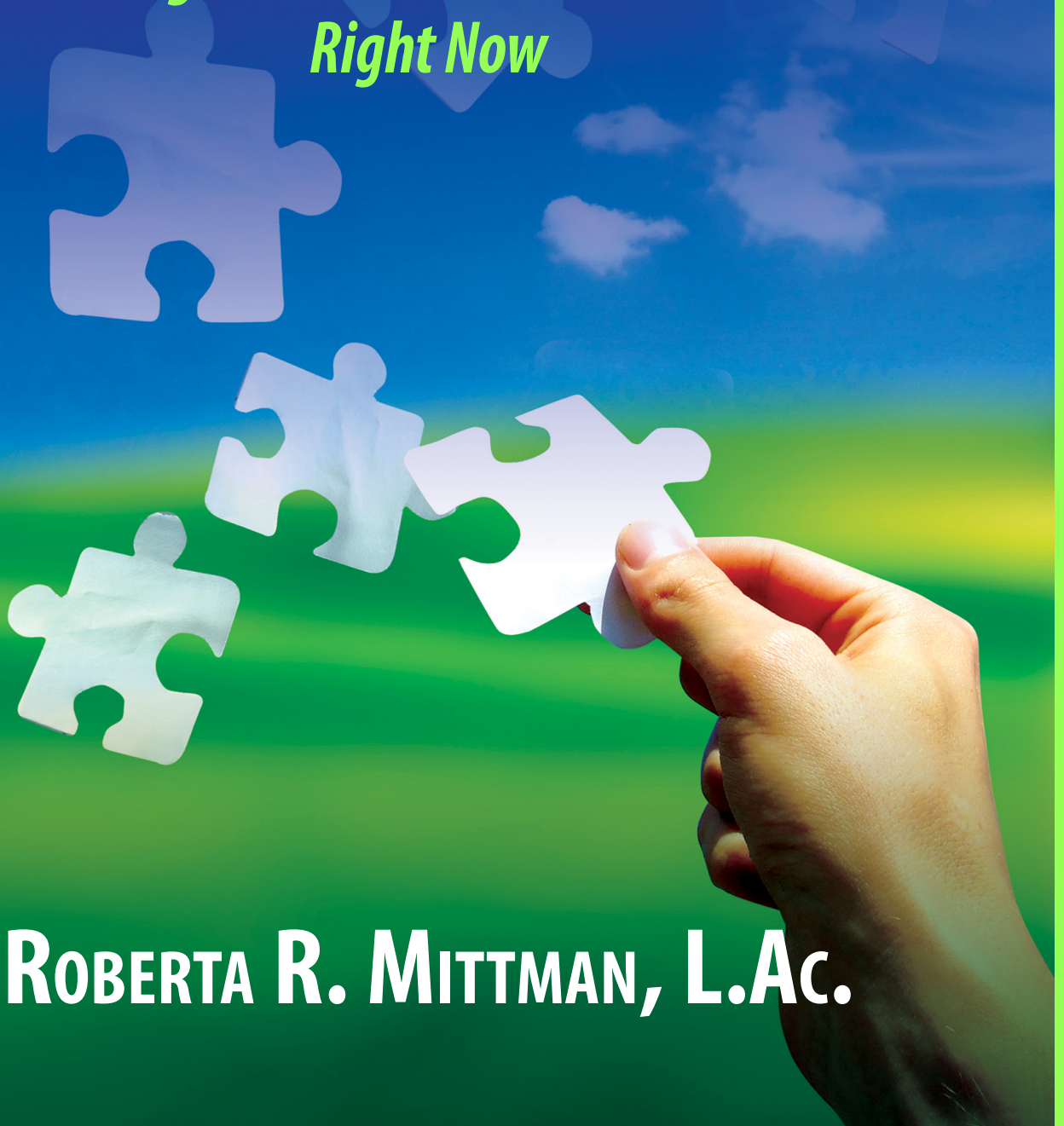


# Ultimate Wellness

*The 3 Mental Shifts You Can Use to  
Change the Course of Your Health  
Right Now*



**ROBERTA R. MITTMAN, L.Ac.**

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# Dedication

I dedicate this book to my father, Milton Roberts, M.D.,  
who originally inspired me to pursue alternative medicine;  
to my wonderfully supportive family; and to all the patients and clients  
whom I have had the honor to serve.

# Acknowledgements

A big shout-out to all those who inspired and aided me in this project, including my dynamic coach Suzanne Evans, publishing guru Donna Kozik and her fabulous managing editor Dina Rocha (and talented staff), and my own on-the-money staffers Laura and Jennifer. Thanks, too, to my copy editor, G. Miki Hayden, who knows where all the deleted exclamation marks are buried.

Roberta is one of the few practitioners I have met, in either holistic or traditional medicine, who combines the rare qualities of true compassion with unparalleled excellence in her clinical field. Roberta has cared for many of my patients and is able to complement the improvements we can make with Western medicine with the addition of acupuncture and holistic approaches. Working with Roberta has been a true pleasure for both myself and my patients.

**Jacqueline Jones, M.D.**

[www.ParkavenueENT.com](http://www.ParkavenueENT.com)

I have been a patient of Roberta's for many years and have successfully continued with preventive care, managing food and environmental sensitivities and alleviating muscle tightness. Although I have done the liver cleanse several times, this time deserves special attention because it really gave me a much-needed boost in both my professional and personal life. Before beginning, I craved carbohydrates, felt out of shape, and plowed through the day with lowered energy. A few days into the program, I noticed an increase in energy throughout the day, and I was satisfied with less quantity but more nutritious foods. As a pleasant surprise to us all, I have experienced a weight loss that has been truly sustainable. Since I work from home, that was a challenge for me because I used to reach for foods that really weren't the best for me and my need to stay focused. I didn't expect to lose the weight, but it's an added bonus and keeps me motivated to continue eating in a cleaner, more healthful way without being dragged down by sugars and other self-defeating foods and snacks. Now I feel so much better than I did when I *thought* I was in good health before. I'm ready for the holidays without my usual fear of gaining excess pounds and having to start the process over. My eating has changed for good.

**Jeffrey L.**

Trader, New York

I have worked with Roberta Mittman using NET for almost five years. I have also worked with several other healers during my life, and I believe some of the most powerful healing that I have experienced has come from working with Roberta. There seems to be no limit to the potential uses of NET, and Roberta is both creative and masterful in applying it. NET is precise, fast, and pain-free. We have used it to heal physical ailments, such as pain in my back and knee, as well as a build-up of fluid in my ear that did not drain after I took medications prescribed to me by an ear, nose, and throat specialist. We have also used it in my professional career, to calm my nerves and enable me to be at my best giving important speeches and presentations. The most important application for me has been in my personal life. Most of my life I struggled to get into romantic relationships with women. With Roberta's support using NET, I was able to clear the way for a

wonderful new woman to enter my life after having gone seven years without a relationship. And when that relationship ended rather suddenly and inexplicably, Roberta helped me heal through those feelings of loss, grief, and abandonment. Now, although I am single again, I feel much better about myself and am more at peace being on my own. Roberta is both a talented healer and an excellent coach. I am deeply grateful to her, and I can only give the highest recommendation of her to anyone.

**David Elsbree**

Accountant

Okay, so I think I'll come in daily for life! You're as amazing and talented a healer as you are beautiful, and boy, do you look great! Thank you so much. I felt light-years better in all ways after seeing you—and will recommend you even more than I already do. In fact, I talked to five people since seeing you about their needing to schedule a visit. Thank you for taking such good care of me, and for being such a great resource.

**Cathleen Campbell**

Energy Empowerment Coach

Roberta Mittman has been my acupuncturist for six years now. Under her care, my food sensitivities as well as digestive and muscle problems are much improved, I feel better, and people tell me I look younger and healthier. She is a gifted and caring healer who is genuinely interested in me as a whole person. In addition to her healing acupuncture and energy medicine treatments, Roberta has referred me to a great alternative healing team including a Chinese herbalist, an alternative MD, and an amazing massage therapist. I've been to more than a dozen acupuncturists in my time, but Roberta towers above them all, in a class by herself.

**David R. Yale**

Author, *Pun Enchanted Evenings: 746 Original Word Plays*

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### **About Roberta Mittman, L.Ac.**

**R**oberta Mittman, a dedicated alternative healthcare practitioner and licensed acupuncturist, is the founder of the Park Avenue Center for Wellbeing. She serves her local community of New York City as well as those who connect with her virtually and through telephone coaching to improve their health.

Roberta brings extensive patient-tested knowledge and experience to her busy practice, helping her patients with pain, allergies and sensitivities, fertility, smoking cessation, immune issues, and weight management. Her goal is to successfully integrate a variety of strategies so that each person achieves balance, optimal health, and powerful mindset shifts.

“I firmly believe in the principles and methodology of my work, which are to offer a range of treatments to help you become healthier now and in the future. My goal is not only to relieve you of your illness and discomfort, but to help you in creating and implementing a personalized plan for preventative care, and to empower you to be your own best healer.”

Roberta Roberts Mittman, L.Ac., Dipl.Ac., M.S., PLLC

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## **Welcome to Roberta Mittman's Ultimate Wellness: The 3 Mental Shifts You Can Use to Change the Course of Your Health Right Now**

I expect that those of you about to read this book are very much like the patients in my busy wellness and acupuncture practice in Midtown Manhattan: You have issues. Hopefully not very serious ones, but ones that bother you nonetheless. Regardless of your age, you most likely have some conditions that don't go away over time (as well as some that do). Or you're looking for approaches to prevent these ailments from occurring in the first place.

I am delighted to let you know that I have discovered ways to address those issues and conditions that may be keeping you up at night, or just nagging at you from time to time. And in case you were thinking that you could sweep your concerns under the carpet until they got really bothersome or painful, I must tell you right now that ignoring the reality isn't the solution. Unfortunately, the consequences of inaction may tend to exacerbate a condition that could have best been handled earlier in a natural, holistic way. Often this means that the responsibility for initiating your self-care rests firmly with you.

I have found that it's very difficult for individuals to determine what the most helpful routes are to their own optimal health. In fact, we all need a certain amount of direction from guides and advisors to assist us in sorting through the confusion and overload of advice presented to us on a daily basis. I hope to help you sift through much of that information and learn new solutions to some of your concerns.

Because I can offer you an understanding of how you might maintain yourself in an optimal condition of health and obtain maximum happiness as well, my intention here is to share with you workable approaches that come from many sources, both traditional and alternative. Please keep in mind that these suggestions are in no way a substitute for seeking advice from your physician and other healthcare professionals you may rely on ordinarily.

## MY LEGACY

**R**oberta Mittman's *Ultimate Wellness* is dedicated to bringing you to a greater state of health, no matter what your present condition is. My real interest in producing these pages (and in conducting my practice) is to give you the positive, empowering help you need.

I enjoy reminding people that alternative healing in general, and acupuncture in particular, is an integral part of my DNA. My father, a real trailblazer, was an MD acupuncturist over 40 years ago who successfully integrated the best of two worlds: the old and the new, East and West, traditional (Western) and holistic forms of medicine. Inspired by his expertise and his courage to forge his own path during a time when alternative modalities were regarded with the utmost skepticism, I have continued his work—his legacy—to combine modalities in order to help you achieve optimal, personalized health and wellbeing. As you will see in this book, I don't believe that "one size fits all." Thus, my aim is to share what I've learned working with people from all walks of life to improve *your* wellbeing.

One important factor in your health that I've tried to emphasize throughout this book is what you are thinking. Yes, what you are thinking. It is my belief that the way you are thinking about your health is the way you are feeling. That's why I quickly point out from the start a few faulty avenues of thought that will stand in the way of your happiness and definitive wellbeing. You always have the choice to think in more productive, satisfying ways, as I often remind my patients while nonetheless focusing on the physical aspects of their health. So please keep that concept in mind when reading, and don't skip through the passages that relate to restructuring your way of looking at your situation. A change in outlook could make the difference between experiencing pain and chronic illness, and enjoying a resolution of your condition along with increased vitality and health.

Because not everyone who reads this book will be able to come into my New York office, I have instituted a program of virtual wellness coaching so that I can help you from afar. Nonetheless, the primary purpose of this book is to give you many tools to deal with your common, everyday complaints and situations on your own, using a variety of different strategies and information that you should find both helpful and practical.

In addition to my practice at the Park Avenue Center for Wellbeing, this is my gift to you—and my legacy.

## THE 3RS

**Y**ou'll notice in reading the book that I frequently refer to my 3R system. It's a way of understanding what you can do to improve your wellbeing by breaking it down into easy, simple-to-implement, one-at-a-time steps. Let me outline that quickly for you now:

*Recognize, Reframe, Reclaim.*

Once you become familiar with what each R means, you can use these 3Rs as workable tools to arrive at a positive effect on your overall wellness, regardless of your issue or condition. Using the 3Rs will help you see how to look at your health from a different angle than perhaps you were taught or were told to previously. The 3Rs will allow you to find and implement strategies to overcome difficulties that may come up along the way and permit you to live in a manner that will bring you the greatest happiness and quality of life.

**R#1—RECOGNIZE:** Try to awaken to the connection between mind and body. How does thinking about what you perceive as your deviation from the norm, or what you consider your “problems,” hinder your progress or bring relief? Consider this: Verbalizing negative thoughts manifests as negativity in our actions. Believing in the negative creates negative results.

I have patients who come into the office saying they feel stuck, defeated, and angry with their situation.

They tell me:

“I’ve tried everything and nothing helps.”

“It will never get any better.”

“Changing my eating and schedule is too hard.”

“Just fix it.”

Do **you** find yourself thinking and saying these things? If so, you have work to do, starting with learning to view the negative situation in a more life-affirming way.

Once established, the cycle of increasing negativity is hard to break, but breaking it is certainly possible and something you, too, can do.

Verbalizing positive thoughts has an uplifting effect on a person’s spirit, which automatically creates a sense of overall wellbeing. Some patients understand this naturally. They’re in pain or other difficulty, but they simply move ahead, enhancing productivity and enjoying their everyday living. They’re eager to know what foods to eat to reduce inflammation or stomach upsets or to lose weight—or to deal with whatever problem—and how acupuncture might help.

These patients come to see that controlling their negative thoughts and stress is key. They refuse to continue being captive to their sense of not being what they should be in life.

Next time you think a negative thought, replace it with one of these positive ones instead:

“Today is a good day.”

“This is a step in the right direction.”

“I haven’t discovered it yet, but I *will* find a solution.”

“I can make good choices to ease the problem.”

**R#2—REFRAME:** How can you change your thoughts and actions to bring better results? I, Roberta, can’t “just fix it” because *you* have to take responsibility for incorporating the steps that will finally bring you real relief.

Looking at your condition holistically means you must tackle the many components of your wellbeing. All of these factors have to be addressed in order for you to achieve a balanced state of health and a more pain- and stress-free daily existence. These areas you need to work on include changing your thinking, exploring many different forms of healing, looking at food as medicine, and taking action to remove the stress. Put together, they are the foundation of a strong and healthy body.

Take responsibility for incorporating the steps that bring relief.

**R#3—RECLAIM:** You deserve good health, and it is there for you to claim. Learn to see how your life is ready to be lived to its fullest.

I urge you to not try everything at once, but to begin with those suggestions that appeal to you the most. With each upgrade in how you feel, you’ll be tempted to go back to the information to give some of the other recommendations a try. Each patient-tested idea successfully put into practice will give you more positive impetus and more actual energy to go further in the direction of your *ultimate wellbeing* and to become your own best healer.

# PART

## **Recognize Your Ways of Thinking About Yourself**

## Chapter 1

### The 5 Top Dangers of Being “Normal”

*“To be normal is the ideal aim of the unsuccessful.”*

—**Carl Gustav Jung**

**M**y washing machine always makes me chuckle (good thing when you’re doing lots of laundry, right?). It has a setting for “normal.” Apparently, the manufacturer assumes that we, as intelligent consumers, identify, understand, and collectively agree that a certain kind of dirty laundry can be considered normal.

Personally, I’m not sure what “normal” laundry is. What’s more, on my machine I have a choice between two normals: heavy and light. Think about it. I live in an urban setting and work indoors. Naturally my clothing will encounter a whole different kind of dirt and wear-and-tear than that of someone who lives in the country and works out in the elements. My “heavy” could be that person’s “light.” And yet both of us would consider our laundry “normal.”

The humble washing machine illustrates a larger point. Ultimately, the word *normal* can be vague—or even useless—when employed to set a standard for just about anything. The only exception I can think of is standardized blood tests, but then, I’m not so sure about that, either.

When it comes to health and wellness, the notion of being “normal” can be confusing and might well be absolutely counterproductive. Is my normal the same as yours? Well, I’m a female, 5 feet, 1 inch tall. Are you? Probably not. If just gender and height can create a wide range of “normal,” imagine the variation multiple details can produce.

It concerns me that I hear the question “Am I normal?” several times a day in my busy New York City practice. Worrying about what’s normal can be exhausting and in the long run meaningless for a patient. What’s more, dangers lurk in pursuing normalcy above all else.

Right now, I’d like to share some stories of real patients who’ve experienced wellness breakthroughs. These patients all have one thing in common: They’ve taken the radical step of ditching the concept of “normal” and redefining what they expect and receive in health and life. Could one of these stories

apply to you, too? Probably the overall concept can.

## **DANGER #1: “Normal” thinking locks in habits and excuses that prevent change.**

It’s just human nature that we tend to think of change as risky. By the same token, we routinely treat things that have happened as long as we can remember as safe and risk-free—or “normal”—even when that’s not the case at all. Regarding the status quo as “normal” lets you accept it whether it’s in your best interest or not. This is a trap. Instead, examine your “normal” honestly. You might discover that you’re performing tasks or thinking about yourself and others in a ritualistic, outdated, or even dangerous way.

**Case Study:** Robert discovered this truth firsthand. His “normal” meant looking forward to a cigarette after work. It was his way of celebrating the end of each workday. After making the decision to stop smoking, he soon became aware of faulty thinking and actions, and began my nonsmoking acupuncture/mindset treatment. By looking at his triggers, we were able to change his thoughts about what comprises a positive end-of-day activity and help him to successfully transition to the nonsmoking world.

## **DANGER #2: Ideas of what’s “normal” often come from a mindset of lack.**

These notions grow from doubts that what you have—or are—will measure up. Too often, when patients ask whether they’re normal, what they’re really worried about is that they’re somehow less than adequate. Trust me: It’s an ungrounded fear. Life doesn’t come with a scorecard—ever.

**Case Study:** In my office, I helped this concept of lack evolve into self-growth for my patient Amy, who took a good, hard look at her weaknesses as a coach. She vowed to turn what she saw as flaws into successes instead of feeling sorry for herself or focusing on peers who were making more money. After two NET (neuro-emotional technique) sessions, she realized what distinctive qualities and attributes she brings to the people she helps. Only then did her coaching career accelerate. Amy discovered success didn’t depend on being “normal” by meeting an outside standard but on celebrating and embracing her own uniqueness, and applying these in her coaching practice.

Many of us would benefit by borrowing a page from Amy’s and Robert’s books. Start with taking stock of the thoughts and actions that you’re tolerating as “normal” or just not noticing anymore. Challenge the normal! Complete self-care involves recalibration combined with a real examination of who you are, what you want, and where you are going right now. After all, what was normal last year—or even yesterday—could be outdated tomorrow.

## **DANGER #3: Settling for “normal” can keep you “playing small.”**

This is true in health and in life, both personally and professionally. Trying only to measure up to “normal” may prevent you from being the best, most empowered version of yourself. There are aspects of you—innate traits, talents, and abilities—that you have the potential to hone to levels that far exceed normal. But you may never discover them if you let “normal” be good enough for you.

**Case Study:** Nicole was afraid of standing out and hid behind a poor self-image and low self-esteem. As a result, she didn’t succeed in making the new relationships that she sought or securing that promotion at work. Why? She chose what she thought felt safe and normal—in other words, her comfort zone—to avoid feeling fear. Could that be your “normal,” too? If so, I have good news for you: Recognizing this self-limiting pattern has allowed Nicole to begin to change her outlook. You can, as well.

## **DANGER #4: “Normal” thinking lets unhealthy patterns get passed along through the generations.**

For as long as I can remember, my family has had its own set of preferences and habits and celebrations. I heard advice and wisdom about my heritage from my elders that I would never hear anywhere else. Sound familiar? There’s much to be valued in family tradition. But the fact is that not every tradition is all that healthful. Continuing those that are risky to health or wellbeing can certainly be sadly misguided.

**Case Study:** Frank ate bowl after bowl of pasta, bread, and dessert because he thought his Italian roots led him to those choices. Two hundred and fifty pounds later, Frank is rethinking the diet that’s “normal” in his family, even as his relatives say “Mangia!” His new, updated eating plan reflects what is healthful for him now, in this stage of his life, and he’s enjoying experimenting with new foods that he had previously ignored. Does the change mean Frank respects his family any less? Of course it doesn’t. It just allows him to better respect his own wellbeing.

## **DANGER #5: When we accept something as “normal,” we can perceive it as too hard—or even impossible—to change.**

**Case Study:** Karen’s story speaks for itself. Karen came in with shoulder pain. It started as a twinge with certain motions such as brushing her hair, and then progressed to more pervasive achiness in her arm. Eventually, it spread to numbness and tingling in her fingers, and made cooking and computer work difficult and, at times, painful. The thought “stress always lands there” helped her rationalize the growing discomfort in her body.

What happened was that as Karen’s shoulder issue gradually became her new “normal” state of affairs, she grew accustomed to discomfort. She was reluctant to get the care and testing that she needed because of the inconvenience and lack of time and energy. She wound up postponing the early treatment that



might have prevented her condition from progressing to levels that compromised everyday activity. We eventually resolved her problem, I'm happy to say, but the good results would surely have come much more easily if she hadn't accepted her pain as "normal."

**"The possibility of stepping into a higher plane is quite real for everyone. It requires no force or effort or sacrifice. It involves little more than changing our ideas about what is normal."**

—Deepak Chopra

Your state of being, "normal" or not, is with you day and night, everywhere you go, in every situation. It is one of the few things that only you can claim and only you can embrace. Think of this: Even people in poor health or with low self-esteem have their good days. So seize the positive and make it yours. Once you begin to accept the possibility of living happily without being like your next-door neighbor in looks or abilities, you may find you'll actually begin to live well with increasingly less focus on being "normal." Right now, start by making one essential decision: Are you ready to do the work needed to move past your sense of comparison with others and embrace a more fulfilling life? Cement your new resolve by saying this out loud: "I am making a conscious decision to enact change in my life."

As I mentioned in my introduction, one approach I like to teach my patients is to use the 3Rs—and in all areas of treatment, this can be a potent tool.

Here are the 3Rs that can help you forget about being like everyone else when you're obviously not.

**RECOGNIZE:** Start today. Examine your routines and habits honestly. Be on the lookout for the "same old" ways of thinking and feeling that have gotten a deep hold on your everyday life. What practices or attitudes need to be adjusted? Then take charge—and change. Your happiness and wellness are worth the effort. Take a good look at the patterns in your world that you regard as "normal," and ask yourself whether each "normal" offers you maximum satisfaction and comfort. If not, stop settling. It's time to say goodbye to emotions, comfort levels, and attitudes that are simply business as usual and don't represent what you really want.

**REFRAME:** When was the last time you found a piece of clothing marked "one size fits all" that truly was a comfortable, flattering fit: the right color, the right fabric, and the right level of warmth for anyone who might wear it? Right. Me neither. "One size fits all" doesn't often work for clothing, and it works even less in health and everyday life. Seek out, instead, a renewed sense of what's genuinely right for you, here and now. Be yourself, and do what you need to in order to have your own best life.

**RECLAIM:** Accept that making “normal” a health goal is a mistaken pursuit. “Normal” can be an arbitrary measurement. Just as a one-size-fits-all coat would be a bad choice for most of us, “normal” is not a close enough fit for the majority of my patients. People of differing sizes and lifestyles, with varying medical histories and experiences, who don’t have the same tolerances and sensitivities, can’t all fit into an identical health mold. Trying to make ourselves fit can lead to choices that run counter to good health.

The patient stories above send a clear message to me: “Normal” might be an okay starting point, but maybe it shouldn’t be the end goal for anyone. We can, and should, treat ourselves better, as the individuals we are.

## Chapter 2

### 5 Key Questions to Stop Body-Bashing

*“Everybody is unique. Compare not yourself with anybody else lest you spoil God’s curriculum.”*

—**Baal Shem Tov**

Seeing “normal” as an ideal isn’t the only misguided mindset I run into in my practice. Here’s another common, even more destructive one I run into every day. People who vary from “normal” (well, yes) in looks to downright attractive reject their appearance or some aspect of a perfectly “normal” set of body parts. This affects how they live their lives, even drastically. Have a peek at others in this regard, then decide if this is something you do, too. (Oh, you’re already thinking of the areas in which you dislike something about yourself. Well, let’s see what we can do about that.)

When new patients come into my office at the Park Avenue Center for Wellbeing in New York City, I consult with them at great length about what makes them unique, including their medical, emotional, nutritional, physical, immune, and allergic history. When the conversation turns to weight and self-image, though, it’s as if a cloud has overtaken an otherwise-sunny day. In other words, patients begin to radiate extreme dissatisfaction with their bodies, relentless self-criticism, and sometimes even hopelessness.

Such thought patterns can be deep-seated and therefore might take some time to shift into a more positive or neutral zone of greater self-acceptance. (After all, this negative self-talk didn’t start yesterday. More than likely, it began when the person was a young child or teenager, right?) However, with personalized nutritional strategies, restructured thought patterns, and honest conversations about these issues, I often witness an empowered transformation to a better-balanced, happier way of self-perception. This new thinking can ripple throughout every aspect of my patient’s life, including more meaningful, authentic relationships with others and a huge increase in business and financial success.

If you have been less than kind to yourself because of a negative body image, read on. These questions are designed to help you get to the root of the problem—and put you on the road to personal acceptance through forming a new way of looking at your oldest and best friend: you.

## **QUESTION #1: What do you hate most about your body?**

Okay, come clean. When you think about your body, what part(s) leave you with a shudder, sigh, or inner scream? Is your least favorite feature your arms, your thighs, your abdomen, your...?

Now take a minute to look at your “bad features” more closely. What do you say to yourself about them? Do you fixate on minor things that really don’t matter? Are you able to give an honest assessment of your flaws and see a ray of hope, or are you cruel and unforgiving over imperfections? Do you believe you can change the parts that are less than ideal, or do you feel hopeless?

Some people think that a rock-hard attitude toward problem areas will help focus attention and hard work to correct them. That’s not how I’ve come to see it. Overly judgmental thinking is truly self-defeating. That kind of negativity is powerful and dangerous, and can quickly squash any good feelings you have about yourself. Self-deprecation blocks people from growing in self-esteem. I’ve seen this effect firsthand in my patients.

**Case Study:** When Julie came into my office, she said that she felt “stuck” in her job as an administrative assistant. After we used NET (neuro-emotional technique) for just a few minutes, it became clear that Julie had always been unhappy with her appearance and, as a result, was now hiding from opportunities to be seen in her workplace—and in her relationships in general. This pattern had begun way back in grade school as a reaction to children who teased her about her weight. By hanging onto this negativity into adulthood, Julie had turned her pluses—skills, compassion, and great sense of humor—into her best-kept secrets, along with her beautiful eyes and hair and her sharp mind.

When Julie realized that her “invisibility” was the result of old thoughts about her weight, she understood that was what had prevented her from moving ahead in her job. She began to actively take greater initiative and felt freer to seize opportunities to be noticed for her abilities. Julie’s happy ending: She’s now a manager at work.

Julie’s case demonstrates that, left unchecked, a focus on what’s less than perfect can create an unrealistic perspective, so much so that it jeopardizes all the positive actions you’ve taken to become healthy, balanced, and successful.

The fact is that no one has a naturally perfect physique. Give yourself a break. A body that functions well is a gift. Don’t underestimate the value of that gift by concentrating on imperfections that don’t affect your health or ability.

## **QUESTION #2: Are you married to the scale?**

In other words, how often do you weigh yourself (monthly, weekly, daily, hourly)?

If your answer is “daily” or “hourly,” commit immediately to changing that damaging habit. Too much focus on a single health number can backfire. Obsession, after all, is no healthier than excess weight.

If you fear losing control or becoming undisciplined without a frequent weight check, simply write it in your calendar as a weekly (not daily) to-do item, and cross it out when you’ve done it. This way, you can reassure yourself you aren’t forgetting, without becoming too compulsive.

So often people come to me saying they want to lose weight. Along the way, they reveal that they step on the scale a minimum of two times per day. The problem? Constant weight monitoring is actually self-sabotaging. One’s self-esteem or mood for the whole day can be determined by a number that is simply not representative of an actual physical condition.

**Fact:** Your weight can vacillate by a few pounds at any time because of hormones, salt or sugar intake, medications, and many other daily variables. A person who plays this “beat the scale” game is guaranteed not to win when the number doesn’t go down. (I’ve even seen situations in which a smaller number is equally damaging, with a patient testing over and over to be sure it’s really true.)

Other dangers are also inherent in too-constant attention to weight. Reliance on a scale can mean false dependence on an outside mechanism to determine where you stand at any given second. It suggests to me a lack of self-trust to make optimal, healthful choices. My suggestion is to weigh yourself no more than once or twice a week. This way, your frame of mind won’t be so influenced by an external measure of success. Besides, what we are looking for is a trend of weight loss, not actual ounce-by-ounce measurements.

Instead of stepping on a scale, think of more positive, confidence-building ways to start your day, like reading an affirmation; planning out your rewarding, productive day; or packing healthful treats to take with you so you won’t wind up starving or make poor choices. And don’t worry: Even if you give it a vacation, your scale will still be there tomorrow.

## **QUESTION #3: Are you over-enrolled in celebrity diets?**

I admit it: I’ve bought those magazines that show “How They Did It”—what plan models, actresses, and other famous people have followed to achieve substantial weight loss and what seems to be a total body makeover. Well, my friends, it’s true that most of these stars did work very hard to obtain those results. However, please keep in mind that many celebrities have personal chefs, staff, and trainers, and have worked on their bodies as a project that must be “fixed” in order for them to retain favor in the public eye. So what do these plans mean for the rest of us personally? I say nothing. Most of us don’t

have such advantages. Besides, comparing ourselves to others usually comes from a sense of lack, and competing with the rich and famous will only contribute to a greater sense of failure and feeling “less than.”

In fact, do you follow celebrity diet plans at all? This is probably not a good idea. Remember: Every body, lifestyle, and budget are in some ways unique. The plan that worked for this month’s pampered, jet-setting *Vogue* cover girl may be entirely unsuitable for your needs.

Remember also that beneath the glamour, stars are flesh and blood, like us. How many times have we seen a movie star lose weight, then end up cruelly criticized in the press for regaining it? Regardless of the person’s social status, maintaining a healthful weight takes commitment and the right mindset. Simply having a famous name attached to it doesn’t make a diet plan foolproof.

**Case Study:** I’ve seen celebrity diets fail for patients. Hannah, for example, came in excited about trying a diet that was featured in *People* magazine. She was sure that following a plan that kept stars looking fabulous would yield similar results for her. After a few weeks, though, it became clear that Hannah was, in fact, gaining weight.

The reality of the situation is that a diet plan that works for one person may not translate into benefits for another. A successful eating plan must take into account your nutritional requirements, your food sensitivities, your daily schedule, the responsibilities that you alone face, and the goals that you have set for yourself. The diet must provide enough food to satisfy your body’s hunger—not to mention, it must be pleasing to your personal tastes and preferences. After all, eating is both a physical and an emotional experience. Forcing yourself to stick with food you don’t like or can’t feel good about is sure to result in diet failure.

The plan designed for some other person, however beautiful, was clearly deficient for my patient Hannah. This plan would fail for many others as well. Don’t be star-struck and fixate on what worked for someone in Hollywood or Bollywood. Instead, keep focused on what your own requirements are. Only then will you be able to stay on track.

### **QUESTION #4: Do you yearn to return to your high school weight?**

You might be surprised to learn how many people come into my office wanting to weigh what the scale said 20, 30, or 40 years ago. Realistic? I don’t think so. An arbitrary figure from the distant past may be an unattainable goal for many reasons, and it surely can serve as an undesirable one as well.

**Fact:** Our bodies’ needs change as we age, as our lifestyles evolve or as we fall into new day-to-day habits. It only makes sense that our ideal weight should change as well.

The aging process brings many variables that can affect one’s weight. Hormones, nutrition, and lifestyle

can change the body's ideal weight (usually raising it a bit higher). Placing your goal at a number from another time will set you up for failure and ultimately can be a damaging choice.

It's not productive to live in the past. Appreciate your personal history, reflect on it, and recall the good moments. Don't, though, try to recapture what's behind you. (Bad dates, acne, social drama, that gawky stage—when you take off the rose-colored glasses, not all high school memories are fond ones, are they?) Instead, embrace a forward-thinking mindset that lets you focus on living your best life and health in the present—and the future.

Here's a much better option: Don't start with the wrong objective. Get a realistic picture of where you should be today to enjoy a healthful, rewarding life. You probably look better than you did when you went to high school, anyway.

### **QUESTION #5: Do you think you can make all the changes yourself?**

You answered yes, didn't you? I admit it: I'm an independent thinker, too.

People often pride themselves on being lone cowboys, and in many ways this is a positive characteristic. When it works, it works quite well. But when we struggle to succeed—when we repeatedly try to accomplish something and aren't able—this is not the time to stand alone. There's no shame in asking for help. Quite the opposite: It's a sign of mental strength and level-headedness to recognize you can't do everything by yourself.

If you've been dealing with the same issues and results for a while, then chances are you are missing the boat in determining which strategies can work for you now and will work in the future. It's amazing how many people have lost weight only to gain it back because they don't have proper support and care.

**Case Study:** When David began coaching with me, he was eager to try a new detox plan he had discovered. He hoped the plan would free his body of toxins and let him lose weight while following his vegetarian preferences.

What he didn't know was that he had a sensitivity to soy, a primary ingredient in many of the proteins on vegetarian eating plans. David's digestion was often upset, and he wasn't getting the burst of energy that can accompany a good food-based detox program. He was following all the dietary instructions, but because his body didn't feel good during the detox, he began to sense a deeper problem than he had before he started. He was already seeing himself fight a losing battle, and he'd only just begun.

Fortunately, David's symptoms came up early on. On our next coaching call, he shared his disappointment, and we worked together to make adjustments. Once we realized the source of his discomfort—too much soy—we were able to craft a new, healthful, personalized nutritional program

that took into account this and other sensitivities. We also collaborated to come up with a workable approach to exercise and other lifestyle considerations. David has had smooth sailing since.

Now, when people ask David what steps he took to get into a healthful pattern, he tells them to begin their own coaching sessions. He knows full well that what works for him may not be the answer for the next person. It took a personalized plan and the support of a caring expert to find the strategies that worked for him.

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**“When you consider yourself valuable you will take care of yourself in all ways that are necessary.”**

—M. Scott Peck

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I’ve just discussed ways we can be less than kind, if not downright cruel, to ourselves through negative self-talk about the way our bodies look. Hanging on to those damaging thoughts can limit our possibility of success in weight loss as well as health and life in general. Now let’s move through the 3Rs on this one.

**RECOGNIZE:** If you’re ready to start on a journey to renewed wellness, the above questions can provide the basis for a great road map. Curious where the travel leads? Grab a paper and pen, and let’s begin.

List the body part(s) that you wish you could change. Label each of the parts you listed with one of these choices:

- D: There’s a permanent, disabling condition that keeps it from functioning well.
- A: It needs treatment or other attention you’ve not been able and/or willing to give.
- U: It works fine but is unattractive.

Cross out all items labeled D or U. Here’s why: Items that are “D”—true permanent disabilities—are beyond your control. They absolutely do not equal a failure on your part. In other words, stop beating yourself up about things that aren’t your fault. Focus instead on appreciating, taking care of, and using to the best of your ability the rest of your body.

Similarly, it’s best to focus away from items you labeled “U.” Skin that has a few wrinkles or spots but is free of rashes, cancers, and discomfort is a blessing, not a curse. Most feet are not much to look at, but the vast majority of them are still capable of walking, running, and dancing. Besides, what’s unattractive to one person may be quite appealing to another. Beauty is a matter of perception, not fact.



So forget the “D” and “U” parts. To make a significant and lasting change in your wellness, concentrate instead on the items you labeled “A.” You can only find success—including improved health and improved self-esteem—by taking control, and the “A” items are the ones within your reach. They are, too. Make a conscious decision to focus on what you can do.

**REFRAME:** Stop looking at your body as a commodity. Instead, accept it as the way the inner you gets to experience the world in a health-positive, vital way. While we definitely want to look our best, what’s really attractive to others is a glow of health and enthusiasm.

Don’t forget that a healthy body is intimately connected to a healthy mindset. If you’re not at your best physically, it may be because you are laboring under some false assumptions. Believing that a plan designed for someone else will work for you, or being unwilling to make changes or ask for help, will only further hamper your efforts. Change those attitudes, and change your results.

**RECLAIM:** Give yourself permission to be yourself and to live in the body that you have. You don’t have to be anyone else, and you don’t have to look like a girl of 16 or boy of 19 if you’re really 35. You don’t have to be anorexic to be accepted by the people around you. You do have to feel relaxed in your own skin—so strive for that instead of goals imposed by the media. You want to enjoy your life on your own terms, and doing that will win you the loves and friends that you always wanted—not starvation or self-deprecation.

The common factor in most success stories is identifying the problem, so get started by asking yourself all the above questions. Then take action to change, beginning with finding a caring partner to support you on your journey toward the positive. With the right help, you can move past these stumbling blocks and embrace instead an attitude of possibility and improved self-esteem, which will inevitably lead to better health.

## Chapter 3

### 6 Signs So-So Health Is Hurting Your Career

*“So many people spend their health gaining wealth, and then have to spend their wealth to regain their health.”*

**—A.J. Reb Materi**

Let's look at another thinking pattern that doesn't work. This time both the carrot and the stick I'm holding out for you are that if you're ignoring your health or are in denial about the signs calling you to correct the path you're on, you're hurting both your earning potential and career. Look at it that way, and maybe you'll pay more attention to signals saying you need to act now to feel better and live better, and with a bit more zip.

For people hoping to excel in their businesses and careers, physical limitations can be uncomfortable and, in due course, very, very costly. Poor health often leads to circumstances that cause us to stop right in our tracks—and cease producing. Most of the people I see at my Park Avenue Center for Wellbeing fall into this “just squeaking by” category. Although they have the best of intentions to maintain their bodies, they allow other priorities to outrank health. Ultimately, they fail to follow through with the self-care that is necessary for complete success—personal, professional, and financial.

What happens when you let the gift of good health start slipping away? For many people, the first sign of a health problem is a plummeting energy level. With good overall health, you progress through your day feeling sharp, focused, and on task. You can work to achieve your goals, both on the job and at home. Without it... Have you ever waded through a long day, exhausted and unable to stay focused or be productive? Lack of energy shouldn't be ignored. It's a sign that some part of your health picture—sleep, nutrition, lifestyle—is less than optimal.

If you recognize something is amiss, commit to fixing it. There's a right way and a wrong way of going about that, though.

There are real consequences to accepting health that's “just okay” but not truly good. Are you on the track of feeling “not so great” physically? Here are six signs to watch out for:

## 1. Lately, your performance has been slipping a little.

How you're doing at work is a reflection of the state of your overall health. Further, how you treat yourself—body and mind—will at the end of the day affect how you present yourself to the rest of the world, including your family, colleagues, and clients. You simply cannot be a success (at least, not for long) if you never put yourself on the “to-do” list.

**Case Study:** Sophia told me she felt she was “spinning her wheels” in her two-year-old interior design firm. Despite her best marketing efforts, she wasn't monetizing as she'd hoped. We took a look at her goals and activities, and a pattern emerged: She was putting everyone else's needs above her own. What she required was to properly focus on her own success. She decided to take care of a few of her nagging physical complaints, plus she commandeered one afternoon a week for “Sophia time” to rest and play. These couple of critical changes later, Sophia now sees the road ahead of her as smoother, less burdensome, and more fulfilling.

## 2. You have unexplained weight gain or pain, or you take more sick days than ideal.

Ouch. Unchecked stress has long been known to undermine or limit success, but did you know that it can literally make you fat, tired, and/or sick? I have seen firsthand many striving executives who have been absent from work, feeling too ill to work effectively, or suffering from neck and back injuries, all because of an overload of stress in their lives. You might think stress is a necessary evil, but I and other practitioners can share techniques that will help alleviate this “silent killer.”

**Case Study:** Plagued by worry, doubt, and fears, Larry tossed and turned at night, unable to sleep. That's when his back seemed to hurt the most. Finally, fatigue depleted his immune system, and he caught one cold after another. But Larry was able to turn his health around. By fine-tuning his sleep and work habits, and finding holistic, balancing relief for stress through periodic acupuncture and twice-weekly swims, he was able to recover his inner calm, clearing his way to better rest, a better mood, and pain relief.

## 3. You feel scattered and overwhelmed, or you can't prioritize.

Have you ever felt that you couldn't accomplish even the simplest tasks without making mistakes? Or couldn't figure out what to do next because you had just too many options to consider? These could be signs of an underfed, overtired mind. Or they can indicate that you're simply expecting too much of a single individual—yourself. Even the most focused, intelligent person has some limits. The human brain can only work on so many problems and projects at once.

When you aren't paying attention to what you're eating or the quality of your sleep, or when the impossible is what's expected of you, it's easy to become confused, disorganized, and sloppy at your tasks. Mistakes, some of which may be costly, are the result.

**Case Study:** Lisa came into my office feeling so frustrated and angry that she literally wanted to let out a scream. Overloaded with work and exhausted from late nights at the computer, she said she threw her hands up in disgust when she wasn't able to make sense of the work that overflowed her desk. She had begun to fear being fired for her poor follow-through.

Lisa's case was clearly one of impossible expectations. She had reached her limit, and, as her stress level rose, the quality of her work began to suffer. The only sensible solution was to get some of the tasks off her overfilled plate. So when Lisa and I met, we made two plans: one for her to speak up about the situation to her superiors in a professional manner, and one for her to prioritize her duties. Although things are not yet perfect for her at work, Lisa's new strategy will go a long way toward allowing her to delegate some of her responsibilities to others in the office—resulting in Lisa's ability to perform the duties she retains in a more productive way. (Whew.)

#### **4. You over-commit and over-serve everyone—except yourself.**

This is a typical pattern in business but especially common among entrepreneurs. Besides skills and knowledge, those who work for themselves tend to provide “above and beyond” service—or even nurturing—to set themselves apart from their competitors. But as we all know, there are only so many hours in a day. Something has to give. When faced with a choice of doing for oneself or doing for a client, many business owners will choose the client every time. The intention may be good, but the approach most often backfires.

**Case Study:** Irene made sure her clients were all satisfied, even though that rarely permitted her any time for a personal life. She continued to sacrifice her time and priorities, leaving her exhausted and ineffective by the end of the day. What Irene didn't realize at first was that she was allowing clients to take advantage of her by always being willing to help them out. What's more, by giving all of her time to them, she was neglecting herself.

Irene decided to set stricter work times and trained her clients to reach her during “business hours” only, instead of at their own convenience. This change made a huge difference for Irene. Though she now spends fewer hours working, her satisfaction and focus have increased—as has her success. Plus, she now has time for her husband and is able to reserve some all-important “me” time, uninterrupted by client concerns.

#### **5. Instead of producing and earning, you'd rather take a nap.**

Does that sound familiar? In particular, does your get-up-and-go dissolve in the afternoon? If so, then your energy system needs an overhaul. When you have a half-day left to complete your projects, reach clients, or stay on schedule, and you feel depleted and sluggish, it's time to look at your lifestyle,

including how and when you rest, and the patterns of your blood sugar level. Do this before you wind up with your earning potential cut in half.

**Case Study:** Leo, a solopreneur who works from home, seemed to be a real “morning person.” But by 3 p.m. each day, his energy flagged to such an extent that he often found himself resting his head on his desk. His clients had to wait until the next day to hear from him and became impatient for his response. Business was at risk.

With some adjustments in his nutrition, Leo became a full-day professional again. He realized that although he was rarely hungry for breakfast and ate a small lunch, he had been sitting down to dinner with his family and more than making up for his earlier hours of undereating and tiring himself out. Now, with a steady and sensible meal schedule in place, Leo’s closing his sales—not his personal energy—by 5 p.m.

### **6. You think there’s nothing wrong with your self-care; therefore, other things or people must be to blame when business matters don’t go well.**

Blaming others rarely is the fix your business or career needs. What you need to do is take charge when problems hit. You can only do that when you’re in a healthy, vigorous state. It’s easy to be in denial about the state of your health, even if you’re paying some attention to your wellbeing. It’s time to take back responsibility for your own condition and see that you always have options waiting to be explored. Imagine what reaching your potential will do for your self-esteem—and for your financial health.

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**“Health is like money, we never have a true idea of its value until we lose it.”**

—Josh Billings

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Let’s get started with my 3Rs.

**RECOGNIZE:** When it comes to your own wellness, it’s hard to be objective. So many of the mediocre-health signs above are patterns that have developed slowly over months or even years. That can make the routines leading to so-so health not just simply hard to change, but hard to even recognize.

And let’s face it: If you don’t see a problem, it’s just about impossible to fix. Many of my patients don’t at first acknowledge the link between their health habits and their professional success. But the health-wealth connection is undeniable.

Are you a healthy, fit individual who takes steps to stay that way? Or do you take your good health too much for granted? If you ever imagine that you'll live forever in the same body, feeling exactly the same way you do now, those rose-colored glasses may not be a good thing. You may be entertaining the fantasy (sorry, but it's true) that just because you feel well today, your self-care job is good enough.

Here are some misguided wellness statements I hear from time to time, and why they're dangerous:

### **"I'll worry about it later—when it really gets bad!"**

Consider this: What if "later" comes sooner than you planned? What if that minor problem you've been ignoring suddenly flares and becomes debilitating? Don't let that happen to you. Avoid being a victim of "I'll worry about it later" thinking by identifying what compromises you're making now. Then take steps to put in place the changes or adjustments that will ensure your future wellbeing.

### **"It will never happen to me."**

When we're young or in excellent health, it's easy to slip onto the road to denial, thinking that malfunctions will occur in the far-off future. The truth is that many of us will eventually feel the wear and tear of time. Poor habits, practiced over many years, do eventually come home to roost. For instance, "It will never happen to me" is a common rationalization that many smokers use to continue their habit even after they notice some symptoms of damage to their body.

### **"If I wait long enough, it will just go away."**

In some cases, that statement may be accurate. For instance, muscle spasms can be a symptom of a virus or a side effect of soreness from a recent exercise class. After a little rest, simple muscles spasms disappear. But what if those common spasms don't resolve as expected? That's a sign something more may be going on. Don't wait too long for symptoms to "just go away." Delay allows minor discomforts to settle in and become a new normal for you, which is really another way of making do with just so-so health.

Knowing that your body is built for success is important, but respecting its limitations, when appropriate, is a responsibility we all need to assume.

**Case Study:** After exercising, Rebecca felt twinges of pain in her shoulders and low back. She wondered if perhaps these sensations were just from overtraining in the previous day's workout. Healthy and active, she noticed that the pains were still present a few days later. After seeking advice from a professional, she modified her self-care routine. Rebecca added Pilates classes to learn how to hold her body differently and turned to acupuncture to resolve muscle tightness. Her pain eased as a result. She knows now what measures to take if the pain should reoccur in the future, and she's poised to remain pain-free.

Feeling strong and healthy is positive as long as the feeling is an accurate reflection of your physical state and you're truly in sync with your body. The assumption that you're healthy, though, based on confused, misguided, or unrealistic goals or attitudes, will ultimately not be helpful for you. Relying on inaccurate self-assessment could, in fact, make matters worse when it comes to treating a long-standing injury or condition. It's time to take a hard, honest look at your wellbeing and adopt steps today to help your body continue to perform at its peak tomorrow.

Take a closer look at your health, habits, and routines. Chances are that you already know some of the elements that are costing you precious time and results. What changes can you make to correct this pattern?

**REFRAME:** Why settle for feeling okay and just getting by? Instead, make this your goal: to feel like a million while you're making a million. Undoubtedly, you have important duties to perform. But don't forget: One of those jobs is taking care of the fabulous body that you have been given. You only have one; you can't at all afford to neglect it. As so many of my patients have found over the years, your wallet can't afford it, either. Take charge.

Remember: Not-quite-up-to-par health can cost you time, productivity, and money. How you treat yourself—including how much attention you give your physical and mental health—profoundly influences the results you get in your personal and professional life.

**RECLAIM:** "The way you do one thing is how you do everything." I hear this often in my coaching circles. When it comes to your health, this statement also applies big time. The condition of your health will influence the condition of every other aspect of your life, including your bottom line. If you want to be successful in your career, "so-so" health won't suffice in the long run.

Here are two "don'ts" for reclaiming your health:

### 1. **Don't gamble by assuming your health will take care of itself.**

This is the time for some action. When you turn your attention to yourself and your own wellbeing, you're making an investment in a priceless quality that you can't afford to sacrifice. This is not selfish; this is a necessary step.

If you aren't paying attention to your health, unfortunately, odds are that it will catch up with you later. Your body needs care, and you need to make a commitment to finding resources to give yourself the proper guidance.

### 2. Don't seek self-care direction from questionable or unreliable sources.

Up late at night surfing the Web for information on a particular health condition? Depending on the individual behind the counter at the health-food store to help you find solutions? If so, then you're not respecting yourself as you should be. You have a right—and a duty to yourself—to enlist professional assistance. What's more, there's a lot of confusion out there. Complicating your thinking with information overload doesn't lead to answers; it only makes the situation more puzzling. Avoid well-meaning but misguided advice by turning to qualified support for help.

Here are the do's:

Begin by paying attention to any health deficits you have, then work slowly and surely on at least one simple, healthful change in nutrition, lifestyle, or mindset that will help fix the problem. Here are a few small ideas to get you started:

- Try a new "good for you" food.
- Drink more water.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Cut down on caffeine.
- Go to bed 30 minutes earlier.
- Eliminate vending-machine food and bring delicious, nutritious snacks instead.
- Buy new sneakers.

Not one of these is a major change, yet the results can be life-changing. What other small steps can you add to this list?

Does the idea of putting yourself on your list as priority #1 make you nervous? Do you think that caring for yourself before others is selfish? Hardly so. In fact, the total opposite is true. Failure to care for yourself not only dims your potential brilliance, it also can result in delayed or lost opportunities to fulfill present and future goals. The whole cycle can be very expensive in terms of productivity and financial loss.

Keep your eye on the gift that keeps on giving: your good health. This is the best way for you to move forward in your life with vitality, enjoyment, and longevity. Start with a simple, small step: Pay attention. That means you shouldn't let warning signs slip under the radar. And you should get to know your body to understand what you're feeling. Doing so will allow you to reap countless rewards now, and in the future.



# PART

# 2

## **Reframe the Conditions That Hold You Captive**

## Chapter 4

### 3 Steps to Easing Your Daily Pain

*“The first tools we need are willingness and an open mind—the willingness to say that the mind is looking at something it is being asked to view so it can be healed.”*

—**David R. Hawkins, M.D., Ph.D., *Healing and Recovery***

I was overjoyed to be in the beautiful Berkshires in Massachusetts this weekend with my sister, Patti, when the foliage began to turn vibrant colors. In 2004, after her sudden illness necessitated a kidney transplant, I was the happy donor. Since then, she’s been feeling well and strong. I have, too. (I’m always pleased to hear that someone has registered for life-saving organ donation. If you feel that’s a step you might want to take, check out Donate Life America [[www.donatelife.net/](http://www.donatelife.net/)]. I’ll certainly be supporting you all the way.)

Pain is one of the most frequent difficulties that my patients bring to me. Are you living with some chronic pain, or are you merely trying to exist? Pursuing a fulfilling life—even if you are in pain—might be a challenge, but you can take positive steps right now to downplay the influence physical discomfort has on your life and purpose. Neck, back, joint, and other pain, along with inflammation, can respond well to an overhaul of your current way of life and thinking. Pain may be real, and its effect on our bodies and minds is real, too, but don’t stop with simply acknowledging your pain. Take an inventory of what doesn’t hurt, along with that list of your discomforts. Maybe you have to tolerate constant leg pain, but your shoulders are powerful and trouble-free. Maybe cold, damp weather triggers your joint pain, but the week has been warm and clear, and you feel good. Maybe you’ve discovered a spice that relieves your symptoms and tastes great, too. Whatever form the little victories take, celebrate the positive in your health and life. Life is to be lived to its fullest—pain and all.

Better health takes courage. Don’t be afraid to claim what’s good for fear it won’t last.

**“Pain (any pain—emotional, physical, mental) has a message. The information it has about our life can be remarkably specific, but it usually falls into one of two categories: ‘We would be more alive if we did more of this,’ and, ‘Life would be more lovely if we did less of that.’ Once we get the pain’s message, and follow its advice, the pain goes away.”**

—Peter McWilliams, *Life 101*

Isn't it time to take charge of your health? Start today by taking three steps:

**RECOGNIZE:** What's one negative thought that goes through your mind? Find one, and you'll begin to identify others.

**REFRAME:** What options might you have for more positive thoughts and actions? What is a more positive way of looking at the circumstances? What are some positive steps you might take? If you take responsibility for your pain, you can keep it from dictating your life. Here are just two health-responsible actions to consider:

### ***Explore the best of East and West.***

In addition to seeing your doctors regularly for checkups, be open to the holistic world to balance body, mind, and spirit. For instance, acupuncture can be used along with pain-relieving prescriptions.

### ***Learn what foods affect your condition.***

For pain management, add colorful vegetables and fruits, the spice turmeric, and health-promoting fats from fish, nuts, and avocados. Avoid sugars, caffeine, soft drinks, and, for some, the nightshade family (eggplants, tomatoes, white potatoes, tobacco). Helpful supplements include omega-6 fatty acids (fish oils), bioflavonoids, and glucosamine.

**RECLAIM:** Accept your innate health, ease the pain that has been plaguing you, and know that you're taking responsibility for *you*. Once you admit that you can change and take command of the steps needed to make that transformation, you're more than halfway there. (You don't see it yet, but do believe it, because it's coming.)

Beginning right now, put the 3Rs to work: Formulate one positive thought. Commit to taking one positive action. And say aloud, “I deserve good health.” In fact, you do.

**Case Study:** In the few weeks prior to seeing me, whenever Brian lifted his right arm, he winced with pain. Sometimes his discomfort was barely detectable, but several times a day, certain movements, like lifting an object at a certain angle or reaching his arm back, would cause a sudden twinge.

"I'm doomed to have surgery, but let's give acupuncture a try, anyway. I have nothing to lose," he said when he walked into my office. Having treated similar conditions successfully many times, I began his acupuncture, while at the same time speaking to him about his fear that an operation would be inevitable, explaining that he, indeed, had hope for avoiding surgery, and he could take actions that would help his condition.

Using a combination of Chinese and trigger point acupuncture, I released many of the tight muscles around his shoulder joint, so that, even after just the initial treatment, he noticed better range of motion with the arm and less pain. We added a couple of anti-inflammatory supplements (bromelain and fish oils) and gave him a few gentle exercises to keep the involved area more flexible. He also changed the ergonomics of his computer and desk at work, which improved his posture and helped prevent repetitive stress. After several acupuncture treatments, Brian was almost completely pain-free, and surgery was no longer a looming prospect.

My questions for you at the end of this chapter are: What have you done this week to ensure that your mindset is better balanced? What positive steps have you taken in your nutrition, lifestyle, and self-care?

## Chapter 5

### Inquiring Minds Want to Know... About Headaches

*“When the head aches, all the body is the worse.”*  
—English Proverb

**W**hen I polled my patients for conditions that they would most like to read about, headaches received more votes than anything else. And it certainly is true that I spend much of each day speaking with patients who have to deal with this annoying, painful condition, helping them find options for relief. Luckily, my results have been very promising using a combination of holistic techniques.

If you're a headache sufferer, you know that there are times when it's virtually impossible to look, feel, think, and live your best. Debilitating headaches can cripple your personal as well as professional life, often resulting in postponing activities, deadlines, and daily tasks for hours or even days.

If you're one of the many individuals plagued with headaches, then I believe the following information will help you get a grip on head pain once and for all. Dealing with your headaches starts with taking the time to look at your own particular condition, type of headache, and family history. Then use that knowledge to decide what you can personally do to make yourself more comfortable.

Not all headaches are alike. Different types need different attention, so start by determining what kind of headache you have. Could it be a...

#### **Tension-type** headache?

If you have a feeling like a band being tightened around your head, or if you simply feel muscle tension on both sides of the neck or back, it's possible that you have this common, occasional type of headache. Some unfortunate people, however, have them every day.

### **Cluster** headache?

If you're a male, then this may well be your type of headache, because cluster headaches affect men more than women. With intense pain that often appears on one side of the head without warning, cluster headaches last between 30 and 45 minutes. Sometimes these headaches are accompanied by teary eyes and sinus congestion. "Cluster" comes from the unfortunate fact that these headaches sometimes resolve only to occur again later in the same day.

### **Hormone** headache?

It's no surprise that these belong to the female population, usually triggered by the menstrual cycle. Many of their symptoms, such as sharp, throbbing pain on one side of the head, nausea, and sensitivity to sound and light are similar to migraines.

### **Migraine** headache?

Ever notice a visual disturbance before a headache? You could be experiencing an aura, which signals that a migraine is on the way. Throbbing and piercing, migraines are generally one-sided but can affect both sides. Sensitivity to light and loud noises, and even odors, as well as nausea, are often reported. Women tend to be the most frequent sufferers.

Do any of those sound familiar? If you know your headache type, that sometimes can help determine what treatment course will be most effective.

Before we discuss treatment, let's take a step back. Rather than treating a headache, imagine stopping it from happening in the first place. Too good to be true? Not at all. You can address many of the common causes of headache directly and easily. Here are some triggers:

- Working with your head still for long periods of time
- Keeping your head down, as when looking at a computer screen that's too low
- Changes in sleep, either too much or too little, especially on weekends
- Clenching or grinding teeth, especially at night
- Intense, flashing, or bright light, such as from the sun and computer screens
- Sudden or prolonged loud noise
- Skipping meals, dieting, or fasting
- Physical exertion and overdoing exercise

- Motion sickness
- Hormone fluctuation, especially estrogen in a woman's cycle.
- Food sensitivities to, for example, aspartame, caffeine, chocolate, alcohol, MSG, cheese, and aged or processed meats
- Medications, both prescription and over-the-counter
- Smells—whether unpleasant or not—including perfume, flowers, pollution, secondhand smoke, and strong food smells
- The weather, especially the period right before a rain storm or during changes in barometric pressure
- Allergies, which make a person sensitive to pollens and toxins, and often result in painful sinus congestion
- Stress and/or anxiety (but you don't have any of that, right?)

Now consider yourself armed with knowledge. You can identify many of the types of headaches and factors responsible for bringing them on. I hope you also know that you're not alone in this battle (just the popularity of this topic proves that). But better still, your arsenal will soon include options for helping to not only relieve headaches but even prevent them from occurring.

**Case Study:** When Sarah suffered from migraines, she was “out for the count” for the rest of the day. Done in by nausea, light sensitivity, and irritability, she had to stay home from work during those attacks because functioning in a work environment would have been impossible. She and I looked at all kinds of triggers: stress, lack of sleep, foods, environmental issues, and hormones. But until the day when we correlated her most intense pain to a change in barometric pressure, treatments simply helped her to cope with the episodes, not prevent them.

Undeniably a rainstorm would increase swelling in her body in general, and that became the obvious variable in her migraine pattern. I was able to show her actions that would help prevent a migraine when an impending storm was on the horizon, including acupuncture, supplements such as feverfew, and an avoidance of migraine-causing foods, such as nuts and chocolate. Now, she stays tuned to weather reports in order to avoid her migraine reaction to increased air pressure. A little detective work ultimately allowed for preventative actions as the best method of treatment.

**“Pain is one thing; suffering is another.”**

—David R. Hawkins, M.D., Ph.D., *Healing and Recovery*

For the next two weeks, keep track of facts about your headaches in a headache diary: when you get them, what you’ve been eating or drinking, hormones, the weather, any condition that’s different from the norm. This journal can be a helpful tool to connect the dots among seemingly unrelated clues so you can arrive at some real solutions based on your individual headache patterns.

My 3Rs are great for identifying approaches to the headache problem. Even if just one technique works for you, it’s a gift that can help put your wellness back on track.

**RECOGNIZE:** What’s fueling your headaches? The single, most-effective step you can take toward relieving frequent headaches is to understand what causes them. So, grab the headache journal you’ve been keeping, and start looking for patterns. When do headaches most often affect your life? Are they seasonal and predictable, or are they random? Are they related to a food, such as wine, chocolate, or cheese? Do they become worse before a stormy day? Are they hormone-related? Do they originate from a sinus condition, grinding teeth, poor posture, or eye strain? Most of all, are they stress-related?

**REFRAME:** Now address your thoughts and actions. Are you content to let headaches take over your life? Of course you’re not. And you have the power to seize control. It all starts with a change of attitude. Don’t focus on how much headache pain limits you. Instead, think about the many different options you have to fight off pain.

## **Modalities**

Have you considered acupuncture, acupressure, massage, guided meditation, or other mind-body techniques? If you live in the New York area, look no farther: These are all services offered at my Park Avenue Center for Wellbeing. If you live elsewhere, just e-mail or call me and inquire about my Virtual Wellness Coaching programs.

## **Action Steps**

If your journal helped you identify what sets your head screaming, you may be able to eliminate that trigger directly. But even headaches caused by unknown triggers, or the biological or environmental ones you can’t avoid, may benefit from these approaches:

- Wear earplugs to block out excessive noise.



- Get plenty of exercise and sleep, preferably at the same time each day.
- Change your body position at work frequently during the day.
- Confront a stressful situation head-on by speaking up for your needs.
- Avoid common trigger foods such as chocolate, cheese, caffeine, and alcohol.
- Stay well hydrated.
- See your doctor if your headache is a result of a fall or trauma.
- See your dentist if you wake up with jaw pain.

### Remedies to Try

Although it's possible your headaches are so severe that you must take prescription medication at the first sign of impending pain, my goal is for you to take as little medication as possible, as infrequently as possible. Have a few alternatives on hand so you're not tempted to reach for the pills unless absolutely necessary:

- **An ice pack applied to the pain point.** This simple trick may be enough to relieve your pain. Frozen peas, anyone?
- **Acupressure-to-go.** Place one finger or an eraser on an acupuncture point (best bet is between the big and second toe on the top of the foot) whenever you feel a headache coming on.
- **Herbal and nutritional supplements.** Not only can they relieve headaches, but some supplements can even prevent them. Known anti-headache supplements include feverfew, butterbur (although be aware of possible side effects), magnesium, Vitamin B2 (riboflavin), willowbark extract, and certain topical oils, to name a few.

**RECLAIM:** While headaches may be a reality in your life, be on the lookout for “victim thinking”—thinking that blames someone or something else for your condition. Take responsibility for finding out what your particular discomfort responds to, and try different options for preventing and relieving headaches in your life.

**Case Study:** Jill was referred to my practice by a well-known dentist who specialized in TMJ issues. Not only did Jill have jaw tightness and discomfort, but she also experienced headaches on a continual, though random, basis. As a result of stress and tension, Jill clenched her teeth all day long at work even though she wasn't aware of the nervous habit. Her jaw muscles were constantly tight and painful due to clenching at night as well as during the day.

Jill's treatment began with acupuncture to release the contracted muscles in her jaw and neck, while NET helped us to get to the root of the stress underlying the problem. A combination of dental work, including a night guard, and awareness of pain relief methods helped Jill find liberation from her discomfort.

Dealing with headaches by yourself can be a difficult undertaking. Don't try to do it alone. Find a health professional you trust to help you navigate through the possible causes of your headaches and to introduce some alternative, safe ways for achieving relief. Or call or e-mail me with any questions you may have.

## Chapter 6

### Look Under the Hood at Acid Reflux and IBS

*“Life itself should be regenerative. You should be singing, enjoying life, being happy with people, exercising, eating the appropriate foods.”*

**—Lee Lozowick, *The Alchemy of Transformation***

**G**ive it the right gas, timely maintenance, and a little TLC, and your car is likely to run quite well. But how many of us take the time to approach our bodies and optimize our health in the same attentive way?

I see lots of patients who treat their possessions, pets, and other people much better than they treat themselves. Putting yourself last by ignoring your body’s dashboard warning lights can often take a toll on the basic functions that drive your health, balance, and wellbeing.

Interestingly, at the root of most imbalances in your body are “problems” with your digestive system. Believe it or not, your digestion is the key to many health issues you may be experiencing, because it affects the functioning of everything else. Read on, and I’ll explain... Think about the basic mechanics of your car. It has an engine that needs to run smoothly in order to keep all the other systems moving along. And that car incorporates automotive hoses designed to move fuel, air, wastes, and information in one direction only, without blockages or mishaps.

Your body operates in much the same way. The “engine” that runs everything else is your digestive system. Its functions are to break down, absorb, and assimilate food and nutrients in order to make optimal use of the fuel you put in your tank.

But what if your digestive system isn’t functioning as well as it should? A malfunction at this point can disrupt your whole body’s balance, resulting in symptoms from discomfort, heartburn, bloating, and other inconveniences to more far-reaching and longer-lasting conditions such as arthritis, allergies, moodiness, autoimmune issues, skin problems, low energy, and actually many more repercussions than I can fit here.

We all experience digestive problems from time to time. That’s only natural; after all, not many of us have “iron stomachs.” On the contrary, most of us have more delicate systems, resulting in two conditions that

I see in my office day after day: acid reflux (also known as GERD—gastroesophageal reflux disease) and IBS (irritable bowel syndrome), disorders of the upper and the lower digestive systems, respectively.

Ever had a burning feeling in your chest, or a sour or bitter taste in your mouth more than twice a week, with each episode lasting for up to a few hours after you eat? If so, it may be acid reflux. This condition is caused by the backup of acid and stomach contents into the esophagus. Acid reflux is so common that “the purple pill” and other prescription and over-the-counter remedies are now well-known household names.

You could also have another, quieter type of acid reflux while you sleep and not even know it. The chronic dry cough, hoarseness, and even allergy-like nasal congestion that many patients suffer throughout the day may actually be caused by acid reflux. This is reflux that occurs at night without any burning sensations at all. Your doctor may diagnose this condition as “silent reflux.”

What causes acid reflux? Many things! Here are just a few of the most common offenders: stress, weight gain, alcohol, caffeine, eating large meals, eating too close to bedtime, eating too quickly, citrus, dairy, chocolate, tomatoes, diet soda, and spicy food. Other health conditions can also contribute.

What about IBS? These three letters appear daily on my intake forms. Characterized by alternating constipation and diarrhea, irritable bowel syndrome, or IBS, may be mild or merely inconvenient in some patients. For others, the condition can be painful, cause urgency, or trigger bloating, fatigue, and headaches. These symptoms are often made worse by certain foods (see above), stress, and other irritants. I’ve actually treated patients who have had to stay home or plan trips around restroom availability. Not fun at all.

If acid reflux or IBS affects you, grab control. Begin with a doctor’s checkup—but don’t stop there. Take the time now to learn about some of the many holistic, natural ways to approach and ease these conditions so they don’t run your life. Relax. You’re on your way to safely navigating digestive speed bumps and regaining balance and wellbeing throughout your whole body.

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**“Eating everything you want is not that much fun. When you live a life with no boundaries, there’s less joy.”**

—Tom Hanks

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Okay, we’ve discussed the symptoms of acid reflux and IBS. Remember that the digestive system is responsible for the assimilation of the “fuel” that you put into your tank to keep the body’s systems running. If there is a backflow, you may experience acid reflux, or if there are problems lower down, you may develop irritable bowel syndrome.

These problems are very unpleasant, but they don't have to be permanent.

I mentioned that people sometimes take better care of their cars than they do their own bodies. Are you one of them? I'd like to offer you an easy-to-follow guide that may help you restore your "engine"—your digestive system—to a point of balance and, let's face it, a more comfortable ride throughout your day.

I can't emphasize enough how your digestion is at the core of every function of your body. Good digestive health means good overall health, so let's send acid reflux and IBS packing for good. We can use my 3R system to make it happen.

**RECOGNIZE:** What's going on? Are you paying attention to what your body is saying, or do you wave off regularly occurring symptoms? Statements like "It's just indigestion," "It was only something I had for lunch," or "It's just stress at work" can actually be signs that you're in denial, a signal that you're not listening to your body's cues. Be honest. You know who you are.

Those statements above may be true, okay, but maybe they're not the entire story. Take a few minutes during your day to stop and listen to your body—to your gut, specifically—to see whether it's truly happy. If it is, great. But if it's complaining, get on the road to feeling better with steps like the ones below.

**REFRAME:** Change your thinking and accept responsibility for your health from the inside out. Then follow each thought with a change in your habits. Here's the surprise: Most of these suggestions work to relieve both acid reflux and IBS.

### **I can effectively troubleshoot to identify potential pitfalls.**

To identify possible food triggers, plan to do a mild detox. My suggested routine is doable and usually lasts only one week. During this time, you'll eat plenty of fish, poultry, vegetables, fruits, and nuts, while eliminating wheat, dairy, sugar, peanuts, citrus, fatty meats, yeast, eggs, sodas, caffeine, artificial sweeteners, processed food, and alcohol. Relief from acid reflux or IBS during the detox period might indicate that what you've eliminated is a problem food for you. This knowledge will help you manage your symptoms in the future.

### **I can gain support to lighten my load.**

Too much physical body weight can exacerbate digestive conditions. Think about starting a nutrition plan to target both your digestion and weight management. You might be carrying too much mental weight, as well: your stress. Techniques such as guided meditation and NET (neuro-emotional technique)

can ease the heavy feelings caused by tension. Since we have so many receptors for emotion in our digestive systems, it's no wonder that stress can be a leading cause of problems there.

### **I can look for ways to safely improve my digestive activity.**

An individualized supplement plan is ideal. It might include: probiotics to repopulate necessary, good bacteria; herbal or mineral treatments such as slippery elm and zinc; glutamine, deglycerized licorice, and digestive enzymes to soothe the intestines; and/or other nutritional components like fiber as an agent to clear the intestinal tract.

### **I can navigate curves in the road.**

Your day presents challenges as well as opportunities to take positive actions. Are you eating too fast? Please slow down. Are you going to bed too soon after eating? Wait a few hours. Are you eating too much at once? Try smaller meals spaced three hours apart. Are you exercising? Try moving; it usually helps. Are you sleeping in a flat position? Acid reflux can be decreased by raising the mattress at the head.

### **I can try a time-tested route that's been used for thousands of years.**

As a licensed acupuncturist, I am pleased to report that this modality helps to alleviate the discomfort of acid reflux and IBS as well as to rebalance the nervous system. Acupuncture can balance the meridians, especially the yin/yang partners, stomach and spleen, and infuse a calm energy that helps to alleviate distress and discomfort. I can even teach you helpful acupressure points that you can later use at home.

**RECLAIM:** You deserve to be healthy, and a healthy digestive system will result in improved overall wellness. Find peace in knowing that you're doing your best to keep your body in optimal condition. Remain resolved to take the measures that will start you feeling and looking your best. Finding knowledgeable, caring support will help you stay the course. I look forward to working with you on your journey to what I call "extreme wellbeing."

**Case Study:** "I can't seem to stop this burning after I eat" was the main symptom that brought Eric in for help. He joined hundreds of others who come into my office every year complaining about what is typically thought of as "heartburn" or acid reflux.

Despite the many medications available for the condition, Eric was determined to see if he could stop his discomfort in a natural way. The first step for us was to look into his diet. It wasn't long before I noticed some common triggers, such as tomatoes, chocolate, alcohol, caffeine, and citrus. Then we surveyed the stress component, and Eric filled me in on the workload he had been handed recently and the pressure he felt to complete his tasks in an unreasonably short amount of time. Because the digestive system is often the first place for the signs of stress to register in the body, the extra demands

at work appeared to be a major contributor to Eric's digestive problem.

Lastly, Eric and I discussed his lifestyle, and one factor stood out as a possible trigger for acid reflux: going to sleep too soon after eating. The minimum amount of time after eating before lying down should be around three hours; anything less can initiate discomfort. My suggestion that he have his meal earlier in the evening, in addition to giving him some soothing, healing supplements, made an enormous difference in Eric's comfort level. As a result, with the consent of his doctor, Eric was able to avoid medication for the time being.

Take a closer look into what your body needs in order to stay in balance. Are you ready to move on to more action right now? Use acupuncture to get on the road to tip-top health.

## Chapter 7

### Spring Allergies, or Who's Afraid to Smell the Roses?

*“Keeping your body healthy is an expression of gratitude to the whole cosmos—the trees, the clouds, everything.”*

—**Thich Nhat Hanh**

I am so over the winter weather! Spring is my favorite season, hands down. Watching the flowers and trees bloom always gives me a lift, accompanied by a real-time acknowledgment that the cold days in the Northeast are finally over. (At least, that's what I'm choosing to believe.) It also heralds a super-busy time for me in my office because of the countless number of people coming in seeking natural, holistic relief for their “hay fever.” Bravo to all.

If you're one of the many suffering from seasonal allergies, read on for some of the details we discuss. A tip below just might help you navigate through the sneezy, drippy spring allergy season. Knowledge is the first step to taking control. Do let me know which one of these works for you, and call or e-mail me for my super cleanse.

#### **Is it an allergy or a cold?**

For some people, the first bud in spring (or falling leaves in autumn) regularly triggers a cascade of allergic symptoms. Do you start to sneeze and sniffle? Do your eyes and throat itch? Do you wake up with sinus congestion or pressure? Do you have a tired, heavy feeling that seems to characterize this allergy season? If that sounds like you for more than a week (and that's a *big* hint), then most likely you have seasonal allergies. If you have a fever, or if congestion and other symptoms last for only about a week, then chances are that you've had a cold. If you're not sure, check with your doctor.

#### **So, what are allergies anyway?**

I call it a case of a misguided but well-meaning immune system, whose mission is to protect you from foreign invaders. Generally, allergies are caused by your body's immune reaction to substances that



aren't inherently harmful to you. Specifically, seasonal allergies are caused by pollen released into the air by trees, grass, and flowers. Tree pollen, the most predominant, causes the worst of our reactions.

### **What are the most common symptoms I see in the office?**

Itchy throat and eyes are often combined with congestion, runny nose, sneezing, and coughing. If not handled diligently and right away, these symptoms can turn into more involved conditions, such as sinus infections, asthma, or other respiratory ailments, so it's important to take action at once. Also, check with your doctor to be sure you aren't at risk for serious conditions and don't need monitoring.

### **Can you get help from the natural, holistic world?**

You bet! There are many steps you can take, as well as triggers you can avoid during this period that will help you be comfortable despite all the signs of spring in the air.

Spring is a time of new potential, growth, and vibrancy. In Chinese medicine, spring is also the season of the liver and gallbladder, and their meridians. Great ways to recognize and celebrate this season and all it symbolizes are acupuncture and a liver cleanse. I can offer you a cleanse that serves as a safe, easy, effective way to eliminate toxins, recalibrate your body after the winter, and lay the foundation for the active months ahead. (Take note that when you use my super cleanse, you eat nutritious, filling meals, and the cleanse requires just seven to 10 days. Give me a call and I'll get you started. The cleanse includes both diet and supplements that help the detoxification process.)

**Case Study:** When May rolls around, I usually find a flood of patients in my office suffering from congestion, sinus pressure, and headaches. Spring allergies can be a source of suffering for many individuals, so when Eileen came in, we got right to work with NAET, a natural allergy elimination technique.

I explained to Eileen how a consistent homecare routine was crucial to her winning the war with allergies, and recommended the purchase of a HEPA air purifier, a daily sinus rinse, and exercising outdoors only at times when the levels of allergens in the air are lower. Taking into account her tendency to react to common allergens, I advised Eileen to be especially careful about what she ate, and we spoke about the need for her to eliminate excess sugar and too much dairy (a mucus-producing food group for many) and to make sure she got plenty of wholesome fats, including omegas from salmon, walnuts, and avocados. In addition to the essential fatty acids, I advised Eileen to try quercetin and stinging nettles, supplements specific to her type of allergic reactions. Acupuncture for allergies was very helpful for her as well.

Eileen soon reported having a more comfortable spring season, and she was able to eliminate most of the fogginess she had previously experienced at this time. For next year, however, she has vowed to

come into the office in March to prepare for the allergy season before her symptoms kick up.

Okay, we've discussed some general information about seasonal allergies. I know what you really want is relief, so now it's time to roll up our sleeves. Let's get to work on becoming more comfortable and feeling good even when the pollen flies.

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**“Health is the thing that makes you feel that now is the best time of the year.”**

—Franklin P. Adams

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A further way you can mobilize your resources is to use my highly effective 3R system—**Recognize, Reframe, Reclaim**—to improve your health and wellbeing during this annual time of overload challenge. Suffering is optional when you Recognize, Reframe, and Reclaim.

**RECOGNIZE:** Start by taking stock of your situation, then ask yourself what you've done in the past that actually worked. What are you feeling at this time of year? Can you pinpoint what substances trigger allergy symptoms for you? What lessens those symptoms, and what relieves them completely?

**REFRAME:** I have five solutions for you. All of them come from the critical reframing step. Reframing means getting to the nuts and bolts of relief by changing how you think about the problem. Don't assume you have no control. Here are some patient-proven suggestions for finding answers:

### **1. I can make changes to my environment.**

No, I don't think you should become a hermit. But it can be very helpful to avoid outside air during the hours that pollens are most active, usually 5 a.m. to 10 a.m. Installing a HEPA air filter in your home can remove 90 percent of the irritants in your indoor environment. Vacuuming regularly and keeping windows closed will further limit what gets into your home. And don't forget to wash your hair and change your clothes to remove pollen you've carried in yourself after exposure to the great outdoors.

### **2. I can make changes to the way I eat.**

Sugar increases the body's inflammatory response, which in turn can exacerbate the immune system's allergic reactions. But did you know that specific foods can also make your allergies worse? Apples, pears, peaches, cherries, and, for some people, milk, can aggravate symptoms. Best to eat other fruits and vegetables to get your Vitamin C at this time of year.

### **3. I can try new techniques to reduce discomfort.**

Acupuncture, natural sensitivity-reducing techniques, and electrodermal screening (allergy testing without subjecting you to unpleasant and slow skin-test methods) are just a few examples of old and new modalities that have helped others combat allergy challenges.

### **4. I can try natural, patient-tested supplements.**

Quercetin, stinging nettle (not to worry, it's in a capsule), and butterbur are among the natural remedies that have been shown to be successful in some patients. If you have a more serious condition, such as asthma, you'll want to see your doctor first to clear the way for taking synergistic, natural remedies. The ultimate goal is for you to feel well enough to take less medication.

### **5. I can think differently about my allergies.**

Yes, allergies may be a "cross to bear" in the spring, but studies show that reducing stress and anxiety can help ease the discomfort of allergies. Guided meditation, exercise and yoga, and NET (neuro-emotional technique) can all help in your efforts to feel calmer and more balanced.

**RECLAIM:** You definitely deserve to be healthy and feel well. Find the activities that bring you a sense of fun, accomplishment, and comfort during the allergy season. Know that you are taking responsibility for the way you're feeling, and congratulate yourself for that. With consistent and diligent action, you may soon be on the way to a spring with far fewer annoying allergy symptoms.

## Chapter 8

### Take Control of Stress Right Now

*“Surely there is something in the unruffled calm of nature that overawes our little anxieties and doubts; the sight of the deep-blue sky and the clustering stars above seems to impart a quiet to the mind.”*

—Jonathan Edwards

This afternoon, I’m in the Berkshires taking a much-needed break from the whirlwind of Manhattan. This part of western Massachusetts is my favorite place to go to charge my batteries, regroup, and just plain relax. It’s only a long weekend, and the time goes by quickly, but when Monday rolls around, I feel as rested as if I’d been away for an entire week. Sometimes I can just think of being here, and my body language changes completely. I view the weekend out of town as an integral part of my self-care. Do you have a favorite place or memory that can take you away from your everyday stress?

Recently, returning to the office after a productive week away, I found my desk overloaded with messages and mail. What do I do in the city when I feel stress creeping in? My go-to ways to bring in some balance and calm are exercise (like a Pilates session or 30 minutes on the elliptical machine) and guided meditation. But stress can be dealt with in a number of other ways, so let’s look at that now. Ever feel that pain, discomfort, and other symptoms all tend to arise when you’re stressed? You’re not alone—and you’re right on the money.

In fact, various studies have shown that anxiety, stress, and other emotional conditions can actually decrease the body’s immunity and leave us open to illness, from the common cold to heart conditions. Psychologists have long observed that emotion triggers the release of hormones throughout the entire body. But humans produce two different groups of emotion hormones, and they cause the body to react in two different ways. The first response is a flooding of hormones that put the body on high alert, preparing it to move fast in self-defense. Scientists call this reaction the “fight-or-flight response.” These hormones and fight or flight are the way our bodies naturally respond to stressful or threatening circumstances. The second possible response is a release of hormones that work in a nearly opposite way. These relaxation chemicals allow our entire bodies, including brains, muscles, and organs, to rest, regenerate,

and heal. Positive emotions are the trigger for this healing release. In truly dangerous or frightening situations, the fight-or-flight response can literally save our lives by giving us a quickened reaction time and a burst of energy. But when the body is constantly manufacturing those action hormones but not using them, an unhealthy chemical build-up and feelings of tension result. Modern life, fast-moving technology, and poor dietary and lifestyle habits can all also add to—or even produce—this stress response.

Who can avoid stress these days? (I haven't met anyone yet.) So if you're like many of my patients—with multiple responsibilities, too little time, and your own unrealistic expectations of yourself and others—you might be experiencing a tightness and/or pressure in many areas of your body, especially the neck, back, and digestive system.

What do you do when stress creeps into *your* daily life?

**Case Study:** Jeremy came in admitting he was stressed as soon as he sat in my office. What to do about handling this stress was now the focus, because it was taking a toll on his health. He had the following issues: weight gain, back and neck pain, allergies, and difficulty sleeping. This left him feeling uncomfortable, tired, irritable, and low on energy. "I've had enough," he admitted. "I can't change my job and family, so I'll have to figure out something else to change, because I'm in an unhappy place."

First, we looked at his nutrition. We saw that he was skipping meals and then making up for it at night, in addition to heading to the vending machines at around 3:00 p.m. most afternoons. That pattern added up to extra pounds every year and erratic energy levels. Eating more regularly during the day was going to be an important change for him. We then examined his sleep habits and realized that he wrote e-mails late into the night, which made it difficult for him to calm down and get ready for sleep. Eating earlier in the evening, reading something less stimulating, and taking a warm shower before bed helped him to initiate a more regular sleep schedule, improved his mood the next day, and generally added to his confidence and self-esteem.

Just those changes in eating and sleep made a big difference for Jeremy, though we continued to work on other aspects of his health, including acupuncture for his tension-origin neck and back pain. After a month, Jeremy was noticeably more content, more comfortable, and better able to handle the challenges that confronted him.

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**"The greatest discovery of my generation is that a human being can alter his life by altering his attitudes."**

—William James

Remember the 3Rs? These strategies can help you maintain or gain control of an overactive fight-or-flight response.

**RECOGNIZE:** What events trigger your own fight-or-flight response? Remember: In a dangerous situation, the fight-or-flight chemicals can give you strength and speed your reactions. But not every circumstance is truly threatening. Now, while you're in a safe physical and emotional place, jot down a list of triggers that cause your stress level to rise. Then go through that list rationally: Which ones are real threats to your safety or wellbeing? Those are the ones that you don't want to work on when you...

**REFRAME:** Arm yourself with calming thoughts you're able to remember when events that are not true threats occur. Here are some simple statements you can use to counter stressful but not dangerous situations:

**I am safe.**

**I am alive.**

**I am okay having options.**

**I am okay being truthful.**

How do these statements work? If your morning commute to work, for example, raises your stress level, you can counter the effect by focusing on an affirmation such as "I am grateful for the opportunities of this day." Or if meeting new people triggers your anxiety, try calming yourself right before your interview by reinforcing the simple thought "I can trust myself." With repetition, these calming contemplations will become your new automatic reaction to normally stressful events.

**RECLAIM:** Behaviorist and author David J. Lieberman, Ph.D., writes that "At the heart of persistent anxiety is the fear of being out of control." Taking back control by learning to alter your mind's and body's responses is a healthy step toward reversing the damaging effects of stress on your body.

One natural, effective way to reverse the damaging effects of stress on the body is NET, or neuro-emotional technique. This powerful technique, which I've provided to patients successfully for years, makes positive use of the mind-body relationship by directly addressing the emotional component of health.

NET helps us—you and me, working together as a team—to identify your unresolved emotional/psychological patterns from the past with laser speed. It works quickly to help you change the outdated "default settings" that keep you stalled in a stressed, uncomfortable, and unhealthy state. Isn't it time to replace the old self-talk that no longer serves you with balanced, positive messages?

### **The results:**

Patients find that long-standing pain and other chronic symptoms resolve much more quickly when the emotional component is addressed as well as the physical. In many cases, it's the missing link to health.

### **Try it now:**

Stop for a moment and recall the last time you felt the tension and anxiety that signal a fight-or-flight response. Was it at your last business meeting? At a social event? When thinking about financial concerns or family issues? Start by applying the 3Rs to that situation, and begin taking control of your stress level.

PART

3

**Reclaim Your Ultimate Health  
Using These Strategies**



## Chapter 9

### Healthful Eating—Throw Out the Diets

*“If I’d known I was going to live this long, I’d have taken better care of myself.”*

**—Eubie Blake, on his 100th birthday**

Okay, I’ll confess: I’m sitting here working and enjoying my favorite fun food: a Lindt chocolate truffle. Notice I didn’t use the word *cheating* or say it’s “bad” food—that kind of thinking is so last year. Today, we’re all about taking responsibility for the choices we make and for tuning in to our natural hunger and fullness signals, an amazing diagnostic tool that we’re born with but often override..

I’m excited about my new way of looking at eating. I’ve decided to totally eliminate the concept of “bad” foods, and I refuse to feel guilty if and when I splurge. So far I’ve also resisted the impulse to buy every tabloid that highlights a new fad diet modeled by a svelte, bikini-clad starlet.

I didn’t always have such a positive attitude toward food, though. I admit, at some point in my life, I may have made some of these familiar statements: *“I’m on a diet and shouldn’t have any treats.” “Eating during the holidays is like navigating landmines.” “I’m going out tonight. I’d better starve now to prepare for a big meal later.” “I’m sticking with my diet foods all the way—then I know I’m good.” “I am so glad I didn’t break down and have a cookie. Instead I had a ton of good food.” “I’m getting thin for the holiday party. I’ll do whatever it takes to wear that new dress/suit.”*

Do those words sound as if they could have come from you or someone you know? I hear these and others just like them in my office every day.

Hot off the press: We’re *done* with the guilt, deprivation, and discouragement that come from unattainable (and often undesirable) goals. For good. For real.

Let’s talk about the basic, biological state of hunger. Do you know when you are really, truly hungry, as opposed to being bored, depressed, stressed, rushed, or under pressure? Most of us don’t, because we haven’t listened to our inborn signals in a long, long time. We’ve pushed them off, then overindulged, starting a cycle of hunger, guilt, stress, shame—and more overeating. Get the picture? If you’ve thought about starving yourself so that you’ll fit into that holiday party dress, it’s practically guaranteed that

you'll either be as uncomfortable as a sausage, or you'll lose the weight only to put it right back on, and then some. The negative cycle always seems to continue.

### **The Fullness Scale is a great tool to help you get in touch with your food needs.**

Here's how it works:

1. Visualize a scale from 0 (starving) to 10 (stuffed). Rate your hunger. Keep a food journal, and add this information, if you like.
2. Interpret your rating:
  - a. If you are a 0 or 1, you're already too hungry and in danger of overeating at your next meal or even throughout the rest of the day. *Try never to go without food so long that you reach this point.* Once you do, your body will think it's starving and will hold on to every single calorie for dear life.
  - b. If you rate your hunger a 2, 3, or 4, it's time to eat. *Continue eating only until your self-rating is a 6 or 7.* This can be tricky to gauge, so don't eat straight through to the end of your meal. In the middle of your lunch or dinner, actually put down your fork and take a pause. Think carefully about how you feel. Where are you on the hunger scale? If you're still really hungry, keep eating. If not, think about stopping now.
3. To continue to determine your fullness level, consider how you feel after your meal and rate yourself once again. Are you a 6 or a 7 now? Right on. If you're a 9 or 10, you're probably feeling stuffed or, worse, sick, and you've just gotten some good information about what it feels like to override your satiety cues. It's uncomfortable; you won't do it next time. (Notice there is no self-bashing in this discussion.)

Now it's time to ask yourself: "What do I really like to eat?" Surprisingly perhaps, many of us actually don't know. Make a list: What texture (crunchy, creamy, chunky, soft, cold), intensity (spicy, mild, robust, light, rich), and taste (salty, pungent, sweet, tart) do you want in your food? Armed with this information about your own food preferences, you'll be prepared to take some positive steps. Choose to include these types of foods in your diet to ensure that you'll be satisfied. If you don't include your favorites to begin with, you might end up eating lots of other foods (along with hundreds of needless calories) that you really don't want in search of that one food experience. Is it worthwhile continuing to avoid that desired food indefinitely? Not a chance.

Not giving in to the self-recriminations that come from strict diets and their downfalls will allow you to learn to respect your body, for both its good points and the negatives. I haven't met anyone yet who

totally loves everything about his/her body, but I have had the pleasure of meeting some individuals who have successfully made peace by choosing healthy imperfection over unrealistic, overly restrictive diet rules. When you feed your body well, you also feed your soul.

Now here's the good news. If you know my 3Rs (Recognize, Reframe, and Reclaim), you already have the tools you need to drop unhealthy habits and begin to look at food in a whole new way. The 3Rs will rescue you from these unhealthy food attitudes just in the nick of time.

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**“The doctor of the future will give no medicine, but will interest his patients in the care of human frame, and in the cause and prevention of disease.”**

—Thomas Edison

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Who said you have to lose weight to be healthy? They were dead wrong. It's time to realize that you must get healthy in order to lose weight, not the reverse. The diet mentality doesn't work because it offers false hope for losing weight quickly and permanently, often giving recommendations that are boring, restrictive, and unsatisfying, if not downright unhealthful. And chances are, if you've been on a diet at some point in your life, you've lost and regained the same amount of weight over and over.

A newer and better eating plan isn't just around the corner. It's been programmed inside you since your birth; you've just ignored its warnings and messages all this time. Food is nutrition that your body requires in order to survive, but eating can also be an enjoyable journey into what makes you tick. What you need is a sustainable way to nurture your body by learning to listen to your body's own hunger cues. Then you can make your peace with food, once and for all.

Diets don't work because they make unrealistic promises based on false hopes, while deprivation always backfires in some way. What does work for health and weight management is to adopt the right attitude about food. To do that, you have to throw out your guilt and look at food for what it is: both necessary nourishment and a source of pleasure. The 3Rs are great for taking this knowledge and turning it into positive action.

**RECOGNIZE:** Eating is a necessary biological function, so it makes sense that the mind-body connection is very pronounced when we look at food, weight, eating, and nutrition.

Think about the Fullness Scale above. This is a great tool for recognizing the relationship between body and mind at both ends of the Fullness Scale, and a tool for trying to reconnect your attitude toward eating and your body's real needs. Before you eat, take a moment to honestly rate your degree of hunger.

- **If your rating is a 7 or 8, you're not truly hungry.** Think about what other factors might be triggering your urge to eat. Are you feeling stressed, bored, nervous, angry, deprived, or overtired? Eating won't solve any of those problems. Allow yourself to get to the bottom of what you're feeling instead of masking the emotion or sensation with a snack or a meal.
- **If your rating is very low, pay attention.** Use the Fullness Scale throughout the day so that you become aware of your body's hunger cues. You can avoid overeating by answering your body's need for nourishment before you reach the desperate 0 or 1 on the scale.

When it's time to eat, don't be afraid you'll overdo it. Your body comes equipped with a portion-size measurement system. Look at the size of your palm. Right there is the correct size of a healthy portion of meat. Curious about how much pasta to eat? Just look at the size of your fist. (No, it's not that huge bowlful restaurants serve. Ask for a half-order, eat part, and take the rest home, or split it with a friend.)

**REFRAME:** Think about eating in a different way. One way to reframe your thoughts and actions is to ban the "food police." Grant yourself a pardon and spring out of food prison—no parole necessary. Let go of all the unreasonable, guilt-causing diet rules.

- Being a "good" person doesn't mean you can only eat "good," diet foods. And eating "bad" foods, like a piece of chocolate cake, shouldn't propel you into feeling "bad" about yourself. When forbidden foods no longer exist, they'll no longer have a hold on you.
- What if you suffer guilt because you're a member of the "clean plate club"? Don't let the thought of wasted food force you to eat. *Instead, ditch the dinner plate and use a salad plate.* You'll visualize a lot of food but will be eating less than if you piled up dinner on a larger dish. You can have more food later if you're still hungry, but you won't overeat if you're not. And as for that chocolate cake—studies show that your taste buds actually become indifferent to the yummy taste in under five bites. You'll receive no added pleasure from finishing the cake just because it's there. Make a new habit of sharing desserts.

In short, a positive feeling of self-worth is unconditional; it has nothing to do with your food choice of the day. Please adopt a more loving, forgiving, and compassionate view of yourself, and realize that you're doing your best to stay healthy by eating nutritious foods as well as foods that you enjoy. Give yourself permission to feel satisfied and happy.

**RECLAIM:** Knowing that you can enjoy what you like removes much of the drama and negative self-talk around food and eating. Reclaim your health by adopting these ideas:

- Your body needs food. *Eat when you're hungry, and stop eating when you're full.* Just periodically

engage in a reality check with your body about your level of hunger to be sure that you are within a healthful, comfortable range of being fed.

- Make sure that you like what you're eating to nourish your body. Don't eat what you don't like. Deal?

The plan sounds simple, and it is. What's hard is throwing out the old habits that have kept you trapped for so long. But changing your ways is a worthy goal. You deserve the benefits of feeling healthy.

**Case Study:** Jennifer noticed that she was gaining weight and wasn't happy about it at all. She couldn't decide why this was happening, because she exercised regularly. She was clearly frustrated. However, when we looked closely at her food journal, we noticed that she had been skipping meals. That in itself could be the culprit, because when your body is deprived of nutrition for an extended period of time, it thinks it's starving and holds on to every available calorie. In addition, an important food group that seemed to be missing from Jennifer's diet was vegetables, the magic food of weight management. For her, fruit was a go-to choice without protein or fat to slow down its metabolic effect on the body. Moreover, a reliance on diet sodas was keeping her body in a "sweet" mode, even though real sugar wasn't included in the drinks. In fact, research has shown that diet sodas contribute to weight gain.

As soon as Jennifer added more vegetables and water, cut out diet sodas, and ate every few hours, her weight began to come down in a healthful way.

## Chapter 10

### To Sleep: Why We Should (and How We Can)

*“Rest is the sweet sauce of labor.”*

—Plutarch

I guarantee that you know this deal-breaker, deal-maker to good health if you think about it. Take a few seconds to guess. I'll wait for you. Did you say *sleep*? Then you've hit the jackpot.

One of the main contributors to health problems—lack of sleep—plagues just about all of us at one time or another, and some of us (a whopping one-third of all adults) more often than we like—yes, even those of us who know better. On Monday, I admit, I was tired. Why, you might ask, was I dragging after a weekend? Because I slept too late on Sunday morning. I know. At first glance, that seems to go against all logic. I learned the hard way that sleeping later than usual Sunday morning can delay my bedtime Sunday night, even though the alarm will be ringing at the same time the next morning. Now I understand why sleep experts recommend that we get up within an hour or so of the same time daily.

A regular, consistent waking time: There's my first recommendation. And that's just the beginning of what you can do to help yourself get more rest.

But it's only a few hours' beauty sleep, you say? Read on for why rest is critical to good health, and the physical and mental toll skipping it can take on your wellbeing.

What's so important about getting those zzzzzs? Think about the last time you woke up after a really good night's sleep. Remember how energized and refreshed you felt? Your body's natural daily cycles of renewal, activity, and growth are taxing. Periods of nightly restorative rest and repair actually reverse that wear and tear. When allowed to recover from those normal but significant demands, your body rewards you by delivering optimal levels of health and efficiency.

What happens when that opportunity for R-and-R is taken away? You already know that without enough sleep, your body will show signs of fatigue, ranging from annoyance to depletion. But did you know that even illness can result? In fact, studies show that lack of sleep is a major underlying cause of the body's malfunction and eventual breakdown.

In addition to flagging energy during the day, sleep deprivation may initiate physical and mental problems that can truly disrupt our day—and life. Lack of rest can contribute to pain, inflammation, stress hormone production, and even accelerated aging and increased obesity. Yes, it's true. Medical studies show that the less you sleep, the sooner and more likely you are to get old and fat. Include with that poor memory, disorientation, and a weakened immune system, and you have a recipe for big-time illness and dysfunction. Too little sleep also decreases your alertness and response time, leading to dangerous driving situations.

Add all that on top of exhaustion and feeling just plain “off” during the day, and the message you receive is very clear: Getting better sleep isn't a luxury. It's a requirement for good health and safety.

To understand why sleep is so critical, let's start with the basics. What happens during your nightly rest? Every night, you rotate through four phases of sleep, a cycle that repeats about every 90 minutes. In Phase One, your brainwaves slow, muscles relax, and blood pressure drops slightly. Phase Two, lasting from several minutes to an hour, is characterized by physical relaxation accompanied by increased levels of brain activity and REM (rapid eye movement), a state often marked by vivid dreaming. In Phase Three and Phase Four, your brainwaves reach the ultraslow, regular frequency of deep sleep.

You might be thinking, “Why do I need to know all that?” The bottom line is this: Without a long enough period of rest, or if sleep is interrupted, your body is not able to experience all four stages of sleep proportionately—and you won't reap the beneficial physiological effects of each stage.

All right, I've described the ways that sleep deprivation affects the body's essential functions. In short, sleep is a key component to health. Getting fewer than eight hours of sleep can lead to illness, obesity, and poor overall daytime performance.

Causes of lack of sleep are complex and often occur in combination. You know the usual ones: too much caffeine, traveling to different time zones, noise, children, middle-of-the-night trips to the bathroom, and pain. But did you realize that the following physical and behavioral factors can also play a role in your staying awake?

- Drinking alcohol before bedtime (which might seem relaxing at first but backfires by keeping you up later on)
- Smoking before bedtime
- Being a woman over 40 (the most likely group to be wakeful)
- Having anxiety about—you guessed it—inability to sleep
- Physiological problems, such as snoring and sleep apnea
- Not listening to your body's cues or giving in to a “second (or third) wind”

In addition, your sleep environment can work against you. Here are a few characteristics of poor sleeping conditions:

- Any light at all in the room—not just streetlight seeping into windows but also the glow of computers, TVs, and illuminated clocks
- A room that's too cold or too warm
- An old mattress that needs to be replaced

For many of us, sleep is an elusive endeavor. With heavy, stressful work schedules and the demands of daily life on our shoulders, we are challenged to get the rest we need to be productive, healthy, and energized. But take heart: We can learn to control at least some of the factors that affect our ability to rest.

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**“It is the trouble that never comes that causes the loss of sleep.”**

—Charles Austin Bates

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If you're tired of being tired, done with tossing and turning, and so over the sheep-counting routine, use the lists above to take two steps toward better health today. True, some of the physical factors above are things you can't fix (such as being an over-40 female) or can't do much to correct by yourself (sleep apnea, for example). But you *can* control many of the behavioral ones. Start small by eliminating alcohol and smoking, and not being tempted to work through a “second wind.”

Assess and adjust your sleep environment. Try it tonight, then dedicate a week to resting in optimal conditions. You may be surprised at the improvement you feel.

You can also start getting the rest you need from the holistic viewpoint. (Hint: One patient favorite is “acupressure-to-go,” a method of self-treatment described below that works wonders at bedtime.) Read on for other holistic, patient-tested ways to get the rest that your body craves and requires.

**Case Study:** When nighttime rolled around, David's energy peaked. Still checking e-mails at midnight, he complained of being tired at work with a lack of focus during the day. When we looked into his lifestyle patterns, we found he slept too late on weekends instead of getting up around the same time as during the week. As a result, on Sunday nights, he was never tired enough to go to bed at a reasonable hour, and the cycle of tiredness at work started again every Monday.

Overstimulated by electronics at night, and involved in work-related issues, David found it difficult to turn off his mind in order to go to sleep. He also saved his heaviest meal for late evening and snacked



all night long. As a result, he went to sleep with a full load of food in his digestive system. Then, when he tossed and turned, he became more concerned about his ability to function optimally the next day—which led to more stress over not being able to sleep. The result: an irritable, foggy, tired young man.

David and I spoke about his making some changes to this routine, beginning with his getting up at the roughly the same time on weekends as during the week, and having him stop with electronics (computer, TV, and such) at least an hour before bedtime. He agreed to try eating dinner around seven and a light snack before bed, and to place a notepad by his bed in case he was up worrying about the following day. These changes amounted to a big improvement in his ability to sleep, so the next day he was more focused, energized, and rested. David soon reported functioning more optimally at work and being happier overall.

Feeling trapped in a cycle of daily fatigue and nighttime wakefulness? Applying the 3Rs will give you some solutions from the integrative, holistic perspective to bring relief, energy, and vitality back into your life.

**RECOGNIZE:** You need to get a handle on why sleep has been elusive before you can make repairs. Here are the most common causes of sleeplessness:

### **Poor Eating Habits**

If you indulge in heavy meals, devour sugary foods, or eat too close to bedtime, your ability to get a good night's sleep can be compromised. Instead, have a light dinner. If you're still hungry later, snack on small portions of foods rich in protein (such as yogurt), tryptophan (turkey), and light carbohydrates (fruit).

### **Lifestyle Choices and Behaviors**

Begin to wind down earlier in the evening to give your body nighttime sleep cues. For instance, you may relax easily when you take a warm bath, keep lights dim (and then completely dark for sleep), or read a boring book. Stay comfortable during this time also. Simple measures such as wearing socks if you have cold feet can make a big difference. And start a habit of keeping the wind-down period calm. Reserve physical exercise and stimulating media such as TVs and computers for other times of the day.

### **Stress**

Find a healthy way to let go of the things that cause you stress. I have one patient who keeps a notebook by his bed and “downloads” all of the day's stresses by putting them in writing. Another patient stows

a gratitude journal nearby, ending each day by jotting down its pluses. Either method will provide you an emotional outlet and calm your mind.

**REFRAME:** Are you talking yourself into sleeplessness? It's possible that self-talk could be making sleeping more difficult. I have patients who wake during the night, then fret about how little time is left to sleep. The cycle of worry and mind chatter sabotages their efforts to get back to sleep.

Allowing yourself to think "I'll never go to sleep" will only make matters worse, so reframe your thoughts to "Even though I'm up now, I'll be able to take steps to fall asleep successfully." And then do it.

If you awaken during the night and find getting back to sleep a challenge, don't toss and turn. That only stimulates anxiety. Instead, break the cycle. Get up and go to a different, dimly lit room to journal, read, practice deep breathing, or listen to a guided meditation CD.

Once you've turned off the critic in your mind, you're ready to try additional sleep solutions:

- **Relaxation therapies** such as meditation and biofeedback can put your mind and body in the sleep mode.
- **Treating physical pain** is critical to restoring sleep. Whether you use holistic modalities, such as acupuncture and massage, or your doctor's suggestions, address pain directly.
- **Dietary supplements and herbs can help.** Magnesium is a natural muscle relaxer. Melatonin helps to regulate wake/sleep cycles. Ashwagandha helps deal with stress. Valerian, passionflower, and chamomile teas are time-tested traditional aids to relaxation.
- **Acupressure-to-go** is a simple self-treatment solution. Place two fingers on the back of your neck, directly below where it meets your skull, and massage this area. This is a wonderful way to prepare for sleep.

**RECLAIM:** Breaking a cycle of sleeplessness or a habit of too-little rest is like making any other lifestyle change. It won't be easy, but by no means is it impossible. You have so much to gain and nothing to lose, so take that first step now. Feeling vibrant, energized, and refreshed—remember what that's like?—is the wonderful reward you'll reap. And it's within your reach.

## Chapter 11

### Live Your Life with Plenty of Energy

*“The higher your energy level, the more efficient your body. The more efficient your body, the better you feel and the more you will use your talent to produce outstanding results.”*

**—Anthony Robbins**

I just came back from a family vacation at a Palm Desert resort where I headed straight to my favorite destination: the spa. Exercise, rest, and massage really help to restore the depletion caused by a very busy work and play schedule. I'm going to pledge to include them in my daily life regularly—will you? Please say “definitely,” and read on for more solutions that will restore your zip. During the week I handed all the patients who came into my office a checklist of health challenges that they face. They were asked to rate them by priority. The results: Number one was lack of energy. It even outranked weight issues, much to my surprise. I want to share some of the ways we unintentionally zap our energy reserves and, more importantly, give you tips on how to reclaim your sparkle and pizzazz. Read on to learn how to gather your forces in a healthful way, and participate in all the activities that you want and need to engage in without feeling drained.

Patients tell me a lack of energy makes the day seem long, difficult, and unproductive. Does this pattern sound familiar? First, a lack of energy leads to a loss of sharpness in focus and memory. Then, especially in the late afternoon when blood sugar gets low, a less-than-optimal mindset and mood set in. Next come worry and guilt over not accomplishing enough, which in turn leads to mental weariness—further bringing down health and wellbeing. This sequence of events quickly becomes an exhausting, vicious cycle.

A person who runs out of steam typically either sinks to a lethargy fueled by exhaustion (yawn), or launches into a stress-filled attempt to beat the clock to get every last thing done (whew). This cycle negatively affects immunity, the aging process, and general self-esteem—not to mention focus and ability to handle the tasks at hand.

Many energy suckers are largely preventable, the result of poor choices. The good news is you can break the pattern. Most energy loss stems from unhealthy habits that sneak into our routines. Before we know it, they've become regular parts of our daily life. But take heart: If you recognize these behaviors, you can make a conscious effort to take positive steps and change.

### **Energy Zapper #1: Late-Night Work**

Internet and e-mail tend to blur the line between work time and personal time. You know who you are—the one who always wants to finish “just one last e-mail.” Before you know it, you've found a “second wind” and spent an hour or longer working on. But doing that requires overriding your body's cues for rest and repair. This doesn't just keep you up way past your normal bedtime; it also disrupts your body's natural rhythms, setting the stage for energy depletion the next day.

**Energy Fix:** Make a pact with yourself to adhere to a time limit. Stick to it even if you have to set an alarm to remind yourself. When the time is up, stop working—period. If you become tired before that time, listen to your body. Refuse to be lured into fatigue by the “just one more thing” syndrome. It's a trap. (I know that myself from past experience.) Start tonight.

### **Energy Zapper #2: Relying on Caffeine**

You know you're in trouble when the entire staff at Starbucks knows your order. Yes, a cup in the morning is a typical part of the wake-up routine, but continuing with cup after cup all day long to maintain your energy level will surely backfire. Caffeine creates tension by raising your stress hormone level. You may also crave sweets when you crash from the caffeine. And on top of that, caffeine is a stimulant that can potentially keep you up at night (leading, of course, back to #1 above).

**Energy Fix:** After one cup of coffee in the morning, switch to green tea. It has a far smaller amount of caffeine but also boasts antioxidant benefits coffee can't claim. Or, if you are totally addicted, opt for a half-decaf blend. Your best beverage bet of all: herbal tea or water. Once you get out of the caffeine habit for a day or two, it will be easier to resist, I promise you. And without having that stimulant constantly circulating, you'll feel better balanced, more relaxed, and stable during the day.

### **Energy Zapper #3: Creating Unrealistic Expectations (or None at All)**

Are you a list maker? This isn't a bad thing. But if your lists are impossibly long, you're only setting yourself up for failure. Even worse is not making a list at all and figuring you'll just do everything you can with the little time you have allotted. “Winging it” and overestimating how much you can achieve both prevent you from having the satisfaction and peace of mind that come from a reasonably paced, productive day. Either way, you may find yourself lying sleepless in bed at night, thinking of everything that didn't get done.

**Energy Fix:** Take time to get real. Have a good, hard look at what you sincerely want and need to do. Begin your list with necessities such as work, childcare, errands, gym, and food shopping. (Please don't forget to focus on *you*, too.) Then be honest. Only add as many extra duties as you can accomplish. You may have to reschedule the ones that just won't fit that day, and that's okay. You'll still have tomorrow. Make a point of crossing off each task as you complete it, too. This is important: It empowers you, reminding you that you're in control and successful.

### **Energy Zapper #4: Poor Boundaries**

Are you constantly at the beck and call of others, given no opportunity to express an opinion, or asked to take on unrealistic tasks? Do you typically become discouraged, feel powerless, and develop low self-esteem? Not standing up for yourself is a real drain. Over the long term, the effects range from fear to pessimism, further dragging down vitality and making feeling free or in charge nearly impossible for you.

**Energy Fix:** Honestly examine your willingness to do too much for others. Perhaps you've lost your sense of self along the way while over-giving, over-agreeing, or participating in well-meaning relationships that no longer serve you. It's time to rethink these situations. Draw clear boundaries with negative people. When a request is unreasonable, simply say "no." While it's true that we can't change others, it's also crucial to our own wellbeing to alter how we react in order to keep their negativity or selfishness from invading our own lives.

### **Energy Zapper #5: Unhealthy Food Choices**

Taking control over our own health and wellbeing starts with good nutrition. If you routinely skip breakfast, consume sugary treats, turn to vending machines for snacks, or order meals that lack protein or healthy fats, you're not getting what you need. Many who struggle to make it through the day are running on empty—empty calories, that is.

**Energy Fix:** First and foremost, plan ahead. Long before you start craving or feel your energy sinking, decide what and when you're going to eat. Set your sights on three meals and two snacks. Know what you'll need to buy, prepare, and take along with you. I keep almonds, a Metagenics Rice Ultra Meal Bar, or some fruit in my bag or on my desk at all times so healthy choices are easy and available. I'm not leaving my nutrition up to chance. Neither should you.

### **Energy Zapper #6: Uncertainty About How to Improve Your Health**

Maybe you're aware something isn't quite right, but you're not sure what it is. The very fact that your wellbeing is in question can make this a stressful and exhausting problem. But don't put it off. Finding and fixing energy drains in your life may take a little work, but it's so worth it when you look at the results: more resolve, better focus, more accomplishment.

**Energy Fix:** My 3R system is the perfect approach to this problem.

**“Do you remember the things you were worrying about a year ago? How did they work out? Didn’t you waste a lot of fruitless energy on account of most of them? Didn’t most of them turn out all right after all?”**

—Dale Carnegie

Here’s how you can use the 3Rs to help you regain your lost energy:

**RECOGNIZE:** What are the roadblocks holding you back from accomplishing all you want and need to do? Compare the situations that make you feel drained to the ones that leave you energized. What are the key factors that make a difference for you? Once you know what the problems are, you can take positive steps to correct them.

**REFRAME:** Turn those minuses into pluses. True, you can’t always change a situation, but you can change your mindset and actions so that you deal with events more effectively.

You can make significant inroads to feeling more energized by using the energy fixes above to get started with the Reframe step.

**RECLAIM:** Use your newfound energy to move forward, feeling productive and focused throughout your day. Vitality is a gift to do with as you please. Don’t be afraid to take advantage of yours.

**Case Study:** When it came to getting something done or multitasking, Tracey was the one you could always count on.

An efficient, competent, bright young mother, Tracey had a number of people to take care of, including her three children, her husband, and her mother. By the time the kids had completed their after-school activities, ate snacks and dinner, and went to bed, Tracey was so exhausted that she had no energy left for herself or to spend time with her husband and friends. Her to-do list was so long that she was constantly stressed about not accomplishing what she had set out to do, and as a result Tracey felt that she was underachieving and always falling short of others’ expectations. Her eating plan was virtually nonexistent because she ran so fast and had so little time to tend to even the most basic self-care; her meals were merely an afterthought.

Tracey and I first spoke about her lack of “me time,” which to a young mother is so important, and the need to consider her own basic requirements in this hectic mix. We established a sound, practical

nutrition plan that even included some healthful bars to take with her in her handbag when running errands, as well as a nutritional shake to mix if she had to hurry out the door in the morning. We also went over her schedule and decided to break down her over-giving and over-serving routine into priorities so that the timetable was not only doable, but it also honored her own “musts” for a better balanced and more satisfying life. I offered her a supplement designed for the “stressed and wired” type of personality, as well as acupuncture to smooth out her stress and harried mindset.

We also used NET (neuro-emotional technique) to identify the root cause of the need to please everyone around her at all cost. As a result, she was able to calm down then, and take a look at her routine and see how her energy was scattered and thus unsustainable. She was soon able to move forward with a new understanding of how she might accomplish what she must do for her family but also attend to herself and her own requirements.

## Chapter 12

### Renew Your Thinking in Living Color

*“Health is a state of complete harmony of the body, mind, and spirit. When one is free from physical disabilities and mental distractions, the gates of the soul open.”*

—**B.K.S. Iyengar**

**W**hile sitting down to write today, I’m in the middle of loafing at my favorite escape: Rancho La Puerta in Baja, Mexico. I’m here on a treasured mother-daughter week for a repeat visit to a super-casual environment full of fitness classes, hiking, massage, exquisite grounds, warm people, and delicious home-grown food. (Now you can see why I love to return.) I’ve decided to use this week as a time for activity but also renewal and reflection, as so much has transpired in the two years since I was last here: marriages, births, deaths, career expansion, and more. I’m in an environment that can teach me so much if I listen and am aware.

Vacations are all about “R and R”—rest and relaxation. During my vacation here at Rancho La Puerta, though, I learned they can also give us another “R”—renewal—that will last even after returning home. The fresh thinking I gained from this trip is too good not to pass along. Here are two great ideas I picked up from the experts during my stay.

#### **Idea #1:**

The owner and director of the ranch, Deborah Szekely, gave a talk about her life and philosophy. She shared her strategy for keeping balanced, with priorities mindfully in place:

- Write your planning calendar in pencil.
- At the end of each week, erase those items that didn’t actually happen.
- Review and highlight each remaining event in color:

**Green** to symbolize personal growth,



**Black** to designate a “toxic” event or person,

**Blue** to signal a task that could have been delegated, and

**Red** to signify friends and family.

This technique enables a person to see how that busy week was really spent. More importantly, it can help in making decisions and changes to avoid future “black” and add more “green” and “red.” Isn’t this a great way to incorporate what you want more of in your life, and to identify and solve the issues that might be holding you back? It’s a method I’m adopting going forward.

### **Idea #2:**

Let’s move beyond our comfort zones. As another trainer put it, “We live in a Starbucks culture, which means that we all expect the same thing the same way every time. That is limiting thinking and prevents us from being more agile, flexible, and open to new experiences.”

That trainer’s advice is right on the money. Doing only what we know best, day in and day out, leaves no room for spontaneity or adventure. Dedication to routine can rob us of creativity, too, but it can also get in the way of our goals for improvement. And isn’t bettering ourselves what self-growth is all about?

There’s nothing wrong with having a plan. In fact, as busy as most of our lives are, it can be crucial. And a certain amount of predictability keeps us grounded while giving us a starting point each day. That’s a positive.

But if a person finds herself saying “no” to every new opportunity and every chance to try something different, perhaps it’s time to step back and examine why. What’s the real reason behind that decision? Think about the last time you automatically dismissed opportunity by saying “I don’t have time” or “I’m not interested in that.” Was that really the case? Or did that decision come down to fear—fear of losing control, fear of challenge, fear of embarrassment, fear of failure, maybe just fear of something new and untested? These are times when having a “comfort zone” is more hindrance than help.

This is the end of my own predictable Starbucks life. From now on, I’m making a point to identify which routines in my world are really just traps—and better yet, find ways to introduce a little adventure.

Put these two great tips together, and you have a recipe for renewal. Now, while it’s fresh in your mind, make an appointment with yourself at the end of this week to evaluate how your time was spent. If you find there’s more “black” and “blue” than you like in your life, figure out why. Is “Starbucks thinking” playing a big role? Take charge!

Now, when I think back to my vacation at Rancho la Puerta, I think of the lush foliage and winding paths through the glorious property. One day, as I was walking to the spa after a long session of fun fitness activities, I came upon a fork in the path. My thought: This is truly a win/win choice. In other words, whichever route I chose, I'd be headed toward relaxation, beauty, and peace.

That thought was symbolic of where I am today in my personal and professional life. I am filled with gratitude that I'm presented with such positive, empowering paths to pick from every day. I hope the same is true for you. Let gratitude play a role in your daily choices, and you'll find the win/win mentality to be part of every equation.

**Case Study:** From time to time, I see patients who are afraid to try anything new. They come into my office thinking that they can continue their same routines—but with different results. I know I read somewhere that this is the definition of insanity.

I point out to those patients, as I did to Nina, that in order to see changes, she had to make them in her life, despite the fact that she was quite afraid of the unknown and the “what ifs.” Perhaps staying in her current physical state with back and neck pain wasn't so bad after all?

We spoke about her decision to make the appointment and come in, and decided this action in itself was a good indication that she was ready to move ahead and change her level of discomfort. After all, what did she really have to lose? She began to feel more amenable to “taking the plunge” and making the choice to do something for herself—and to alleviate her pain—even if she was unsure of the outcome.

After her introduction to acupuncture, Nina was immediately relieved to see that the treatment wasn't nearly as uncomfortable as she had imagined. More importantly, she was proud of the fact that she had taken the chance and displayed the courage necessary to break through her fear. The confidence in herself that resulted was a real lift for both of us.

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**“Know, then, whatever is cheerful and serene that supports the mind supports the body too.”**

—John Armstrong

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Vacations can be so refreshing. Two weeks later—even with the demands of a full-time practice—I'm still feeling revitalized. And here's another half of the renewal picture: tips to maintain a healthy, balanced physical self even while you keep up with work. Have a look at this idea of renewal through my other Rs, the three we can generally use to revitalize ourselves.

**RECOGNIZE:** Are you stuck in a rut? Have you told yourself so? Do you cling to “safe” routines *because* they’re safe? Have you often thought about breaking out of your patterns? Do you believe you’re stuck feeling obligated to some individuals you don’t really like to be around? Is your body tense and screaming for relief? Face the facts. Then you can change.

**REFRAME:** Understand that new places and new people open up the opportunity for a larger life with more fun and greater mental and physical—even emotional—stimulation. We are meant to continue evolving as long as we’re on this earth and breathing air. Give yourself the okay to go forward and the okay to explore. Bring more passion to your life, and enjoy each and every day in a unique way.

**RECLAIM:** We can reclaim many areas of our existence. One part of our lives we could probably all start by reclaiming is our physical selves. Here are some ideas toward that very positive end.

We’re a connected culture—maybe too connected. How much time do you spend each day hunched over a desk, attached to a telephone, or staring at a computer? Sitting still while talking and typing may not look as physically challenging as pro sports, but in their own way these sedentary activities are stressful and take a toll on the body.

The solution? Adopt this new rule: Don’t sit for prolonged periods of time without some form of movement or stretching. Get into the habit of taking a break every 20 minutes to add a bit of mild physical activity.

I hear protest. Did you automatically react with “A break every 20 minutes? I can’t do that and keep my job!” Not to worry. We have many simple options for these breaks. None of them take long to accomplish and will help reverse the effects of sitting still at a desk or not being active enough during the day. Rounded shoulders, beware.

### **Get some fresh air:**

Close the door and practice a little careful deep breathing. Inhale slowly for a count of seven, hold for a count of four, and exhale slowly for a count of eight. Repeat at least six times or for a few minutes. The effect of this simple technique is incredible; it’s like taking a spa vacation.

### **“Play” ball:**

Put a tennis ball on the floor. Place one foot (no shoes, of course) on top of it and roll it under the foot, arch, and heel in a back-and-forth or circular motion. Change feet and repeat. In reflexology, the foot is a representation of your whole body, so by massaging your feet, you’re actually giving yourself a body massage (!) as well as grounding and energizing yourself. What an easy way to reap big rewards.

### **Meet the band:**

Bring in a band—a long piece of firm, flat elastic. Extend your arms in front of you, then grasp one end of the band in each hand and pull to stretch your upper back, neck, and arms. Stretch again while holding your arms over your head, and then reach behind your back for a third stretch.

### **Show stress the door:**

While standing in a doorway, press your hands against either side of the doorframe and push yourself gently forward to lean through. Do this three times, each with your hands in a different position: below, level with, and above shoulder height. This will engage all the muscles that are overused and abused by slouching over a computer or desk. Ahhh...feel the tightness in the pecs and traps dissipate.

### **Try “netwalking”:**

This technique comes courtesy of Joe Sweeney, author of the book *I Know I Should Exercise, But...* It's a wonderful idea for busy professionals who work in proximity to or in a building not far from colleagues. Joe advises planning walking meetings outside to discuss business instead of the usual communication by phone or e-mail. This “netwalking” accomplishes three important things at once: business, exercise, and a clearer mind. My reaction to Joe's advice: Wow—why didn't I think of that?

Remember that taking a physical break has powerful mental value, too, in that you return to your task rejuvenated and focused. There are no losers in this game.

Maybe not all of these tips are right for you, but you won't know until you try. Make a commitment now to test-drive at least one or two of them. If you have a history of losing yourself in your work, set a timer to remind you when it's time to take a break. I promise you won't regret it. The reward—a body that carries home less achiness and tension at the end of a day—is worth the effort.

## Chapter 13

### Caring for Your Largest Organ (Your Skin)

*“All sanity depends on this: that it should be a delight to feel heat strike the skin, a delight to stand upright, knowing the bones are moving easily under the flesh.”*

—Doris Lessing

I'm sitting here in the sun thinking about the sun. Summer is truly my favorite season, and feeling the warmth and taking in all the scenery fills me with great happiness. (I'm definitely not as happy outside in the freezing cold.) The good news: Summer has just started. Maybe I still have that summer vacation mentality from school days even though my schedule is equally as busy all year round.

No matter. I'm working and loving the heat, flowers, and calm that signify peace to me. The grill is ready for some wild salmon and fresh vegetables from the newly stocked farmer's markets. Yes, this is definitely going to be a fabulous summer. I can feel it already. I hope you feel that sense of joy and hope, too. But don't forget to take care along the way. Read on for valuable skin health information that you need to know—stat.

Summer arrives at least once a year in most parts of the world. Particularly at this time of year the sun—and both the damage and the benefits it can offer—is intense. Are you taking good care of your skin? Here are 12 must-know facts and guidelines about the sun and your health.

#### **1. There's a difference between the rays.**

In terms of skin health, sunlight comes in two types of rays: UVA (think “A” for aging) and UVB (think “B” for burning) rays. The UVBs can be the damaging ones you hear so much about.

#### **2. “SPF” has a meaning.**

The Sun Protection Factor in a sunscreen product refers to how long you can stay in the sun without burning unprotected skin.

### **3. Buy the best SPF for you.**

I personally don't put on less than the equivalent of a 30 (a total from all the various skin products I use). Be wary of sunscreens with sky-high numbers such as 90. These products may contain more potentially irritating synthetic ingredients. Try to find mineral formulas.

### **4. Not all sunscreens block both UVA and UVB.**

Different compounds block different rays. Check labels carefully to make sure your sunscreen does the whole job.

### **5. The right amount of sunscreen is a minimum of one ounce.**

*Hint:* If your eight-ounce sunscreen tube isn't empty after eight days, you probably didn't use enough. (Another S: slather!)

### **6. Reapply sunscreen after every two to three hours of exposure.**

Follow this rule even if the product says "water resistant." Swimming or perspiring? Yes, you need more.

### **7. Reapply even more frequently when you're around reflective surfaces.**

Water, snow, and ice are reflective.

### **8. Apply your sunscreen 365 days a year.**

While the sun may feel its most intense during the heat of summer, those damaging UVA and UVB rays actually penetrate year-round.

### **9. My skin doesn't burn easily. Why bother?**

Even when the harm done by a sunburn isn't obvious, underlying damage can occur. Spending too much time in the sun without sunscreen or covering can result in annoyances such as wrinkles, freckles, or uneven coloring; the itching and discomfort of dry skin; or truly threatening conditions including skin cancer.

### **10. Don't forget to protect those tricky places.**

Ears, exposed scalp (a part, for example, or bald areas), and hands need coverage. Don't forget to reapply sunscreen to hands after washing, too.

## 11. Clothes aren't always enough.

Hold clothing up to a light. If you can see light through it, it's too sheer to protect you from sun damage (good to know when buying T-shirts or beach coverups).

## 12. Sunglasses are more than a fashion statement.

Check the label. Do yours block both UVA and UVB rays? Protecting your eyes from the sun can help prevent cataracts.

Now that you're armed, take a step back for the surprise: Your body needs exposure to the sun (those UVB rays, to be exact) to make Vitamin D, a hormone essential to good health. Do I hear gasps—or cheers?

According to Michael F. Holick, M.D., in his book, *The Vitamin D Solution: A 3-Step Strategy to Cure Our Most Common Health Problem*, sun phobia and the use of sunscreens have prohibited our bodies from making “the sunshine vitamin” that is critical to just about all areas of health. Dr. Holick is an expert who was ahead of his time. He has been writing and talking about the benefits of Vitamin D for years, though it has only recently come into the forefront of medicine and research. Among the facts his book shares:

### Why do you need Vitamin D so desperately?

A huge percentage of us are deficient, even those who live in sunny climates.

### What can it do for your body?

Almost everything! Vitamin D contributes to the health of:

- Bones (by preventing osteoporosis and fractures),
- Cells (by warding off cancers, infectious diseases, and asthma),
- Organs (by guarding against heart disease, diabetes, and tooth loss),
- The autoimmune system (by decreasing risk of multiple sclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis, Crohn's disease, and Type 1 diabetes), and
- The brain (by staving off depression, Alzheimer's, and dementia).

In addition, this hormone supports muscle strength and helps prevent mood-related health problems (PMS and sleeping disorders).

Our bodies don't make Vitamin D on their own unless we spend time in the sun responsibly. For those who are sun-shy, certain foods and supplements can provide the missing vitamin.

So it's really okay to sit in the sun? It's best to consult Dr. Holick's book, which contains sun exposure recommendation charts for different skin types and geographic locations. In general, Dr. Holick suggests that 10 to 15 minutes of unprotected sun exposure on your arms and legs (avoid sun on your face) from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., two to three times per week, is very beneficial. And inlanders need not despair: No beach is necessary. Sitting outside at lunchtime will do. If you're wearing a bathing suit, though, remember that more of your skin is exposed. This means more opportunity to get your Vitamin D and less time required in the sun (approximately seven to eight minutes). And then the sunscreen goes on right away. Remember: The rule is to spend time in the sun *responsibly*.

When it comes to sun and skin, it doesn't take much effort to reap great health gains. Take a moment to answer two questions: Do you have just a few minutes a day that could be spent soaking up some vitamin-producing rays? Or, on the other hand, are you compromising your health by spending too much time unprotected against the damage the sun can cause? Small adjustments go a long way. Commit yourself to adopting them today.

Summer is and will always be my favorite season. Maybe it's because I live in the Northeast and feel chilly most of the year. In terms of available food choices, summer is good to me, too. I prefer local summer produce, such as berries and fresh corn that I can only wish for in other seasons.

It's no coincidence, then, that my skin in the summer is at its most vibrant. It's a direct result of eating such a variety of fresh food. An added bonus is that my immune system profits from the antioxidants as well. Read on for more simple—and often tasty—steps you can take to ensure you're taking good care of your body's largest organ.

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**“Take care of your body. It's the only place you have to live.”**

—Jim Rohn

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**Case Study:** Before taking off for a warm-weather vacation, Lucy was excited about lying in the sun and getting a tan. I worried that her fair skin might burn easily and suggested she use sunscreen to ward off harsh rays during the peak daylight hours and around the water. Dr. Holick speaks about judicious sunbathing depending on how close one is to the equator, and advises taking proper measures.

Since Lucy might easily run into trouble, we spoke about the need to reapply sunscreen often, and especially after swimming. Because of the association of the skin with the immune system, I gave her



an acupuncture-to-go treatment for reinforcement because of the risks associated with the air on the plane. Moreover, as Lucy was also plagued with allergies, and was highly reactive to mold, becoming easily congested, we fortified the lung meridian through acupuncture.

*(Acupuncture-to-go is a term I use for applying a small piece of tape with a microscopic metal ball to an immune point on the arm. This procedure is for individuals who are ill or who are traveling and need additional protection for their immune system. I also use this technique for smoking cessation or other addictions. I place tiny, clear circles of tape with microscopic metal balls on several key points on the ear that are instrumental in the auricular part of the treatment. Practically invisible, the acupuncture-to-go tapes help to reinforce the treatment and show patients the areas that can be stimulated for extra care.)*

Why not go the 3R route in caring for your skin?

**RECOGNIZE:** Think about where you live and where you vacation. How much sun do you get in the summer? Or even in the winter? Do you use an SPF to protect yourself from locally strong rays? Do you know the reasons to take extra Vitamin D and in which form? Have you investigated all of these issues and feel that what you're doing in this regard is right for you?

**REFRAME:** In addition to having a new understanding of your needs, you can determine to change your routines to boost the health and appearance of your skin. A whole new set of habits will give you a spectacular glow.

**RECLAIM:** Everyone can take a few of the following steps for a more attractive and more comfortable life:

### **Skin Booster #1: Foods to Benefit Your Skin**

Have problem skin? Your skin directly benefits from many of the components in a balanced, healthful diet. A few simple changes or additions to your menu may help alleviate skin complaints. Here are some of those skin-healthy nutritional elements and common foods that provide them:

- Omega-3 fats from cold-water fish (such as wild salmon and sardines)
- Beneficial oils from flaxseed and walnuts
- Zinc from beef and peanuts
- Fiber from beans and whole grains
- Fresh fruit (especially cherries, berries, and apples)

- Vegetables (particularly sweet potatoes and spinach)
- Water for hydration

On the flip side, some foods contribute nothing to skin health—or can even compromise it—and are best avoided. Sugar, cola and other caffeine-rich products, and alcohol are among those common culprits.

### **Skin Booster #2: Three More Beneficial “Foods”**

When the skin shows signs of damage, the right foods can ease symptoms and discomfort. But don't expect to eat these skin-friendly foods. They are best when applied directly to the skin.

- Aloe naturally soothes irritation. It's great for treating and protecting areas affected by minor burns, scratches, and insect bites. Just cut open a fresh aloe leaf and squeeze its gel directly onto the irritated area. (Some grocery stores even sell large, single aloe “spears.”)
- Chamomile tea is known for its ability to calm a stressed or sleepless mind. But when applied to the skin, it also “calms” rashes, hives, inflammation, and other minor irritations. Brew the tea in water as you normally would, then cool thoroughly. Use a spray bottle to mist affected skin.
- Cucumber is not just a tasty treat. Applied topically, it also eases swelling. Keep this high-water vegetable in the fridge, and lay slices of it on swollen areas for a soothing, cooling effect.

### **Skin Booster #3: Supplements for Your Skin**

Some dietary supplements are especially helpful in achieving and maintaining healthy skin. These include vitamins A, B, D, and E; beta-carotene; and fish oils. Many multivitamin formulas contain most or all of these. In addition, some good herbal formulas include calendula, goldenseal, St. John's wort, nettle, red clover, and/or burdock, all of which contribute to skin health as well.

### **Skin Booster #4: Dry Brush Exfoliation**

Right before your shower or bath, go over your body with a soft, natural-bristle brush. This simple routine helps to remove dead skin cells, encourage detox, improve lymph and blood circulation, and decrease puffiness. Some therapists who recommend dry brushing also suggest you take short periodic breaks from the practice.

### **Skin Booster #5: Chinese Medicine**

Emotions, digestive disorders, poor diet, toxic buildup, and an unbalanced lifestyle all take a toll on a person's health. Traditional Eastern medicine recognizes that external influences and environmental factors (cold, wind, dampness, and heat) combine with internal ones (blockages in the meridians—the body's natural vitality pathways) to cause imbalances that become obvious on the skin. In fact, traditional healers regard the skin as the front line of defense of the body and consider it an essential part of the immune system, similar to the lungs.

That's why the ancient healing technique of acupuncture can be an effective treatment for troubled skin. Acupuncture corrects the underlying causes that show up on the skin. Acupuncture frees blockages in the meridians, restoring the body's natural energy flow and balance. This in turn improves or eliminates many skin conditions, including acne, rosacea, eczema, hives, and itchiness.

### **Skin Booster #6: Exercise**

It's common knowledge that movement and exercise can help to prevent bloating and loss of muscle tone. But did you know that exercise can also help the body fight off puffiness and acne? In addition, regular exercise leads to better circulation, which in turn has a positive influence on the way your skin looks and feels.

Remember: The skin is your body's largest organ. It only makes good sense to care for it. Take a moment now to assess the health of your skin. Are you satisfied with your skin's comfort and appearance? If not, perhaps a few changes are in order. Start with the list above and regain the gift of "feeling good in your own skin."

## Chapter 14

### You Can Thrive in the Middle of Winter

*“‘Hear! hear!’ screamed the jay from a neighboring tree, where I had heard a tittering for some time, ‘winter has a concentrated and nutty kernel, if you know where to look for it.’”*

**—Henry David Thoreau**

**W**hen you hear “winter,” do you think of days cut short, along with clouds, and gloomy skies? Do you miss the excitement of the recent holidays and instead feel a little down, with flagging energy? Or perhaps this time of year, you kick yourself for having a hard time completing simple daily tasks. These could be signs of Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD for short), and it’s much more common than you might realize.

The other side of the overabundant sunlight of summer is the absence of natural light because of winter’s shorter daylight hours. This is the number-one reason for the blue feeling that characterizes SAD. Cold, cloudy, wet weather makes exercising and enjoying the outdoors during the day more difficult. Staying indoors equals even less exposure to natural light, which can negatively affect the body’s production of the neurotransmitter serotonin. Low levels of serotonin trigger a depressed feeling that’s hard to shake.

Many people I see in my office complain of the “winter blahs” in varying degrees and mistakenly feel alone in their condition. I explain that this is a common pattern shared by many who are sensitive to the changes of the seasons, starting as early as October and November.

SAD sufferers report that getting out of bed in the morning, feeling energized, and even socializing normally all are more challenging in the fall and winter seasons than in the spring and summer months.

If that sounds familiar, here are some things you can do to remain positive and keep your batteries charged this winter.

### **Brighten your physical environment.**

Natural sunlight helps most, so let it in. Roll away dark shades, sit next to a window in your office, and make a point of getting outside for breaks whenever possible.

### **Move around.**

Join a gym, get an exercise CD, or just stand up and stretch. Remaining sedentary only contributes to that lethargic, heavy feeling, so incorporating walks outside during the day will make a difference and help to lift your mood.

### **Invest in a phototherapy lightbox.**

This is a small investment with big returns. It generally only takes 30 minutes each morning to get positive results from a phototherapy device. What's more, some insurance plans will even help with the cost of a lightbox if your doctor indicates you'd benefit from it.

### **Stay in touch.**

Make more of an effort than usual to connect with friends, family, and colleagues.

### **Utilize stress-management techniques.**

These include yoga, meditation, acupuncture, massage, guided imagery, support from a holistic practitioner, and/or even a professional evaluation for depression if necessary.

### **Avoid fatty, sugary, or heavy foods.**

While comfort foods might make you feel safe, relaxed, and uplifted for a short while, the lethargy and weight gain that can crop up in the long run will definitely have the opposite effect.

### **Try nutritional supplements.**

Vitamin D ("the sunshine vitamin") and omega fish oils are effective in combating feelings of depression.

### **Plan a vacation.**

This is my favorite! If you sing the winter blues, make a point of visiting a warmer, sunnier climate, which gives you something to both look forward to and to look back on with pleasure.

## Change your mindset.

Don't get locked into "This is just the way I always feel in January" self-talk. That's defeating. At the same time, don't think you have to reinvent every detail of your life because it's a new year, either. That can only lead you to feeling overwhelmed and intimidated. Instead, make a list of activities that you've been wanting to enjoy. View the new year not only as a fresh start but also as a door leading to exciting opportunities. And remind yourself that this door is built on the firm foundation of the happiness and success you had the benefit of in preceding years.

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**"People don't notice whether it's winter or summer when they're happy."**

—Anton Chekhov

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Remember the 3Rs (Recognize, Reframe, Reclaim)? The 3Rs technique is perfect for getting to the bottom of your winter blues.

**RECOGNIZE:** Start by evaluating how you feel. Are your winter blues an emotional state, or are you showing signs of both emotional and physical trouble? How severe is your depression? During what times of the day or week do you feel the lowest? Could certain activities or environments be triggering your feelings of being down? On the other hand, what activities make you feel your best, even as winter clouds cover the sky?

If you can pinpoint when, where, and during what tasks your feelings tank, you are just a step away from knowing what caused the plunge—and, more importantly, preventing it.

**REFRAME:** Now take your answers and turn them into affirming statements of action. Start each one with a strong, positive "I can." For example, if you've identified the end of the cold, dim winter workday as a particularly low time, and you also observe that you feel good after a vigorous walk, your statement might go something like this: "I can take a brisk stroll during my lunch break to revive my mood and avoid late-day slump." If dark days truly darken your mood, you can respond with: "I can prevent negative effects by using a lightbox for phototherapy every morning." If even the sunniest of winter days brings you down despite adjustments to diet and exposure to light, you might state: "I can make an appointment with a qualified expert to get to the bottom of this."

Reframing may sound like a small, unimportant step, but it will make all the difference. This is the point where you move away from the idea that you are powerless and begin to regain control. Remember, it's all about the "I can."

**RECLAIM:** SAD lives up to its name, but it doesn't have to be a permanent condition. Whether the cold seasons affect you to a small or large degree, there is undoubtedly something you can do to relieve the depression. You don't have to suffer. Take that first step. Commit to act on your own behalf. You deserve nothing less, spring, summer, fall, or winter.

SAD is common, but you don't have to be a victim. You can develop control over it. Now that you know the facts, it's time to act. Identify at least one thing you can do today to move out of the blahs.

Another challenge that the winters present in colder climes is the challenge to keep our immune systems strong. That, too, is an issue we can deal with successfully. True, many of us spend more time indoors when the weather is frigid—a smart move, but also a potential problem. Why? Cold and flu germs flourish when lots of people spend time indoors together. Artificial heating creates a perfectly cozy environment for uninvited microbial guests to spread.

**Case Study:** During cold and flu season, Natalie always felt low and lethargic, and sniffled constantly to the accompaniment of a frequent dry cough. This winter, she decided she would try to take more measures to prevent the usual from reoccurring and make some empowered choices to improve her condition. Since she's one of my health and wellness clients who live outside of the New York area, I coach Natalie over the phone to help her stay balanced, healthy, and moving forward in her overall wellbeing.

We began in the fall with a liver cleanse, a one-week detox that was judged to be a complete success. Not only did Natalie feel more energetic after eliminating some of the foods that were compromising her energy, such as sugars and wheat products, but she also lost a few pounds in the process as a bonus. Just eliminating these offending foods seemed to make a huge difference in her energy and nasal congestion. To boost her immune system, she then began to take some supplements, including a formula of zinc, Vitamin C, some extra Vitamin D, and some other minerals. She also enjoyed experimenting with a few new recipes that utilized vegetables she hadn't tried before, including kale, spinach, and bok choy. In addition, she purchased a humidifier for her bedroom to counteract the drying effect of the heating system in her home. Well done, Natalie!

You, too, can take some of the steps Natalie took, and then some. Here are a few.

### **1. Build up your immune system by eliminating toxic overload.**

Everyday stresses take a toll on our bodies. It's important to counteract their effects. One way to boost your natural ability to fight off the germs that cause illness is to limit and remove toxins. Toxins weaken the immune system, making it more vulnerable to disease. Processed foods, sugars, chemical residues from the environment, and mold and bacteria from heating systems are all potential culprits. They can all serve as that "last straw" that triggers breakdown in an already weakened immune system.

## **Do-now fix: Try my quick, easy, one-week, food-based detox.**

A desire to take a break from the excesses of the recent holidays (confession: I had *way* too much chocolate and French fries, too!) is enough to fuel my decision to start Detox Week. How about you? Time and again, my patients have affirmed what I observed myself: that eliminating toxins can set the stage for a stronger immune system that's ready to fight battles on demand. Contact me for the instructions and inexpensive supplements I use myself.

NOTE: In today's world, our exposure to toxins mounts up in countless ways. For instance, chemicals released into the ground, water, air, and food affect us every day. In addition, eating a diet high in processed foods is practically unavoidable unless you cook your own food all the time. Other common toxins that can build up in our system and especially our livers include excessive caffeine, alcohol, tobacco, medications, auto emissions, and artificial ingredients and additives in much of what we eat. Carrying around the burden of these toxins can often negatively affect our health.

Modern science has taught us the detoxification process is a natural one that can become compromised and is nutrient-dependent. A safe, food-based cleanse is one I recommend, lasting from one week to one month. It follows simple, yet effective dietary guidelines in combination with a complete, nutritionally balanced supplement program. I suggest that patients think about trying a cleanse like this gentle one every few months or seasonally to not only help rid excess toxins that can be stored in the body, but also to recalibrate sugar cravings and less-than-optimal dietary habits.

## **2. Don't wait until you're fighting to put on your armor.**

Now—before you show the first signs of a snuffle or cough—is the time to make healthful food choices and add a few supplements to prevent immune system invaders from taking over.

Fruits and vegetables, especially fresh ones, provide vitamins A, B, and E as well as flavonoids that work with Vitamin C to keep your body armed and ready to battle all kinds of germs. And don't forget good proteins found in lean meats, eggs, and beans. They add iron, zinc, and amino acids that build the foundation for overall health.

## **Do-now fix: Boost your interest in wholesome foods by broadening the selection.**

Bored with winter fruits like apples and pears? I am! So even though fresh, organic choices are preferable, at this time of year I will also buy fast-frozen fruits and vegetables with no added ingredients. ("No added ingredients" is the key. Beware especially of sauces of the kind you find in frozen food entrees. They pile on sugar, salt, and carbs you don't need.) Whenever possible, I also incorporate immunity-boosting shiitake mushrooms and garlic into my ingredients list. To round out basic supplementation, add a good multivitamin, fish oils, and extra Vitamin D.



### **3. Go holistic with herbs, Chinese medicine, and acupuncture.**

The holistic world offers assistance for every step of the immunity fight. To prevent illness by boosting immune system function, you can add many herbal ingredients (ginseng, astragalus, and echinacea, for instance) to your supplement list. Some Chinese medicine formulas are designed to be taken at the very first sign of illness, while others can be taken during a bout to help you recover faster. A qualified practitioner will help find the right formula for you and your condition.

#### **Do-now fix: Winter is the perfect time for some preventive acupuncture.**

Comfortable and relaxing, acupuncture boosts energy and regulates the immune system. In addition, I teach my patients to self-administer “acupressure-to-go” by stimulating known immune points for a few days of targeted reinforcement afterward. This treatment is especially effective in strengthening immune health before air travel.

There you are: three ways to arm yourself against ills so common in the winter. Why not take a moment now to strategize how you can incorporate them into your personal routines? The reward—a cool-weather season with fewer sick days and greater overall wellness—is worth the effort.

## Chapter 15

### My Not-So-Mainstream Acupuncture

*“The human body has been designed to resist an infinite number of changes and attacks brought about by its environment. The secret of good health lies in successful adjustment to changing stresses on the body.”*

—**Harry J. Johnson**

**W**hile I’m a board-certified/licensed acupuncturist who practices acupuncture, that certainly isn’t all I do. I wanted to place a discussion of acupuncture last in my book so you wouldn’t think that my entire practice is based on that. It’s not. But I certainly do place a great emphasis on acupuncture and on Chinese Medicine when I work with my patients. Here’s how I see it and how I use it.

Let’s start by discussing Chinese Medicine 101 and how it can apply to you right now. Its ancient philosophies, theories, and techniques are entirely viable today, and are alive and well in China, around the world, and even here in the United States. In the United States, acupuncture and herbology are the main systems of Chinese Medicine widely recognized, respected, and studied for their noninvasive, natural healing and for prevention of illness and disease.

Qi Gong exercise and Feng Shui—balancing the energy of a space—are also part of this system in addition to other modalities. Even EFT (emotional freedom technique) or NET—contemporary healing practices that look at the emotional aspects of the individual—use Chinese Medicine with their emphasis on tapping acupressure points or using meridians to help explore deeper aspects of a condition.

Thousands of licensed, nationally board-certified acupuncturists—like me—practice in the U.S. these days, and the World Health Organization has acknowledged acupuncture’s efficacy for many conditions. In addition, more insurers than ever cover acupuncture in their alternative healthcare offerings.

First, it’s important to know a little about your life force, called *qi* (pronounced “chi”) in Chinese Medicine. A primary factor in the health and prosperity of all living things, *qi* animates life and growth, powers movement, effects change, and governs evolution and development. *Qi* is the activator for all bodily

functions, and its daily creation depends on the food that we eat and the air that we breathe.

Qi travels through our bodies using invisible channels of energy called *meridians*, each meridian connected to a different organ. A smooth, efficient flow of qi is essential for a healthy, pain-free existence, because a blockage or stagnation in the meridians results in imbalances and problems for your health. Twelve major energy channels—meridians—run through the body, forming an extensive energy and communication network.

Keeping the meridians open, unblocked, and in a healthy condition is imperative for the body's self-regulating actions to occur automatically and for us to enjoy vibrant good health. Unfortunately, meridians can become blocked, such as through an accident or some other kind of breakdown, creating both excess somewhere in the system and deficiency elsewhere.

Luckily, damaging the meridians beyond repair is difficult, and they can be rehabilitated through healthful lifestyle, foods, herbs, and acupuncture (or acupressure), so the smooth, even flow of qi can resume its optimal journey throughout the meridian system.

We practitioners look at a person to see how strong or weak that person's qi is, and that is translated to the organs and their functions as well. As long as the qi remains strong and flows freely, the body's organs work in harmony so disease and illness cannot enter.

Qi isn't what we usually refer to as the pep form of energy; rather, it's the pilot light that makes up everything and connects it to the universe. We all operate using two kinds of qi: the finite kind we're born with, having inherited it from our parents, and the resource we can acquire, maximize, and optimally manage. Regrettably, many of us don't keep the latter kind built up and have to make withdrawals from the finite kind to fund life's activities.

We make qi by combining food and air—so our ability to make qi will depend partly on our physical constitution and partly on our own particular lifestyles. We use our available qi for all the body's activity: movement, digestion, warding off illness, getting through the day. When qi is weak, it means that we are under-functioning in some way; a particular organ may lack the power to do its job well, or lack of qi may cause lethargy or an immune system malfunction.

We can increase our qi through breathing, fresh-air physical exercise, postural alignment, Qi Gong exercise, and such, but we lower our available qi through shallow breathing, a sedentary lifestyle, poor posture, and similar suboptimal choices.

Environmental factors such as electromagnetic fields can reduce qi levels, and qi can become stagnant when its circulation in the body is restricted by tension. Our core beliefs and mental attitudes also help determine our qi level, with life-affirming and self-valuing beliefs helping to give us fuller access to our vitality.

Foods that tend to tonify qi tend to be sweet (but not sugary), often warm, fresh, local organic food.

The cornerstone of Traditional Chinese Medicine is that we seek out the underlying root cause of an imbalance to truly fix your symptoms in a lasting way by looking at the whole person—an approach that sets it apart from Western medicine. For instance, neck pain isn't treated in an isolated manner. Instead, we look at lifestyle, diet, stress, and many other contributing factors to arrive at a real solution. When we speak about healing, we mean body, mind, and spirit—all three—because Chinese Medicine regards them as inseparable, and each affects the others.

**Case Study:** Twenty-six-year-old Jane came into the office feeling a little nervous about her first acupuncture treatment. I'm talking about the typical needle phobia that many patients reluctantly confess to. Since this is not an uncommon fear for my new patients, I reassured her by showing her the needles, or what I call "filaments," and explained how sterile they are, and how flexible and thin they are in order to render a virtually painless experience. We then discussed the pain around her right elbow, which Jane felt was from overuse of her computer mouse. I could tell that she was still nervous when I began, but as soon as I inserted needles into a few of the points, her relief and calmness returned. "This isn't bad," she soon remarked. Once the needles were all in place, I heard comments such as "that's nice." Soon after, she became completely relaxed and had to be woken at the end of the treatment.

"This is the kind of thing that I see new clients," I told her.

"It's perfectly comfortable," she agreed.

Jane has since become one of my most ardent fans, and her elbow pain long ago vanished.

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**"It's no coincidence that four of the six letters in health are 'heal!'"**

—Ed Northstrum

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Acupuncture has played a very important part in my own life. Not only do I see firsthand the many benefits that it offers patients on a continual basis, but it also represents a significant aspect of my own personal history. You may be asking, as so many people do, how I became interested in pursuing it as a career. Well, if it wasn't for my father, I wouldn't have experienced the wonderful results that this ancient technique offers to my patients today.

I was inspired to become an acupuncturist when my dad, an alternative-minded M.D. who was one of the first licensed acupuncturists more than 30 years ago, discovered the many benefits of this ancient healing art well before it became fashionable. He was so successful in helping patients this way that he completely dedicated his life and practice to becoming a skilled acupuncturist. As a result, my practice

is, in part, a way of honoring his expertise and courage, as well as the invaluable lessons that he passed down to me. Furthermore, he was able to effectively integrate both traditional and alternative forms of medicine—a goal to which I also have devoted my career.

My professional training began at the Tristate College of Acupuncture in New York City. After three years of intensive, hands-on training, I received my license to practice acupuncture in New York. Later, I earned a master's degree in acupuncture from Tristate College. Nationally board-certified, I am also licensed to practice in Connecticut and Massachusetts.

And while completely adhering to the findings of Traditional Chinese Medicine, I have developed my own version of this ancient discipline: I've added a new, modern twist to bring even faster, longer-lasting results to those with whom I work.

A technique with more than 3,000 years of success behind it, acupuncture has gained such acceptance worldwide that even Western doctors have begun to realize how powerful its application can be. But what exactly is acupuncture, and how does it work?

As I discussed above, when qi is blocked or interrupted, pain, stiffness, or other unhealthy conditions are the result. By stimulating acupoints, or channels for this energy, an acupuncturist restores the harmonious flow of qi throughout the body. The newly released energy relaxes tight muscles and balances the immune system, nervous system, hormones, digestion, and so forth, even resolving a range of addictions.

I know. Your inner scientist may be asking questions. Scientifically, we don't know exactly why acupuncture works. One theory says that acupoints are areas that naturally cause the body to produce pain-fighting chemicals, or endorphins, when stimulated. But whether that theory is accurate or not, several up-to-date studies have concluded that acupuncture is effective for many conditions.

And what about those acupuncture needles? Don't let the word *needle* make you nervous. Recent studies have proven that acupuncture is safe when administered by a qualified practitioner. And believe it or not, acupuncture is so comfortable that many patients report "floating" out of the office and then experiencing a calm, more stress-free day. (The needles used in our office are the thinnest of thin—the Japanese style—and are as flexible as a guitar string.)

Acupuncture is also well-known for treating conditions that have a strong emotional or mental component, including insomnia, infertility, and anxiety. It can even help patients stop smoking or manage their weight.

Acupuncture has been shown to reduce symptoms of chronic physical conditions like skin problems and asthma, and it can relieve the pain of disease or injury. For patients under a medical doctor's care for serious illness, acupuncture can go hand in hand with current treatments to speed

healing and further overall wellness. One example is cancer. The federally supported National Institutes of Health report that acupuncture, for one thing, can reduce nausea from chemotherapy. There are many different styles of acupuncture employed throughout the world. Chinese and Japanese are the most popular and have been used successfully for centuries. But did you know that there is an American style of acupuncture called trigger point therapy?

Trigger point therapy is relatively new and based on the work of Dr. Janet Travell, an expert on pain management. Based on contemporary knowledge of anatomy and physiology, trigger point therapy is used by physical therapists and other practitioners to help relieve muscle tightness faster and more directly than other styles of acupuncture. It's truly amazing to see how pain and knots and spasms in the back, neck, arms, and shoulders are resolved so quickly.

Combine the new American style with the ancient, traditional styles, and you have the ideal balance of East and West, the old and the new, for optimal relief and overall best results. I use trigger point and more, depending on the need of the individual patient. I take a history, add to that electrodermal screening to pinpoint what's going on with the various body functions, and then treat using acupuncture for multiple problems simultaneously.

Acupuncture is not just a means of treatment of ailments, however. It's a means of maintaining optimal body function. Patients who regularly receive acupuncture treatment are more likely to stay in balance despite emotional and external stressors. Balance is the goal, in fact, and balance of our bodily systems is what contributes to ultimate wellness.

For me, acupuncture is a strong accompaniment to a person's wellness regimen and can be used to maintain health on an ongoing basis as well as to heal. I've discussed many other wellness practices throughout this book, but keep in mind that acupuncture is the punctuation mark that you can add to make your other efforts even more effective.

Is acupuncture a technique you might to try? Let's give the 3Rs a chance to help us decide.

**RECOGNIZE:** Look at your health and wellness issues. Do they fall into any of the areas noted above? Further, acupuncture can be great for maintaining normal organ functioning. The needles don't hurt. Is it for you?

**REFRAME:** How about thinking of health in terms of balance and not disease. Forget about being sick or having some "condition" to which you put a name. Instead, see how you can bring yourself into a better balance and get your energy flowing as it's meant to.

**RECLAIM:** You can regain your balance if you claim it, and acupuncture will help you regain better function of your body—you!

Sometimes in our everyday chaotic and hectic lives, a person crosses our paths who is able to restore the harmony and balance we need to live healthier, happier, and more fulfilling lives. For me, Roberta Mittman is that person. Roberta has the tools to imbue a person's body, mind, and spirit with a beautiful state of grace and harmony. Her sense of compassion, her intuitiveness, and her diversified skill set allow for a unique and restorative healing session. I always leave Roberta's office feeling renewed, grounded, and ready to embrace the day. I can't wait for my next session!

**Karen DeMeco**

Prudential Douglas Elliman

I've been treated by Roberta for about eight years. Obviously, I find her approach to have a great deal of value. I go to Roberta for my health trials both great and small, from occasional crisis to the frequent "owwie." I feel that I always have backup for what ails me, and I can continue on about my life, functioning optimally. In this way, I'm able to meet my many daily responsibilities without interruption.

**D. W. Kear**

IT Manager

THANKS for that incredible call this morning! What an ego boost, and IMMEDIATE feedback from our session. Wow! Tonight I received 3 emails/Facebook messages from 3 long-lost friends. So I went on Facebook and email and sent about 20 notes reaching out to people who I want to remain in my life. This HAS NOT BEEN ME. Only: Poor me, no one wants me. I am so freed up. Can't wait for the next session. I'm just getting going. THANKS THANKS THANKS! You are my favorite practitioner!

**Barbara Rosenthal**

[organizingforsuccess@gmail.com](mailto:organizingforsuccess@gmail.com)

I feel so fantastic right now, I don't want it to end. Thanks so much!

**Debbie Ulrich**

Westchester Pulse Therapy

It is with great pleasure that I write about Roberta Mittman, my acupuncturist, mentor, and friend.

In the 3 years that I've been working with Roberta, she has helped balance my hormones while I was going through menopause; healed a chronic wrist problem I had on and off for a number of years; pinpointed an allergy that the dermatologist couldn't identify and which affected me terribly; and diagnosed and continues to help me with TMJ syndrome.

For all of the above help with ailments, I am forever grateful. However, or should I say more importantly, Roberta has helped me through personal emotional crises. Her loving and giving spirit is one of the many gifts she so freely shares. Her easy manner is very welcome, and her exceptional ability to make me feel better about life and myself is an amazing comfort.

I feel so blessed to know her and have her in my life.

**Regina Durazzo**

Carlin Ventures, *Vice President*