “Now we’ve found how changing the activity of the mind can alter the way basic genetic instructions are implemented,” stated Harvard Medical School professor Herbert Benson, M.D., co-senior author of the report. The study also indicated “that the relaxation response alters the expression of genes involved with processes such as inflammation, programmed cell death (which can keep genetically impaired cells from turning into cancers), and how the body handles free radicals – molecules produced by normal metabolism that, if not appropriately neutralized, can damage cells and tissues.” This is an incredibly important finding for people suffering from any disease, including arthritis. The report also cited: “Mind-body practices that elicit the relaxation response (such as meditation, repetitive prayer, yoga, tai-chi, breathing exercises, progressive muscle relaxation, etc.) have been used worldwide for millennia to prevent and treat disease, and this study provides the first compelling evidence that the relaxation response elicits specific gene expression changes in short-term and long-term practitioners .”

Chronic physical pain very often leads to chronic anxiety and depression, which means that you want to do everything in your power to prevent or reverse this disorder. The emotional pain of arthritis is tremendous; it can cause you to withdraw, lose hope and not want to live, which is so far from how we can live with the proper care. To make and sustain change, we must first become aware of another possibility and then we must feel our desire enough to make the commitment to a different reality. The commitment is one of heart and mind; it takes both. But the mind is incredibly powerful, and can oftentimes override our hearts, so we must first understand it, and then learn how to deal with it in order to succeed in creating change. Simply put, we have the conscious mind and subconscious mind (typically termed the “unconscious” in scientific circles). The conscious mind is responsible for logic and reasoning, while the subconscious mind according to Sigmund Freud is a repository for socially unacceptable ideas, wishes or desires, traumatic memories and painful emotions. While the subconscious has largely been thought of as the receptacle for negative thoughts and experiences put out of mind by the mechanism of psychological repression, its contents do not necessarily have to be solely negative. What’s most important to realize, however, is that in the common psychoanalytic view, the unconscious (comprised of both the personal unconsciousness and the collective unconsciousness, defined as the unconsciousness of humanity) is a *force* that can only be recognized by its effects, or the symptoms (or realities) it produces.

While this is a very rudimentary definition for an extremely complex field of understanding, we need only to know this: Our unconscious mind has tremendous influence (more than we know) over our actions. When “sabotage patterns,” for example, surface we can use the power of our *conscious* mind to make the correct choices based on our commitment. How do we do this? By *imagining* what life would be like if we fall back into our same “old” patterns, and then actually *feeling* the painful feelings associated with these old ways. If we spend just enough time doing this, we will not want to engage in our old behaviors. Then, we can engage ourselves in imagining how much better life is and will be once relieved of the arthritis symptoms. Feel the positive feelings associated with the freedom of healthy living; these will keep you on track. If you slip up; simply refocus and reconnect to your commitment. Applying this level of awareness and consciousness to our efforts in creating a healthier existence makes it significantly easier to make better choices in the moment, which is really all that is required. We create health for the future by making good choices now.

Much of your success will be determined by your ability to support yourself mentally and emotionally, which means structuring your time to support your new habits, eliminating toxic habits and relationships, doing more things that make you truly happy, letting go of beliefs that no longer serve you, and learning the art of self-love. As I said, this is a complex landscape to navigate, but one worthy of your attention and efforts. Consider seeking the help of coaches, spiritual teachers, and supportive friends and family to provide encouragement to you on this important journey

The Importance of Exercise

Patients are almost never advised to build up the muscles around a problem joint, but evidence shows that when a strength training program is instituted along with proper dietary changes, often symptoms resolve with no need for medication or surgery. The CDC says that “physical activity can reduce pain and improve function, mobility, mood, and quality of life for most adults with many types of arthritis including osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, fibromyalgia, and lupus.” They also report that “scientific studies have shown that participation in moderate-intensity, low-impact physical activity several times a week improves pain, function, mood, and quality of life without worsening symptoms or disease severity.”

Unfortunately, most Americans have a sedentary lifestyle, and our leg, arm, back and stomach muscles frequently become weak from lack of use. Joint health is not possible without proper muscular support; diet alone cannot rehabilitate joints that have become impaired. All forms of exercise, including aerobic, muscle strengthening (resistance), and movement that promotes flexibility (such as yoga or stretching), are all important because they keep joints fully mobile while transporting nutrients and waste products to and from the cartilage to regulate and control joint swelling and pain. Strengthening the surrounding muscles also helps decrease bone loss and increases bone density, which supports the joints in proper functioning by protecting them from the pressure of carrying the weight of the body.

Not enough that can be said about the overriding value of exercise in creating and maintaining a healthy life. Energy and stamina are enhanced through exercise, which also decreases fatigue and improves the quality of sleep, which is an essential component of weight management. When we are tired and not sleeping well, we often gravitate toward foods that give us quick energy – typically sugary, calorie-dense processed foods with deleterious side effects. Regular exercise combats fatigue while regulating our appetite, inspiring us to make healthier food choices. For these reasons and more, exercise has been shown to enhance weight loss and promote long-term weight management, especially in those with arthritis who are overweight. As we’ve learned, lowering body weight decreases the forces on the joints, which is essential for those suffering with arthritis, and any other ailment for that matter. The bottom line is that obesity shortens life. Recent studies have linked every 10lbs of excess body weight to 1 year off your life expectancy. 88

Exercise may offer additional benefits to improving or modifying arthritis. It has been proven to help lower the stress that causes us to tighten muscles, clench our jaws, and develop damaging muscle spasms. Strengthening muscles, while also developing flexibility through exercises such as swimming, power walking, dance, yoga or Pilates, helps to reduce tension, allowing the joints to move more freely. Of course swimming is an excellent form of exercise for anyone suffering from arthritis and or obesity; it is easy on the joints and offers excellent cardio fitness while increasing muscle and bone strength. While exercising arthritic joints may seem counterintuitive, there is nothing that can help more than proper movement and diet, and you will be astonished to see the results that can be accomplished with these two changes alone. Ultimately, the only way to restore lost function is to provide circumstances that promote proper function, not to cover up the symptoms with drugs that are not designed to address the cause of the loss of function.

If there ever was a time to take action to become lighter; it is now! Ask yourself: Can I really afford to *wait* to make changes that could help me have more happiness today? Most importantly make sure to choose exercise that is preferably near your home or workplace and that you enjoy. Studies show that people are more likely to stick with an exercise program that they like. Also, be sure to consult qualified physical trainers or professionals with expertise prior to beginning any kind of training program, and especially weight training. One of the key aspects of joint health is correct alignment, and unless we receive instruction on proper form in the performance of any exercise we run the risk of damaging our joints rather than helping them.

A New Paradigm

In many ways it is very clear that for all intents and purposes the food corporations, the pharmaceutical companies, and our legislators have declared war on the American public. Whether they are unconscious of their actions, purposefully indifferent or simply ignorant of how to create health, they continue to fight tooth and nail to keep insular structures and systems in place – the very act of which brainwashes most of us into believing that we have few to no options for disease eradication other than what they are presenting. In particular, it is most disconcerting that the majority of elected and appointed government officials who we entrust, charter, and pay with our hard-earned tax dollars to protect us from corporate interests are doing just the opposite, and protecting – to our peril – their personal interests instead. Our expensive and costly medical system built and run by largely unconscious individuals, who by definition are more interested in protecting their positions (financial and otherwise) than in “*first, doing no harm,*” will *not* produce the type of care providers and government officials who can effect real change in dealing with the medical problems of our time. Profitability – above all else – will keep this monstrous mechanism in place, and have us tethered to the medical establishment for life.

Adding to the challenge of change is the fact that the food industry simply doesn’t want you to make healthy changes. Billions, if not trillions, of dollars are at stake – approximately 36 to 40 billion dollars would be lost by the food industry if each of us simply reduced our daily caloric intake by only 100 calories. This is about 4 potato chips, ¼ of a candy bar, and 1/3 of a soda. That’s a large financial impact for a very small shift in one lifestyle choice; it should be no wonder then why “food” companies forge ahead, keeping us fat, arthritic, in pain and addicted rather than leading the way toward healthier eating.89 But we can no longer deny that our diet is ruining our health and that of our children, and the chance for a healthy future, for us, our country and our planet. We are already seeing the effects of toxic living in us and around us. What does it take for us to pause and look? For the first time in recorded human history, *children* are suffering from lifestyle-based illnesses that are not necessarily related to poverty. Yes, our children are now suffering from arthritis, hypertension, heart disease and diabetes in record numbers. In truth, we all need to change and have no future – unless something significant does change.

For the wise few in government and industry that follow a higher moral compass, and for those of you who will take this information to heart and do whatever you can to create a healthier way of living, I honor you. Only those who are able to take an honest look at what is not working, who are able to ask and reflect on the deeper questions, and then take appropriate actions will survive it. While it won’t be easy at times, I can assure you that it is worth it. The smiles that we see on people’s faces when they make these changes and release their need, for example, for a cane, a cupcake or other physical or emotional support is truly inspiring.

My colleague Luanne Pennesi, R.N., M.S who assisted me with this study said: “What I witnessed after four weeks of people integrating this protocol into their lives was nothing short of miraculous. As a registered nurse, trained for 36 years to make sure that patients got their drugs, I could not believe what I was witnessing. Some were no longer using walkers or canes; I was truly amazed! This is what should be on the front pages of the *New York Times*, USA *today, Time* magazine and every medical journal in America.” When I see the results of this protocol in action – as I have recently – it’s hard for me to believe that the majority of Americans have given up on their precious health for a few candies, cookies, sodas, meatball sandwiches, hot dogs and pizzas. Are we truly unwilling to take the necessary steps to change? And why don’t we make better choices with respect to our physical wellbeing? The short answer is because we perceive change to be difficult and painful. Before you accept this as true, however, you may want to consider that a change may actually be less painful – and potentially even joyful – to what you are currently experiencing.

As I have shown you here, the reasons for arthritis are as numerous as its symptoms: our toxic foods, our lack of physical movement, our jobs, televisions, computers, smart phones and videogames all promote a sedentary lifestyle. We travel by car just to go a few blocks, we rely on “others” (doctors and pharmaceuticals) to make us well rather than finding out and taking steps to create a healthier life for ourselves, and we haven’t learned how to manage the constant milieu of mental, emotional and physical stress. While we didn’t get where we are completely on our own, it is entirely up to us whether we develop arthritis or whether our current arthritis and pain worsens. We have *another choice* – to develop the determination to seek out information and support enough to make changes that we become unflappable in the face of temptations, corporate agendas, Madison Avenue spin masters, and the ill-informed physicians that are contributing to our nation’s bleak health status. This choice is really a commitment to doing something different, something truly empowering. We have seen what conventional medicine has to offer for joint damage, and the overwhelming evidence is that it will worsen our condition.

If you believe in your body’s natural capacity to be strong and self-repairing, and you truly want to rid yourself from the pain associated with tissue degeneration, then you will find the motivation to do what you need to do. I’ve seen it a thousand times over: people changing their minds (first) and then their bodies for the better. As soon as enough of us do this, our family, friends and communities will follow; and so will others around the globe. As American cultural anthropologist Margret Mead said: “Never doubt for a moment that a small group of people can change the world, indeed they are the only ones that ever do.”

Trust me when I tell you that the miracle of a healthy, pain-free body is not only possible, but probable if you follow these guidelines. As you continue to read on, you will learn about some of the people who are inspiring themselves (and others) to lead a better life. I encourage you to take the time to read what happened for these folks in just *three short weeks*. I can also share with you that there is hardly anything more worthwhile than bearing witness to the complete transformation of a human being who at one point in their life is constrained by their illness, and then shortly thereafter becomes free from arthritis and pain, and living a life that they love.