A Holistic Approach to Mental and Physical Well-Being

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Received: August 29, 2019; Accepted: September 13, 2019; Published: October 20, 2019

Abstract

A major goal of mankind since ages has been to seek liberation from suffering, both physical and mental. Ancient Indian physician and scholar Charaka emphasized positive mental health when he articulated that the task of medicine is not simply to strive for absence of disease but to enable an individual to learn about and lead ideal life. Recent trends in the field of psychology have major developments in the field of Complementary and Alternative Medicine. The methods used to heal patients both physically and psychologically are increasingly holistic in their approaches. Research suggests that holistic techniques used to reduce stress, anxiety and depression are being utilized by patients and clients more and more and subsequently replacing what used to be the authority of pharmaceutical remedies. According to a study done by the Samueli Institute in Alexandria, Virginia, the United States has shown a marked increase in the use of methods such as hypnosis, yoga, relaxation exercise, acupressure, affirmations, reiki, meditation, spiritual healing and energy healing. Taking a holistic approach to healing means considering all realms of existence, not just the physical body. The objective of present article is to create an awareness of the benefits of holistic approach and achieving dramatic changes in physical, emotional and behavioural health.

Keywords: Holistic Healing, Beliefs and values, Physical, Emotional and Mental health, Energy pathways.

Introduction

The journey of life is like a woven carpet made up of different coloured threads. Each new experience contributes to not only the formation of a pattern but to the strength and structure of the fabric itself - ‘The personality.’ An experience, good or bad, adds colour to our life. It is up to an individual to maintain the colourful and joyous aspect of his or her life.

As there isn’t one single factor that causes mental health issues, there isn’t one magic formula or pill to ‘fix’ it! I have found that a holistic approach to health has relatively improved and lasting results. This is an approach that has worked well for me, personally. I believe it is critical to combine a holistic approach with conventional therapy.

What exactly is a ‘holistic approach’? Through years of neglect, improper nutrition, air/water/food pollutants and daily stress mismanagement we have essentially become walking putrefying systems. Holistic healing addresses all parts of the individual. It is not limited to the physical aspect of a person where manifested illnesses are most apparent. This means that diseases don’t merely inhabit the body, but they can infiltrate the mind and spirit as well. Holistic healing is an ongoing journey in search of deeper answers. It is not a one-time fix, but a discovery in living a better and healthier life. It evaluates all aspects of a person’s life - physical healing, mental health and wellness, emotional well-being, and spiritual beliefs and values.

Have you ever asked yourself how much do you love and accept yourself? I begin every session by asking this question to my client.

The most important thing I tell clients as soon as they come to me is that, “There is nothing wrong with you. You are perfect and complete. There are just some little pebbles stopping the flow in your life. Those pebbles are beliefs and behaviours that might have been true at some time in your life, but are no longer true and are not working for you. It’s my job to figure out what they are, change them and get you unstuck.”

Our mind is like a parrot. Parrots recite things without any understanding or comprehension. We may keep reciting those negative thoughts to ourselves for decades. We hear that ‘parrot’, we believe the ‘parrot’. We allow our mind to go in autopilot mode and become its prisoners. This affects how we behave and how we think and feel about ourselves and may eventually lead to various mental and physical ailments. I believe we all have the healing power within us. We just need to discover it and believe in it. I have been using alternate healing therapies along with conventional counselling therapies for quite some time and have got excellent results. This holds true for individuals of any gender and age.

Examples of a few therapies include -CBT, hypnosis, EFT, NLP, Affirmations, Pendulum, Reiki, Acupressure, Brain Gym, Frequency Generator, Chakra healing and diet.

I have seen this, time and again that while the initial source of mental distress can be one dimensional, the inter-relation of all the systems quickly leads to multi-system commotion that requires a holistic approach to regain balance. We know that chronic stress and mental health conditions can worsen the prognosis and course of an ailment. As with every health condition, decreasing stress and boosting one’s immunity and psychological resilience can help the body cope better, heal more quickly, and maintain general well-being. The holistic approach encourages the patient to include healing strategies that support the whole individual.

The holistic approach I adopt is to make the individual aware of their beliefs, values and strengths (i.e. self-realization). Most of the therapies I use work on the belief in the body’s ability to heal itself. They use an understanding of the working of the body based on Eastern concepts of energy meridians and fields. I believe thoughts create feelings which contribute to an individual’s personality and behaviour. Our thoughts are often based on our values, beliefs and experiences. In my experience, holistic approach helps go to the root of the problem and positively improves the healing process. If you cure a problem from the root, there are minimal chances of reoccurrence. It is rightly said, ‘cure is better than treatment.’

Most of you have heard about cognitive behavioural therapy. It focuses on helping clients change their unhelpful thinking and behaviour. Energy psychology shifts problematic beliefs, behaviours and emotions swiftly and gently. As a clinical psychologist after carefully monitoring the field’s development the energy approach has made a profound difference in helping my clients. Since 1980’s Western alternative therapy practitioners have been applying principles of acupuncture to psychological and physiological issues. While acupuncture is associated with the use of needles, tapping and massaging specific points on the surface of the skin also produce the desire effect. Our body is composed of energy pathways and energy centres that are in dynamic interplay with your cells, organs, moods and thoughts. Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT), acupressure, reiki, pendulum, and chakra healing helps shift these energies and improves your health, emotions and state of mind by tapping into the energy points.

According to Louise Hay we are each responsible for all our experiences and every thought and feeling is creating our future. Through resentment, criticism and guilt we create illnesses in our body. The point of power is always in the present moment. Self-approval and self-acceptance in the now are the keys to positive changes. What we think about ourselves becomes the truth for us. Our subconscious mind accepts whatever we choose to believe. When you release your old belief and repeat new affirmation repeatedly it becomes true for you. Neuro-Linguistic Programming describes the fundamental dynamics between mind (neuro) and language (linguistic) and how their interplay affects our body and behaviour (programming). NLP is a multi-dimensional process that involves the development of behavioural competence and flexibility, but also involves strategic thinking and understanding of the mental and cognitive processes behind behaviour. Since the 1980s, the field of Educational Kinesiology – the study of movement and its relationship to learning – has touched people of ages and cultures. It validates that when the neuropathways for movement are fired, they activate and connect the whole brain in the synergetic way necessary for growth and change. Brain Gym is a collection of repatterning movements and activities which help children discover how to receive information and express themselves simultaneously, thus enhancing whole brain learning. Brain Gym brings about rapid and dramatic changes in the reading, writing, language and numerical skills. It enhances attention, concentration, memory, organizational skills, etc. The ability to learn is especially important when children are laying the foundation for their future education. Its unique movements and processes were developed by Dr. Paul Dennison and Dr. Gail Dennison. Holistic treatments are uniquely designed for an individual, and do not use a ‘one size fits all’ approach. Most treatments are non-invasive and they rarely cause unpleasant or long-lasting side effects. A long standing symptom of an ailment due to a medical condition can lead to some initial psychological symptoms, which in turn create a tsunami of events pertaining to our general health. Perturbations in one system can lead to multi-system commotion. At this stage, it is apt to realize that the roots of major physical, mental and social ailments are secondary to unresolved childhood traumas. With a proper holistic approach at the right age, we may be able to prevent these.

A holistic approach is considered to be more effective as it brings positive and long lasting changes and improves individual’s overall health and quality of life.

Thus, a multi-system imbalance requires holistic care which brings remarkable transformations. “The part can never be well unless the whole is well.” - Plato

Reference