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The Presence of FAMILY

EVERY YEAR IN THE LATE SPRING, MY HUSBAND AND I SPEND A WEEK IN SOUTHWEST FLORIDA, RIGHT ALONG THE GULF COAST. We stay in a modest, but very charming house that has been in my family for two generations. My parents are true "snowbirds," leaving for the house in November and staying through April. Once they head back home to Philadelphia, we drive down for a week to ourselves. As much as I love my life in Pennsylvania, it's so refreshing to step out of the workaday world, traffic, and daily routine that marks the other 51 weeks of our year. We have

grown to love the house, which is situated in a wild bird sanctuary and near a natural mineral spring, and we're always a little heavy-hearted when we leave. This year, however, I was surprised by how emotional I felt when it came time to pack up and head back north. For days after our return home, I would think about the house and suddenly fill up, crying at the drop of a hat. I would wake up with sadness, a longing in my heart, like I had been pried away from something so special, so much a part of me, that I almost couldn't bear it. I was missing my family.

Now, don't get me wrong—I keep almost daily contact with my parents. They wouldn't have it any other way. I



"THERE ARE TEACHERS ALL AROUND US IF WE ARE OPEN TO THEM."

-ANONYMOUS

visit them frequently, despite the hour-long drive that separates us. I wasn't missing having them physically around, rather, I was missing the warmth and the bond that I felt as a little girl. While staying at the house, I had found a drawer full of old pictures, some from before I was born, of my parents, my uncles, grandparents, cousins, and family friends. I realized that there were so many that I felt separated from, by geographical distance, death, or merely the passage of time—but I remembered them all. They all played some part in shaping who I am today. Almost all of those people had spent time in the Florida house, and each one seemed to have left a small shred of their presence behind. The commu-

nity that was, and is my family fills that house, and when I came home to West Chester, the ghosts had gone, and I missed them.

After a few days of feeling blue, I began to turn around. My sadness was replaced with a sense of overwhelming gratitude and contentment. I felt so fortunate for the family that I have, that I can always return to that beautiful house in Florida, and that I can call my parents anytime. I was also overcome with joy when I thought about my extended family—my friends, the "family we choose." My

yoga community has been such a big part of that extended family. I have learned so much, and have grown tremendously in all areas of my life.

In the end, I realized that family is where we learn to love and live together. We are taught tolerance, sharing, and empathy when we coexist in the community of our families. They come in many forms, but this community is what keeps us going as a human race. When I found yoga, it gave me a refreshed version of all I had been given years ago. I will forever be grateful to all the teachers that went before me, dedicated to learning how important it is to keep our desire for family alive. ▲



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N THIS ARTICLE WE WILL EXPLORE THE POSITIVE EFFECTS THAT THE PRACTICE OF MEDITATION CAN HAVE ON FAMILY LIFE.

First, let's consider that while a house is built with things like wood, bricks, stone and glass, a home and family are built on things like words, intimations, and caring gestures. In other words, healthy communication is the foundation of a happy and rewarding family life.

When we consider the phrase, *Actions speak louder than words*, we should also consider that communication is the action that begins family life. For example, the vows of the marriage ceremony and the birth certificates of the children that connect the children to the parents. Some live their lives from the outside in; they believe that the walls of the house that envelop the family are the essential aspects of a happy home and family life. However, the walls would not exist if not for the communication between the people who built or own the walls.

So what are the signs of a healthy and happy family life? First and foremost, the communication is positive. Marital and family researchers report that unhappiness in families is often caused by negative communication, such as: criticism, blame, offensive-defense patterns. There is one study that shows that happy, married couples have five positive interactions to every one negative interaction. Unhappy couples typically have more negative interactions than positive ones. Compliments and encouragement build a relationship, while criticism and blame tear it down.

The second feature of a happily family is that its members take time to communicate, and again, when they do, they communicate in a positive way. The next feature of a happy family is that the communication is also honest and direct. For example, complaining or demanding something in a rude or agitated tone of voice might be considered a negative approach, whereas explaining oneself and making a request might be considered a more positive approach. Another negative approach is communicating a thought or feeling based on an assumption that we have of the other person. When we assume that we know the reasons and motivations behind another person's behavior, we are essentially negating that person and saying that they are valid only as a reflection of our own thoughts and beliefs. Another challenge is when there is no give-and-take in communication. One person dominates



Meditation & Family Life

by Anthony Michael Rubbo, MHS

and the other person submits or withdraws from the interaction. If this becomes an ongoing pattern, then the relationship runs the risk of falling apart.

Now let's look at *listening* in family communication. In healthy families, members listen actively and truly try to understand what the person is saying. A simple nod or, "I understand," is often sufficient to create a positive interaction. And a simple, "I don't understand," or, "Can you explain or clarify that?" keeps the interaction positive. The most subtle aspect of healthy communication is the recognition of nonverbal signals. A child or spouse may be saying one thing but meaning something entirely different.

Next let's take a look at the practice of meditation and how it can support a healthy and happy family experience. Meditation begins with a unique kind of communication—internal dialogue. As soon as we sit, thoughts flow and we get carried away on them like leaves on a stream. At some point in the meditation, we become aware that we are the stream itself, and we simply let thoughts come and go. Instead of reacting critically to our thoughts, we respond non-judgmentally, and practice our awareness and acceptance of the words that we are essentially speaking to ourselves. So this type of meditative practice results in the cultivation of a communication skill: when the thoughts of another come to us in their words, we practice the same awareness and acceptance. Meditation also cultivates a more effective speaking style—one that is clear and direct, without hidden messages or assumptions. When two or more people use this approach, the result is a state of bliss for the couple or family. Life becomes more simple when people take responsibility for how their thoughts and words translate into interactions with others. In meditation, feelings also surface and become acknowledged. And so the person takes responsibility for his emotions, and the powerful part they play in communication with other family members.

In conclusion, when a person experiences self-acceptance, they can more easily accept others. When someone acknowledges their own thoughts and feelings truthfully and sincerely, they can do the same in interactions with their family members. Upon this foundation of mental clarity and emotional sincerity, a positive, physical culture is then developed. And then the walls of the house can be built, and the house will be strong and the home will be healthy. ▲

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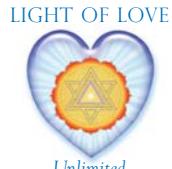
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The Yoga of Marriage

WHEN I MET JENNESS IN 1971, THE VERY FIRST QUESTION I ASKED THE WOMAN WHO WOULD EVENTUALLY BECOME MY WIFE WAS, "DO YOU HAVE A PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE?" At that moment we began a series of conversations about the meaning of life and how best to experience happiness. By the mid 1970s, those talks had led us to the practice of Yoga Science and marriage. The conversations have never stopped. They continue to this day.

People marry for many reasons: love, security, pleasure, and to provide a safe, nurturing environment in which to raise children. If you are already married, or are contemplating marriage, Yoga Science offers many helpful and practical insights that can make your marital relationship more loving, creative and deeply rewarding. For the past 31 years the Yoga of marriage has consistently provided Jenness and me with practical wisdom and inspiration. Through our yogic marriage each of us serves the other as the instrument of Guru (the universal force of light that dispels the darkness of ignorance), encouraging one another to act skillfully in all relationships—including those with health, food choices, family, finances, work and sexuality.

In Yoga Science, the institution of marriage is considered to be an *ashram*—a structured framework or community fostering spiritual practice (*sadhana*). Ashrams, in slightly varying forms, have existed all over the world for thousands of years—throughout India, the Far East and even ancient Greece. At the threshold of the Christian era, the Jewish communities of Essenes were based on the ashram tradition. According to Olivier Manitara, author of the book, *The Essenes—From Jesus to our Time*, Jeremiah, Isaiah, St. Ann, Joseph, Mary, John the Baptist, and Jesus Himself were all Masters of the Essenes. During at least part of their lives, each of these sages lived as sadhakas (spiritual aspirants), in a spiritually directed ashram community, where they studied and practiced many of the principles taught today as Yoga Science.

The word, *ashram*, is derived from the Sanskrit, *shram*, which means "hard work." In marriage as an ashram, the couple consciously and willingly undertakes the physical, mental, and emotional work of transforming the power of their individual debilitating habits. This ashram is the place where they continuously attempt to practice *Karma Yoga* with one another. *Karma Yoga* asks both husband and wife to serve the other with love, and to base all their actions on their own inner intuitive wisdom—renouncing, rather than claiming, the fruits of their actions. The results of all actions, Yoga teaches, belong not to the individuals, but to the Divine Origin of the wisdom that inspired the action.



The word *ashram* is also related to the Sanskrit root, *ashraya*, meaning refuge or retreat. When a marriage is grounded in Yoga Science, it becomes a retreat from the anxiety and pressures of the world. It provides the necessary refuge within, which individuals may look inward to examine the deeper aspects of life.

All Yoga practices—such as *hatha* (physical postures), meditation, *Ayurveda*, and *pranayama* (breath work)—have one and the same goal: unbounded happiness and fulfillment. When two human beings consciously join together to practice Yoga Science, every relationship that takes place within that union (including rela-

tionships with their children), is viewed as a means to fulfill the purpose of life. Every thought, word, and deed becomes an integral part of *sadhana*. Such skillful action provides both husband and wife the fearlessness, nourishment, inspiration, inner strength, compassion, and creativity necessary to meet all the challenges of everyday life.

But even if only one person in a marriage can courageously follow the principles of Yoga Science—without expectations or judgments—enormous benefits accrue to the entire family. Such skillful action is highly contagious.

In our Western culture, the wedding ring is the symbol of commitment and fidelity. In Yoga Science, the ring is seen as the joining together of two distinct half circles; two individual and limited egos. When the two are made one through the Yoga of marriage, the husband and wife no longer consider themselves to be separate individuals. Each is now half of a newly created whole—an expansion of their prior individual identities. Many philosophers have echoed this yogic concept through the ages. The Greek philosopher Aristotle, student of Plato and teacher of Alexander the Great, spoke as an intuitive Yoga scientist when he said, "True love [as in marriage] is composed of a single soul inhabiting two bodies."

In keeping with Aristotle's sentiment, a modern, yogic marriage makes it possible for a husband and wife to experience the true merging of souls. The process is analogous to the metallurgic phenomenon of amalgamation. For instance, if copper and zinc are heated together sufficiently, the resulting alloy of brass displays more highly-prized qualities than did its original constituents. Similarly, as a wife and husband make conscious, discriminating choices based on their shared, inner, intuitive wisdom, they merge into a new, common alloy, one with new capabilities greater than the sum of its parts. The two evolve into a unified consciousness with new attributes like stability, flexibility, and strength that perfect and surpass the original characteristics of the individuals. Through the process of *sadhana*; selfish, fearful, and resentful aspects of each partner's old

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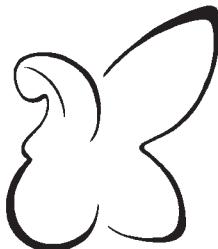
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personality are transformed into expansive qualities of creativity, selflessness, compassionate love, mutual respect, and gratitude.

Every yogic principle and practice can be enlisted in the transformation of an unexamined or unfulfilling marriage. The following specific applications may serve as inspiration.

Ahimsa: Yoga's Highest Principle

In the Yoga of marriage every action (mental, verbal, and physical) is guided by the highest yogic principle of *ahimsa*. The practice of *ahimsa* means that every thought, word, and deed in every relationship is to be non-injurious, non-harming, and non-violent.

In practical terms, *ahimsa* is the same wisdom as the Golden Rule that instructs human beings to "Do unto others as you wish to have done unto you," or as Jesus the Christ teaches: "Love thy neighbor as thy self." Mahatma Gandhi always insisted that, "Ahimsa is an attribute of the soul—to be practiced by everybody in all affairs of life. If it cannot be practiced in all circumstances, it has no practical value." The logic behind all these instructions is one and the same: on the highest level of consciousness, your neighbor (and therefore, your husband or wife) is also your Self.

The sages of Yoga Science teach that if a husband and wife serve ahimsa in mind, action, and speech with each other and with their children, they automatically live in harmony with the universal law of dharma—that which guides the family toward its highest good. If they practice ahimsa, they will experience a loving, healthy, creative, and rewarding life together. If a couple does not practice ahimsa, the consequence will be some form of physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual dis-ease or pain.

Yoga Science acknowledges the multiplicity of changing names and forms, but recognizes them to be only limited manifestations of the One Absolute Reality. If a husband or wife thinks, speaks, or acts in a harmful or injurious manner within the family structure, that injury will ultimately come back upon them since, in truth, there is only One Reality. The Bible teaches that, "As you sow, so shall you reap," or, in modern parlance, "What goes around, comes around."

For most of us, the senses, ego, and unconscious mind took control of the city of life many years ago. Yoga Science helps both husband and wife rectify that situation by placing all their mental forces in service to an intelligence greater than the mind and a truth that never changes. Even in the midst of the challenges and cultural pressures of modern marital life, the wisdom of the eternal soul serves as a beacon leading the married couple toward their mutual highest and greatest good.

The present, cultural view of marriage does not wholeheartedly embrace the concerted application of this philosophy, and in some situations might even view ahimsa as a display of selfishness or weakness. But that is a misunderstanding of the principle. People may say, "If I refuse to agree with my husband or wife, it might be criticized as selfishness and that's not good." But Yoga Science explains that there's nothing wrong with being selfish—if the real Self being served, in a marriage and in every other relationship, is the Lord of Life.

Detaching from Old Habits

What, you might ask, saves a yogic husband or wife from acting habitually in an unskillful manner? The answer lies in *vairagya*: the practice of detachment or non-attachment. When practicing *vairagya*, a husband, for example, is always first aware that both he and his wife are essentially manifestations of the Supreme Reality—One pure consciousness having an intimate human relationship as

husband and wife. Secondly, the husband is aware of his own and his wife's *samskaras*—unconscious attachments that inhibit skillful and loving action. Through the regular practice of meditation, the husband can learn to center himself in the fullness of his Essential Nature

and detach himself from both his own and his wife's limitations. Freed from such powerfully debilitating habits,

the husband, again through skills learned in meditation, can more reliably follow the promptings of his own conscience (*buddhi*). Utilizing his will power, the husband is able to freely serve the discriminating choice of *shreya* that will enhance his marital relationship, and he can sacrifice the *preya*—those ego or sense gratifications that would have eventually brought the couple pain.

Tapas: The Heat that Transforms

The word *tapas* means heat. It is a spiritual aspirant's acts of surrender or renunciation that generate the heat necessary to facilitate transformation. When a husband and wife consistently sacrifice the *preya*, their offerings purify the mind and body and increase the energy, will power (*sankalpa*), and creativity that are necessary to realize greater unity, understanding, and joy. *Tapas* does not require the renunciation of every pleasurable desire and emotion. The beneficial results associated with *tapas* do, however, remind us that self-discipline is a necessary ingredient in every successful relationship. As the insightful, twentieth century mythology scholar, Joseph Campbell observed, "When you make a sacrifice in marriage, you're sacrificing not to each other but to unity in a relationship."

Heart Chakra

The heart chakra (*anahata*), found at the level of the physical heart, is considered a demarcation between the animal consciousness of separateness and pain, and the Divine consciousness of unity and happiness. Its symbol is two intersecting triangles—the same symbol that represents modern Judaism as the six-pointed Star of David. The first triangle is turned upward—an ascending triangle symbolizing the fire, or resolve (*sankalpa*), of human effort. The ascending force is our conscious discrimination between the short-term ego or sense gratification of *preya* and the perennial joy of *shreya*. The descending triangle represents grace (*kripa*). If a husband and wife prepare their hearts and minds by consistently serving their inner, intuitive wisdom, the descending force of grace is thereby given access to their lives and blesses the marriage with the fulfillment of needs. But the sequence of events is critical. First and foremost, individuals must base their actions on the Divine wisdom of the *buddhi*. Then, Divine grace descends. Jesus the Christ spoke of casting seeds on various kinds of soil, but only where the farmer had prepared the soil would those seeds sprout and prosper.

Teaching Our Children

When a couple regularly practices the Yoga of marriage in this manner and tells the child, "No, don't do that," the instruction is understood yogically as intuitive wisdom reflected from the discriminative faculty *buddhi*. A young child faced with a thwarted desire is likely to turn down the volume of the parents' instruction as a method of dealing with his or her own anger. But even if the child chooses not to hear the parents on this particular occasion, she continues to observe the parents to see if Mom and Dad heed their own discriminative advice when dealing with their own desires and attachments.

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"What is family?" Dan asked the DreamTime. The DreamTime placed the following scene into Dan's Vision: *A dear friend lay on her bed peacefully. I felt that she was my wife's mother until I realized she was my friend's mother.* From that scene, Dan Knew that family members were those who incarnated many times among the same Soul group while taking on a variety of roles. This definition of family took Dan beyond the belief that family members were merely those of blood relations.

The DreamTime spoke again and Dan saw that family members share the same basic Truth about the meaning of life on Earth and the life beyond. *I stayed at a family's home. I saw the father cultivating the earth with a small tool. Though he did very well with his tool, I realized that my tractor could aid his process.* Dan realized that his family members are cultivating the New Earth, creating Heaven on Earth. Dan's tractor would add a dimension beyond that of the father's small tool. Dan's offer implied that the man was ready to receive his aid based on their mutual Creation of the New Earth.

The DreamTime took Dan to a place where *Families were buying boats. The son had a say in what kind of boat the family would choose. He liked the one that had slides on its sides so that he could slide into the water.* The children of

the family are what the adults have birthed. The children of the family are those who have received the Great Wisdom of the elders of the family. The children live in the Love of their Mother, the Sea, and take Joy by their *slides* into their Mother's arms. The children Know that the rewards of life come from Beauty, Love, and Joy. This family Knowing cancels the timeworn "gain through pain" mantra.

The DreamTime took Dan to another scene where Dan *would take his grandchildren into the water. They would listen to me and follow me.* The DreamTime suggests that Dan's grandchildren represent the legacy that he would leave on the Earth. This scene is strikingly similar to the previous one. Dan's legacy is the Unconditional Love that birthed through his children to endure through the lives of his grandchildren.

The DreamTime took Dan to a studio microphone through which a man spoke if his professional success. *A wealthy man felt very confident with his success in his chosen field. He spoke about his comfortable family trips.* Confidence is another attribute of this family. The father's confidence in his own success now flows Abundance for the many members of his extended family.

The DreamTime opened the door to another family member's home. *The father spoke of his success as a salesman. His success lay in his ability to put aside company sales techniques and merely be himself. From his success, he saw a large amusement park that gave joy to thou-*

sands of families. The members of the family incarnate with their own unique gifts. When they honor their gifts, their success permeates the entire family, reaches beyond, and brings Joy and Happiness to many others.

The DreamTime took Dan to a *winning, professional football team connected to his family. This team played at the field where Dan attended high school.* Knowing One's true connection to One's family helps One merge diverse time zones into the Knowing of the Now. The family helps each of its members move beyond linear time into the Now, the place of Infinite Consciousness.

The DreamTime re-turned Dan to the shore, their familiar meeting place. The DreamTime tiptoed over the waves to retreat into Infinity. His Father woke him through the Loving rays of the Sun. Dan had asked about family. The DreamTime had responded with the story of a Soul Group that had repeatedly incarnated in this world to Create the New Earth, support one another, and leave their legacy of abiding Love. Dan's gratitude showed in his smile that traveled afar on the rays of his Father, the Sun. ▲





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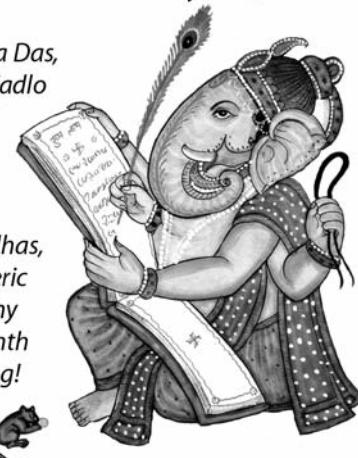
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Penny Kulp grew up in Chester Springs, PA, in a caring family environment. After a short time in business, her concern for others led her into a career as a Massage Therapist.

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MY FAMILY IS MY SAVIOR!

NOW THAT FEELS REAL GOOD DOESN'T IT! So many of us spend so much time blaming and distancing ourselves from our families. Some of us will swear on our graves that we didn't pick our families. Many of us don't even want to talk about our families. Then there are those of us that are *trying* to forget our families. Well, I'm here to suggest that all of the above may condemn us to countless lifetimes of lessons and struggles. Why? Because our families are our greatest teachers, and ultimately, our silver platter Saviors. *It all begins with our incarnation into our families—and the lessons with our families don't end until we take full responsibility for everything we attract into our experience from our families.* Kinda sucks doesn't it? We can choose to be in denial about what our families are teaching us about ourselves, or empowered by what we are learning and transcending. Two voices, two choices. One voice is of the ego and one voice is the higher self.

We must realize that we are with our families for a reason. We picked our mother, father, and other family members. We pick our bodies to incarnate our souls into. We have sacred contracts and agreements with our families. They are our teachers, just as we are their teachers. When we learn a lesson from them, we break Karma. We stop playing out a certain familiar and fear-based dynamic with them—like getting the last word in or having to be right. *This frees us up to heal and really learn our lesson experientially.* If you are interested in reading about the *whys* of incarnation, and lessons we learn, then you have to read, *Journey Of The Souls*, by Michael Newton, Ph.D. He hypnotizes his clients into their in-between lives before they incarnate again. The book is a fascinating read for those of you who need to know the *whys*.

Many times, in order to gain a different perspective with our families, we need to create surrogate, healthy families and

learn to get our needs met outside of our family of origin. This empowers us to create anew, and take responsibility in asking for what we want in a healthy way. As we evoke a healthy separation with our family, we ironically are able to appreciate them more and see the lessons we have willfully attracted more clearly. **This enables us to Love them more and realize their divine presence and purpose in our lives.**

For others, they may need to cut off their families for a period of time, as they sort out the confusing, and sometimes traumatic experiences they have attracted. There are no mistakes, accidents, or random occurrences. *If we believe there are, then we still adhere to the disempowered, victim mentality. There is no freedom or power in that thought system.*

When we have no back doors to slip out of we find ourselves fully accountable for everything. Now that is true empowerment and humility!

Remember, we get only one family of ori-



gin per lifetime. We can choose to create as many surrogate families as we like. It is important to do our healing work, so we can gain an appreciation for our family of origin, and feel the gratitude of experiencing them as our teachers. This is true acceptance and taking full responsibility for our choices. It is only then that we can see the forest through the trees, and begin to apply these lessons to all areas of our lives. When we heal our family stuff we heal ourselves. When we surrender and realize we have created everything and attracted everything, we heal ourselves. When we heal ourselves we heal the world. When I really get that I heal the world by owning all of my own karma, and it's all my karma, then I can really accept the karma that I attract as my silver platters in life. For in these very lessons lie my transcendence and freedom from the bondage of blaming my family. And then my heart can truly sing, *My Family Is My Savior and I Love them as I Love myself, for they are my mirror of who I truly am. I am that, I am!*

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Weight Loss Resistance

As we get older, it becomes more and more difficult to lose weight.

This phenomenon is called **weight loss resistance** (WLR). Lack of willpower doesn't adequately explain this experience, as evidenced by people who muster extraordinary discipline with **diet and exercise** for month after month, and yet the weight just doesn't come off. While increasing numbers of Americans, both adults and children, are overweight and want to lose weight, modern medicine has failed to provide a viable solution.

This problem is perpetuated by the industries that feed off this fat epidemic, including the food (diet foods and sodas), pharmaceutical, and insurance industries.

No one drug or fad surgery can really provide optimal weight, or optimal health. This is because the *cause* of weight loss resistance is multi-factorial, or web-like.

THE PROBLEM WITH DIET & EXERCISE

Diet and exercise is clearly unsuccessful in the long-term for the vast majority. This is because it is flawed in its conception. As we are learning, *diet* does not work, because when we restrict calories, the body's metabolism adjusts and eventually becomes even more resistant to weight loss. Over 90% of people who *diet* are heavier five years later. This concept of diet is being slowly replaced by *lifestyle*, which means that we re-construct for ourselves a new sustainable way of shopping, cooking, eating, sleeping, and exercising. However, there remains confusion about what and how to eat.

While *exercise* is necessary for optimal health, the type and intensity of exercise advocated for weight loss and maintenance has inherent problems. The first is that most forms of *aerobic* exercise essentially trade-in a joint for fat. After a few years of running, biking, or swimming, even when using today's newer machines, people begin to "burn out" their knees, backs, shoulders, or necks. This is due to the un-natural repetitive motion several times per week, as well as other factors discussed below.

Intense aerobics also produces free-radicals, the sparks that ignite inflammation and block weight loss.



THE HORMONAL CONNECTION

Another problem with intense aerobics is the way the body interprets this activity, leading to a condition called *adrenal fatigue*. 20,000 years ago, we only did *aerobics* when we were being chased by lions or running from natural disaster. After a period of such intense activity, an early human would either rest or rest-in-peace(!). Our pets live this way—periods of intense activity, followed by even longer periods of rest. Humans are also designed to vary their activities with the seasons, becoming more and less active as the days get longer and shorter. In addition, when we watch an Indiana Jones movie, the body thinks it is being chased by natives—it cannot distinguish a movie from reality. So we go from stressor to stressor, 16 hours a day, without a change of season. In response to this stress, the adrenal glands put out several *fight or flight* hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol. While very helpful in short bursts, these hormones in the long-term raise blood sugar, raise blood pressure, damage muscle, bone, joints and skin, suppress the immune system, impair the gastro-intestinal (GI) system, and alter sleep and neurotransmitter balance.

Adrenal hormones also have an intimate relationship with sex and thyroid hormones, so they can cause or be affected by thyroid disease, birth control pills, and peri-menopause, making WLR more problematic. Finally, we are learning more about the sugar/fat modulating hormones, including insulin, glucagon,

leptin (made by the fat cells themselves), and others. They interact with all the other hormones discussed above, so true health requires a global approach to the hormonal systems of the body.

INFLAMMATION & TOXICITY AS MAJOR MISSING LINKS

Inflammation is a natural fire that the body uses to dis-assemble tissues and kill internal predators. It works through multiple chemical mediators, such as prostaglandins and cytokines. However, if the inflammation process does not turn off, it begins to alter our metabolism and cause WLR. One major cause of chronic inflammation is *chronic toxicity*.

Toxins are substances and activities that *poison* the body. There are several types, including chemical, biological, physical, and psycho-spiritual. We can also think of them as *exo-toxins*, coming from outside the body, and *endo-toxins*, coming from within.

Chemical toxins include: heavy metals, pesticides, drugs (legal and illegal), alcohol, cigarette smoke, and certain substances made by the liver. Biological toxins include certain foods, bacteria, yeast and parasites, and their waste products. Psycho-spiritual toxins include chronic anger, anxiety, negative thoughts, addictions, and unhealthy mental practices. While each toxin individually may be safe or manageable, the total load (we now carry as many as 300 modern chemicals in our body) can overwhelm our natural detoxification systems. The interaction of multiple toxins is called *the cocktail effect*.

These toxins poison our enzymes, which are needed to de-activate other toxins, generate energy, burn fat, and build tissue, to name just a few functions. Toxins also damage the integrity of our GI tract leading to malabsorption, leaky gut, constipation, and further toxicity. These dysfunctions then confuse the immune system, leading to allergy, recurrent infection, and autoimmune disease.

Sleep deprivation, or poor quality sleep, can be considered a toxin in itself, as it has clear effects on metabolism and inflammation.

The sum total of these conditions stoke the fire of inflammation that smolders in our brains, blood vessels, joints, skin, and organs, and confuses our hormonal systems.

As we get older, we accumulate more and more of these toxins in our bones, muscle,

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and fat. Losing weight (and other activities), causes a release of these toxins from these tissue banks back into our circulation, essentially poisoning ourselves from within, causing worsening inflammation. In some ways, getting older, i.e. getting arthritic, demented, depressed, osteoporotic, bald, and fat, can be simply thought of as the accumulated damage from these toxins and inflammation.

The good news is that we can reverse this toxicity and the resulting inflammation starting at any age. With strategic detoxification and lifestyle change, we can slow down and even reverse aging and WLR.

TOXIC FOODS & FOOD ALLERGY

Besides the clear toxicity of commercial foods, with pesticides, artificial hormones, antibiotics, genetically modified proteins (60% of soy and corn), and chemically manipulated nutrients (such as high-fructose corn syrup), another important consideration is that of allergy and intolerance.

Many of us are allergic to one or several foods. The biggest culprits are: sugar, dairy, wheat and gluten, and soy. This is in part because of over-exposure since early childhood, as well as the fact that these foods are not the same as they were 10, 100, or 1000 years ago. Many people aren't aware of these allergies, or intolerance, because the body adapts, as it does to a toxic job or home environment. However, after a period of vacation from these toxins, their re-introduction may demonstrate a clear deterioration in health. An elimination and then re-challenge is often more diagnostic than skin, blood, or energy tests for allergy.

Dairy is a highly controversial and important toxin/allergen since it has been highly marketed as a good source of calcium, protein and vitamin D, and helpful for weight loss. The Weight-Watchers program, one of the most successful diet/lifestyle plans, is heavily based on dairy. However, there is growing evidence that dairy in most forms is pro-inflammatory (*see Campbell's book*).

When one consumes an allergenic food on a regular basis, even a small amount, this stokes the immune system to produce inflammation, and also calls on the adrenal glands to produce cortisol and adrenaline. Therefore, eating an allergenic food in and of itself may be a major cause of WLR. Some people are lucky to find that the elimination of just one food, such as dairy, wheat, or coffee, allows weight to begin to drop off without any other changes in lifestyle. Most people will need a more comprehensive approach, however.

Lastly, there is a growing convergence of opinion that the optimal diet should emphasize organic food, green vegetables, colored fruits, seeds and nuts, less grains (*especially processed ones*), more water, and more raw foods. Food processing and cooking can destroy up to 80% of nutritional value. Victoria Bourtenko's book distinguishes between feeling full vs. feeling satisfied. The common habit of looking through the cabinets after finishing a meal suggests that the body is looking for something that is missing from the Standard American Diet (SAD).

Like building a house without nails or with substandard pipes, lacking just one critical nutrient or consuming altered nutrients may cause subtle or serious illness which tends to worsen over time.

THE UNIQUE ROLE OF YOGA

While most exercise is stress-producing, classic yoga, with its meditative quality, is one of the few forms of exercise that provide stretch, strength, and at the same time can re-balance hormonal and neurotransmitter systems. The trick is to do yoga gently, not aggressively. It also is portable, cheap and does not utilize the repetitive unnatural movement of aerobic machines. Yoga also allows us to explore our thought processes, which are always involved in weight issues.

STEPS TOWARD REVERSING WEIGHT LOSS RESISTANCE

Based on the above, the following steps can be effective for a sustainable lifestyle with optimal health and weight:

1. Get informed. Read and learn. Be critical of concepts that have been drilled in since childhood.
2. Get real. Take an honest assessment of where you are with your weight, diet, and lifestyle. Clarify your priorities and identify the obstacles that get in your way (see Hobbs book on time management).
3. Get inspired. Methods to stoke your enthusiasm for health include journaling, joining a yoga class, and finding friends and a community that support your efforts. On the other hand, find ways to defend yourself against those who may sabotage your efforts, including family members and co-workers.
4. Get help. Find a knowledgeable and like-minded practitioner who can do the proper tests and provide objective feedback.
5. Get tested. Evaluate toxins and allergies using the best methods available. Even if some are not covered by insurance—this investment is like fixing your car or home—and without it you can waste time and money.
6. Get prepared. Design a comprehensive program that involves: healthy foods, supplements, *gentle* aerobics, *gentle* yoga, journaling, support people, and a regular schedule or ritual that keeps your momentum going. Some people like to make one change at a time, others plan for a month or two and then implement a comprehensive program all at once.
7. Get started. Make a commitment to a new way of eating and living. In opposition to fast foods, the "slow food" movement emphasizes the importance and privilege of preparing our meals using organic, local foods.

By applying these principles, health will improve and weight will stabilize naturally. ▲

IMPORTANT NOTE: This educational material may not be used to make decisions about medical care without the help of an experienced practitioner.

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Carol Bowman, MS, past life regression therapist for fifteen years, is the internationally-known lecturer and author of *Children's Past Lives and Return From Heaven*.

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