

The Healing Power of Eros

Darlene Lancer, JD, MFT

www.whatiscodependency.com

Eros, god of love and desire, was “the fairest of the deathless gods... He unstrings the limbs and subdues both mind and sensible thought in the breasts of all the gods and all men.”¹ No one, neither mortal nor divine, can resist his enchantment. Eros is the spirit of life, the cosmic power of love, and the procreative force of the universe, drawing things towards unity and bringing order and harmony to Chaos² (Harrison & Jane Ellen, 1955). According to the Greek Orphic religion³ (Hamilton & Edith, 1954), in the beginning there was Chaos, the creative void that gave birth to Eros, the creative impulse or spirit, and Eros was the catalyst in the formation of Gaia, the earth goddess or physical existence. Thus, Eros, also known as Shekinah among Kabbalist Hebrews, connects body and soul, as does “ruah elohim” in Genesis⁴ (Abraham & Ralph, 1994).

The Orphic religion celebrated life itself and the mysteries of ecstasy and love. For its followers, Eros represented divine light, epiphany and the higher self in all its aspects of love.⁵ Orphic reformers include such luminaries as Buddha, Christ, Pythagoras and Wilhelm Reich. Reich’s colleague, John Pierrakos, describes Eros as an awakening force, a vibrational resonance that shakes the body and opens the heart:

“...it vibrates our core and produces an exquisite mental, physical and emotional bliss...it brings movement, life and hope. The ultimate manifestation of Eros is the connection with the force of creation. Eros transforms us from weak to powerful, hard to soft, rigid to flexible; it raises our consciousness to that higher level we feel when we connect with the creator through prayer, or the connection with nature we feel as we walk by the sea”⁶ (Pierrakos, 2001).

FREUD, LIBIDO AND THE PLEASURE PRINCIPLE

Freud referred to Eros as life instinct, which he called libidinal energy. In identifying the “pleasure principle,” he saw man as a pleasure-seeking animal, whose “entire psychical activity is bent on procuring pleasure and avoiding pain”⁷ (Brown, 1959). In fact, we are built for pleasure. It is our birthright. Deep brain centers respond directly to pleasure sensations. Animals will self-stimulate

those centers to exhaustion, without stopping to eat, drink, or mate⁸ (Ornstein & Sobel, 1989).

Our internal health maintenance system appears to be guided by pleasure. Most healthy people have a *joie de vivre*; they pursue healthy pleasures and live optimistically, with zest and commitment that improves their health and prolongs their life. They are pleasure-loving, pleasure-seeking, pleasure-creating individuals. In fact, worrying about your health is unhealthy.⁹ For just as love of life is the basis of pleasure, fear of death is the basis of pain.¹⁰

Freud thought that labor and the progress of civilization is sublimated Eros, and a cause of man’s neuroses.¹¹ Taken too far, “Instinctual renunciation is the path of sickness and self-destruction,” when the repression of libido turns the lack of pleasure into pain.¹²

In attempting to understand the nature of pleasure and pain, philosophers have defined sensuous pleasure as the conscious effect of that which advances bodily life, with a corresponding general increase of potentiality. Higher pleasure is associated with a heightened sense of life and power. Sensuous pain is connected with retrogression in function of bodily life and the system as a whole and is a forerunner of death¹³ (Marshall, 1894).

Freud noticed that pain is accompanied by unbound stimulation and internal excitation. With greater stimulation, pleasure decreases and “unpleasure” increases. The calmer or higher the system’s “quiescent cathexis,” the greater is its ability to bind this excitation¹⁴ (Freud, 1961). Pain and life events are experienced differently depending on the perception of whether they are a threat or irreversible. Nonetheless, perceived and anticipated pain or stress stimulate the sympathetic branch of the autonomic nervous system (“ANS”) just as actual physical pain does. Hormones and chemicals are released that alert the body for action and self-defense, speeding heartbeat and respiration, raising blood pressure, constricting blood vessels and muscles to prepare the body to fight or flee. The ensuing adrenalin rush is always followed by fatigue, because the sympathetic system is catabolic; it uses up energy and depletes the body.

The ANS is designed to absorb a shock, re-stabilize and return to homeostasis, but chronic pain, stress and trauma, flood the body’s physical and psychological defenses. The consequence of trauma is greater if the system’s cathexis, or its capacity to take up the additional incoming stimulation, is low. This accounts for the destructive effects of chronic stress and pain, and explains why they impoverish other systems. Freud theorized that recurring traumatic dreams recreate anxiety in an attempt to bind and master the original

¹Hesiod, *Theogony*, pp.120-122.

²Harrison, Jane Ellen, *Prologomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, Meridian, New York, 1955, pp. 657-8.

³Hamilton, Edith, *The Greek Way*, W.W. Norton & Co., 1954, p. 214. The religion was named for Orpheus, who unified the values of Apollo and Dionysus. Apollo was the God of order, harmony and moderation, while Dionysus was the God of wild drunkenness, feasting and ecstasy.

⁴Abraham, Ralph, *Chaos, Gaia and Eros*, Harper, Collins, 1994, New York, p. 147.

⁵Harrison, *supra*.

⁶Pierrakos, John C. (founder of Core-Energetics), *Eros, Love & Sexuality, LifeRhythm*, 2001, pp. 14, 51-52.

⁷Brown, Norman O., *Life Against Death*, Random House, New York, 1959, quoting Freud, p. 8.

⁸Ornstein, Robert, Sobel, David, *Healthy Pleasures*, Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc. Woburn, Mass., 1989, p. 25.

⁹*Id.*, pp. 7, 24, 26.

¹⁰Marshall, *supra*, p. 184, quoting Boullier, *Du Plaisir et de la Douleur*.

¹¹*Id.*, pp. 17, 25-26.

¹²*Id.*, p. 57.

¹³Marshall, Henry Rutgers, *Pain, Pleasure and Aesthetics*, MacMillan & Co., New York, 1894, p. 184 (quoting Hoffding, *Psychologie*, p. 172; and Baldwin, *Psychology, Feelings and Will*, p. 126).

¹⁴Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, W.W. Norton & Co., New York, 1961, pp. 4, 9, 33-36.

*Correspondence regarding this article should be directed to: info@darlenelancer.com

Copyright: © 2014, Darlene Lancer (2004).

stimulus that overwhelmed the system.¹⁵ Contemporary scientist, Bonnie Bainbridge-Cohen suggests that trauma and stress are forms of information overload¹⁶ (Pert, 1997).

In later writings, Freud redefined the pleasure principle from the avoidance of stimulation to a “deep-rooted, passionate striving for a positive fulfillment of happiness.” Man seeks activities to express libido in accordance with the pleasure principle - the ultimate, erotic essence of our being.¹⁷

REICH: PLEASURE AND THE MIND/BODY CONNECTION

A student and colleague of Freud, Wilhelm Reich had a unitary concept of the organism and biological energy, emphasizing the functional identity of somatic and psychic processes¹⁸ (Sharaf & Myron, 1983). He disagreed with Freud that a death instinct existed, and believed instead that most people feared pleasure. The tasks of therapy are to reverse the “general sympatheticotonic contraction of the organism,” reduce chronic anxiety, and increase the capacity for pleasurable functioning and flow of “orgone energy,” the primordial bio and cosmic life force.¹⁹ To Reich, motion (root of “e-motion”) and sensation are inseparable.

“Emotions flow through our body, thoughts flow through our mind; the flow of daily life, moving freely, is an experience that creates pleasure...The combination of energy (movement) and consciousness creates the possibility of pleasure, joy, and ecstasy.”²⁰

Freud believed that libido, or Eros, operates at the cellular level.²¹ In looking for Eros and orgone, Reich studied microorganisms, and discovered fluid currents within amoebas that pulsed in an alternating rhythm of expansion and contraction: Outward toward the surface, and inward toward the center.²² He thought these two biophysical currents or energy flows corresponded to the two basic effects of the psyche expressed by: 1) The sympathetic nervous system, which contracts away from the world in anxiety; and, 2) The parasympathetic nervous system, which expands toward the world in pleasure.²³ A parasympathetic disposition flows outward, and emphasizes pleasurable sensations, nourishing, healing and regeneration of the body. This branch of the ANS stimulates the immune system and digestion and elimination. It is characterized by relaxed muscles, dilated blood vessels, warm and rosy skin, a strong, slow heartbeat, and deep, slow respiration. But among his patients, Reich observed the opposite: Pale, cold skin, tense muscles, shallow breathing, and high pulse and blood pressure, symptoms of chronic sympathetic nervous system dominance, which is experienced as unpleasure, due to the lack of natural pulsation and impedance of the flow of bodily fluids. He said this represented a defensive, armored stance towards life. Reich speculated that disease resulted from such “biopathy,” a disturbance of the natural bioelectrical equilibrium of the two energy flows²⁴ (Buhl, 2001).

¹⁵Id.

¹⁶Pert, Candace B., *Molecules of Emotion*, Scribner, New York, 1997, p. 275.

Brown, supra, p. 89, quoting Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Hogarth Press, London, 1930, p. 37. Seeking homeostasis was originally referred to as the “Nirvana Principle,” then later the “death wish.”

¹⁸Sharaf, Myron R., *Fury on Earth, Biography of Wilhelm Reich*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1983, p. 214.

¹⁹Id., pp. 207-208.

²⁰Pierrakos, supra, p. 13.

²¹Freud, supra, p.53, n. 21.

²²Sharaf, supra, pp. 207-208, 243. Reich, *Character Analysis*, Doubleday Canada Ltd, Toronto, 1972, pp. 356-357.

²³Id., pp. 356-7.

²⁴Buhl, Heike, “Autonomic Nervous System and Energetic Medicine,” www.orgone.org/articles/ax2001buhl-a.htm, pp. 5-7. Sharaf, supra, p. 214.

He tested his theories by measuring the electrical potential of the skin. His experiments showed that during pleasurable states there was an increase in charge as energy moved towards the periphery, and a decrease in flow and charge when subjects felt unpleasure. He considered cancer to be a disease of contraction and putrefaction of tissue due to pleasure starvation of the organism. By collecting and treating patients with orgone energy, he was able to provide an expansive therapy that stimulated the parasympathetic nervous system. It increased hemoglobin and reduced pain and tumor growth.²⁵ I attribute my own seemingly miraculous invigoration and complete cessation of chronic hip pain to the intense “orgone energy” I experienced when visiting the Amazon rain forest. The benefits diminished when I returned to the city, and completely vanished once I was back in polluted Los Angeles.

NEUROBIOLOGY OF HEALING

Modern Western man has suffered from a “split between his psychological and physiological processes” due to a “profound distrust of unconscious or autonomic processes.”²⁶ The unity of mind and body was recognized as early as Aristotle, but now we have scientific proof. Dr. Elmer Green, who pioneered biofeedback at the Mayo Clinic, paraphrased Aristotle (Aristotle, 1913) when he wrote:

“Every change in the physiological state is accompanied by an appropriate change in the mental emotional state, conscious or unconscious, and conversely, every change in the mental emotional state, conscious or unconscious, is accompanied by an appropriate change in the physiological state.”

Empirical evidence obtained with PET Scans, radioimmunoassay and other techniques shows that attitudes, thoughts, beliefs and images are not mere abstractions, but electrochemical events with physiological effects.²⁷ The body can no longer be compared to a robot controlled by the brain; instead, according to scientist Candace Pert, the mind/body organism is a complex psychosomatic “information network,” linking “psyche,” representing the mind, emotion and soul, to “soma,” comprised of molecules, cells and organs. Each second, massive information is exchanged via “information substances,”²⁸ that interact throughout the body. “Emotions are at the nexus between matter and mind, going back and forth between the two and influencing both.” Molecules of emotion affect every system of our body from head to toe; they seek wellness, demonstrating body/mind intelligence.²⁹

The central switchboard of the body/mind is the limbic-hypothalamic system (“LHS”). The hypothalamus is in the middle of the limbic system, bordering the thinking frontal cortex and ANS, which is comprised of the sympathetic, parasympathetic and enteric nervous systems (the latter regulates the stomach and intestines, which are very sensitive to stress and psychosomatic disorders). Pleasure, pain and other signals from the body and immune system are transmitted to the LHS. Thoughts and images are also sent there from the cortex in the form of neural impulses, which are then transduced into neurotransmitters that modulate each cell of the body via the ANS³⁰ (Rossi & Ernest, 1986). Neurotransmitters affect us more than we realize, including mood, thoughts, appetite, stress, emotion, aggression, addiction, appetite, sleep and cell growth and division; reciprocally, our mood, behavior and thoughts influence the

²⁵Id., pp. 214, 303-305.

²⁶Pelletier, Kenneth, *Mind as Healer, Mind as Slayer*, Dell Publishing, New York, 1977, p. 27.

²⁷Justice, Blair, *Who Gets Sick*, Peak Press, Houston, Texas, 2000, p. 52.

²⁸Pert, supra, pp. 184-185, 189. “Information substances,” was coined by Francis Schmitt in 1984, referring to all messenger molecules and receptors.

²⁹Id., pp.19, 189.

³⁰Rossi, Ernest, *The Psychobiology of Mind-Body Healing*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 1986, pp. 101-102, 107, 152.

neurotransmitters. The neurotransmitters, along with the hormones of the endocrine system, immunotransmitters of the immune system, and peptides of the neuropeptide system influence feedback centers in the LHS, then travel to. These bio-chemicals that are influenced by our thoughts and emotions travel throughout the entire body within five to thirty seconds, where they modulate molecules within each cell affecting tissue and disease.³¹

The neuropeptide system is a multidirectional psychoimmunoendocrine feedback network joining together the brain, glands and immune system (including the spleen, bone marrow and lymph nodes) - the entire organism.³² Neuropeptides are the physiological representation of emotion, feelings, sensation, thoughts and drives, and “weave the body’s organs and systems into a single web that reacts to both internal and external environmental changes.” They can also produce emotional states that activate this circuit simultaneously throughout the brain and body, which creates a constellation of bodily responses. For example, thoughts can release endorphin neuropeptides, which then elevate mood.³³

Endorphin neuropeptides play a central role in carrying messages between the brain, and the immune, endocrine and autonomic nervous systems, and travel separately from the central nervous system through our fluids to communicate with each cell.³⁴ Endorphins are the body’s natural opiates. Under their influence, even rats swoon, roll onto their backs, with eyes closed and limbs floppy. We too are wired for pleasure and pain, the key to our survival.³⁵ For example, opiate receptors that secrete endorphins are densest in the cortex, and are also found on lymphocyte and monocyte immune cells.³⁶ Our skin that is so sensitive to touch and pleasure also plays an important role in the maturation of T-cells. Even immune cells in our bones produce and secrete neuropeptides that not only affect and respond to mood and emotion, but also regulate the routing and migration of immune cells. Hormones, neurotransmitters and neuropeptides innervate lymph tissue, and can both stimulate and inhibit immune function, as does stimulation of the LHS. Immunotransmitters feedback to the LHS, endocrine system and the ANS. These interconnections support two-way communication between the mind and immunity.³⁷

Thoughts, images and feelings are conveyed to receptors on the surface of each cell. The receptor transmits messages deep into the cell’s interior, with the potential to change the cell’s state dramatically. A chain reaction of electrical, biochemical, and genetic changes can be initiated, such as cell movement, growth, division, and the increase or decrease of proteins, enzymes and other chemicals. Signals can also direct cancer cells to grow, move, and divide. This neuropeptide activity at the cellular level translates into large changes in behavior, activity and mood.³⁸

This communication network is the psychobiological basis of mind/body healing. What is significant about the new paradigm is that in some respects each cell represents a holographic fractal of the body/mind, and like a network, entry anywhere has the potential to affect the system everywhere – all points are equal. For example, I have found breathwork to be an invaluable tool in treating stress, trauma, chronic pain and illness. By practicing slow, deep breathing, neuropeptides in the respiratory system signal neuropeptides in the brain stem, which in turn affect thoughts, feelings and the experience

of pleasure and pain.³⁹ Similarly, with biofeedback, self-hypnosis, relaxation techniques and guided imagery, subjects can regulate heart rate, circulation, tension and pain control, and even affect the cellular function of their immune system as measured by blood and saliva tests.⁴⁰ Psychoneuroendocrinology and psychoneuroimmunology research has revealed intelligence throughout the body, and the important role of emotion, belief and relationships in fighting infection, allergies and disease. Through their thoughts, subjects were actually able to enhance their immune response to increase neutrophils (that destroy viruses and bacteria) in their blood.⁴¹ Experiments with mice and men have demonstrated that our immune system has memory and can learn, proving that immune reactions can be conditioned by experience and beliefs⁴² (William, 1990). The placebo effect, which accounts for success in 30% to 90% of research subjects, is evidence that belief and hope prompt our own neurochemistry to heal ourselves, and can be harnessed to be effective most of the time⁴³ (Benson & Herbert, 2000; Janov & Arthur, 2000).

Endorphins and other chemicals can significantly alter a person’s experience of pain, pleasure and immune function. Hence, the extra endorphins produced by lovers increase their immunity and decreases in pain.⁴⁴ Similarly, the positive mood and expectation of pleasure found in healthy people and happily married couples appear to boost their immunity.⁴⁵ Joy appears to affect cancer patients’ survival rates more significantly than either the number of metastatic sites or their relationships with their mate and doctor⁴⁶ (Siegel, 1989). Brain scans reveal that positive thoughts and feelings cause secretion of chemicals that support psychological and physical health, including chemicals with specific messages for cells to affect tissue and disease.⁴⁷ Uplifting feelings improved HIV-positive patients’ immune resistance by 300,000 times,⁴⁸ and increase S-IgA levels, which protect against upper respiratory infection, while anger has a negative effect⁴⁹(Braden & Gregg, 2000). Even actors who portray a happy mood enhance their immune function, as do subjects hypnotized to be happy⁵⁰(Futterman, Kemeng, Shapiro et al.,1994).

The opposite is also true. The highest rates of illness are among those who are unhappy, discontented, and have many interpersonal problems. Stress hormones, cortisol, epinephrine and norepinephrine negatively impact the cardiovascular and immune systems, and limit the body’s ability to fight cancer.⁵¹ So can depression as shown in several studies, one with recent widowers⁵² (Barnet, Ann, Barnet, &

³¹Id., pp. 109-111, 129, 146.

³²Pert, supra, pp. 171-172.

³³Id., pp. 130, 145, 148, 261, 311.

³⁴Rossi, supra, pp. 183-185, 198.

³⁵Pert, supra, pp. 63, 86.

³⁶Id., pp. 134, 161-162, 182.

³⁷Id., pp. 182-183. Rossi, supra, p. 152-154.

³⁸Id., pp. 107-108, 129-130. Pert, supra, pp. 24, 38, 173.

³⁹Id., p.186. Rossi, supra, pp. 129-130.

⁴⁰Pert, supra, pp. 188, 191.

⁴¹Rossi, supra, pp. 155, 157.

⁴²Pert, supra, pp. 190-191. Check, William A., *The Mind-Body Connection*, Chelsea House Publishers, New York, 1990, pp. 86-87.

⁴³Id., p. 72. Benson, Herbert, *The Relaxation Response*, Harper-Collins Publishers, New York, 2000. p. xxix. Janov, Arthur, *The Biology of Love*, Prometheus Books, New York, 2000, p. 340.

⁴⁴Justice, supra, p. 284.

⁴⁵Id., p. 293. Check, supra, p. 94. Ornstein, supra, p. 27.

⁴⁶Siegel, Bernie, *Peace, Love and Healing*, Harper & Row Publishers, 1989, p. 28.

⁴⁷Rossi, supra, p. 109.

⁴⁸Rein, Glen (Quantum Biology Research Labs, Boulder Creek, Ca.) and McCraty, Rollin (Institute of HeartMath, Boulder Creek, Ca.) Joint USPA/IAPR Psychotronics Conference, Milwaukee, WI., 1993.

⁴⁹Braden, Gregg, *The Isaiah Effect*, Harmony Books, New York, 2000, p. 179.

⁵⁰Futterman, A.D., Kemeng, M.E., Shapiro, D., Fahey, J.L., “Immunological and Physiological Changes Associated with Induced Positive and Negative Mood,” *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 45: 499-511, 1994. Polonsky, W.H., Knapp, Levy E.M., Black, P.H., “Experimentally Induced Emotion and Immunologic Change: Pilot findings” (Abstract), *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 50: 198, 1988.

⁵¹Justice, supra, pp. 77, 148, 205.

⁵²Barnet, Ann, Barnet, Richard, *The Youngest Minds*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1998, p. 148. Check, supra, pp. 82-83.

Richard, 1988). With depression, people have more limited patterns of thought, behavior and responses. We can infer that there is also less internal communication.⁵³ Feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, and the inability to derive pleasure from activities and relationships often precede illness.⁵⁴ Depression appears to be a better indicator of heart disease than artery damage, high cholesterol or cigarette smoking, and divorce has nearly the same impact on the heart as does smoking over a pack of cigarettes a day.⁵⁵ The amount of plaque in coronary arteries is controlled by neuropeptides linked to emotion.⁵⁶

MOLECULES AND EROS

Sensual and erotic feelings can neutralize the destructive effects of stress, organic illness and pain⁵⁷ (Menninger, 1938). Without touch, babies fail to develop normally, even if their other basic needs are met. Monkeys isolated without “contact comfort” as infants, later show cognitive, social and physiological impairment, including abnormal brain chemistry; they rock endlessly back and forth, have shorter life spans, depressed immune systems and neglect and abuse their offspring.⁵⁸ On the other hand, sufficient touch and nurturing in childhood creates extra cortisol receptors that help the adult recover faster from stress.⁵⁹ Nurturing calms and heals. It releases the neurotransmitter serotonin, and promotes relaxation, growth, repair and healing. When two close monkeys reunite after a separation, they begin grooming each other, and their serotonin levels rise.⁶⁰ And when stressed monkeys are hugged their stress levels return to normal. Much research supports the healing power of touch for depression and illness. Touch stimulates and regulates the body’s chemicals to maximize our health more effectively than drugs.⁶¹ A nurse’s comforting touch can stabilize heart function and blood pressure.⁶² The serotonin and oxytocin released by massage and touch inhibit the sympathetic nervous system’s fight or flight response and production of stress hormones, and activates the parasympathetic nervous system, promoting relaxation, immune function, repair of the body/mind, pain reduction and longevity.⁶³ When an animal’s belly is stroked, its oxytocin levels rise and blood pressure drops. Like “a mother’s caress,” an injection of oxytocin balances the feeling of being unloved and in pain. The greater the love, the more oxytocin, the faster one heals.⁶⁴ Merely watching a film of Mother Teresa ministering to the sick can increase your immunoglobulin levels - called the “Mother Teresa effect.” You’ll get the same result if you remember a time when you loved someone, and felt deeply loved and cared for⁶⁵ (Larry, 1993). Feelings of love, gratitude and well-being balance the ANS, giving one a greater sense of control and resistance to illness.⁶⁶ In my own experience and that of my patients, pain is relieved and energy revived in the company of friends and loved ones. In the days before my mother died, after a visit with her grandson, she went without her oxygen inhaler for

⁵³Pert, supra, p. 270.

⁵⁴Siegel, supra, p. 154.

⁵⁵Ornstein, supra, pp. 24, 26.

⁵⁶Pert, supra, p. 189.

⁵⁷Menninger, Karl, *Man Against Himself*, Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York, 1938, p. 380.

⁵⁸Barnet, supra, pp. 115, 118-119.

⁵⁹Justice, supra, p. 65.

⁶⁰Janov, supra, p. 292.

⁶¹Pert, supra, pp. 271-273.

⁶²Ornstein, supra, p. 33.

⁶³Id., p. 45; Rossi, supra, p. 174; Janov, supra, pp. 296, 303. Barnet, supra, p. 212. Justice, supra, pp. 65, 348-349.

⁶⁴Janov, supra, pp. 295-296, 299, 305.

⁶⁵Dossey, Larry, *Healing Words: The Power of Prayer and The Practice of Medicine*, HarperCollins Publishers, New York, 1993, pp. 109-110.

⁶⁶Justice, supra, pp. 130-132.

twenty-four hours. It’s no surprise that people with strong social networks have stronger immune systems and live longer, a factor more important than diet, exercise and lifestyle⁶⁷ (Berkman & Syme, 1979).

For Carl Jung, Eros symbolizes the psychic energy of relating and joining.⁶⁸ It’s been suggested that this connectedness operates between particles at the subatomic level, as a kind of primordial love or empathy⁶⁹ (Larry, 2001). What is the connectedness between people and particles that triggers chemical reactions? Swiss scientist, Hans Jenny, showed that sound vibrations cause predictable movements and patterns when projected into substances. Living systems also emit vibrational tones. For example, a rosebud unfolds with its own distinctive sound, similar to one of the lower notes on a pipe organ.⁷⁰ Emotions also create vibrations that can be detected by sensors placed in the ground surrounding someone experiencing a range of feelings from anger to compassion.⁷¹ The vibrations of prayer, love, gratitude and beautiful music cause the molecular structure of water to form magnificent crystals⁷² (Emoto & Masaru, 2004). Such feelings may produce the same transformation in our own fluid systems that makeup the information highways and 75% of our body. Perhaps these “good vibrations” excite our cells, molecules and atoms to vibrate at a specific frequency in resonance with others.

Physicists, David Bohm and Stewart Wolf, argue that emotions influence quantum events.⁷³ They also cause our DNA to change shape. When you feel anger, stress, frustration or fear, your DNA becomes shorter, tighter, and switches off many codes. When you feel gratitude, love and appreciation, your DNA relaxes and the strands unwind. More astounding, an experiment performed by the military showed that changes in a person’s emotions simultaneously affected a sample taken of his DNA, even when it was separated from the host by a distance of fifty miles⁷⁴ (Motz, 1993). Despite great physical separation, people who love each other sometimes share telesomatic events, even symptoms, through sympathetic resonance. Their minds behave non-locally, just as two quanta can respond to one another non-locally.⁷⁵ Thus, love can even heal at a distance.

FINDING PLEASURE

Pleasurable states and behaviors, particularly when creative and numinous, engage the healing and transformative power of Eros. Special genes, called immediate early genes and clock genes, appear to be involved with healing. In exploring the new field of psychosocial genomics, psychologist Ernest Rossi has investigated how we can modify gene expression at the cellular level, for healing and self-recreation. He emphasizes the role of play, novelty, creativity, numinous experiences, happiness, humor, curiosity and wonder in the psychosynthetic process of neurogenesis.⁷⁶

⁶⁷Id., pp. 138, 147, 285. Berkman, LF, Syme, SL, “Social Networks, Host Resistance, and Mortality,” *American Journal of Epidemiology*, pp.109:186-204, 1979.

⁶⁸Abraham, supra, p. 147. Freud thought Eros was the unifying force between cells that creates multi-cellular organisms. Freud, supra, p. 53, n. 21.

⁶⁹Dossey, Larry, *Healing Beyond the Body*, Shambala Publications, Inc., Boston, 2001, p. 255.

⁷⁰Beakey, Beverly M., *Choose Life*, Asher Press, 2000. See www.innerself.com/Miscellaneous/music.htm.

⁷¹Id., Braden, supra, pp. 187-188, 206.

⁷²Emoto, Masaru, *Messages from Water*, Beyond Words Publishing, Hillsboro, Oregon, 2004.

⁷³Siegel, supra, p. 29.

⁷⁴Motz, J. “Everyone An Energy Healer: The Treat V Conference” in Santa Fe, N.M., *Advances*, Vol. 9, 1993.

⁷⁵Dossey, *Healing Beyond the Body*, supra, p. 250.

⁷⁶See Rossi, Ernest, *The Psychobiology of Gene Expression*, W.W. Norton Professional Books, 2002.

Profound states of comfort, relaxation, trance and sleep maximize healing potential, and permit deep inner work and creative reorganization to occur.⁷⁷ Doctor's suggestions to the subconscious minds of severely burned patients brought about their speedy, near miraculous recovery⁷⁸ (Caprio, 1964). Techniques such as yoga, biofeedback, hypnosis, creative visualization, meditation and prayer reduce sympathetic nervous system activity and stimulate parasympathetic responses. This shift benefits endocrine and immune function and creates an integrated hypothalamic response, increasing the organism's "quiescent cathexis" and ability to bind energy.⁷⁹ Entering deep comfort and relaxation during hypnosis has helped my patients with chronic pain and illness⁸⁰ (Lancer, 2003). In such a relaxed state, learning is also enhanced. Moïshe Feldenkrais employed meditative movement in his revolutionary approach to healing and neuromuscular re-education. He believed learning should be pleasurable, and that goal setting impedes progress by creating resistance and removing us from the present moment⁸¹ (Bach-Y-Rita, 1981). AS in creativity and play, one's attention should be focused on the immediate sensate experience.

We need pray for no higher heaven than the pure senses can furnish, a purely sensuous life," wrote Thoreau.⁸² Any one of the senses is a portal to the pleasure centers in the brain.⁸³ Our brains release opiates that heal and give us pleasure when we experience music, beauty, nature or art.⁸⁴ One of the first fetal sensations is rocking, floating and moving in the womb. From subtle internal movements to martial arts, dance and exercise, endorphins are released and we derive pleasure from the motion of our breath, cells, fluids, tissues, muscles and limbs. Gentle holding, rocking and stroking soothe the ANS and activate our body's healing mechanisms, as do hot baths, the warmth of the sun, and petting an animal. A sauna raises serotonin and endorphin levels.⁸⁵ Hugs and kisses, laughter, and even purging tears can heal.

Our next pre-natal sensual experience is the vibration of sounds and our mother's voice. Our voice, singing chanting creates a vibration that reverberates through our tissues and bones. Innately, we both make and respond to rhythm. Song and music can bypass the cortex and stimulate spontaneous movement, memory and emotion. Certain frequencies, such as a waltz, have been shown to positively affect the ANS and the release of endorphin hormones, while reducing stress hormones. Common measurable improvements are to respiration, heart rate, blood pressure and conductivity of the skin.⁸⁶ The beneficial effect has been compared to 2.5-mg. of Valium. Hayden's Cello Concerto in C and Bach's Air on the G-String are used in ICU to reduce pain and anxiety and speed post-operative recovery, and to supplement treatment for cancer, stroke, arthritis, and kidney dialysis.⁸⁷ Music reduces the need for anesthesia and pain medication. Some patients with Alzheimer's disease and autism respond positively to treatment with music. It also helps some Parkinson's patients to relax their rigid muscles, and move their hands over a piano keyboard even though they are frozen when

⁷⁷Rossi, *The Psychobiology of Mind-Body Healing*, supra, pp. 67, 139, 174.

⁷⁸Caprio, Frank S., and Berger, I.R., *Helping Yourself with Self-Hypnosis*, Prentice Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1964.

⁷⁹Rossi, supra, p. 44.

⁸⁰Lancer, Darlene, "Interrupting the Cycle of Chronic Pain," *Many Voices*, Feb, 2003, p. 12.

⁸¹Bach-Y-Rita, Eileen, "New Pathways in the Recovery from Brain Injury," *Somatics*, Autumn/winter, 1981, p.40.

⁸²Brown, supra, p. 308.

⁸³Ornstein, supra, p.32.

⁸⁴Justice, supra, p. 289.

⁸⁵Ornstein, supra., p. 47.

⁸⁶Breakey, supra.

⁸⁷Ornstein, supra., p. 59-61, 63.

attempting to feed or dress themselves.⁸⁸ The sound of babbling water, rain, waves, or chimes, wind in the trees or a caring voice may have the same calming effect.

Views of water and plants induce alpha brain waves and relaxation; in fact post-op patients who had a tree view required less medication and were released sooner.⁸⁹ Aquarium gazing is as effective as hypnosis in reducing pain, anxiety and blood pressure.⁹⁰ Spending time in nature, looking at a fire, animals or babies play, seeing beautiful art, a sunrise, sunset, or rainbow can spark feelings of awe or unity associated with Eros. Watching an hour of comedy lowers stress hormones and boosts immunity by increasing lymphocytes⁹¹ (Applegate, Kiecolt-Glaser, & Glaser, 1997). Norman Cousins completely reversed painful ankylosing spondylites by supplementing medical treatment with visualization, the love of family and friends and laughter. Watching five minutes of Charlie Chaplin videos relieved his pain for several hours. After a heart attack he did the same, and ignored his doctor's warning to have by-pass surgery.⁹² He attributed his healing to laughter and the endorphins that elevated his mood.⁹³

Aromatherapy has been effective for treating insomnia, anxiety, panic attacks, back pain, migraine and food cravings. Imagine the smell of flowers, soap, incense or perfume. A whiff of spiced apple can modify stress responses and stimulate the parasympathetic nervous system.⁹⁴

Although primarily sensual, the erotic can be extended through creative sublimations afforded by art, crafts, music, dance and hobbies that gratify the pleasure principle.⁹⁵ For clients and me, creative activities are relaxing and a powerful channel for Eros. The healing power of creativity was highly regarded by Carl Jung. It stimulates the intuitive, "feminine" or "yin" side of the psyche, and is an outlet for the unconscious.⁹⁶ Whether its creativity, knitting, cooking or sports, people are happiest when they are in "flow," losing themselves in an activity. According to researcher Mihaly Csikszentmihaly, "flow" generates a sense of well-being, that life is good.⁹⁷

An instructor at a stroke rehab facility told me stories about two stroke patients, one formerly a professional dancer, who now walked with a quad cane; but when her favorite music was played, she danced with grace. Another was a biology professor and gourmet cook, whose love of nature and teaching aroused Eros. For several years, he had lost his speech due to the stroke. However, one day, while sitting by the window, he saw a clump of mushrooms, and began talking fluently about the species and how to prepare them, until his caretakers noticed and commented, when he stopped abruptly.⁹⁸ For many years, although I couldn't walk without pain, I could still dance.

Most notable is the story of cellist Pablo Casals. He suffered from rheumatoid arthritis as well as emphysema. Each morning, with his head bent forward he shuffled to the piano bench. He unclenched

⁸⁸Breakey, supra.

⁸⁹Justice, supra.

⁹⁰Ornstein, supra, p. 56.

⁹¹Id., p. 28, 218. Applegate K.L., Kiecolt-Glaser J., Glaser R., "Positive Affect and Immune Function," *Research Perspectives in PsychoNeuroImmunology*, Boulder, Colo., June 5, 1997.

⁹²Check, supra, p. 32, 50.

⁹³Pert, supra, p. 167.

⁹⁴Ornstein, supra., p. 69.

⁹⁵Menninger, supra, p. 385.

⁹⁶Lancer, supra.

⁹⁷Justice, supra, p. 134.

⁹⁸Interview with Devon Wallace, July 5, 2005.

his hands, his back began to straighten and his breathing relaxed. As reported by his guest, Norman Cousins, Casals began to play Bach's "Wohltemperierte Klavier" with the skill and alacrity. He hummed as he played, and he moved into playing a Brahms Concerto. His fingers became extremely agile as they flew across the keyboard. His whole body became fluid and moved with the music. He rose, now standing several inches taller, walked to breakfast, his breathing barely audible. After a hearty meal, he went for a walk.⁹⁹

Creativity uplifts the soul, providing pleasure and inspiration, particularly if engaged in as play. From a biochemical standpoint, play heals by increasing our expressive range, loosening the flow of information that is stuck.¹⁰⁰ However, focusing on effort, technique or an expected outcome restricts that flow, and takes us further from the awareness and joy of the moment¹⁰¹ (Lancer, 1991). During play, we are united in the timeless present with the object of our experience. A child's play is purposeless yet meaningful; it is not self-conscious. We all carry that latent memory of childhood pleasure and play – a time to which we yearn to return when we were at one with the world, with love and pleasure. Like the Greeks, Freud equated love and pleasure, where the Self enjoys the world as it enjoys the Self.¹⁰² This love of life and blissful sense of oneness is what Eros represented in the Orphic mysteries.

"Self-love," says Bernie Siegel "is an acknowledgement of the spark of the Divine that is in each of us, no matter what our imperfections."¹⁰³ Only in the full acceptance of our own imperfections can we fulfill the ultimate aim of Eros.

CONCLUSION

Although we haven't been able as yet to understand or quantify how mind and emotion improve our health, we are able to see signs that it does both from neuroscience research and from the effects on cells and patients. A great deal of research is being done on mapping the brain. More basic research and clinical studies need to be done on emotion. Although we may know that certain emotions are linked to certain chemical reactions, such as release of stress hormones, how thoughts can lead to this result in ourselves, our disembodied DNA, or in others for whom we pray is not understood. More controlled studies should be done with larger populations. There is a scientific bias against the existence of diverse emotions in animals, which militates against using animals in research. However, this would open up greater possibilities for brain studies.

REFERENCES

Abraham & Ralph. (1994). *Chaos, Gaia and Eros*. New York: San Francisco: Harper Collins

Aristotle. (1913). *Physiognomonica*. United Kingdom: Clarendon Press.

Bach-Y-Rita, E. (1981). New Pathways in the Recovery from Brain Injury. *Somatics*, 1(2), 26-34.

Barnet, A., & Richard, B. (1998). *The Youngest Minds*, New York: Simon & Schuster.

Benson, H. (2000). *The Relaxation Response*. New York: Harper-Collins Publishers.

Berkman, L.F., & Syme, S.L. (1979). Social Networks, Host Resistance, and Mortality. *American Journal of Epidemiology*, 109,186-204.

Brown, N. O. (1959). *Life Against Death*. New York: Random House.

Buhl, H.S. (1999). Autonomic Nervous System and Energetic Medicine. *Energy and Character*, 30, 1.

Caprio, F.S., & Berger, J.R. (1964). *Helping Yourself with Self-Hypnosis: A Modern Guide Self Improvement Successful Living*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., Inglewood Cliffs.

Emoto, M. (2004). *Messages from Water*. Oregon: Beyond Words Publishing, Hillsboro, Oregon.

Freud. (1930). *Civilization and Its Discontents*. London: Hogarth Press.

Freud. (1961). *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.

Futterman, A.D., Kemeng, M.E., Shapiro, D., & Fahey, J. L. (1994). Immunological and Physiological Changes Associated with Induced Positive and Negative Mood. *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 56(6), 499-511.

Hamilton, E. (1954). *The Greek Way*, New York: W.W. Norton & Co.

Harrison, J.E. (1955). *Prologomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, (pp. 657-8). New York: Meridian.

Hesiod. (1914). *Theogony*, pp.120-122.

Janov, A. (2000). *The Biology of Love*. New York: Prometheus Books.

Justice, B. (2000). *Who Gets Sick*. Texas: Peak Press, Houston.

Lancer, D. (1991). *Body and Soul – Sex and Spirituality*. Whole Life Times.

Lancer, D. (2003). *Interrupting the Cycle of Chronic Pain*. Many Voices.

Larry, D. (1993). *Healing Words: The Power of Prayer and the Practice of Medicine*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

Larry, D. (2001). *Healing Beyond the Body*. Boston: Shambala Publications, Inc.

Marshall, H.R. (1894). *Pain, Pleasure and Aesthetics*. New York: MacMillan & Co.

Menninger, K. (1938). *Man Against Himself*. New York: Brace and Company, Harcourt.

Motz, J. (1993). Everyone an Energy Healer: The Treat V Conference. In Santa Fe, N. M., *Advances: The Journal of Mind-Body Health*, 9.

Ornstein, R., Sobel, D. (1989). *Healthy Pleasures*, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc. Woburn.

Pert, C. B. (1997). *Molecules of Emotion*. New York: Scribner.

Pierrakos, J.C. (2001). *Eros, Love & Sexuality*, Life Rhythm.

Rossi, E. (1986). *The Psychobiology of Mind-Body Healing*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Rossi, E. (2002). *The Psychobiology of Gene Expression*, W.W. Norton Professional Books, New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Sharaf, M.R. (1983). *Fury on Earth, Biography of Wilhelm Reich*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Siegel, B. (1989). *Peace, Love and Healing*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers.

William A.C. (1990). *The Mind-Body Connection*, New York: Chelsea House Publishers.

⁹⁹www.healingmusic.org/Main/Newsletter/Interface_Sound_Medicine.htm

¹⁰⁰Pert, supra, p. 277.

¹⁰¹Lancer, Darlene, "Body and Soul – Sex and Spirituality," Whole Life Times, Oct., 1991.

¹⁰²Brown, supra, p. 32-3, 38, 46.

¹⁰³Siegel, supra, p. 249.