Psychosomatic Illness – Is It All In The Mind?

The dictionary defines a psychosomatic illness as one "…caused by mental or emotional problems rather than by something physical". This idea has fascinated me since I became aware of the work Louise L. Hay has done on making a connection between our minds and our state of health. In her view, anything affecting our lives, (and this can come from our feelings, our background, our belief system), just about anything that touches or has touched us, can be a factor. She tells her personal story of childhood sexual abuse, which she connected to the vaginal cancer she developed in adulthood. Her book, *You Can Heal Your Life*, with its explanations of what may have caused illness or led to an accident, has sold millions of copies worldwide.

These are real illnesses, with a physical element, but they are not necessarily caused solely by outside forces such as heredity, smoking, a life crisis, or eating the wrong things, although these factors have probably played their part in the illness. For many of us, illness is a wake-up call, and we need to look at what we can do to change matters.

Food For Thought

For Phil Edwardes, a UK healer, none of the causes of illness are found anywhere in the body and, emphasising that he isn't blaming anyone, he believes that everything that happens to our bodies is because we're inside them. This does rather bear out a finding in the case of multiple personalities. People who have several personalities have found they may need reading glasses in one personality and not in another; they may be diabetic in one personality and not in another.

I'd often heard of things being "all in the mind" as have most of us, but when I took my first steps in complementary medicine in 1987, I saw how this thinking could be applied. One of my earliest purchases was a book based on Chinese medicine that was recommended by my reflexology teacher. I immediately read what it had to say about every illness I could think of that had touched my family, my friends, or me. And I was blown away by some of the possible explanations; things fell into place and understanding dawned.

Finding Out For Myself

The best way to learn something is to experience it ourselves and I didn't have to wait long. Studying for my reflexology diploma I worked on an old friend who suffered from sinusitis. The treatment really helped, but so did finding an apartment away from her parents, or more precisely her mother, with whom she was often at loggerheads.

In 1990 I started up in business, distributing and demonstrating ear and body treatment candles (although body candling arrived much later on the scene) and one of the very first people to contact me was a lady suffering from a distressing and continual noise in her ears (tinnitus). She told me she had a handicapped daughter and in the course of our conversation she burst out: "I can't stand it when she screams"'. Even with my limited knowledge of the product I was so confidently selling, I knew the candles wouldn't help her and I really hoped she could understand at some point that she was manufacturing a noise in her head to drown out her daughter's screams. It sounds hard, but there is only one place where the solution to any such problem lies … where it started. In ourselves. Until we are able to do that, few therapies will bring lasting relief.

Stories I’ve Been Told

A child’s deafness at birth stemmed from what she’d heard while in the womb. Once her mother understood this and worked on her own emotions—a tough task for her—the child was hearing perfectly by the age of 7.

A young Catholic priest had always known he was homosexual, but until he was ordained at the age of 32 he had attempted to deny it. He plunged into a nervous breakdown and carried on as well as possible until he started to experience a loud whistling sound in his left ear, which he interpreted as his soul crying out to speak its truth. The physical suffering was intense. He finally decided to come out and to inform his bishop that he was leaving Holy Orders. The decision made, his tinnitus immediately calmed down and at the time the article appeared, he was practically cured.

A colleague at an exhibition knelt down to chat to a girl in her mid-teens who was confined to a wheelchair. She was accompanied by her mother and younger siblings and explained there was absolutely no physical reason why she couldn’t walk, but that was the situation and she didn’t really care one way or the other. It would have been fascinating to learn something about her family dynamics, but even if a skilled therapist managed to uncover the possible root of her problem, unless she was prepared to work on herself, little progress would result.

Choosing Our Words With Care

Some of the expressions we throw around so lightly can give us a huge clue as to what’s going on in our lives—or what could be waiting in the wings to pop up.

- “She really gets up my nose,”
- “I can’t stomach it.”

- “It breaks my heart.”, etc.

We can connect this thinking with sinusitis, digestive or cardiac diseases – in fact, with just about anything. If we look at some of the things we suffer from: arthritis, short or long sight, poor hearing, allergies, ulcers, constipation, cancer, they can tell us volumes about our deepest beliefs. Illness may seemingly have a real physical cause, yes, and certainly has a real physical manifestation, but if we can process the painful experiences we all endure as we go through life, we can certainly reduce any damage that physical ill-health can do and hopefully avoid many problems altogether.

Further Reading:

- *Healing Vibrations*
- *Praying For Health*