

All Healing is spiritual Healing

Listen to the Body—It Always Tells the Truth

Our spirit is revealed and concealed in our body's journey through our lifetime. According to the oft-repeated saying by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, "We are spiritual beings having a human experience."

Spiritual healing encompasses not just the soul but also the body, mind, and heart. Our body is the matrix for our soul. It is what allows our soul, our inner being, to grow and express itself here on Earth.

How do we penetrate to the heart of the matter when we are sick? Whether it's an acute illness like a cold, or a chronic condition like arthritis that is interrupting the life we feel we should be living, how do we address the physical and spiritual aspects of what is happening to and within us so that we can get as well as possible within the context of the body we have? First we need to learn to listen to our bodies.

I remember when I was about twenty-eight years old, lying in bed so tired that I couldn't get up. It didn't matter how much sleep I'd gotten. This scenario repeated itself day after day. I'd drag myself up and out of bed to go to work and do the things I needed to do with little to no enthusiasm or energy. It got so bad that I couldn't remember why I'd ever liked living, why I'd ever thought it was worth the trouble, effort, or energy to bother getting up in the morning. I began to realize, finally, that I could not solve this problem in my head. I couldn't solve it with willpower, nor even with my powerful spirit. I had examined, reflected, questioned, processed, looked at issues, tried to figure out what was bothering me, ad infinitum. I thought that with certain realizations, healing would automatically follow—but it hadn't. I was good and stuck. Only then did I accept that my body, this precious "thing" that housed, reflected and revealed my soul, needed help. And she needed it on a physical level. This was oddly difficult for me to accept because I identified more with spirit than with matter. I identified more as a spiritual being than as a physical one. And clearly, my body did not agree with my assessment! So, I finally decided to get some physical help.

First I pursued standard blood tests and exams. According to the tests I was in perfect health. "So how come I feel too exhausted to get out of bed?" I asked the doctors. They shrugged in reply. They had no idea. If I'd continued on this road, I suspect they would've told me to go have my head examined. But I didn't have money for that, nor insurance, so instead I began to take some herbs in an attempt to help myself while I sought out a medical center where both conventional and traditional medicine were offered.

Fortunately I found such a place, and scheduled an appointment. First I was required to see their medical doctor to get new blood tests. I met with him after that and was again told that, according to the tests, I was fine. I told him I was feeling a bit better than when I'd scheduled the appointment, but still didn't feel anything resembling well. He shrugged, perplexed. Then he sent me to see the Amma therapist, which was why I had gone there in the first place. Amma is a healing art from China that is the great-grandmother of acupuncture, acupressure, and other related forms of energetic healing. The practitioner put her fingertips on my wrists to read my pulses and said, "Well, you're definitely borderline anemic."

"But your doctor said my blood tests were all perfect. Didn't you read them?"

"Yes, I did. I use the tests as an adjunct reference point to what your body tells me and what I can sense for myself. I believe your pulses more than I believe a test."

Aha! As a young herbal student this brought me immediately to a new level of understanding that

bodies themselves are more reliable than tests. I've seen this repeatedly over the years. Bodies are also more reliable than any of my thoughts and beliefs when there is a conflict between them, because bodies don't mislead or lie. They tell the truth no matter how unwanted, uncomfortable, or inconvenient that truth may be. And I have learned that they know only one language—the language of love. *And love is what heals.* Bodies are not concerned with being smart, or right, or enlightened, or understood, or seen as good enough. Bodies are not invested in these kind of concerns that race around in our heads and keep us exhausted as we fight with ourselves rather than simply live to our fullest. Bodies simply are. And they are a reflection of our inner journey toward expressing the wholeness that we always hold within ourselves no matter what may have happened to us in this or any other lifetime. What I learned through my journey of healing at that time was that I needed to fully embrace being alive, and my body was showing me that I was only half-alive. While I did have a lot of fun and accomplished some wonderful things with my outer life, I had also spent a large part of my inner life for nearly thirty years sapping my own energy. I was constantly cutting myself off from my true present, undermining my own life and relationships because I was not really at home being in my body on Earth. I was too afraid. I finally decided I didn't want to continue to live my life with one foot in and one foot out, so to speak. So, fearful though I still felt, on my thirty-first birthday I fully committed to being here, to becoming who I came here to be—me—and to letting what I did grow out of the truth of my being. I was blessed to spend that birthday with a group of women at a small gathering and to receive a birthday smudge, prayer, and blessings from Keewaydinoquay, an Anishinabeg herbalist, scholar, and elder wise woman whom I would grow to love.

When you commit to living as fully as possible your life doesn't suddenly become all rosy—but it's never boring. It's been over twenty years since then, and what a trip it's been! I've never been sorry I made this commitment to my life. And I've never had anemia again, either.

HEALING HERBAL RECIPE FOR IRON-DEFICIENCY ANEMIA

1 1/2–2 cups dried stinging nettle leaves and stalks

1/2–1 cup dried plantain leaves

1 dropper (25–30 drops) fresh yellow dock root tincture per cup taken

1 dropper (25–30 drops) fresh burdock root tincture per cup taken

1 dropper (25–30 drops) fresh dandelion root tincture per cup taken

Put the dried herbs into a half-gallon glass jar. Pour boiling water over them to fill the jar completely, and cap it. Let this infusion sit out on the counter for about 8 hours (or overnight). Decant it by pouring off the liquid and then squeezing all the liquid out of the leaves, to get the strongest part of the medicine. Store the infusion in the refrigerator, or reheat and put into a stainless-steel thermos for drinking throughout the day.

Drink 2–4 cups of this preparation daily, hot or cold. Add the three tinctures into each cup of infusion that you drink. You may also mix an ounce of each herbal tincture into one bottle; shake well before adding 3 droppers (approximately 1/2 teaspoon) into each cup of infusion.

When my practitioner listened to my descriptions of the herbs I'd begun using, she agreed that it was likely they had raised my iron count high enough that she read it as borderline anemia rather than the full-fledged anemia I was feeling originally. Nettles are a rich source of chlorophyll; they increase the iron in your blood and improve the health of your red blood cells.

This deep green herb also nourishes your adrenal glands and can help you reclaim and restore your vital energy. I've seen yellow dock root bring up low iron counts more quickly than iron supplements countless times since then. Yellow dock root tends to grow in iron-rich soil and it aids how well the body assimilates and therefore makes use of any iron it receives.

Dandelion roots and burdock roots, taken separately or together, also increase iron levels in the blood. Additionally, eat fresh plantain leaves in your salads—they grow in nearly every lawn and

field, and are a specific herb for anemia. Plantain is also a specific herb for “failure to thrive” in infants. I wasn’t an infant at that point, but I’d been failing to thrive and was in the process of rebirthing myself anew.

If you prefer not to use alcohol or simply want to try something different, here’s another helpful recipe to get the benefits of burdock, dandelion, and yellow dock roots:

DEEP ROOTS DECOCTION FOR IRON-DEFICIENCY ANEMIA

1 cup dried burdock root 1/2 cup dried dandelion root 1/2 cup dried yellow dock root 6 tablespoons blackstrap molasses per quart. Put the herbs into a half-gallon jar. Pour boiling water over them, and cap the jar tightly. Let it sit for about 12 hours. You can strain this infusion, add the molasses, and use the brew at this strength, drinking it by the cup, or go on to make a decoction as follows:

Strain the infusion, squeeze the liquid out of the roots, and turn it into a decoction by steaming off half the liquid (see Decoctions, page 42), which makes it twice as strong as the original infusion. After the decoction has steamed down to the desired amount of one quart, stir in the blackstrap molasses. Take 2 tablespoons (one ounce, or 1/8 cup) of the decoction 2–3 times daily, or as needed.

This infusion or decoction can be drunk hot or cold, but both must be stored in the refrigerator. I would suggest also drinking the nettle and plantain leaf infusion and eating plantain leaves. This recipe is a good iron tonic for anyone, and can be used preventatively. Often the difference between preventative and curative remedies is simply in the amount used.