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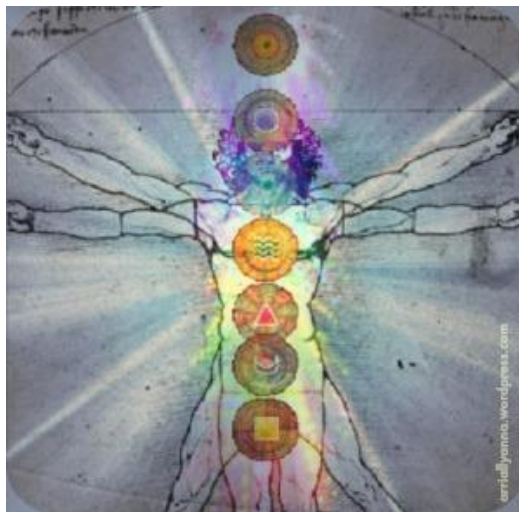
## What Is Health?

By Rebecca Reese, M.D.

### ***What is Health?***

There is absolutely no reason that we can't walk up to the day of our death in a state of profound health and well-being. My Qigong teacher, Master Liu He, tells the story of her grandfather's death. One day he gathered the family together and told them that the time had come for him to go. The next day he went into his room and closed his door. After that he sat down and left his body.

Health can only begin to be understood by studying the whole being – this is where the concept of holistic medicine comes from. The entire multidimensional being that we are is one giant self-regulatory and self-healing mechanism. It operates through a very complex array of feedback systems that are interlinked in so many ways that it becomes beyond our capacity to imagine. Whatever information comes into and out of our system, our natural healing capacity organizes that information into the best expression of health that is possible.



Health is expressed as range of motion and flexibility in every arena of life: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual.

**Physical Health** is the ability to move through the maximum physical range of motion that is possible for our constellation of a body. For many of us that means the ability to sit on the floor with crossed legs or to sit up straight in meditation without pain. It for sure means having the strength and flexibility to meet the physical requirements of our daily lives. Practices like yoga and qigong are really good for taking a physical body and educating it to achieve greater range of motion and flexibility. Physical movements like walking, running, jumping, skipping and hopping are also important to keep our physical capacity up and available.

**Mental health** is the maximum range of motion possible within the constraints from our genetics, trauma history and karma – the circumstances life has given us. Mental health involves the ability to be present to what is immediately in front of us in this moment to the best of our capacity. Mental health has within it the freedom to think creatively; to step outside of old paradigms and have a new view from an authentic perspective that is able to see many sides of an issue and respond appropriately in real time. Mental health represents the flexibility to embrace new ideas and new ways of viewing old problems.

**Emotional health** is demonstrated in the ability to allow our reactions to change according to the experience in front of us. A healthy person experiences the flow of many emotions within a 24 hour day.



Different emotions have different weight in our system. Anger tends to shut down our access the deeper parts of ourselves and blocks our ability to receive input. Fear can also be quite crippling because it can lock us out of our own feedback systems. The higher states of love, joy and peace are free flowing and uplift us and our total environment.

Whenever we are stuck in an emotion - that is not health. Often we are distracted or overwhelmed by undigested emotions from past experiences that we imagine are being recreated in front of us. These undigested emotions can be emotions that we carry from our extended family experience – and maybe even originated from generations preceding us. A term that our teacher Swami Chetanananda has used for this is – “the disappointments of our ancestors”.

There is a simple practice for dissolving undigested emotions that come up. That practice is opening your heart. How do we do it? One of the most important things we can do is talk to our heart. In meditation we ask as deeply as we possibly can for our heart to open “I wish to open my heart” or “I am Love”. Another way we open our heart is to think of someone we really love or someone who has really loved us. The way we know our heart is open is that we feel love. You can use that feeling to access your open heart and then use your asking to make it bigger and bigger. The heart can expand endlessly – it is not limited to our physical body. We can bring the heavier energies we experience into this open heart and transmute them into Love.

**Spiritual health** transcends belief system. Ultimate health is the experience of Self-realization – where we as human beings perceive that we are an energetic system of pure radiant light. The source of that pure light is the source of our physical bodies; the source of all that is. Experiencing this source gives us the capacity to live from our

deepest authenticity – present in the moment – benefiting from the experience of our past rather than living in reaction to it.

When we reach the final moments of our lives will we contract in fear and disappointment? Or will we open and expand endlessly releasing ourselves, dissolving ourselves into Love? This is the real question and one of the main motivations for maintaining spiritual practice day after day, month after month, year after year. By practicing consciously and conscientiously that expansive option will be available to us at the time of our death. This will allow us to die in a state of grace. In my capacity as a physician I have had the great honor to be present to witness graceful death on a number of occasions. It has been a profoundly beautiful experience. The choice to be established in this expansive field is one to be made now and every day of our life. ॐ



About Rebecca Reese, M.D.

A longtime student of Swami Chetanananda's, Rebecca Reese received her medical degree from Tufts University School of Medicine ('93) and is currently a physician (M.D.) with a practice in cranial osteopathy and homeopathy at Fulcrum Healthcare, Portland, OR. Dr. Reese also holds a B.F.A, and an M.A. in music, and is a concert level cellist who has performed widely. Dr. Reese may be reached at: [Fulcrumhealthcare@gmail.com](mailto:Fulcrumhealthcare@gmail.com)