

Healing



Spiritual Techniques for Healing the Body

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What Is Spiritual Healing?

Spiritual healing is the ability of your mind and soul to repair your ailments. These ailments are not limited mere physical wounds, but can also relate to mental illness and self esteem issues. Many modern day physicians invoke the idea of spiritual healing along with western medicine as a means to promote the health of their patients.

The belief that a healthy mind equals a healthy body is not new to anyone. However, the idea that a positive spiritual existence might heal the body is sometimes misunderstood.

But, those who carefully examine their own lives can probably see where their mental state inflicts harm on their physical health. An easy example is the “when it rains it pours” syndrome. Just when everything seems to be going poorly some people find that they wind up physically sick. It is hard to believe that the two are not in some way connected. The same can be said for working things in reverse. Start feeling positive and having a more balanced energy and physical illness can also dissipate.

Spiritual healing is often associated with religion and faith healing. There are many religions, including Christianity, that believe strongly in the power of prayer to heal illness. The belief in divine intervention has been widely documented. The laying of hands or other religious rituals are claimed to heal everything from cancer to blindness. This is not the same as spiritually healing your soul so that your body can be more healthy.

True spiritual healing requires work on ones self. It requires you to figure out how to get your body and energy into focused balance. There may be relation to the belief in a higher power along with meditation, but in this context it is not specifically about divine intervention.

History of Spiritual Healing

Spiritual healing has been around for ages. Ancient Egyptians and Greeks went to their priest-physicians when they needed help. One of the most famous of these priest-physicians was Hippocrates, who brought standards to medical practices around 400 BC. He believed that the best approach to a diagnosis included observing nature, life, and a natural healing process. Today medical doctors still take the Hippocratic oath when they become physicians.

North American Spiritual Healing History

In America most people are familiar with the idea of an Indian Medicine Man. Some Hollywood depictions paint a caricature of the actual practices used by indigenous American people. Native Americans believe that any healing process should be completely holistic.

Sometimes their rituals involved entire families if not the whole community. They analyzed dreams and stressed ridding the body of toxins through special baths, fasting, and the use of herbs. They also prayed to their higher powers through music, chant, drumming, and dance. Native Americans believe in healing a person, not necessarily a disease.

The traditional Medicine Man, or Woman, as the case often was, watched the goings on in their environment. They observed the animal life, birds, climate, and other actions or changes to determine whether the future would be successful or difficult.

The Maya Indians used the sun cycles, moon cycles, eclipses, and the movement of Venus to plan their lives. They prayed for protection from evil in themselves and in their community. They believed that everything, even vegetation and minerals had a life force. They respected animals and only killed them for food, then asking for the spirit of the animal to be returned to the animal kingdom.

Sweat Lodges

Sweat lodges or medicine lodges have gained certain notoriety due to an incident in Arizona where several people died in a non-Native American sweat lodge. The Lakota Nation has actually filed suit against the owners of that lodge for desecrating their beliefs and violating peace between Americans and the Lakota nation for using a sweat lodge improperly.

In Native American culture these lodges are used to promote health and community among their people. These lodges are tent type structures or dug out of the ground with planks for tops. They use heated rocks to provide heat within the structure. Sometimes the orientation of a lodge directs it toward a specific spirit. Often they face East with a sacred fire burning just outside of the lodge. These lodges are sacred to the Native American people. The ritual includes either silence or chanting along with offerings and prayer.

Medicine Men or Women will be in charge of the sweat lodge, the purpose of sweating is to drive out negative spirits from the body. There is also a raised state of consciousness that comes with the rise in body temperature. This allows participants to reach the spirit world on a personal level. It is in this context that true healing is said to begin. The Native Americans do not mix the sexes in their sweats nor do they attend in the nude. This is in contrast to some new age sweats, and is in keeping with their traditional sacred nature.

Many Native American Spiritual healing practices were outlawed until 1978. At that time the American Indian Religious Freedom Act was passed allowing activities and rituals to again be practiced. There have been difficulties as some of the land once used to consecrate their rituals now serves other purposes. However, in the Native American or American Indian medical system the use of traditional practices and rituals is still sometimes used.

Shamanism

Shamanism is a range of beliefs or practices that involve communication with the spirit world. The Shaman is known as the practitioner of said craft.

The Shaman is able to:

- Treat illness and serve as healers.
- Enter supernatural realms to receive answers to problems within their community.
- Be the intermediary between the human and the spirit world.
- Lead a sacrifice.
- Tell stories or songs to preserve their tradition.
- Tell fortunes.

Although there are many differences in the different beliefs that comprise Shamanism there are some common threads shared by all. Shamanism itself is made up of the idea that the world is pervaded by forces that are invisible by that affect the living.

They believe that the cause of a disease is in the spiritual realm such as evil spirits or witchcraft. They use both spiritual and physical systems to heal these ailments. The Shaman will confront the spirit that is causing illness by entering into the sick persons body. They banish the infectious spirit and bring healing to their patient. They are also experts in plant life and will prescribe herbs for treatment.

In the modern communities the belief in Shamanism has grown. It reflects a path to knowledge rather than a specific faith. It is a belief instead of the reality of spirits, not necessarily reflected in particular cultural group. They believe in what is called the axis mundi or a pathway between heaven and

earth for the sole purpose of spiritual contacts. The term ecstasy is used to refer to the wholeness that is created when these spirits are reached. It is a personal quest for inner power and knowledge. A practitioner of Shamanism can live in both the real world and the spirit world, having achieved balance.

Those who have reached this point of balance say they feel more comfortable with themselves and the world around them. Obstacles that had previously stood in the way of their achievements are removed. Those who are ill have new energy that heals them.

Westernized shamans will use spiritual extraction, past life regression therapy, and hypnosis to reach the spiritual balance that provides healing.

Shamanism has been called into question as an occult because of the practice of channeling spirits that take the form of animals. Some of the plants that are used have hallucinogenic properties which also promote the belief that it is of the occult. In North America, notably among the Navajo the use of Peyote produces this effect. This is considered an altered state of consciousness. This state leads to self discovery, knowledge, and healing. Other plants used in ritual are tobacco, fly agaric, and psychedelic mushrooms.

Altered Mental State Healing

Altered mental state healing encompasses many forms of spiritual healing. It is not limited to the type mentioned in Shamanism which concerns itself with the use of hallucinogenic substances. However, the spiritual practice of using chemicals to reach a higher spiritual plain is well documented in Shamanism and other forms of occult. The use of meditation can also produce an altered mental state which allows people to get in touch with the spirit world.

One of the ways this is accomplished is through dance and music. Many churches, including the Catholic church permit charismatic services. In these services members of the church often find themselves in a state of ecstasy where they speak in tongues, experience automatic writing jags, and even pass out as they are overtaken by the spirit. These masses are often held in the evening and kept rather quiet so as not to draw attention to itself as a version of the occult. However, it just proves that an altered mental state can be reached in the absence of chemicals in what might be considered a “normal setting.”

Many psychologists adhere to a sort of self hypnosis that aids patients in the healing process. They start by telling themselves that they are not sick or that they do not feel bad. The idea is that the mind will connect with the body and in fact heal itself.

Yoga

With origins in India, Yoga is the practice of traditional physical and mental disciplines associated with Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. It is believed to date back to 900 BCE among figures found in classic Yoga poses.

Yoga is probably the most widely known and easily accepted forms of spiritual healing. Yoga classes are held at virtually every health club and often at churches and community centers. The process of meditation and stretching that occurs when one does Yoga is accepted as at the very least helpful in maintaining ones health. It is far more then just a stretching class.

Yoga is a way of life and a way of looking at the world. It is about creating balance in your body through the development of both strength and flexibility. There are certain poses that promote certain physical benefits. They can be done in together quickly or slowly more geared to the perfect alignment of the pose.

The idea of achieving a healthy and fulfilling life comes from achieving the eight limbs or philosophies of Yoga. The limbs build upon each other with only one actually involving a Yoga pose.

The Eight Limbs of Yoga

1. Yama - The five abstentions are non-violence, non-lying, non-covetousness, non-sensuality, and non-possessiveness.
2. Niyama - The five observances are purity, contentment, austerity, study, and surrender to god.
3. Asana - This literally means seat and refers to the seated position which is used for meditation.
4. Pranayama - Suspending breath, to control the life force.

5. Pratyahara - Meaning abstraction or the withdrawal of the sense organs from external objects.
6. Dharana - Concentration or fixing ones attention on a single object.
7. Dhyana - The intense contemplation of the nature of the object of meditation.
8. Samadhi -The act of merging consciousness with the object of meditation.

As you can see by the eight limbs there is far more to Yoga than poses. It is actually about a combination of exercise, breathing, and meditation as a means to promote better health. Breathing is the source of life so once one has learned to control and increase their breathing they can then fully meditate.

Meditation is not a state of mental blankness, but rather a quiet and reflective mind. This state allows one to reach a higher state of mind and relieve themselves of everyday stresses thereby healing the mind and, in turn, the body.

Once a higher state of mind has been reached stretching poses can help to relieve tension and illness in the body. Yoga is used to treat what you would expect body aches and pains, but also some things you might not expect like arthritis and asthma.

Illnesses treated with Yoga include:

- Sour stomach
- Bronchitis
- Cancer
- Constipation
- Diabetes

- Depression
- Headache
- High Blood Pressure
- Menstrual Cramps
- Migraines
- Rheumatism
- Sciatic Pain
- Sexual debility
- Sinus
- Obesity

Keep in mind that Yoga is used to treat, not necessarily cure, the above mentioned ailments.

Yoga postures are the process of stretching and then balancing your body in a specific pose. By breathing through these poses one can achieve balance between mind, body, and spirit.

Yoga Poses

Downward Facing Dog - This position build strength, flexibility, and awareness. It stretches your spine and hamstrings and allows your heart to rest. To accomplish this pose you will need to be on your hands and knees with your wrists below your shoulders and your knees under your hips. You will slowly curl your toes back and push your hips up straightening your legs and arms with your feet and hands pressed to the floor. Your head should hang loose from your shoulders and neck facing down.

Extended Side Angle Pose - In this pose you will strengthen and stretch your legs, groin, and hamstrings. It also opens your chest and shoulders. To reach this pose your left heel should be down on the floor with your leg spread so the right knee is bent so the calf and thigh are at a right angle and parallel to the floor. Your right hand goes inside your right foot and your left arm reaches to the ceiling. Your face should reach up with your right hand. Once you achieve balance with this pose you should repeat it on the other side.

Garland Pose - This pose opens up your groin and hips. To accomplish this position you will stand with your feet a mat's width apart. Then you bend to your knees in a squat keeping your feet parallel. Your upper arms go inside your knees and your elbows bend bringing your palms together in the prayer position. If you can bring your hands to your heart and open your knees a bit. Relax your shoulders and keep your spine straight. Remain in this position for five breaths and then straighten your legs to come out of the pose.

Lotus Pose - This advanced pose is a Yoga classic that opens your hips. To accomplish this pose one should sit then bend your right knee and bring your right ankle to the left hip crease with the sole of your foot facing upward. Then do the same with your left foot, bringing it up to your right hip crease and turning the sole upward.

Standing Forward Bend - This stretch rests your heart and neck while it relaxes your mind and body. At the same time it stretches your legs and spine. This stretch requires you to stand with your feet nestled next to each other, then swan dive your arms out to the side while folding forward. Be sure to fold at your hips making the hip creases deep and not at your back. Bring your fingertips to your toes and press your palms flat to the floor. Engage your quads, lifting your kneecaps. Your weight should be held slightly forward to the balls of your feet so that your hips remain over your ankles. Let your head hang loose.

Warrior I - This pose strengthens your arms and legs. It also improves balance and concentration and builds confidence. To move to this pose from Downward Dog bring your right foot forward so it is next to your right hand. Then pivot on to the ball of your left foot, dropping your left heel on the floor

and turning your toes out 45 degrees from your heel. Bend your right knee directly over your right ankle forming a right angle with the calf and thigh. Bring your right hip back and your left hip forward so your hips are square toward the front. Bring your arms out to the side then up touching your palms together and facing up toward your thumbs, doing a slight backbend. Slide your shoulder blades down your back. Repeat on the other side.

Cobblers Pose - This pose also opens your groin and hips. This sitting pose is accomplished by bending your knees so that the soles of your feet are together, letting your knees fall out to the sides. Maintain a long spine and press the outer edges of your feet together firmly.

Half Lord of the Fishes Pose - This pose is said to cleanse your organs. It also opens your shoulders and hips and stretches your spine.

Child's Pose - This pose can help ease back pain while it gently stretches your hips, thighs, and ankles. From Downward Dog drop your knees to the floor and spread them as wide as your mat, keeping your big toes touching. Bring your belly to rest between your thighs and place your forehead on the floor. You can either stretch your arms out in front of you with your palms on the floor or bring them alongside your thighs with the palms facing up.

Happy Baby Pose - A pose like this also opens your hips and groin. To do this pose lie flat on your back. Bend your knees into your chest. Bend the knees and bring them toward your armpits. Each ankle should be stacked over the knee so that your shins are perpendicular to the floor. Flex your feet then hold the outer edges of them and draw your knees to the floor.

Plank - The plank promotes arm and core balance and strength. The Plank is reached from the Downward Dog pose by drawing your torso forward so the shoulders are over your wrists. Your entire body should be in one straight line, much like a push up position. Your forearms and hands should be firmly pressed to the ground, do not allow your chest to sink and press back through your heels. Keep your neck lined up with your spine and your shoulders broad as you balance in this position.

Bridge - This pose strengthens your lower back and abdominal muscles. It also opens your chest and increases flexibility. This backbend position is reached by bending the knees and bringing the soles of your feet parallel to the mat and close to your buttocks.

Lift your hips up toward the ceiling and lace your fingers behind your back, straightening your arms and pressing them down to the mat. Roll one shoulder under and then roll the other shoulder under. Lift your hips further and draw your chest toward your chin with out moving your chin to the chest. Keep your feet parallel and release your hands slowly bringing your upper, then middle, then lower back down to the floor.

Mountain - This will improve posture, self awareness, and balance. To properly do this pose you should focus on aligning your body. Stand up with your big toes touching, then lift all of your toes and fan them out. Place them on the floor so that you have a solid base.

Place your weight evenly on both of your feet so that you feel your calves and feet rooting to the floor. Draw your quadriceps upward so that your kneecaps rise. Rotate your things in and tuck your tailbone, draw in your tummy. Stretch your neck making it long so that it rises to the ceiling while your shoulders slide down your back.

Cat - Cow Stretch - Increases spine flexibility. Begin this pose on all fours with your wrists under your shoulders and your knees under your hips. Keep your spine in a straight line that connects your shoulders to your hips. Extend your neck forward all the way through the crown of your head and back through your tailbone. Maintain the natural extension of your neck out from your spine.

Learning to do the above poses may be daunting but the combination of postures along with breathing and meditation has been known to increase your lifespan. It is said that your body will detoxify and the blood flow to your different organs increases with his work. It also helps you to simply become more aware of your body and your mood. This will help you to understand when or if something is wrong with you physically.

There are a few people who should check with their physician before they begin a Yoga program. Those who have uncontrolled high blood pressure, are at risk for blood clots, have certain eye conditions like glaucoma, and osteoporosis should seek professional medical advice prior to partaking in a Yoga exercise program.

Focusing Energy

On a spiritual journey toward healing you will be asked to focus your energy. You should understand how this is accomplished and why you would do it.

1. Stretch your muscles to allow energy to flow through them.
2. Move your body and joints, flex and extend your fingers and toes, ankles and knees, wrists and elbows. Do neck rolls, knee bends, abdominal twists, and arm circles to move the energy throughout your body.
3. Meditate. Sit in a comfortable spot and center yourself. Close your eyes and visualize the energy of the earth being pulled up to your spine and through your whole body. Meditation should continue for twenty minutes or until you feel complete.
4. Breathe. Focus on your natural breathing rhythm for five or so minutes and allow your mind to go quiet. Once you feel cleared, send out a mental command telling any negative feelings to leave your body. Visualize these negative feelings being carried away from you as you exhale in a forceful manner. Do this over and over again until all of those emotions have left your body.
5. Think clearly on your intent. Energy will flow through to whatever it is you are focusing on. You might repeat phrases like, “my intent is to heal my body” or “my intent is to heal my mind.”

In order to heal yourself spiritually you must be able to let go of anything negative and allow positive spirits to do their work. We all hang on to regrets,

guilt, lost ideals as we go through life. We may be angry at someone or something that happened a long time ago or just recently.

All of that negative energy prevents us from reaching a spiritually higher plain. Reaching that plain is what allows us to be free and for the spirit world to heal us mentally, emotionally, and physically.

Healing through Chakras can come from variety of places. You might be surprised to find out that even the foods you eat can effect your chakras and in turn the emotional and physical ailments that are associated with them. Below is a list of foods that will feed your chakras and aid you in being well.

The Chakras

The belief that everything in one's body on a subtle level has a series of energy fields or centers of consciousness. In traditional Tantric teachings these fields are called Chakras. These chakras are along or just in front of the back bone although they may be expressed at external points in the body. The teachings of Chakras date back to religious, yoga and the occult teachings in India, China, and North America. They have some common points but also vary on several levels. The word Chakra itself means wheel in Sanskrit.

These sacred centers are said to carry one's spirit on their journey toward enlightenment. The chakra is a center of energy from which your life force is both received and expressed. Each Chakra that is in a body is believed to govern bodily functions that are near its region on the spine.

The 7 Primary Chakras

1. Muladhara - The base or root Chakra, located at the last bone on the spinal cord of the coccyx. Sex organs are controlled here as well as emotional feelings of lust, sensuality, and security.
2. Swadhisthana - The sacral chakra located near the ovaries or prostate. Sex hormones are governed by this chakra it also relates to the emotions in relationships, violence, addictions, emotional needs, and pleasure. It is represented by the color orange.
3. Manipura - The solar plexus Chakra, near the navel. The manipura governs one's digestive system as well as power, spirituality, and growth. The color yellow represents this chakra.
4. Anahata - The heart Chakra, obviously located near the heart. This area governs circulation physically and emotionally it involves complicated emotions like love, compassion, tenderness, equilibrium, and well being. It is noted by the color green.

5. Vishuddha - The throat Chakra located in the throat and neck area. This relates to communication through expression. It is represented by the color light blue. It not only governs communication but also, independence, fluent thought, and a sense of security.
6. Ajna - The brow or third eye Chakra located in the pineal gland. This Chakra is concerned with envisioning and regulating sleep and awakening. It also regulates clarity and intuitiveness. It is represented by the color white.
7. Sahasrara - The Crown Chakra located on the top of the head or the soft spot of a newborn baby. This is considered the chakra of consciousness. It is represented by the color violet and involves inner wisdom and the death of the body.

Several modern healing techniques use Chakra points. Practices like aromatherapy, mantras, Reiki, hands healing, flower essence healing, sound therapy, light therapy, and crystal therapy all rely on balance at your energy points or chakras.

Even in modern, western medicine the concept of Chakras is used. The description of aligning ones spinal column from the base of your spine to the top of your head is based on Chakra ideas. Some New Age practices use colors or lotus flowers to visualize each chakra and place it in alignment.

The Chakras are believed to control energy and to draw it to them. This energy keeps the spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical health of your body balanced.

Root Chakra

- Root vegetables like carrots, potatoes, beets, and onions.
- Protein heavy foods like eggs, meats, beans, and tofu.
- Spices like horseradish, chives, cayenne, and pepper

Sacral Chakra

- Sweet fruits like strawberries, oranges, melons, and mangos.
- Honey
- Nuts like almonds or walnuts.
- Spices like cinnamon, vanilla, sesame and caraway seeds.

Solar Plexus Chakra

- Grains and granola like pastas, bread, cereal, and flax seed.
- Dairy including milk, cheese, and yogurt.
- Spices like ginger, mints, chamomile, and cumin.

Heart Chakra

- Leafy vegetables like spinach, kale, and greens.
- Air vegetables like broccoli, cauliflower, celery, or squash.
- Green tea.
- Spices like sage, thyme, cilantro, parsley, and basil.

Throat Chakra

- Water, fruit juice, and herbal tea.
- Tart or tangy fruit like lemon, lime, grapefruit, and kiwi.
- Tree growing fruits like apples, pears, peaches, plums, or apricots.
- Spices like salt and lemon grass.

Brow Chakra

- Dark bluish colored fruits like blueberries, red grapes, and raspberries.
- Red wines and grape juice.
- Spices like lavender, poppy seed, and mugwort.

Crown Chakra

- Fasting or detoxing.
- Incense and smudge herbs like sage, juniper and frankincense to be inhaled or smoked, never to be eaten.

You can also fuel your chakras through visualization techniques. Similar to meditation, visualization allows energy to flow through your chakras. To do this you must be able to visualize at color, like white light or one associated with a particular chakra coursing through your body.

You have to focus the energy into the Chakra spiritual centers and filling each up with light. Experience doing this will often allow one to feel a physical vibration or warmth as their chakras fill with light. Then they will sense the freedom that has come from spiritual energy clearing out negativity. Just as a negative attitude or sad heart can make one sick, turning those thoughts around can help to heal.

These concepts are taken from ancient cultures all over the world who have used altered mental state healing in the form of trance and music. It is not so different as modern hypnosis and dream analysis, just often more accepted.

Conclusion

The connection between the mind and the spirit can not be denied. Those who have tried any form of spiritual healing have quickly learned that they feel better physically when they have handled their emotional well being first. A spiritual journey can be anything you want it to be.

Some people find that faith healers and extreme measures give them the state of consciousness they require to feel better. Others may find that simple things like Yoga classes and meditation works for their needs. It does not really matter which avenue you choose to heal your soul what matters is the healing that takes place.

If you are physically sick you may want to research which types of spiritual healing have helped others with your specific affliction. For example, some people have found great help overcoming pain through meditation and yoga. Others who face depression and stress may find that they way to healing for them is through a spiritual guide who can help them on their journey to connect with the spirit world. There are many kinds of spiritual healing available, all you have to do is find the one that works for you. It is all right to start small, get your toes wet until you feel comfortable moving further on your spiritual journey. If any part of it or any particular group makes you feel uncomfortable move on to another group. There is no specific guide that works best for everyone because it is such a deeply personal experience.

Along your journey you will find that you did not know yourself as well as you thought you did. You might also find that old wounds, both physical and emotional, had not healed as much as you let yourself believe they had. You will also probably be surprised to find how much better you feel once your spirit has connected with your body and soul and a more complete way then you had previously experienced.