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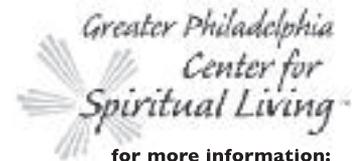
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Reclined Stick Pose:

From reclined, reach the arms long overhead and point the toes away from you. This is a full body stretch where you can feel free to explore any kind of intuitive morning stretch like movements that feel good. Many people like playing with pointing and flexing the feet or reaching side to side in different ways. Here the breath can come into 3 parts: on the inhalation the abdomen expands, then it comes in as the breath comes into the ribcage and flares it open. At the top of the breath the upper lung and clavicle gently lift up. On the exhalation, reverse the flow of air top down (clavicle, ribs, abdomen). Breathe and move or hold this position for 1-2 minutes.



Reclined Tree Pose:

From reclined bring the arms into a comfortable position that does not compromise the shoulders. For some the arms will be long by the ears, others might need to come into a wider v-shape with the arms overhead, bring the right foot to the inside of the left calf or thigh. Let the knee fall out to the side into a relaxed position (prop with a block or pillow underneath if needed) and rest here for 1-2 minutes. Repeat on the other side.

Reclined Knee to Chest:

From reclined, bring the right knee into the chest and hug the shin or the back of the right thigh. Gently draw the knee towards you and place a special emphasis on abdominal breathing in this position. If the back is uncomfortable in this position, bend the left knee and bring the left foot to the ground to modify. Hold for 10-15 breaths. Repeat on the other side.



Reclined Leg Lifts:

From reclined, on the inhalation, point the toe and lift the left leg off the ground. At the top of the lift point the toes towards you and with the exhalation, lower leg back down. Repeat the movements 5-10x on each side.



Reclined Hand To Foot Pose:

From reclined, bring the left leg away from the body. Stay grounded in the right hip. Arms can rest long by the sides or open wide off of the shoulders. Allow the foot and hip to relax here for 5-10 deep breaths and repeat on the other side.



Reclined Butterfly Pose:

From reclined, bring the soles of the feet together and open the knees out to the side. Relax the back and bring the hands on the abdomen. Visualize healing white light in and around the abdominal cavity with the breath. Rest here for 15-20 with a special emphasis on deep abdominal breaths. If needed, modify by propping with block or pillows underneath the knees or back or the thighs.



Figure Four Pose:

From fully reclined, bend the left knee and bring the left foot to the earth. Gently cross the right ankle above the left knee and create the number 4 with the bottom half of the body. With an inhalation, bring the left thigh towards the torso. Reach through the hole of the legs with the right hand and around with the left hand and find a comfortable place to grab hold of the left thigh. As you continue to draw the left thigh towards you with the exhalation, allow the right knee to come gently away from you and create more intensity in the stretch. Hold for 5-10 deep breaths and repeat on the other side.

continued on page 20

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Reclined Side Bend:

From fully reclined, walk the legs over to the left a couple of inches. Stay grounded in the right hip as you bring the arms long overhead and

arch the upper body over to the left, creating a crescent moon shape with the body. Direct the breath into the open right lung and hold for 10-20 breaths. Repeat on the other side.



Reclined Twist:

From fully reclined, bring the right knee in towards the hip with the left hand. Gently draw the knee across the body and support it with the left hand, allowing the right foot to rest on the left leg or the floor if needed. Anchor the right arm in half of a t-shape off the right shoulder. Turn the neck right. Hold for 5-10 breaths and repeat on the other side.

Side Lying Backbend:

Come to rest on the left side. Prop the head with the left hand. Walk the legs behind you. Gently open the throat and take the head back towards the shoulders, creating a gentle pull through the front of the body. Hold for 10-15 breaths.



Hold for 10-15 breaths.



Side Lying Hand to Foot:

Come to rest on the left side. Lengthen the body into a straight line. Let your left arm rest on the earth and the

left side of the head rest on the inside of the left arm. Lift the right leg. If you cannot hold onto the big toe with the right hand, then hold onto the right leg wherever is comfortable or use a yoga strap or old tie to extend the reach of the right arm. Hold for 5-10 breaths and repeat on the other side.



Side Lying Shoulder Rotations:

Come to rest on the left side. Prop or cradle the head with the left hand. On an inhalation gently open the shoulder into rotations, as if you are doing one half of the backstroke. Rotate the shoulder 5-10 times clockwise and counterclockwise, roll over to the right side and repeat on the left shoulder.



Prone Leg Lifts:

From a prone (belly down) position bring the arms long on the earth in front of you. Modify by bending the elbows out to the sides and resting the chin on folded hands. Point the toes. On the inhalation, lift the leg, and on the exhalation, lower the leg. Repeat 5-10x on each side.

Childs Pose:

From a prone position, bend the knees and bring the buttocks back towards the feet. Find comfort by bringing the knees together or try them further apart into a v-shape. Let the torso rest on or in between the thighs and the forehead on the earth or stacked fists. Breathe here for 1-3 minutes



Reclined Prayer Pose:

From fully reclined, let the legs relax and bring the hands to heart center. If the back is uncomfortable in this position, bend the knees and bring the feet to the ground. Take a moment to pray or set a positive intention for the day. Intention can come in many forms for many it is easiest to pick a simple two or three word positive mantra that can be remembered throughout the day. One of my favorites: grace, flow & ease. Rest, pray or meditate in this position for 1-5 minutes. ▲



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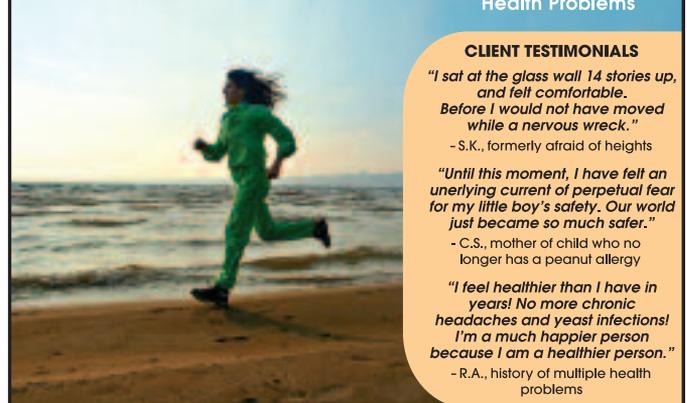
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Human Potential & The Story of Hanuman

YOU MAY OR MAY NOT AGREE THAT HUMANITY IS REACHING NEW LEVELS OF ATTAINMENT, but it must be acknowledged that our concern with developing mental, physical and spiritual proficiencies has risen exponentially over the last several decades. The availability of self-help and spiritually oriented literature, classes, and workshops, has pervaded Western culture along with a statistically significant belief in psychic phenomenon¹.

Although it may seem like you can't cast a rune stone without it landing near an aspiring Light Worker, we live in the midst of a scientific materialist paradigm in a post witch hunt world. There is fear in some circles, that speaking about psychic abilities may bring derision or an unsolicited psychological diagnosis. To add to these misgivings, for those of us who study Yoga, we are cautioned that the *Siddhis*, or supernatural powers mentioned in Book III of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, are only signposts on the way to the real goal of enlightenment and therefore should be noticed, but ultimately rejected. So how do we, in a society that seems bent on exploring and practicing the *Siddhis* in increasing numbers, rectify this with Patanjali's advice and perhaps our own fears of judgment?

Patanjali codifies five methods of achieving the *Siddhis*: *Tapas* (austerity practices), Birth (having performed austerity practice in other lifetimes), *Shaktipat* (Guru or God's Grace via direct energy transmission), Chanting of Mantra, or Use of Herbs (substances which alter perception). Until recently, many of these methods were kept secret so that attainments could unfold under the guru's watchful eye. In today's world however, people seem to be opening psychically in the middle of their householder lives with little or no preparation or oversight. The recently developed field of Transpersonal Psychology is based largely on this phenomenon; however, in the *puranas*, or legends outside of the Vedic texts, stories of the Monkey God Hanuman give us a more ancient source of perspective.

Hanuman was born to the wind god Vayu and the beautiful monkey/forest dweller, Anjani. Although the young monkey favored his mother in looks, he inherited many of his father's powers. Through innocent use of these powers as a baby, Hanuman was chastened, but then granted even more *Siddhis* by the

other gods when they realized his lineage. As a student, he was mischievous, and used his abilities to tease the forest sages mercilessly. Finally, the sages devised a mild curse to make him forget his talents so he would not inadvertently use them for destruction in his youthful enthusiasm. The curse allowed Hanuman to come under the tutelage of Surya, the Sun god, and was designed to lift when another reminded Hanuman of his powers.

Under this arrangement, Hanuman learned well and went to live a life as a trusted friend and advisor to the deposed head of the forest people until he met fate in the form of Ram, the exiled ruler whose consort Sita had been abducted by the demon Ravana.

In the epic Ramayana², when reminded of his abilities by his companions, Hanuman was able to perform the miracles that led to Sita's rescue and the demon Ravana's destruction. Hanuman leapt from the southern tip of India to Lanka, defeating a lesser demon on the way. When Ram's brother Lakshmana was dying and one herb from the Himalayas

would save him, Hanuman flew and brought an entire mountaintop of herbs to ensure success. These actions, amongst many others, helped to save the world from darkness. Upon their triumphant return home, Sita tried to reward Hanuman for his service with a *mala* of pearls. Confused by this gift, Hanuman refused the necklace, and tears open his chest to reveal an altar to Ram and Sita installed in his heart³. There is no need of a reward as Hanuman is already merged with the divine; the greatest gift he could receive.

Metaphorically, we *are* Hanuman; trapped in this dense world with our restless monkey minds and animal nature, yet ever striving to perfect ourselves and destroy the ego (Ravana). True to Patanjali's admonitions, we should not confuse *Siddhis* with enlightenment, equating our initial experiences perhaps, to that child Hanuman who acted so instinctively to reach for the Sun, mistaking it for a mango. However, Hanuman gives us an archetypal counterpart on which to model our approach; with our thoughts and actions based on integrity, compassion and devotion, we may use the *Siddhis* in aid of reuniting the individual soul (Sita) with the universal (Ram) at the level of our ability⁴. ▲

¹ <http://www.ask.com/wiki/Psychic>

² *The Ramayana: A Modern Retelling of the Great Indian Epic* by Ramesh Menon (North Point Press, 2004).

³ Some renditions depict Hanuman with the names Ram and Sita etched on his bones.

⁴ Kumar, Nitin, 2008. *The Mystery of Hanuman*: Retrieved from: <http://www.exoticindiaart.com/article/hanuman> on 11/4/2011.



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- Bhagavad-Gita, 3:13

IN THE BEGINNING, MOST OF US ARE ONE QUICK NAMASTE! FROM THE DAILY GRIND. When class ends we roll up our mat, stack the studio bolsters and on our way out the door hope the parking meter has enough time remaining for a quick run to Starbucks before we go back to work. There's no time to embrace the yoga that is more than skin deep. Forget the philosophy - we're in it for the workout. We want a toned body. Yoga Class is Tuesday from nine to ten in the morning. Everything else is life.

With dedicated practice, however, a subtle shift occurs. The edge between our yoga practice and "real" life blurs. Yoga begins to follow us home. We move deeper into our practice and yoga becomes a part of who we are. When we embrace the notion that yoga has not only strengthened our bodies but has also strengthened our spirit then it's time to ask the question again: How do we live our yoga?

Step Off the Mat

In 2007 Seane Corne decided to move her yoga beyond the mat and confines of the studio walls when, along with Hala Khouri and Suzanne Sterling, she founded Off the Mat and Into the World. This inspiring organization embraces the philosophy of *seva*, also known as selfless service.

According to their website Off the Mat's mission is "to use the power of yoga to inspire conscious, sustainable activism and ignite grassroots social change." Today, Off the Mat and Into the World has an international scope. It supports humanitarian efforts in Haiti with the Global Seva Challenge. Its Empowered Youth Initiative believes a commitment to the next generation has a profound impact on social justice and environmental issues. This year the initiative has programs focused on assisting urban youth in Los Angeles and disadvantaged populations in other parts of the world.

Think Creatively

One such community initiative is The Art of Yoga Project, located an hour south of San Francisco in leafy Palo Alto, California. Art of Yoga's mission is "to lead teen girls in the California juvenile justice system toward accountability to self, others and community by providing practical tools to effect behavioral change."

The Art of Yoga Project improves the lives of disadvantaged and incarcerated young women by nurturing their creativity while encouraging a daily yoga and mindfulness practice.

Transform Your Practice

The practice of yoga is a transformative experience. But how many of us allow that transformation to move beyond our inner spirit? What happens when we stop clinging to the yoga experience we love and allow it to touch the lives of those around us? Supporting others' lives through yoga will transform your own. Mary Lynn Fitton, founder of The Art of Yoga Project, knows first hand the profound effect of selfless service. "Since starting The Art of Yoga Project my personal practice has deepened considerably," she said. "Teaching the principles of yoga to incarcerated teen girls, who have had very difficult life experiences, has called all of us at the project to a higher standard. For example, since we are teaching the girls about *satya* (truthfulness), we are looking closer at how we're living in our own truths, watching our speech, avoiding gossip. Teaching the girls yoga principles keeps them alive and fresh in my mind so I have daily reminders of how I want to be in this world. I am thankful to the girls for that. They are such heroes to me as they shine through their tragic pasts. They inspire me to be ever grateful of my circumstances and to do as much as I can to relieve suffering."

The Small Gestures Count

Founded in 1978 by Dr. Larry Brilliant in Berkeley, California, The Seva Foundation has restored eyesight to millions of people in Tibet, Nepal, Cambodia, Bangladesh and Africa. In the process they have reduced the cost of cataract surgery to just \$50.00. As individuals, our small gestures may never match the scope of Off the Mat Into the World or The Art of Yoga Project, but we can still hold in our hearts this simple idea from the Seva Foundation: *To become fully human we must translate our compassion and concern into useful service.*

What is useful service? For most it does not entail forming a non-profit. Most of us will not have the opportunity to restore sight to the blind or teach yoga to groups of incarcerated young women. But in our daily lives we can still bear witness to the power of selfless contribution. Mary Lynn Fitton says, "I am blessed by this work. I wish everyone could experience the joy, connection and fulfillment that come through being a part of positive social change. You don't need to start a non-profit to make a difference... just take the time to discover what really matters to you and carve out space in your life to contribute to that somehow. *Start with having conversations that matter. Then set your intention to serve. The rest will come.*" ▲



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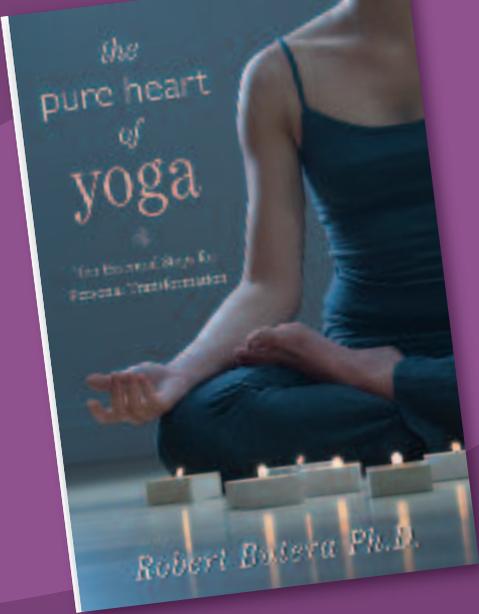
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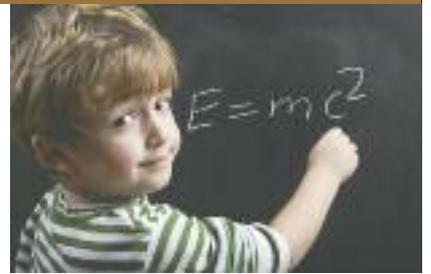
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Prana De-Mystified



THE CONCEPT OF PRANA IS AT THE HEART OF YOGIC PHILOSOPHY. In literal terms the Sanskrit word Prana means *life energy*. It is the subtle force that animates the body and all other living things. The concept rhymes very well with scientific observations in modern physics. All matter is essentially energy as Einstein concluded in his formula $E=MC^2$. In yoga philosophy the concept of Prana is both vast and at times complex. This short article aims to de-mystify the energy concepts of the Gunas (states of being) and make them accessible to yoga practitioners.

The Concept of Energy

People use the concept of energy to describe daily observations about themselves and other people. In these everyday terms the concept of energy is not farfetched or mystical; it is a simple observation of everyday reality. In the same way, the concept of Prana is an observation made by the ancient rishis (yogic seers). They made these observations in a scientific manner, comparing their meditative experiences and observances (research) with others who had performed similar experiments (peers).

Energy States

Through their observations the yogis concluded that Prana or life energy, cycles through three distinct states. The following is a brief explanation, of the three energy states or Gunas, that will hopefully yield some clarity.

Tamas: State of lethargy or decomposition. In nature it is represented by a quagmire or swamp, i.e. the state of the universe before the Big Bang, molten and sludgy. People cycle through this state on a regular basis and certain energy draining foods and activities are called Tamasik and can elicit the lethargic state.

Rajas: State of activity, animation and energy. In nature it is represented by a raging river in a ravine, i.e. it's the *bang* in the Big Bang, explosive and expanding. This energy is powerful, but can also become volatile and unstable. When people live their lives in constant state of movement and stress, they are living in a Rajasik state.

Sattva: State of peaceful being, calm and depth. In nature it is represented by a calm and peaceful lake. It is the calm interlude between the explosion (Rajas) and the contraction or decomposition (Tamas). People generally long for this state and call it peace of mind, happiness and being in the NOW.

People can learn how to interact with the Gunas in a more constructive manner, but these energetic forces of nature will not yield completely to their will.

The Cyclical Nature of the Gunas

While it is natural for people to gravitate towards the calm state (Sattva) and stay away from the lethargic state (Tamas) as much as possible, it is near impossible to steer clear of any of the energy states, since their nature is *cyclical*. Based on the cyclical nature and according to the ancient yogis, it is impossible to move from the lethargic state (Tamas) to a calm and peaceful state (Sattva), without first passing through the

energetic state (Rajas).

In essence, you cannot get up off your lazy butt and start relaxing

or meditating, because then the relaxation is likely to turn into laziness again. You first need to get up and get your energy flowing with physical exercise or mental motivation before you can sit down and experience calmness.

Examples of Everyday Energy Cycles

Going from lazy to energetic: If you feel lazy when you get home from work then try doing something energetic such as walking, stretching or practicing energetic breathing. Getting physically active will change your state from lazy to energetic. If you feel mentally bored and lazy, you can do a similar exercise with your mind, by reading something engaging, thinking about and planning for the future or debating a subject with a friend or a family member. Some people use physical exercise as a means to raise their energy levels and then follow that exercise with relaxation and meditation to reach a state of calm, thus reaping all the desired benefits.

Going from energetic to calm: If you feel very energetic, it is reasonable to think that your mind and body will at times become restless, stressful and unfocused. Unfortunately many people try to numb their senses to a state of laziness when they feel irritated, drained or unfocused. To reach a calm state when a person is overly stressed they must practice something intently, such as relaxation, slow breathing, or simple repetitive actions such as painting, playing a musical instrument, sewing, etc.

Regressing from calm to lazy: Beware that if you stay in the calm and relaxed state for too long you may become lazy again. Just as it may feel calming and rejuvenating to step into a hot tub or hot bath for a few minutes, staying in there too long will drain energy and eventually bring about a feeling of heaviness and lethargy. The same goes for activity and inactivity. If you are inactive for a while, the inactivity can bring with it a feeling of calmness, but most people spiral into a state of lethargy and even depression if they have nothing to do for long periods of time.

Acceptance and Control

While people can make conscious efforts, such as the ones described in this article, to change their energy states, it must also be acknowledged that the cyclical nature of the Gunas cannot be circumvented. After a state of calm and peace, a lethargic state will likely come next, however brief it may be. After a state of extended inactivity and laziness, only the energetic state can break the lazy spell. And once in the energetic state, people can either consciously enter into the calm state or revert to laziness with a brief stopover in the calm state. Any attempt to stay in one energy state all the time is an attempt to break natural laws that will not yield to our will. Accepting this cyclical nature of energy, learning to manipulate it to a degree, and then simply flowing with the changes is the preferred yogic approach. ▲



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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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What Type of Meditation is Best for You?

How to Find and Stick with a Practice that Meets Your Needs

IN 1902, THE GREAT AMERICAN PHILOSOPHER WILLIAM JAMES PUBLISHED A SEMINAL BOOK, *Varieties of Religious Experience*. Not himself religious, he asked a number of people what they meant by “religion.” Perhaps not surprisingly, he found that this common word had many meanings, ranging from piety to mysticism to saintliness.

In the same way, the term “meditation” has many possible meanings, from a state of deep relaxation conducive to better physical health, to a spiritual union with something beyond the human — with dozens of possibilities between.

Although some meditation teachers offer definitions so narrow that only their practice can qualify, when my co-author Eleanor Viereck and I began to compile a guide to the subject, we found dozens of options for people who want to learn to meditate or to expand upon their repertoire of meditation practices. We also discovered that people have varying reasons to pursue such a practice. Some are drawn by the desire to deal with a medical problem such as hypertension or insomnia, both of which have been shown to respond well to meditation. Others seek a spiritual practice that will draw them away from the hurly-burly of daily life. Yet others seek a way of freeing up their imaginations and becoming more creative. Any or all of these can be reasons to look for a meditation practice.

What happens when someone who wants to deal with insomnia enrolls in a rigorous class in a course in Zen meditation? Or if someone who wants to create more spiritual space in her life registers for a health-oriented hatha yoga class? Most likely, they will join the long list of meditation drop-outs, people who say, “I tried that, but it just didn’t work for me.”

But switch them around. The insomniac finds relief and relaxation in hatha yoga, and the seeker finds that Zen offers the spiritual discipline she sought. But there are many other options: the Zen drop-out might have tried biofeedback to get the results he needed. The spiritual seeker might have embraced an indigenous tradition such as drumming. Or she might have found a new connection to a religion of origin through meditative traditions of Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

For every successful meditator today, a dozen people have tried unsuccessfully to develop a meditation practice.

Yet by defining what they seek and exploring multiple options, even meditation drop-outs can find the right practice to meet their needs.

Questions to consider when considering meditation

- What is your reason for meditating? Do you seek to deal with stress or chronic pain? To become more attuned to life’s spiritual essence? To become more aware of others and the needs of society? To enter an altered state of consciousness? To become more deeply conscious of the natural world? To enhance your creative abilities? Specific forms of meditation will lead you to each of those goals.
- Do you practice a specific religion? Does that religion discourage you from exploring other spiritual paths? Or, if you are not a member of a religion at this time, does religious imagery get in the way of your accepting a teaching? Depending on your relationship to organized religion, you will find some meditative practices more suitable than others.
- Can you meditate daily? While this is ideal, there are some forms of meditation that can be practiced less frequently.
- Can you meditate alone? Can you meditate with others? Depending on your level of self-discipline and distractibility, different forms of meditation will present themselves as suitable.
- Do you have physical limitations? Even meditative styles that require movement can usually be adapted for those with limited mobility.
- Do you have an emotional or mental disorder? Most meditative styles enhance, rather than detract from, the lives of those with mental or emotional disorders. However, certain techniques can be difficult for such individuals.

Finding an appropriate meditative practice is the first step. Sticking with it is the next, and most important, one. For all meditative forms require a commitment of time and effort. You won’t know whether a meditation form is right for you without trying it out for many months, at least. Choosing well at the beginning of your journey will contribute to a positive experience, but sticking with your practice is what finally leads to the results you seek. ▲

*Based on the book **Meditation: The Complete Guide** ©2012 by Patricia Monaghan. Printed with permission of New World Library, Novato, CA.*



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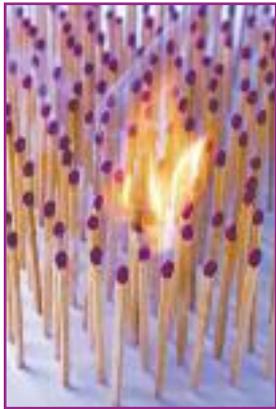
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THE GUT AND INFLAMMATION: AN OBSCURE BUT CRITICAL CONNECTION



REMEMBER OUR PEDIATRICIAN DESCRIBING OUR NEWBORN AS "A GI SYSTEM WITH A PRETTY FACE". In many ways, we are just an earthworm, or tube-within-a-tube, with lots of bells and whistles. That inner tube is our gastrointestinal ("GI") system. The inside of this tube is actually external to our body; the role of the GI tract, at it's most basic, is to let in the good stuff and keep out and expel the bad stuff.

It works so well, processing nutrients and eliminating waste products, that we don't appreciate its complexity or how it affects us long-term. Yes, we're told that "you are what you eat", and "an apple a day keeps the doctor away", but because our bodies are so forgiving, especially when we're young, that we develop habits of eating, and of thinking about our bodies, that just don't jive with a long, healthy life.

Chinese and Ayurvedic medicine emphasize the GI system in the evaluation and treatment of most illnesses. How and what we eat, and any symptoms of upper GI or lower GI dysfunction are critical pieces of information to such systems. Therapies often begin with attention to the GI system--including special diets, the addition or elimination of certain foods, herbs and spices, and treatments such as acupuncture.

Conventional (western) medicine is beginning to come around, as is the food industry, recognizing that many of our modern society's diseases can be caused, and healed by paying attention to our GI tracts, through foods and supplements. Unfortunately, the pharmaceutical industry, seeing this trend, is trying to gain control of the supplement industry via its influence on the FDA.

Another recent development in our understanding of disease and aging is that inflammation is a root cause of many of our chronic ills. Inflammation can be thought of as a fire within. Just like the fires that we keep in our homes, in our furnace or stove, the fire of inflammation is very useful. It kills invading bacteria, viruses, yeast, parasites and cancer cells. It takes apart damaged tissues, such as bone and muscle, which allows them to be rebuilt stronger and better. A similar fire burns in each cell to generate energy (using oxygen).

However, like fire, if inflammation is not contained, it can rapidly spread and beget more inflammation. Just like a tiny

spark coming from a fire can ignite an inferno, the "free radicals" generated by the inflammatory process can attack virtually every tissue of the body in a domino-like cascade. Such tissues include brain (depression and dementia), blood vessels (hypertension, cardiovascular disease), endocrine glands (thyroid disease, diabetes), and bone (osteoporosis, arthritis), just to name a few.

Inflammatory cells and molecules in our body can be turned on and off by multiple factors. While there is a current trend to "blame our genes", the vast majority of inflammation, more than 80%, is caused by lifestyle. This is because genes are like switches or seeds - they can be turned on or off depending upon their environment (and epigenes¹).

Over 50% of our immune system resides in the gut, monitoring the function. We also have a complex nervous system in the gut (sometimes called "the second brain"), which generates and utilizes serotonin and other important neuro-transmitters, the same used by the brain. This combination of immune and nervous function, modulated by the gut, can have significant, even severe effects on other systems of the body, including the immune and nervous systems.

Causes of inflammation, directly or via the gut, include: poor sleep, chronic stress, constipation, overuse of antibiotics, antacids, anti-inflammatory and other medications, lack of balanced nutrients in the diet, emphasis of animal proteins and fats in the diet, and lack of proper exercise, and a host of toxins, including the chlorine in our drinking water.

MECHANISMS BY WHICH GI DYSFUNCTION CAUSE INFLAMMATION

- **Allergy to foods:** the body reacts to the proteins in certain foods (dairy and wheat are the most common).
- **Toxins in foods:** some toxic molecules occur naturally (such as from the mold in peanut butter), in addition to the thousands of additives, pesticides, and waste products from our water, soil and air.
- **Constipation:** is another form of toxicity, where our internally generated toxins ("endo-toxins") stay longer inside, and have more time to leach into our bodies.
- **Dysbiosis:** infection by bad bacteria, yeast, and/or parasites: we normally carry in our GI system a farm of pounds of bacteria and yeast, representing up to 400 species and trillions of cells. If things such as antibiotics, NSAIDs, stress, toxins, etc, alter this ecology, then the

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wrong organisms can dominate. These organisms can disrupt the lining of the GI system, allowing the organisms and their toxins to enter the bloodstream and cause a huge inflammatory reaction.

- *Leaky gut:* dysbiosis or other factors can cause the intestines to become "leaky"; toxic molecules can get into the body and then overwhelm the liver and immune system.
- *Poor nutrition:* a deficiency of critical nutrients can poison or deplete mechanisms that prevent or extinguish the inflammatory fires.
- *Poor absorption:* due to many of the above reasons, even if the right supplements are taken, they may not be absorbed. Each nutrient has a unique mechanism of absorption--proper absorption of one doesn't assure absorption of another.
- *Not enough stomach acids:* acid is needed to digest protein; if proteins are not broken down into amino acids, they can be seen by the immune system as foreign invaders.
- *Not enough pancreatic enzymes:* enzymes in the right quantity (and in the right acid-base environment) are also needed to break down protein into amino acids.

EVIDENCE THAT THE GI SYSTEM IS CONNECTED TO INFLAMMATION

- Sick creatures lose their appetite.
- Rheumatoid arthritis (and other auto-immune diseases) will improve during a fast.
- If people with Inflammatory Bowel Disease ("IBD", another auto-immune disease) are fed bacteria from healthy people, they have improvement equal to that of medication.
- Pain and fatigue often improve when people are given pro-biotics (good yeast and bacteria), pre-biotics (supplements that support the GI system), and other digestive aides.

EVALUATION OF GI DYSFUNCTION (AS A CAUSE OF INFLAMMATION)

Conventional medicine offers many tests of GI structure and function including endoscopy and stool tests. They often reveal non-specific findings, and medications are offered to reduce stomach acid or to aid in motility, hoping that they will work. They should be done first, to rule out any serious medical conditions that might require acute treatment, such as active ulcers and cancer.

From a holistic point of view, the history and physical exam give lots of information. What a patient eats, how they eat, and the associated symptoms of upper GI dysfunction

(belching, heartburn, reflux and bloating), and lower GI dysfunction (bloating, flatulence, cramps, diarrhea and constipation) provide the most important clues. A physical exam, where the belly is palpated, including the liver, and important acupuncture points, give additional information.

If this information is not adequate, or a patient does not respond to treatment, then additional specialized tests may identify, factors which contribute to illness, such as parasites, bad yeast (candida), heavy metals, adrenal fatigue, or other biochemical or hormonal issues.

HOLISTIC TREATMENT

Treatment of inflammation (whether the person is experiencing GI dysfunction or not) often begins with improving the diet: eliminating or reducing known toxins, such as hydrogenated oils, commercial dairy, gluten and artificial sweeteners, and emphasizing foods and supplements that reduce inflammation, such as whole vegetables and fruits, omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids, anti-oxidants and others.

Depending upon the response, specialized diets can be both diagnostic and therapeutic, including elimination, rotation, detoxification, anti-yeast, etc. Special tests may guide the choice of interventions, including, sometimes, antibacterial and anti-yeast agents.

One of the more challenging aspects of this approach is that the results are often subtle. How the GI system functions today reflects, and the very least, what was eaten in the last three days (which is the basis of the four-day rotation diet). The way diet and GI system then affects inflammation can take weeks to months to observe. Therefore, it is vitally important when developing a plan to make a real commitment and to stick to it for a period of time to evaluate its effectiveness.

Keeping a food journal simultaneously with a log of symptoms: daily rating, on a scale from 1-10, symptoms such as pain, stiffness, diarrhea, gas, etc, can sometimes identify a subtle pattern. Sometimes the patterns are not apparent on a day-to-day basis, but become clear when looking back over a month or two (especially when symptoms are associated with hormones, travel, etc).

Despite what the TV ads say, many of our chronic ills do not require medication for the rest of our lives, and can be substantially healed by working on the gut as a part of the holistic approach. ▲

IMPORTANT NOTE: *This general information should not be used to make decisions about medical care without the involvement of an experienced practitioner.*

¹Epigenes are molecules that are passed by generation to generation and modulate gene expression. How your grandmother lived her life makes you more or less prone to disease, apart from the genetics.