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The A to Z Guide to Alternative Medicine

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The A to Z Guide to Alternative Medicine

ACUPUNCTURE

Acupuncture is the art of inserting very thin needles just under the skin to stimulate specific points on the body in order to bring about relief of pain and wellness to the body. This is accomplished by restoring the balance of qi to the body.

Qi is the life force which is found in every thing, both human and non human, from breath to the blood that flows through us, and the movement of qi throughout the body is a sensation brought about by acupuncture that you will not want to miss. It kind of feels like blood flowing, as if you could hear it, but not really. When the acupuncturist takes the needles out of your body you can almost feel the qi moving, it feels like a thread being pulled from your leg, or foot, or wherever the needle is being drawn out from. It is a very calming experience. Simply, the flow of your qi is being restored by stimulating it using needles.

The philosophy of Dao, ying and yang, must be understood in order to understand acupuncture.

Dao is the way of life in Chinese Medicine and acupuncture. Dao advocates living in moderation, and striving for balance with nature. The Chinese believe that moderation is the key to living a long life, and use the practice of acupuncture to balance bodies and spirit to maintain health and to bring into balance ill health.

We are made up of three elements, qi (pronounced Chee) is our energy, Shen is your spirit, and Jing is the essence of ourselves. Qi establishes the interconnectedness with everything and is found in ones blood and heart, lungs and oxygen. Shen is compared to ones soul in that it provides thought and the awareness of the self. Jing helps us grow and reproduce. Once we lose jing, it can not be replaced, as the Chinese believe that we are each born with a finite amount. Because we lose jing if we live carelessly, acupuncture can reduce the loss by balancing the qi, or energy, helping to preserve jing. When our Jing is used up, we die.

Now on to ying and Yang, the other elements of life, when these two opposing forces are balanced we are at peace, we are much more likely to let things slide and take life easy, when they are out of balance we exhibit arrogance, pride, lust, gluttony, and the other excesses of living which eat away at our Jing. The emotions run amok and we become sick.

This is also why acupuncture is often used in cooperation with herbal therapy. Acupuncture works with the yang because it comes from outside the body and goes inside (the act of inserting the needle), while herbal therapies are considered to be ying therapies because they move throughout the interior of the body.

While acupuncture is widely thought to be used primarily to control pain, acupuncture can benefit a host of other illnesses, such as respiratory ailments (asthma), cataracts, hiccups, ulcers, migraines, and toothache, just to name a very few.

The truth is that I have never seen an ailment that can't be alleviated with acupuncture, including alcoholism and addiction cravings. There is a point in the ear which can help alleviate cravings of all addictive behaviors, and acute withdrawal from alcoholism can be helped with the point used for the liver.

Western medicine is beginning to concede to acupuncture for its use in alleviating chronic pain, such as neck and back, which a lot of westerners suffer from. We are only now beginning to accept the fact that it can also be used to help anxiety and chronic fatigue, and more and more medical insurance is beginning to include acupuncture on claim forms.

This article is meant to be informative only, and does not go into the detail that acupuncture deserves; please see a practitioner of Chinese medicine for more information.

APITHERAPY

Bee Therapy is the treatment of ailments with the use of products made from the common honeybee's venom and honey. These medicines include bee pollen, raw honey, propolis and royal jelly. Although scientific studies have not proved the theories that apitherapy works, products like royal jelly have become an increasingly popular item sold on convenience store counters as an energy serum and made into beauty products.

Hippocrates used the venom from bees to treat joint ailments such as arthritis, and a more modern day doctor Phillip Terc claimed that bee stings help rheumatism in an article written in 1888.

There are five basic honeybee products:

Venom is either injected by needle or allowing the bee to sting the affected area. This is the most complex form of apitherapy and the only one where you must consult a practitioner. Users say the benefits far outweigh getting repeatedly stung by bees. Patients presenting with tendonitis, for instance, can be helped with two or three sessions, whereas the pain associated with degenerative bone diseases can only be alleviated through several sessions a week for at least six months. Be sure to get an allergy test for beestings before attempting this form of therapy. The venom contains natural anti-inflammatory chemicals which are more potent than, say, hydrocortisone for tendonitis and arthritis.

Pollen has been found to be a good treatment for seasonal allergies, and is commonly marketed as an energy supplement. Pollen is often used in bee beauty products and is believed to slow the aging process, although there exists no scientific evidence to support this claim.

Raw honey is full of "b" vitamins (no pun intended!) and is a quick energy booster, like cane sugar or fructose. This is not processed honey-it has not been filtered or heat treated-and there are actual studies showing that putting a poultice of raw honey on an open wound can dramatically slow the spread of infection causing bacteria.

Royal Jelly is produced in the salivary glands of the worker bee in order to feed the queen, hence the name. Because this milk white substance is thought to help the queen live so long and make her more fertile, products made from royal jelly are marketed for beauty supply. While these claims are unsubstantiated, studies on humans found that royal jelly can lower levels of cholesterol.

Bees can make their own glue to stick their hives together and repair the walls. This bee glue is called **Propolis** and is made from the sap of conifers or poplar trees. Products made from bee materials for the purpose of creating salves and chap sticks are made from propolis. It is also considered by apitherapy enthusiasts to be an antioxidant.

Other reported health benefits are the breaking down and softening of scar tissue as a cosmetic application, the decrease of fatigue and spasms associated with suffers of MS, and the antitoxins can be beneficial in keeping AIDS patients from contracting flu's and viruses.

Apitherapists have no licensing requirements or credentialing organizations. Some are physician's who believe that it works to lessen joint pain in their patients, most that use it are or once were patients of apitherapy themselves. The most important precaution you can take before exploring this option for treatment is to get an allergy test. If you have a reaction to the bee pollen often used in juice bar health drinks, you are probably allergic to bee pollen and should forego this type of treatment. If you have heart disease or diabetes you should not seek apitherapy, and never give any type of honey to infants.

Raw honey may contain fungus, so the AIDS patients that might be helped through the propolis antioxidants could be harmed through the use of unprocessed honey. Lastly, there are no recommended dosage standards, so exercise caution when first starting to experiment with the benefits of apitherapy.

AYURVEDIC MEDICINE

The legend of the beginning of ayurvedic medicine is that the one creator, Brahma, taught the theories and practices to one of the animal lords, who taught it to the Asvins-the divine twins. They taught this to the chief of the shining ones, called Indra. These were the deities of ancient verdict times.

As mankind fell victim and suffered from ailments and disease the wise men went to Indra and were taught the ancient remedies and healing cures. This is the knowledge of medicine, which is divided into 8 separate branches of the divine tree.

- Kaya chikitsa is the medicine of the internal organs and workings of the body;
- Baala is the study of the medicine needed in order to heal children;
- Urdhvanga is the original study of the ears, nose and throat (as well as dentistry.)
- All surgery, including plastic surgery, is called Salya;
- The study of toxicology-stemming originally from the poison extracted from bug bites-is Danstra.
- The study of what we now know as Alzheimer's and other diseases of the age advanced is called Rasayana
- The study of pregnancy and gynecology is Prasuti;
- The study of mental illness and demon possession is the treatment called Graha.

The belief is that there are three elements in /of the body which cause disease. These are called Vata, Pitta and Kapha. We will talk about each one in turn.

Vata: We are all made up of space and air, with some light, water, and earth thrown in. Vata transmits perceptions to the mind and body and maintains the body's natural balance. If this energy which is used to transmit so much of the outside world to our inner selves becomes imbalanced, disease sets in.

Pitta: This is the energy responsible for vision, digestion, heat, hunger and thirst, happiness and intelligence. When this element is out of alignment, it results in depression, weight gain or loss, dehydration, apathy, and digestive problems.

Kapha disease is the result of lack of conserving and stabilizing the body, we commonly call them viruses or "bugs."

All disease is called Vyaadhi. It is the state of the being when we are full of discomfort or pain, but while all are caused by an imbalance in one of the three elements, they are treated according to the classification of the trauma:

Adhyatmika: physical and constitutional (physical injury, hereditary, and pre-disposition)

Adhibhautika: contributed to environment (allergies, etc.)

Aadhidaivika: contributed to gods or spirits (demons. mental imbalances)

So how does Ayurvedic treatment differ from modern medicine? Practitioners of ayurvedic medicine believe that although antibiotics have their uses (take into consideration post surgery antibiotics to edge out infection or post transplant antibiotics which if not taken will surely cause certain death) ayurvedic doctors would rather see the balance of the body resume as quickly as possible.

The drugs used in ayurveda are derived from vegetables and minerals, with plant alkaloids as the active ingredients. While western medicine relies on this basic principle, the derivatives are often chemically rather than naturally based. Before you study up on this medicine further and decide to grow your own medicinal herbs, be forewarned that where the plants grow have everything to do with their potency and ability to fight infection. You absolutely must have the right balance of alkaline and acid in your soil, as well as stringent water and light conditions.

Some of the remedies might surprise you, as they are virtually the same as Grandma used. The Ayurvedic remedy for a hacking cough? Equal parts honey and the juice from a baked lemon. Grandma probably didn't know to bake the lemon to increase the acidity, but you get the point.

BIOFEEDBACK

Biofeedback is a fancy machine used basically the same way a thermometer or scale is used. When we are sick, we use a thermometer to determine if we have a fever. Depending on how high the fever is, we decide how we want to handle it. (Take over the counter fever reducers or get to the emergency room.) A thermometer is telling us the bio-feedback- the information from our bodies- we need to make the decision. It's the same principle with large and more complicated biofeedback machines.

These machines are used to chart internal functions with more accuracy than a human alone is capable of, and the results are used to determine and then gauge how well the treatment is working.

As an example, say you as a biofeedback patient need to learn how to relax, because you're headed for a stroke. Along with a change in diet and exercise, you need to learn how to stay calm. A biofeedback machine hooked up to you in the office, you learn at what level of stress you start to have physical problems (which are indicated by lights or a buzzer, what ever the machine does to indicate an off balance of heart rate or stressed - tightened- muscles.) the object is for the patient to practice slowing down their heart rate or relax their muscles until the machines light dims, or buzzer stops going off. This is used as a gauge to help patients learn how to listen to and control their bodies. The biofeedback therapist teaches the patient exercises and techniques to use for adjusting the body's rhythm.

In the 1960's laboratory experiments were being conducted to examine research subject's brain wave activity, blood pressure, and other functions of the body which are under normal situations are not controlled voluntarily. The term biofeedback was born. The outcomes of these experiments was hoped to be increased creativity at will-by a person being able to change their own brain patterns-or even more important, the ability to decrease ones own blood pressure, making prescription blood pressure medication unnecessary. Although this hope was found to be unrealistic-too many

variables-it has been recorded that biofeedback can help with other conditions such as chronic pain and stress reduction.

Biofeedback techniques can help with migraines, digestive disorders, and dangerous rhythms of heartbeat. The basic treatment involves teaching the patient different forms of relaxation to adjust the different levels of heart rate and breathing, digesting, etc. the gift of biofeedback is that it serves to remind health care providers and patients that our thoughts and emotions do play a big role in causing and treating symptoms of illness.

A lot of the outcome depends on the patient. You must adhere to regimented eating and exercise habits and change your stressful lifestyle in order to achieve results. You need to commit to learning and practicing stress relieving techniques. Relaxation seems to be the key in biofeedback, and although scientists can not yet determine exactly how it all works, they are able to document that biofeedback does, in fact, teach patients how to control seemingly involuntary conditions of the nervous and circulatory systems. This is thought to be part of the flight or fight reflex system that we all have, and once had more strongly, when humans were more threatened with physical harm more frequently.

When we experience stress today, our bodies still react with the same type of response we did as early man. Our pupils dilate and we start to sweat. Our heart rate increases, etc. but because we live in a "civilized" society now, we can no longer just lash out at seeming threats. So we hold it in and get sick. The practice of recognizing these signs and symptoms of stress in our bodies and the ability to control them-thus not becoming ill-is at the heart of biofeedback.

CHAKRAS

The Vedas, which is the oldest written tradition in India, were written by the people called Aryans, who entered India on chariots. The word Chakra means "wheel" and the term refers to the wheels of the Aryans' chariots – these were the first healers and writers. The story goes that the God Vishnu descended down to earth, and those who first saw the god noticed that he had four arms, and was holding within them a chakra (wheel), a flower (a lotus flower to be precise), a conch shell, and a club.

The yoga Upanishads uses the chakras as what they refer to as "psychic centers of consciousness" and so the charkas became a central part of yoga philosophy in the 7th century, and continue to today.

The Role of Chakras

The yoga Upanishads uses the chakras as psychic centers of consciousness and had become a central part of yoga philosophy by the 7th century.

Any new age healer might know the basics like this, but ask them if they've read " The Serpent Power" (Avalon, 1919), which was the first book to translate chakras into Western use, or the 10th century text "Gorakshashatakam" which is the original instruction book for working with both crystals and chakras together as healing tools.

However, if you're just interested in the pretty colors and what part of the body they correlate to, you can increase your energy levels by basic chakra meditation and crystal placement right on yourself with out any backfiring effects.

There are seven basic chakras, starting with level seven at the crown of your head and working down to the groin area with chakra one. The following is a simple reference to the colors, placement of crystal, and what healing and increased energy you can expect from each point:

7) The purple chakra of the crown, this is located on the top of your head where you'll be familiar with a "soft spot" in babies (if you have any). It governs thought, universal identity, and orientation to self knowledge. When in good energy, this chakra heals and brings us knowledge and wisdom, understanding of ourselves and a deeper understanding of others and our place in the universe. When meditating, sit with a purple stone (amethyst is a good one) on this spot, and during the rest of the day, wear a purple cap.

6) Chakra six is the brow chakra. It is violet and is sometimes referred to as the "third eye" chakra. It is about archetypal identity (achieving work/life balance), light, and self reflection; and is related to being able to see psychically a deeper meaning or bigger picture than a situation originally meant. A lapis stone works best.

5) Blue chakra five is located in the throat, and so is easily related to communication and self expression. It is an important chakra to keep healthy and is used to experience the world through the use of vibration. Blue topaz.

4) The heart chakra is green and resides in the upper chest, near the heart. It is the middle of the seven and represents love, self acceptance, social identity, and air. Mind and body, male and female are represented here, and a healthy heart chakra opens the doors of kindness and equality, compassion, peace, and centeredness. Emerald or malachite stones work well here.

3) The solar plexus chakra, usually yellow but sometimes orange, represents fire, ego identity, and self definition. It is a powerful chakra and rules will and metabolism. Use amber stones to lie on this area for energy and effectiveness in getting your own way. (First rule being harm no one, or non dominating power.)

2) Emotional identity is governed by orange chakra two, which is located in the abdomen near the lower back. It represents water and self gratification, or sexuality. Feeling, desire, sensation, and movement can be healed through the second chakra and comes in the form of greater depth of feelings and the ability to accept change. Ruby or garnet is the appropriate stone to use.

1) Physical identity, earth, grounding, and self preservation are governed by first chakra red, located at the base of the spine. It is our body's foundation and is related to our sense of survival and grounding into the earth. Working with this chakra results in health and prosperity and a sense of presence and security. Use a hematite or tiger's eye when working with this chakra.

CHIROPRACTICS

With so many different alternative methods of treatment in the world today, you may not know that one of these treatments includes chiropractics. This is a form of treatment that has been in our society for years and not even acknowledged anymore as an alternative method of treatment. There are many theories that coincide with chiropractics. The main theory being that the vertebrae is not properly aligned. This is what contributes to a lot of diseases, illnesses and pains. The method of chiropractors is to apply slight pressure to these vertebrae and allow them to put themselves back in place. This is only one method of chiropractors. Most chiropractors concern themselves with more than just your spine. They are concerned with your health, stress levels and the lifestyle that you live. All of these contribute to your physical conditions.

Chiropractors have been known to cure and treat many diseases such as: asthma, arthritis, back problems, bed wetting, bronchitis, migraines, menstrual problems and many others. When you first hear these problems, you would not think that a chiropractor, someone concerning themselves with your spine, would be able help you in any way. Well this assumption would be wrong. Your spine has a lot to do with the way you live and the pain you feel. Whether you feel this pain in your back or in other places, chiropractic help can work for whatever is ailing you.

This type of alternative treatment is completely safe and cost effective. You do not have to spend a lot of money to have this treatment completed and in most cases, chiropractic services are covered in your health insurance plans. This is how popular and ever growing this field of alternative medicine is. There are so many alternative medical treatments that are surfacing in the Western world today that sometimes it may be hard to tell which one is the best one for you to try. If you do your research, you will easily find the best one for you to try first. By taking the first step to find a practitioner to help you with your alternative treatment search you are well on your way to feeling healthier, mentally and physically.

Chiropractors are no longer hard to find. There is more than likely at least a dozen in your very town. Chiropractors have all been trained properly and are experts at what they do. Once you describe your symptoms to them, they are able to instantly pin-point the area of your spine that can contribute to such an ailment. After just one treatment you will notice a large difference in your condition. The one aspect of chiropractors is that one visit is not enough. You must make several visits in order to fully treat your condition to the full extent of the treatment.

If you visit your personal physician first, they may refer you to a great chiropractor to assist you with your ailment. When your doctor is referring you to a chiropractor you know that this treatment is something that you can place all of your trust in. Take this method of alternative treatment into consideration if you have one of the pains or diseases that was listed above. You can believe that chiropractics can assist you with your problem and you can save your money with this treatment as well.

Take the first step by locating a chiropractor in your area and make your first appointment. You will be filled with confidence in this alternative treatment just from the first session.

COLOR THERAPY

Both Egyptians and Greeks built temples of healing and specific colors. Color therapy is a big part of Chinese medicine and Ayurvedic practices, and much research has been done in the area of light and color therapy as an addition to traditional therapies and treatments.

In America, Dr. Harry Spittler found that he could significantly increase a patient's reaction to therapy and treatment by changing the amount and color of light entering the eyeball, producing physiological and psychological changes. Today there are literally thousands of practitioners of color therapy, unfortunately, anyone with a series of different colored lights in their office may be able to pass themselves off as a color therapist, so ask as many questions of them as they are asking of you during the initial visit, and leave if they can not answer them to your satisfaction.

First of all color therapy is considered complimentary medicine, and a good and reputable color therapist will refer you to another practitioner for treatment of your ailment(s), using color therapy only in conjunction with their recommendations.

Color therapy is based on creating balance and enhancing energy. Using seven colors of the light spectrum along with proper placement on each Chakra of the body, these colors resonate with the body's own healing energies to alleviate stress, headaches, etc. Each color has its own wavelength and feeds the energy of the corresponding Chakra. The colors and their corresponding Chakras are as follows:

- 1) Violet = the crown of the head
- 2) Indigo = the brow
- 3) Blue = the throat
- 4) Green = the heart
- 5) Yellow = the solar plexus
- 6) Orange = the lower tummy area
- 7) Red = the base or groin

Each chakra is thought of as an energy wheel, with each color as a cog in the machine of the body. When one cog is out of alignment, the entire "machine" runs improperly or breaks down, so good health is achieved by keeping all seven cogs flowing proper energy to each part of the body.

During the first session the color therapist you will be asked a series of questions and they will explain the various methods of treatment. They should also discuss the use of color in every day life for balancing energy. (How the different colors of clothing and decorations in your home affect your chakra balance.)

Because color has an effect on all of us physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually, the therapist can determine which color energy you are lacking in your life and "prescribe" different colors or combinations thereof along with light therapy in addition to other holistic treatments in order to bring your life on all four levels back into balance.

For example, the crown color is violet, which is connected to the organ of the brain and relates to self knowledge and/or spiritual awareness. This color has had good effects in working with depression, memory loss, and even Alzheimer's patients. It is considered a "cool" color to have calming properties. Blue relates to self expression and the digestive tract, green relates to the heart and breast and helps with the immune system. Yellow is a warm color and has an effect of stimulating the stomach and liver. The color relates to self worth. Orange is a color for sociability and creativity. It governs the uterus, bowels, ovaries, and testes. People wear it for joy and self confidence. Red stimulates the appetite and interestingly enough is often used in restaurant decoration.

Lie on your back with your feet up and the cycle begins all over again, as the chakras run in line from the top of your big toe to the edge of your heel, each color represented. You may also want to research that there is an essential oil or combination of essential oils in relation to each of the chakras.

Chakras on animals run from the back of their necks to the base of their tails, and oftentimes healing colors are used with crystals to increase energy output.

CRANIOSACRAL THERAPY

Based in osteopathy, CST was originally developed by physician John E. Upledger at Michigan State University after an eight year study as a professor of biomechanics. Dr. William Sutherland had pioneered the idea through his work in cranial osteopathy. Dr. Upledger was assisting with a neck surgery when he noticed rhythmic movement of a system later to become known as the cranosacral system. CST evaluates and helps the functioning of the cranosacral system-the membranes and fluid-that surround the spinal cord and brain.

Using extremely light pressure on the head, restrictions are released in order to improve the central nervous system flow and function by feeling the rhythm of the craniosacral system. This method is used as a holistic and preventative approach to healing and preventing central nervous system problems and is particularly helpful in alleviating the pain and even the cause of migraines, chronic neck and back pain, and motor coordination problems. This theory and resulting techniques have also been reported as having a positive effect on relieving colic in infants and chronic fatigue.

Practitioners of craniosacral therapy claim to be able to locate and release what are referred to as energy cysts, where energy has built up and then become blocked, as in neck pain from holding one's neck at a particular angle all day at work. This has proven to be an extremely effective and powerful technique, and can cause the recipient to relive all sorts of past injuries, emotional as well as physical.

Suppressed emotions inhibit structural releases, so uncontrollable emotional outbursts—such as crying—are common during therapy. An experienced and reputable craniosacral therapist will have the skills to help you move through these memories and sensations and out the other side of them. He/she will be able to listen attentively and remind you that whatever caused the pain in the past is no longer present in the future. Once everything is unblocked and realigned, the patient may exhibit better listening and memory, comprehension skills.

What will happen at your session? Wear loose clothing and feel free to remove your shoes. You will lie on a massage table and the lights will be dimmed. The therapist will typically sit at your head first, and place their finger lightly on either side of your temples. It is quiet and you must lie still, they are listening. They will pick up the tension in your temples or a clenched jaw line. They will then move down to your torso and work their way to your feet. What sensations you may experience during the session will be unique to each individual, but typically you will relax to the point of falling asleep. You may even begin to recall hidden memories and express emotion, as previously described.

Many sessions use other types of therapy to help strengthen the system. Chiropractic is often used to realign the spine, relieving pressure all the way to the clenched jaw, or acupressure or acupuncture is used to help increase the chi flow. This entirely holistic approach to cure and prevention of the body's ailments is fast becoming an increasingly popular alternative to conventional methods of physical care wherein only pain pills are prescribed or invasive surgery with long convalescent post op care is required. Unfortunately, most medical coverage, although beginning to change its opinion of alternative medicine, still does not cover most holistic care therapies. Acupuncture, massage and chiropractic were the leading therapies to be covered by health insurance.

There are certain conditions where the therapies of CST are not especially helpful. These include conditions where varietal increases in brain pressure would not enable the ailment to dissipate. Acute aneurysm, cerebral hemorrhage or severe bleeding disorders can be worsened through CST therapy and should be referred out to another practitioner. If you elect to see a CST provider, your number of sessions will vary with

the severity of your disorder, usually 2-3 treatments a week for several weeks is the average length of therapy.

FENG SHUI

Feng Shui is a philosophy that we create and bring what we need into our lives by following the patterns of nature, and that our homes are an extension of ourselves which when in harmony can bring a peaceful alignment with the earth and wind.

While just about every other culture has four elements-earths, air, fire, and water, Feng Shui makes use of a fifth-metal. The combination of these five elementals within the home through the use of lighting, furniture placement, sounds and smells promote our well being on different levels.

In order to achieve this you must have a least a rudimentary understanding of qi. Sometimes written and pronounced Chi, as in the use of acupuncture, qi is the life force that surrounds and binds us, and is in everything. The placement of -for instance- furniture provides either a path or block for Qi to move through, and is why having energy paths through the house is so important, as important as the finding and destroying of poison arrows, or sharp corners within the house. (Poison arrows are the edges that you hardly notice, but they point right at your stomach - indigestion and ulcers- or your head-headaches-and cause irritability and blocked energy flow)

The use of Feng Shui is over 3,000 years old and literally translates to "wind-water" the two elements we can not live with out or at least the two we can not go long without. Through observation, the Chinese learned that by placing objects in a qi pleasing way around the home, within the office, even out in the garden that we achieved a better level of health in prosperity, home, career, and wealth.

Feng Shui is not only a cool way to decorate the house; it is truly a preventative medicine.

To begin Feng Shui you must first remove all clutter from your house. To be someone who keeps everything because some day you may have use for it again is to tell the universe that you do not trust it to provide for your needs, and can cause a blockage of good energy.

So remove what you don't need with a rigorous house cleaning. If you still are having trouble letting go perhaps giving away things to the local goodwill or Salvation Army will help you because someone will get use out of it. The existence of clutter in your home creates stagnation, and you will experience this as becoming depressed, lethargic, apathetic, and/or a sense of being stuck or incapable of moving forward with plans for your life. If you could place the Bagua map over your home it could determine the precise location and part of your life that the clutter is directly affecting, because

different corners of your home affect different parts of your life, east, west, north, south, and breaking it up by sub-directions as well. You don't even need the map to see where you're stuck if you think about it, you know what areas of your home need clearing out, you just may not have put it together with the correlation to other areas of your life.

There are some great, simple to read and beginners guides to Feng Shui. I personally enjoy them because I don't like a cluttered home, and these books gave me the motivation I needed to rearrange and remove. I also like the idea of sound and smell becoming part of my home, with the sound of a calming table top fountain and a good incense to greet me as I come home from work each day.

HEALING CRYSTALS

A crystal is made up of minerals which become crystalline through atoms and ions arraigned in geometrically precise patterns. The most common crystal is the quartz, or clear, pointed crystal which became popular in the mid-late eighties, when crystal and metaphysics shops sprang up all over the U.S.

Crystals were popular long before the U.S. tried to commercialize the heck out of them, though.

Archeologists discovered crystals in graves during excavations in Europe, Middle East, Russia, and Africa. These crystal were dozens of different gems, consisting of amber jewelry, lapis, turquoise, and garnet carvings of goddesses. They were placed in the graves so that they were thought to have been used in the funeral rites as protection and totems, for some were carved in the shapes of animals and birds, intended to escort the departed into the next life.

In the Boyne Valley of Ireland is the solar temple, New grange. It is older than the Egyptian pyramids, and constructed so that the sun would align with the seventy foot long entranceway during the Winter solstice. The roof was made entirely of white quartz crystals and was probably a spectacular sight on the morning of December 21st.

In Egypt, Lapis was considered to be a stone reserved for royalty; it was ground and rubbed into the brow of the pharaohs, to drive out spiritual impurity. Malachite was used to ornate the crowns of the pharaohs-it would help them rule wisely because it helped with eyesight! Their scared scarabs were carved from every precious and semi-precious gemstone and crystal available.

The Mayans made mirrors from pyrite, and obsidian was used to make the sacrificial knives used to cut out the still beating heart from captive enemies. They also believed that if you followed a rainbow to its end, you would not find a pot of gold, but turquoise, which provided a bridge between heaven and earth.

As far as the use for alternative medicine goes, Mayan Indians used crystals for diagnosis and treatment of diseases, and believed that a good person's soul would go into crystals upon death, and become the energy used to heal others. A comforting thought, actually, for you to live on as healing energy.

A crystal's energy is made up of vibrations, and since a human is basically also made from vibration, energy and water, the use of a crystal to heal or reset energy is as old as mankind and found in every culture. The very sight of them awakens our senses, and to gaze and meditate upon them is thought to help restore balance and liven the sick and apathetic.

The belief is that energy is held blocked in our bodies-the energy needed for prosperity, love, and basic health, when the crystals are placed on these points of our body which represent the different levels of consciousness and areas of the body-see chakras-the quartz or other crystal will realign and improve the energy in this area of the body.

For instance, say you have a tummy ache, or better yet, on going sour stomach problems. The proper quartz placed on the lower abdomen will help restore the energy to this area. The crystal has to be charged first, however.

Austrian crystals are man made crystals which enhance the spectrum when light shines through them. The simplest way to charge your medicine crystals before use is to lay them in the spot where the sunlight from the Austrian crystal hits the floor. This will fill the crystal with energy and "charge" it for use. You can then have your patient lay down on their back and, with the help of a chakra and crystal chart, lay the appropriate crystal on the appropriate position on the patient's body, and Meditating through the procedure and soft chanting of affirmations help the healing process along.

HERBAL REMEDIES

There are as many different kinds of herbal remedies as there are regions, reason being is simple. Nature provided different herbs for use in healing for every region, so a curry based remedy in India will work just as well as say, a chamomile based remedy in England.

Herbal remedies are often used in conjunction with acupuncture to relieve a wide variety of ailments, and there are thousands of tea variations for ailments as well, but for this article we're going to stick to herbal remedies like poultices rather than teas, and try to stick with the ones which can be found in a local herb shop.

Unless you are very good at growing your own herbs, you should buy them from an herbalist, at least until you've had a lot of practice at growing your own. Herbs can vary in strength greatly due to the temperature and way in which they are grown, so in order

to get the right strength it is suggested you use apothecary herbs at first. (All are to be taken externally)

Here is a list of common ailments and the herbal remedy that anyone can use, to get you started:

Acne: One of the best acne remedies is to rub a half a cut clove of garlic on your face after washing it, but because most people don't want to smell like garlic, the next best remedy is to mix 1:10 lavender with witch hazel. Witch hazel is a natural astringent, and lavender has healing properties. You can use tea tree oil in place of lavender if the person is male; it smells a little more masculine and works just as well.

Anxiety: Lavender again, only this time get pure essential oil (also available at your local co op or herb shop) and make a compress of it for use on your forehead. A compress is made by heating a small amount of oil and soaking piece of cotton cloth in it, and then squeezing it out and folding it across your forehead-or affected area-when the compress goes cold, repeat the process until you are feeling better.

Bruises can be relieved by using Hyssop leaves and flowers and boiling them into a tincture. Strain the liquid from the leaves and flowers and soak a strip of cotton in it to make a compress, and then press the compress over the bruise, pressing and stroking the area. This is a little uncomfortable, but the combination of hyssop and heat as well as pressure will help get the blood moving again, thus lessening the bruise.

Minor burns; No doubt you've heard of using comfrey as a poultice for burns, but you can also use pure aloe juice. Just rub aloe juice onto the affected area and keep it clean and dry, except for the aloe. Comfrey can be made into a burn cream by crushing the stems and flowers into a fine powder (two ounces), and then mixing it with two ounces of beeswax which you have melted in a double boiler. Add one cup of vegetable oil and a little water. Simmer for twenty minutes and add a drop of benzoic as a preservative (also available at the co op.) Strain through cheese cloth into sterilized jars.

Warts: It is a common old wives tale to place cut pieces of garlic under a bandage and directly on top of warts. It also works, because the garlic is so acidic that it literally eats away at the wart, (well, the virus that causes them,) however, there's that smelly garlic remedy again, try using fresh dandelion juice applied several times daily.

HERBAL TEAS

Herbal teas have been used through out the centuries for relieving pain and soothing away stress. They are also used for entertainment and social functions as well, but we are going to focus on the use of herbal teas for the relief of various ailments.

Please do not attempt to grow your own herbs for remedy teas unless you have taken a class to learn how to do so. Some herbs are poisonous until cooked, some are poisonous after being cooked, and most just won't be strong enough to make any difference, because of soil conditions.

I do not like tea. I never drink it, herbal or otherwise. This is because I had parents who were very into herbal remedies, and at the slightest hint of stomach trouble, I would be forced to drink the worst smelling, foulest, vile tasting teas in the universe.

However, they did work, and so I do recommend them, just don't try to make me drink them! While all the other kids were running around with Bactine and a Band-Aide on their knees, I was forced to hop along with a comfrey poultice tied around my leg...

Please note that most of these remedies refer to a tincture rather than a tea. A tincture is thicker than a tea and contains more of the actual herb, infused in the mixture rather than steeped, as in tea.

Anemia: Boil stinging nettle leaves and drink the tincture. (Yum!, no it really does work, but remember that stinging needle leaves HURT if they're not boiled, so wear gloves when handling them.)

Arthritis: Birch, celery seed, devils claw, or juniper made into a tincture will help alleviate pain. Yes, it tastes as bad as it sounds, and it's not the celery seed you have in your cooking cupboard.

Siberian ginseng root tincture helps with the side effects of chemotherapy and is one of the tinctures which taste good. It soothes the insides and helps keep skin healthy. It has been found to alleviate fatigue associated with chemo treatment, and the ginseng is an ancient herb used in healing.

For a colicky baby, make a tincture of fennel and dill, and add 5-10 drops to their bottle. Fennel tastes like licorice and they like it. You can keep this tincture stored in the fridge for up to a week.

A liter of rhubarb root a day will help with constipation, but I think it has as much to do with the water intake as I do with the rhubarb. (just a thought.)

A tea made from garlic bulbs and ribwort leaves will quiet a cough.

Depression: Grind up an entire oat plant, root to tip, and add St. John's wart flowers. Boil in just enough water to cover the mixture, and let it steep down to a tincture, drink daily.

A very hot tea of lemon balm, yarrow, and ginger will take down a fever and is palatable.

Caraway, fennel, ginger, and peppermint made into a strong tea will ease flatulence.

Catnip, Echinacea, and yarrow made into a tincture will ease flu symptoms.

The list goes on and on. You can also use herbs for creating your own lip balms, creams, and ointments. Most herb stores or family co ops have classes were you can learn to make all of your own herbal remedies, make up, balms and ointments for unique gifts or instant pain and fever relief. Herbs have been around since the beginning of time-learning how to use them properly could save you tons of money on doctor bills and over the counter medications.

HOMEOPATHY TREATMENTS

This is an organic system of medicine that is based on three great principles.

- Like Cures Like
- Minimal Dose
- One Time Remedy

Homeopathy bases its system on these three principles and uses them to help guide the type of medicine and cures that are given out to people who are interested in using this great alternative treatment to conventional medicine. Most of the remedies that are used with homeopathy are for the most part solely water.

These remedies are as natural as possible and have the least amount of drugs in them. The goal with homeopathy is to use the least amount of drugs possible as well as one single remedy for no matter how many symptoms you may have. The less treatments you require the healthier you will be.

Homeopathy is second next to conventional medicine in the world today. The growth of homeopathy is growing in an extraordinary way with every passing year. There are many reasons why homeopathy is such a widely used form of medication. It is extremely natural and safe, the results are permanent and completely effective, you can take homeopathy remedies along side of your conventional medications and can expect no side effects. Homeopathy is a holistic treatment and if taken correctly will cure whatever your ailment is almost instantly. You can be assured that these treatments are not addictive, once you feel relief you can stop taking them immediately with no problems.

Homeopathy is a very precise and exact method of medicine. This is the one factor that some people may find as a drawback. Homeopathy is so precise that it does take a little longer to prescribe and find the perfect remedy for what it is that is ailing you. Homeopathy does not have a standard remedy for headaches or backaches. They create a unique remedy for each person and each person's illness.

Homeopathy looks at pains in more than one way. Looking for how it came to be, how long you have had it, where it started, the exact pain you are feeling and more.

Homeopathy is more interested with the details than anything else. As you know this is a huge difference from conventional medicine which does have a standard medication for each disease and ailment. This makes homeopathy that much better. Once the exact remedy is found for your ailment you can count on immediate and permanent results. This is what makes homeopathy one of the best forms of alternative methods.

Homeopathy is growing in popularity so much that there are literally thousands of different homeopathy courses, medicine kits and practitioners around the world. This makes them that much more accessible to anyone who wishes to try this 100% safe and effective alternative treatment method. Just like anything else, there are of course many frauds out there related to homeopathy. Before you take part in any type of homeopathy course or medication system make sure that you do your research. You do not want to take part in something that is not legitimate or that could potentially be unsafe. Homeopathy is 100% safe if you choose a course or a medication system that is legitimate.

The more you learn about homeopathy, the more different ways you can use it. This means that with your increased knowledge you will be able to take advantage of other homeopathy features and easily know the difference between homeopathy features that are legitimate or are fake. Homeopathy is an alternative treatment that works 100% of the time if you are patient enough to wait for the perfect remedy for you.

IRIDOLOGY

In 1950, a chiropractor from America named Bernard Jensen began teaching students about the necessity of using natural foods to detoxify the body. He developed a method by which the color of the iris was used to indicate the presence of different toxins. American iridology was born.

However, iridology, or the study of disease using the color of the iris and certain color and thickness of lines across the eyeball originated in Europe, when a physician from Hungary and a Swedish pastor both noticed iris markings in connection with disease.

The physician-Ignatz von Peczely accidentally injured an owl as a child, breaking its leg. While nursing the owl back to health, the young von Peczely noticed that the thick black mark that appeared in the owl's eye after the injury began to lessen as the owl healed. He never forgot it, and as an adult practicing his profession, he recorded that patients with bone fractures experienced the same black mark across the iris.

The Swedish pastor-Nils Liljequist-was exposed to malaria as a young man and while receiving the treatment of quinine and iodine noticed that his blue eyes began to grow darker as the drugs built up in his system. He grew up to study homeopathic medicine and recorded similar reactions in clients who came to him for detoxification purposes.

It has been said that the eyes are the mirror to the soul. The famous Greek physician Hippocrates believed that they were also the mirror to the body-specifically for the purpose of determining various ailments. He too recorded the presence of black marks across the iris of fractured bones in his patients, and a change in the color of the eye of patients coming down with diseases.

Unfortunately, iridology cannot be used to determine a specific disease. Practitioners of iridology use it to help patients as a preventative measure understand basic health problems in order to refer them to specialists if needed. The belief is that if a disease is detected in the very early stages it can be prevented from spreading further. The colored part of the eye-the iris-is studied for these markings and color changes by isolating the iris and taking pictures of it with a very strong lens. The process takes about an hour and is painless. The photos are then blown up and gone over with a magnifying glass by the iridologist and used to determine and identify potential ailments.

Most of these ailments are believed to be hereditary, and the patients predisposition to toxicity and disease is determined not only by the photos but with an extensive interview of family medical history. This holistic concept is well accepted by other disciplines of alternative medicine, as it is a fact that all parts of the body are related, especially when used to warn the body of an impending degenerative disease. Under this theory, the color changes in the eyes at the very onset of the degenerative disease are used by the body to indicate an upcoming health problem, and to warn the body to seek preventative measures. The concept is not far fetched at all-take the example of chiropractors using the process of correcting the spinal alignment to help internal organs. Even conventional physicians check the eyes for signs of sickness. (Blood vessel size is an indication of the level of cholesterol.)

There is, however, some criticism toward iridology as practitioners (especially in the United States) are often not fully or thoroughly trained, as the courses offered are usually no more than two to three days in length and are put on by marketing companies who offer "certification" as an iridologist to their distributors. The result is the potential for over diagnosis with the distributor pushing their products through their "specialist."

This tendency toward American consumerism and over marketing has given iridology a black eye (no pun intended) as a reputable form of medicine. When seeking an iridologist, find one who has been certified by the Institute for Applied Iridology or by the International Iridology Research Association in Solana Beach, CA.

KAMA-SUTRA

According to the web encyclopedia, the Kama Sutra... "is an ancient Indian text on human sexual behavior, widely considered to be the standard work on love in Sanskrit literature."

The text is believed to have been written sometime between the 1st and 6th century, A.D. Sanskrit literature is India's oldest language, and is considered to be the mother of all Indian language.

The book itself consists of 35 chapters, sub-categorized into seven parts and each written by an individual considered to be the expert in each field.

The introduction is four chapters long and discusses love and its place in mans existence along with a classification of women.(maidens, women twice married, and public women)This is followed by 10 chapters on sexual union and discusses the art of kissing, foreplay, orgasm, sexual positions, oral sex, and sex with one or more partners at the same time. Acquisition, or "how to get a wife, Hindu style" is discussed in the following 5 chapters, and how she should behave takes up the next two. There are six chapters on seduction, six on courtesans (a prostitute of high status), the last two chapters are entirely devoted to how to become attractive to other people, and is what this article is about.

Kama Sutra as an alternative health topic includes nutrition and exercise geared toward increasing your sexual prowess and enjoyment. The foods you should eat include drinking milk with honey at sunrise every morning (increases sex drive), grinding pumpkin seeds and then mixing them with almonds and sugar cane root, strips of bamboo and then poured into the milk and honey, and eating wheat flour cake (also made with honey and pumpkin seeds.

Why rice pudding is traditionally served as a dessert in East Indian meals? Thickened with cream and mixed (once again) with wild honey, it is believed to give lovers strength. (It's the East Indian way of saying "thanks for eating dinner at our restaurant, now go home and have a great evening!")

If you need a scientific reason for the pumpkin seeds and honey, pumpkin seeds are an excellent source of zinc, which is necessary for sexual function in men. In fact, a zinc deficiency can cause impotence. (By the way, oysters contain very high levels of zinc, in case you were wondering.) Honey also contains a level of zinc, but research shows that honey is considered and aphrodisiac not only for the level of zinc, but mostly for its consistency, sweetness, and color. It will also give you the sugar boost you may like to temporarily increase your energy.

In both men and women, the inability to reach orgasm has to do with lack of histamines. To increase your histamine production you can eat foods with a high level of vitamin B6 and 12, and anything with a high concentrate of folic acid(such as asparagus, peanuts, mushrooms and egg yolks. I advise a large mushroom and asparagus omelet.)

One of the most basic exercises of the Kama Sutra is how to breathe correctly. This is handy not only for increasing sex drive, but can help ease stress and nerves throughout the day.

To breathe better you must learn to breathe deeply and slowly. This is best practiced at first by lying on your back in loose fitting clothing with your hand on your lower stomach. Breathe in slowly and deeply through your nose and then exhale slowly through your mouth. Notice how much your stomach moves as you practice this, as it should rise and fall with each breath.

Now that you know how to breathe correctly you may move onto other Kama Sutra exercises, the PC muscle is located between the genital and the anus. To find it, make your self start and stop peeing. Feel that muscle? That's the one. Practice contracting it 30 times in rapid succession, (to the count of one.) Not only is that all there is to it, you can do this exercise pretty much anywhere at anytime. Kegal squeezes use the same muscle, and the contractions are shorter and held for a longer time, to the count of three.

To end this subject with a little bonus hint: According to the Kama Sutra, size really does not matter. What matters is the type of stimulation a woman receives in the first three inches of the vaginal wall...

KINESIOLOGY

Stressed muscles cause a lot of pain, and taking pain medications either leave us sleepy or don't work for any length of time. The bottom line is that pain killers only mask the symptomatic pain; they do not relieve the injuries that cause the pain in the first place.

Kinesiology practitioners use techniques in which they test the muscles in order to determine the imbalances in the body. They then used a number of various techniques to restore balance. Kinesiology not only works on the body-there has been recorded success with using this practice to restore order to the mind and spirit of the afflicted as well, which makes sense in that when we are in pain we not only feel it in our bodies, we also can become depressed and moody.

The muscle testing techniques used in kinesiology are non-invasive. The limbs of the body are placed in various positions and then light pressure is applied. Very often there is no pain, only discomfort involved. If the muscle does not respond properly then it is an indication of the patient needing further therapies. The condition is then treated on all levels-pain relief, chiropractic to realign something out of place which caused the problem to first develop, strength training for a stronger muscle. Kinesiology's practitioners believe that each muscle is linked to a variety of mental and emotional imbalances as well as the more obvious physical problems.

The practice of kinesiology is thought to eliminate the guesswork in diagnosing a condition by the use of the body's natural feedback system. They believe that by using this technique that the practitioner can not only determine the treatment(s) but the order in which they should be received in order to holistically and completely alleviate

the pain and control or cure the problem. The permanent cure is rooted in treating the original condition.

As an example, say the patient presents as itching, sinus problems, headache, and irritability. These are the symptoms which need to be alleviated, the cause is an allergy. If the patient went to a conventional physician, he might be prescribed some allergy medication that reduces the physical symptoms, but unless the allergy itself is treated, the patient would have to continue taking the medication indefinitely, which could affect them emotionally or mentally with the side effects.

Kinesiology has been thought to improve various conditions such as allergies and depression, arthritis, digestive problems (which have had the greatest recovery rate), learning problems, all kinds of muscle pain (the original complaint most seekers of kinesiology treatment present with), post operative pain and acne.

The treatments are specific to each individual, but usually include reflex massage. Other types of treatment are sometimes preformed such as what is referred to as a mechanical adjustment wherein massage or gentle chiropractic is used to bring the original skeletal structure into alignment. Because there are 206 bones in the human body and they are attached to muscles by ligaments, realigning the skeletal structure eases the pressure of the tension on the muscles, causing everything from blood flow to nerve impulses to correct.

Nutrition and ones diet play an important role in kinesiology therapy as well. The patient's current mineral and vitamin intake are charted and adjustments made to the diet in order to ensure the proper food is getting to the muscles. This chart is also used to determine possible food allergies. Herbal remedies are used to treat various emotional imbalances like depression and anger management issues. These treatments are used as preventative measures along with treating problems presenting at the time of the initial consultation.

MAGNETIC THERAPY

Perhaps you know someone who wears a copper bracelet to help with arthritis or tendonitis pain. Magnetic therapy works along the exact same lines and is a centuries old form of alternative medicine. Rulers as far back as Cleopatra were known to have worn metallic bracelets and bands around the head for this purpose. While magnetic therapy is a common form of healing in India, China, and France, America only began to realize the healing effects within the last few decades- in the early 1900's with resurgence in the late 90's. Now you can purchase them through the shopping network!

Magnetic energy is found everywhere in nature and is called by many other names. The Chinese call it "Chi" and use this energy when practicing acupuncture. Any material that is capable of becoming magnetized does so by aligning groups of atoms. This is what is called a magnetic energy field.

The human body is made of up cells. These cells can renew themselves, and practitioners of magnetic therapy believe that these cells can be manipulated through the use of magnets, that the same energy used to recharge cells as they wear down can become magnified through the energy contained in magnets.

Not all magnetic energy is healing-anyone concerned about the effects of computers and cell phones will tell you that these types of magnetic energy are harmful. They contend that this type of magnetic energy can cause headaches, memory loss, even tumors.

Beneficial magnetic energy, however, can reduce scars on internal organs-as in after surgery-by increasing blood flow. This same treatment can relieve patients of migraines and chronic pain. The increased blood flow is caused by the heating effect magnets have on the circulation.

Magnets have different strengths and sizes. The power is determined by how much iron weight it can lift, and so if using magnets for healing a specific wound-like acute swelling- you may want to consult an expert in the field. Sleeping on a magnetic mattress, however, is safe because they only come in one strength and can stimulate blood flow allover the body. Do not attempt to use magnetic therapy if you have a pacemaker, internal defibrillator, or are pregnant.

Magnetic therapists will determine which strength of magnet you should use-stronger magnets for large areas and chronic pain, lighter magnets for sensitive parts of the body, such as the ears.

You can also drink magnetically treated water. It has been documented to be relaxing; simply place a 6-8 ounce glass of water on the negative pole of a magnet for several minutes and drink twice a day.

Knowing how and where to place a magnet on the body involves good training, so be sure that the magnet therapist has been trained to know the size, strength, and placement as well as the duration of different magnets for the various ailments. There are literally hundreds of magnet sales websites and while they are tremendously helpful in treating different conditions, it would be wise to seek counsel from a trained practitioner before ordering any magnetized item for alternative medicinal use.

The magnetic mattress pads can be good for overall immune system regeneration, and for pain and increased energy, and if you have lower back ache the magnetic insoles are a great help. I know bowlers who swear by them, and people who stand on their feet for most of the day without pain are testimonies to the healing effects of magnets. Magnetic pads and wraps are available for easing conditions such as bad joints, elbows and knees, but again, it is wise to consult a professional before ordering any of these items.

MASSAGE THERAPY

I originally thought that massage therapy would be a gentle, soothing massage that would lessen the ever present tightness in my shoulders and lower back. Boy was I wrong.

I made an appointment at the insistence of my boss because the neck pain I had experienced since adolescence was becoming more intense from the way I sat at my computer.

I was led into a pastel room with soft lighting and asked to strip to my underwear and lay face down on the table. My head went into a donut shaped holder and there was a place to rest my arms. The massage therapist came in and asked me some questions about the location of my pain and then went to work.

It was the most excruciating pain I had ever felt.

Deep tissue massage is used for breaking up the tightness in the muscle tissue and retraining the muscles. Although the first few sessions seemed to hurt more than they helped, I stuck with it, coming three times a week for a month. By the end of the second month I had begun to look forward to each session and noticed that I wasn't clenching my jaw as much. I also noticed that my lower back didn't hurt as much at the end of the day.

The therapist had given me several back stretching exercises to do at night and the results were amazing. I now refer all of my friends with muscle pain for massage therapy.

Massage works the soft tissue-muscles, ligaments and tendons-to stimulate circulation and improve muscle tone. It is a system of kneading and pressing on specific muscle bundles just underneath the skin, but a good massage therapist can reach deeper muscles. Massage is an ancient and simple form of therapy.

Another benefit is improved breathing and circulation. Because the lymphatic system runs parallel to the circulatory system, there is improved elimination of waste through out the body, and in order to experience the full benefits the client is taught how to breathe deeply and slowly. While the few initial visits were quite uncomfortable, the full result was entirely relaxing.

An occasional soft massage is so relaxing that many people fall asleep during the treatment. However, if you have pain like mine a course of several treatments will result in the full benefit, such as along with increased circulation and improved breathing, a relaxed muscle is a good way to prevent sprains and torn ligaments, especially if you are an athlete. (I am far from being an athlete, but am just as prone to injury from excess tension and structural weakness.)

For example, when the structure in my lower back is compromised due to inactivity, I am much more likely to strain my back when I lift heavy objects, even though I am

aware of how to properly lift a box-with your knees, not with your back- but because my legs and lower back are weak, massage can greatly improve the position of the muscles and makes them more pliable, thus resulting in less chance of sprain or strain.

Massage is also used to relieve fatigue, which can be caused from the muscles in the body being so tight that you use extra energy to function. Because massage relaxes the muscles, the entire body doesn't have to work so hard and what was once fatigue can now be energy directed elsewhere.

One last note on the benefits of massage-the use of massage oils help lessen the friction of massage on dry skin, and are often used as an aromatherapy along with the massage process. A good, clean essential oil such as rosemary can leave the client feeling relaxed and calm, so don't hesitate to ask your therapist to use scented oil.

MEDITATION

Meditation is something that many have taken part in for years. It is an art, a skill even. Meditation to those who have spent time doing it know the greatness it can bring to your health, mind and soul. These benefits include more energy and positive state of mind. Studies have also recently shown that meditation increases the level of melatonin. A hormone that supports your immune system. Therefore making your immune system stronger and making you healthier. This hormone also slows down the signs of aging, increases better sleep patterns, increases your energy level and may even inhibit cancer cells from growing.

If you do not know anything about meditation, or have never tried it before, do not worry. Meditation is something that takes a certain amount of meditation, concentration and desire. You have to want to meditate and want to do it successfully. Meditation can change your life if you do it correctly. If you do not do it correctly, than you are just wasting your time. For maximum benefit you should try to meditate for at least 20minutes a day before you go to sleep. Below are some great steps for you to follow beginning your new adventure to meditation.

Method

First find a quiet and comfortable place. Sit on the floor or in a chair, whichever is more comfortable for you and sit with your neck and back straight, but not stiff. Do your best to keep all thoughts of the past or the future out of your mind and just focus on the present.

Now become aware of your breathing. Listen to the air enter and leave your mouth. Feel your stomach rise and fall with each breath. Pay attention to the way that each breath is different from the one before it. This will keep you completely in the present.

Sit back and watch the thoughts pass through your mind, good or bad. Do not react to these thoughts but do not ignore them either. Simply note them and remain in your

calm and relaxed state of breathing.

You may find that you get carried off in your thoughts. Do not get discouraged, just understand where your mind went and return back to your breathing. This is natural.

At the end of your meditation time, take an extra few minutes to become aware of where you are and stand up slowly.

This is the perfect step by step guide for beginners of meditation. Meditation can be a great alternative method for any and every disease or illness. Meditation brings out to a state of relaxation that no other can. Once you master meditation it instantly becomes something that you will always want to do. Something that you want to focus your life around.

Meditation is a skill that has been dismissed by a lot of people before they even learn about it or try it for themselves. It is a known fact that stress and anxiety sometimes causes or even worsens any condition of illness that a person may have. Why not try a method that can reduce if not eliminate altogether the stress in your life and the unnecessary anxiety? It will be extremely difficult to master at first, but once you understand the skill of this new treatment, you are well on your way to an alternative treatment that works for you.

Meditation is not for everyone. You must have the dedication and a large amount of self discipline. Without self discipline you have no chance of using this treatment to your benefit. Be serious when you begin your meditation research and your treatments, it will work for you.

MEDITATION TECHNIQUES FOR BEGINNERS

Meditation sounds simple enough, and it actually is, but many things in life that are simple are not easy, and meditation is a perfect example.

How hard can it be to just sit? Well, if you've ever tried meditation before now, you're probably a lot like me. I would unplug the phone, turn off the TV and all the lights in the house, light a candle and some good incense, and then try to force my legs into the pretzel position and sit quietly.

The first thing I noticed was that my legs hurt and my lower back was screaming. I couldn't shut my mind up long enough to relax, and started remembering and thinking about things so upsetting and chaotic that I gave up and took a nap.

What I learned was that my first mistake was trying to sit like that and assuming that I'd be able to quiet my mind on the first try.

Try sitting cross legged or on your feet or whatever way is most comfortable for you. A dimly lit room and the incense was a good start, now as you try to quiet your mind, count slowly from one to ten with each breath-it gives your mind something to do while it's learning to shut up. Also, closing your eyes is not necessary, you could get a piece of wood with the grain easy to see, a big enough piece that when you look at it that's all you see (the back of a door?)

Sit in front of the wood grain and watch it as you slowly inhale and count, Inhale through your nose slowly and hold-exhale slowly out through your mouth and "one," again and "two." Try it for five full minutes. It's okay if your mind gets distracted (it's used to being distracted) not sitting still, so forgive yourself and start again when retraining your mind. Try to listen to the sounds behind the car doors, the sirens, or any of the other daily sounds you hear in your place, listen for the birds behind the cars, for the wind behind neighbors, just listen and breathe.

On you next attempt take it a step further, setting your timer for 7 minutes instead of 5, and add the habit of practicing listening to your feelings of warm or cool, hard and soft, pressure and breath, be here now. Take your meditation only this far for the first month or so, and allow yourself time to learn how to breath and congratulate yourself on beginning to mediate, never be hard on yourself or give up, it takes a long time to get good at this, but the holistic benefits are great, increased breathing power, a sense of calm that you can tap into anytime you need it, are all excellent benefits of meditation exercise.

Follow your breathing as if it was a tennis ball, without manipulating your breath, watch it in your mind as you inhale and exhale, the tennis ball bouncing against a soft wall, and the wall bending with each breath as it throws your breath back at you, cool visual, hunh?

You may also choose to take advantage of a mantra, or sound that you hum or say while you are meditating. While "Ohm" is popular, you may hum your mantra or make up any sound that you like. The only hint is the simpler, the better. One vowel mantras seem to work best. You can even use a prayer or part of a poem, if it helps, but I tend to stick to simple.

The last and maybe best part of meditation is sending good feelings and warmth to others. While meditation is a wonderful preventative exercise in medicine, you can give it away as well by thinking good thoughts about those you care about.

NATIVE AMERICAN MEDICINE

The gathered information passed down from Grandmother to medicine man or woman over thousands of years by the many North American tribes is now called collectively "Native American Medicine." Some of the practices and remedies are from specific

tribes, but more often these are all gathered together and the origin of a specific treatment has been lost among the ages.

As well it should be, perhaps, for the tribes of North America all believed one thing in common, that we are all at one with every other living thing in the sky and earth, and the elements are here for us to draw on their strength and cure disease, if only we would stand still long enough to listen. We are talking about medical practices over 40,000 years old. Traditions, cures, dances and remedies handed down through orally within a family and tribe.

It is an interesting fact that the Native American Medicine tradition was going on around the same time as TCM (Traditional Chinese Medicine) on the other side of the world, and that both these traditions of practicing medicine are similar to Ayurveda (medicine from India), in yet another part of the world.

All are based on the same beliefs-that your lifestyle and natural setting be taken into consideration before a specific type of treatment is recommended. Balance is the goal when achieving perfect health and emotional spirit. The subtle differences in the practice of such medicine are that cures and herbs are specific to the regions and the types of indigenous plants that are used.

These plants are believed to have their own spirits and therefore their individual intelligence, so that the plants are often consulted as to how best to help the patient. The plants are asked for permission to harvest them, and then gratitude is shown after the harvest, a practice which also can be found in ancient Celtic cultures. In Wales, pieces of copper or other metal were buried near the plant or under the tree from which the bark, root, or leaves had been harvested, in North American Medicine; tobacco is often used as an offering of gratitude. After these medicinal plants are harvested, they are applied in conjunction with chants, prayers, and dances to increase their power and to ask the spirits to help with the healing process.

A purification procedure is used before and after the healing session; smudging is to burn an herb and let the smoke wash over you and the room in which the treatment will be/was preformed. Healers smudge between each session to purify and cleanse them and to release ant energy they might have gathered from the sick patient.

Sage and cedar drive away the negative energy, like the energy released with the pain from a sick person, or the negative energy the healer has picked up as a result of taking the pain from the patient and into them. Far from the cooking spice, sage grows wild in many dry parts of North America, especially in the Southwest, but it can be found as far north as Eastern Washington State. Cedars has great healing and soothing powers, but if you burn it, make sure all of the smoke has dissipated before you enter the room, it is also poisonous. Sweet grass invites positive and happy spirits to join the healing circle, and they like something sweet to be placed in a corner of the room to snack on during the session. They love singing accompanied by the sound of drums and rattles.

The session will likely include some acupressure (uses the fingertips rather than needles), massage, and/or therapeutic touch. The laying on of the healer's hands is very

calming and is used to soothe the patient as well as define where the pain is radiating from. Pain radiates heat, and the seasoned healer can feel this coming off the patient in much the same way a mother puts her hand on a sick child's forehead to feel for fever.

NEURO LINGUISTIC PROGRAMMING (NLP)

NLP is a very unique and effective use of alternative healing methods. This technique is becoming more and more popular and more and more understood as the years pass. NLP uses images and attitudes towards illness to effect it and encourage the healing process. NLP uses a number of presuppositions as part of their treatments to help people see that it is not only medicine that can help you, that you can help yourself.

Alternative treatments and methods work on their own, but the hope and prayers of the person using them does in fact help the healing process in these matters. People do not realize the power of thought. If you give up on yourself than it is very likely that your body will give up as well. There are so many medical and alternative health methods in the world today that there is no need to give up. There is a need to do the research and find a method that will be productive and effective for you and your pains.

NLP is a way of programming your brain. This means that the power of thought can change your life and your health. NLP focuses strongly on your sub-conscious and your dreams. If you are denying your true thoughts and feelings, this can cause your illness to increase or even to allow diseases to enter your body. You want to truly believe that you can heal yourself. If your sub-conscious is thinking something different, than this method of alternative treatment will never be a success for you.

Our brains have been trained to think a certain way since we were born. Just because we have already been conditioned does not meant that this is the proper way to think. Brains can be re-conditioned and this is the act of NLP. If you have been ridden with a disease for a long time without any cure, than maybe it is time to begin to think differently. The power of thought is amazing, this is something that people need to realize and thoroughly understand.

NLP is one of the strongest methods of change in a person in the world today. This is a method of change that anyone can learn and anyone can take advantage of. There are many things in life that people are successful at and many others that they are non-successful with. What the process of NLP suggests is that you can take the strategy you use for your successes and transfer them to the activities that you are not successful with. This process can be used for the healing process as well. As stated earlier, if you do not believe that you can be healed, than you cannot be. You need to have faith in your body, once you lose this faith, your body will then lose faith as well.

Finding a great NLP practitioner is easy! This is of course one of the most vital factors you should consider before beginning your quest for NLP treatments. These types of

treatments are not like conventional treatments. You need to ensure that you are choosing a qualified practitioner. If you do not, you could be putting yourself at a risk. Research is key before beginning an alternative medical treatment such as NLP.

Begin trusting in NLP and its processes. NLP is reliable and effective. There are thousands of people who practice this form of treatment on a daily basis. This could be you. Take your healing into your own hands and try the NLP process. You could be your own savior just by changing your mental thoughts.

QIGONG

Chinese medicine is becoming more and more popular in the western world with each passing year. Chinese medicine is expanding into the alternative treatments used in North America even more with qigong. This is one of the more popular forms of Chinese medicines besides acupuncture of course. Qigong literally has thousands of different forms and styles, all of which ending with the same great results once you are finished. Qigong is a form of meditation and physical exercises. These exercises are meant to attract active and vital sources of energy for your body and mind. Qigong is not only taking part in physical exercises but it has more to do with understanding your inner body and thoughts. Qigong seeks to make a connection between body and soul.

Qigong is becoming so popular in the last few years that you can now teach yourself the Qigong techniques from your own home. You can do this with the many video tapes and books that are on the market today. Just like everything else, research is required before you purchase a self teaching type of this kind. You want to ensure that you are buying something that is authentic and can teach you the proper techniques. Of course, learning something like Qigong is something that is better learned in person. This way you can learn how to act out these techniques flawlessly and learn from a Qigong expert in person. This makes your learning experience that much easier and enjoyable. Sometimes trying to learn on your own can be more difficult than learning with a qualified instructor. Depending on your learning trends, either is effective for you.

Qigong is the art of healing by using the power of your peace of mind. Qigong can be used for many different reasons, the most popular being the healing and reducing of stress and illness. So many people do not realize that just by understanding yourself and relieving your mind of all the troubles that it has can in fact have a lot to do with the disease that you are suffering from. Qigong is the absolute best method for self healing. No matter what ails you, qigong can cure you. Meaning that you will experience less diseases in the future and need less medical care. Qigong is about healing your body, mind and spirit. This type of holistic healing is something that can last forever and effect the rest of your life in the most positive way possible.

There are so many different types of qigong that you may have already used qigong and not been aware of it. For instance one of the most basic levels of qigong is something that most people do at least once a day. Just by sitting up straight in your chair, taking

a deep breath and clearing your mind is the first step in a self healing process. Having a clear mind is the best way to begin any self healing process. The more advanced levels of course include meditation, stretching and much concentration. Anyone can take part in this amazing alternative method to self healing. Just by starting with clearing your mind, you are on the right track.

Before beginning your new adventure with qigong, it is important to do as much research as you can so that you are familiar with the self healing ways that are used with this alternative method of healing. Whether you plan to teach yourself these self healing methods or you are going to find a great instructor, it is still important to do your research. Try out qigong and you will discover the amazing results that you will experience.

REFLEXOLOGY

The art of healing with reflexology has been around for centuries. Reflexology is one of the many forms of alternative treatments that are successful with treating everyday stresses as well as life threatening diseases in a natural way. Reflexology is the art of using your feet to heal not only your pain and illnesses but your entire body as a whole. This is a gentle and painless therapy that causes the body to return to its natural state. Once you have completed this type of therapy, you find that your body works more naturally and has reached its own healthy balance.

Reflexology is meant to work on pains such as: migraines, back pain, infertility, sleep disorders, arthritis, stress related conditions and sports injuries. This type of therapy is not one that claims to cure you, it claims to sooth and ease your pain. Reflexology can be and in some cases should be used along side of conventional medications. This does not create any unwanted side effects. It does however increase the speed of your healing. This type of therapy can be used to relieve your pains as well as to maintain your healthy condition. Once you have successfully finished a session of reflexology you will find yourself wanting to continue even once your illness or pain is gone.

Once you have made the decision to give reflexology a try, it is important to find a reliable and qualified practitioner to trust your reflexology sessions with. It is not hard to find a great practitioner if you do the research first. Reflexology is growing in popularity, this makes the search for the perfect practitioner for you that much easier. The practitioner that you choose should have the appropriate qualifications as well as a personality and demeanor that you can feel comfortable with. If you do not personally like your practitioner than it will make it difficult for you to trust this person with your reflexology sessions. Once this practitioner has been chosen, you need to take the opportunity to make your first appointment immediately. You do not want to wait once you have found one, because these types of practitioners are very busy.

At your first session your practitioner will try their best to find out as much as they can about your present and past health conditions. This is the most important part of this

type of therapy. Learning about the patient is vital before beginning a therapy such as reflexology. In this first session you will experience your first therapeutical session with your feet. Each person responds to this differently, and it is done slightly differently with each person. That is why it is so important to learn about the health history of each person. This background helps the practitioner decide on the preferred method of treatment. A treatment session can last up to an hour. Once your pain is pin-pointed, the practitioner will be able to use your feet to work your inner organs.

Following your first treatment, you will find that your body will react in many different ways. The way your body responds is important to report back to your practitioner. Most people after their first treatment feel completely relaxed and in a state of well being. The healing process can be different for some people, as long as you report your body's responses to the treatment, your practitioner can work with its responses.

Reflexology is growing every year in popularity. Its ability to perform such alternative healing with such power is evidence enough that reflexology is an effective way to maintain your health as well as achieve a healthy state.

REIKI

Reiki is an ancient Japanese word which means "including all" and is a healing energy which works by transference of energy through the hands of the healer to the afflicted. It is believed by practitioners that Reiki energy changes the frequency of ones aura, or body energy, and promotes healing on a physical level first, followed by the emotional level and finally the spiritual.

The big difference between Reiki and other types of hands on healing is the belief that Reiki energy can be transmitted from the healer not only through actual physical touch but also distance. The healer is filled with universal energy all the way down to the cellular level, asks the clients spirit for permission to heal the body, and then transfers the Reiki energy only if it is determined (by the Reiki energy itself) to be within the patients highest good.

The treatment is started by the healer rubbing their hands together and then placing their hands on the patients body or just above the body but still within the aura field. Reiki energy knows exactly where to go and how to heal so it is not necessary for the healer to know what is making the patient sick or even how to heal them, Reiki is based a lot on trusting the universal energy of life and health and allowing healing to take place; to the point of the patient possibly not even being healed of the affliction they originally went to the Reiki healer for, as the energy will heal whatever part of the body, mind, or spirit needs it the most.

While in a healing session, both the patient and the healer may feel cold, prickly sensations or nothing at all. Practitioners believe that Reiki will adjust its intensity by the needs of the patient, and the result is that the healer will instinctively know where and

how to move their hands. Healers report feeling rejuvenated and recharged after sessions, as Reiki does not deplete energy, but rather uses it in a type of spiral, recycling it back into the healer after cleansing the patient.

Reiki is meant to be used as a cooperative with other types of healing, and is particularly good after a massage. Practitioners and patients both report that the use of Reiki helps reduce the negative energy brought forth by more conventional but necessary medicines, such as chemotherapy and AIDS related medication side effects. It also can be used on anything that has energy-another aspect that differentiates Reiki from other forms of alternative medicine-such as cars.

It is important to note that while Reiki practitioners believe that Reiki can be sent to heal from far away, that a reputable Reiki practitioner will not do it without the person's permission, and in fact, can not. In order for Reiki to work both healer and patient must believe that it will work, and even the most painful suffering sometimes can not make someone believe that just laying hands over their bodies and sending energy will help them.

However, the other side of that coin is people who are in so much chronic agony that they are willing to try anything to have even a small relief from their pain. If that is the case, far be it from me or you to try to talk them out of it. As far fetched as you might think the practice of Reiki sounds, there are absolutely no proven negative side effects, so even if you don't believe Reiki will help your suffering friend or relative, remember, it can't hurt.

ROLFING

The definition of Rolfing is to use physical pressure to stretch and guide the connective tissue in the body to allow for a better, more flexible movement in the body. Moving and breathing techniques are taught to the patient in order to help facilitate the process.

The myofascial system of the body supports all soft tissues, defines how the bones are positioned and spaced, and basically is the cause of the shape of one's body. When the patient has been realigned properly, they report less depression and anxiety and have more energy. They have also reported less pain and better coordination.

Patients who seek Rolfing as an alternative medicine usually do so as a result of stress or injury (neck pain) from physically demanding jobs or jobs where they must be in one position for long periods of time, such as at a computer. Sports injuries are also cause for seeking relief through Rolfing.

Students of a balanced life use Rolfing as well. People who seek a balance and harmony in their physical and emotional life consider Rolfing along with yoga to be the ultimate in good health keeping. Professional Rolfists treat all age groups from infants to the elderly.

Ida P. Rolf (1896-1979) is the founder of the 10 stage treatment model. She was an American biochemist and a PhD who discovered the connective tissue that connects the muscles to the bones could be strengthened and manipulated. She believed that the body could become pulled out of its intended shape by gravity, and muscle and connective tissue reshaping was necessary for good health and balance. Unlike the connective tissue massage therapy, she developed 10 sessions geared toward deeper layers of the body, the patient learns to posture better, and control the invisible line that grounds and connects them to the earth. The sessions are structured so that manual manipulation of connective tissue along with lessons in relating to gravity will cause the patient to become more balanced-both physically and spiritually-to the point of the now healthy body beginning to be able to heal itself.

As connective tissue tends to become dehydrated, shortened or twisted (as in sports injuries) as a result of the everyday stress and strain of living, it is unable to perform its job of allowing the muscles to move fluidly, causing all kinds of havoc in the body. Rolfing treats the tightness and inflexibility of the connective tissue in the muscles so that the body can begin to live fully. As with CST therapy, patients often have emotional outlets during sessions including crying, resurfaced memories, and have reported feelings of becoming childlike again.

The 10 sessions consist of evaluating the patient's structure through photos and questions, positioning and repositioning the limbs of the body and using pressure to indicate where the problems areas are located. Then the patient is taught breathing techniques which will help facilitate healing, and in the first seven sessions pain and strain are released from the body. These sessions typically last one to two hours and are spaced approximately two weeks apart. Rolfing is so popular that most patients choose to continue the process after the initial 10 sessions as a preventative measure and holistic approach to well being.

It is important to note that at first Rolfing can be painful or at least uncomfortable, a lot like deep tissue massage. The muscles must be released and if they have atrophied from lack of movement (the old joke about a patient telling the doctor "It hurts when I do this" and the doctor replying "Well then, don't do that" is so true with muscular stiffness. When it hurts to move a certain way, we often stop the movement, causing our muscles to stiffen) and this can be painful at first. If you have a strong dislike for being touched or have cancer or arthritis, Rolfing may not be the best course of treatment for you.

TAI CHI

My earliest memories of Tai Chi were when the show "Kung Fu" hit the television scene in the 70's. My father was mesmerized by David Carradine's fluid movements and quiet ways, and several weeks later I found him out in the back yard practicing the lessons he'd learned at his first Tai Chi class. I don't know how much Tai Chi really had to do

with the show, but it had enough of an impact on my father to change his eating habits and routines forever.

I also thought it was really cool that when he told me to grab his wrist, and then side stepped away, causing me to fall forward on my face. There were a few kids on the playground I was eager to try that move on!

More importantly, doing the daily exercise movements with my father brought us closer together, and for that I will always practice Tai Chi with a certain fondness.

Tai Chi is a gentle form of exercise which can be practiced by anyone regardless of physical capabilities. Even my mother, who was in a wheelchair as the result of polio could do some of the movements.

The modern world is fast paced, and yet we sit around a lot, don't we? While modern technology makes our lives easier, we are slowly as a culture losing the regular muscle tone that would come with regular labor-now we go to the gym, if we remember to or don't get bored with it.

We now experience a wide range of health problems including circulatory, headaches, high blood pressure and chronic back and neck pain, and most of it is a result of the jobs we perform.

Tai Chi is about massage-like movements and stretching, in a nutshell. The long term effects of the daily practice of Tai Chi produces reduced tension, increased strength and stamina, and flexibility. When proper circulation is restored, Taoist Tai Chi teaches that the body will begin to heal itself, restoring proper function of the muscles, ligaments, and even organs. In time, you will begin to notice a change in the entire physiology of the body.

If you need facts and documented evidence, Tai Chi is moderate cardiovascular exercise and is one of the few that can be preformed by anyone. The exercise and movements can be done from a sitting position or a bed. It also helps the immune system by regulating it, and makes a huge difference in posture, aligning the spine and reducing degeneration. Tai Chi is a weight bearing exercise-your own-and can help maintain bone density. This is especially helpful if you are a woman with a genetic predisposition of Osteoporosis.

It takes around four months to learn the set of movements associated with the Taoist Tai Chi. The instructors will demonstrate and then stick with the class until everyone is comfortable with the movements. Because they are slow and deliberate, the movements are quite easy to learn.

Unlike other exercise classes you may find at your gym (you know the ones with someone who has a perfect body on either side of you), you do not have to be in great shape to begin to practice Tai Chi. Anyone of any age or shape can learn the movements.

You can find a class near you by searching their world site online, the instructor is a member of the Taoist Tai Chi Society, and does not get paid for their time. They are volunteers who must pass a certification class and adhere to strict guidelines set forth by the society. Any fee you will pay is for your dues as a member of the society, and so it is very important that you join an actual branch of the society, that way you are a member of the entire society, and can take classes in any town (or nation) you happen to be traveling in.

Membership fees change according to your situation. There are special fees for students and the elderly, and financial hardship scholarships are available.

TIBETAN MEDICINE

Tibetans have been in exile since 1959; most of them live in India and have Indian papers. Their religion is Tibetan Buddhism, and their traditional system of medicine is rather like traditional Chinese Medicine – but Tibetan of course. It has been practiced for around 2,500 years. The headquarters of their Medical Institute is in Northern India, where their doctors are trained and Tibetan Medicines are made. Doctors of Tibetan Medicine are required to study for a minimum of seven years, where they learn not only the basics of their medicine, but are required to learn poetry as well!

Tibetan Medicine is called “gSoba Rig-pa” (which translates as the science of healing) and virtually all of it is based on herbal remedies. They also make a type of pill(s) from precious metals which has had good results with the treatment of ailments such as arthritis, asthma, and ulcers, just to name a few.

Tibetan medicine teaches that all suffering is caused by one or a combination of three poisonous ways of thinking-wanting, dread, and denial. This makes perfect sense when you think about the medicine in context with Buddhist philosophy, which teaches that these are the very three concepts that the Buddhist aspires to relieve themselves of.

"Cures" are based in the elimination of urine, feces, and sweat. When the good elements of the body all work together in harmony, the patient begins to feel better. The long term causes of sickness are one of the “three poisons”, which are believed to be caused by imbalances of time and season, poor diet and improper behavior. (Please note that this article has been extremely over simplified.)

Rlung is to the Tibetans what the Qi is to the Chinese, the life force which flows through us all and the universe. There are five types of Rlung;

- "life grasping" which is located in the brain and controls intellect, swallowing, sneezing, and breathing.
- "Upward moving" is in the chest and controls speech, stamina, and diligence.
- "All pervading" Rlung is located in the heart, and controls movement, such as walking and the opening and closing of the orifices of the body.

- "Fire accompanying" Rlung is responsible for digestion and metabolism, and is in the stomach.
- The "downward cleansing" Rlung expels everything-feces, urine, menstrual blood, babies, and semen. This Rlung resides in the rectum.

With regard to what causes sickness-time and season, improper lifestyle or other imbalances-spirits are thought to cause the sickness if the time and place is disturbed. Different spirits can be disturbed during different times of the day or year, and consultation with a tantric practitioner is needed to determine if angry spirits are responsible for the patient's ailment(s). If this is the case, chanting, meditation and prayer can be used to return the spirit, and herbs are used to alleviate-for example-pain, curing the symptoms as well as the dis-ease.

It is interesting to note that with regard to the sicknesses involved with an imbalanced diet, Tibetan Medicine does not recommend only raw foods, only certain foods, etc. The teaching is very strict with respect to a balance of all foods. They do not say to never eat butter, for example, but to eat a balance of raw and fatty foods.

Diagnosis is done primarily by testing urine and looking at the patient's tongue. Heavy, thick, yellow or dark urine with a strong odor indicates a "hot" sickness, while clear, thin, or white urine indicates a "cold" sickness. The patient's tongue is tested for color, smoothness, and hydration. The doctor will then take the patient's pulse, and like in acupuncture, can tell much about blood flow and blockages by the number of beats and strength.

Finally there will be a long list of questions to be answered by the patient, and treatment will consist of one of four recommendations, advice on diet and behavior, which is the first step of treatment, and/or prescribing medicine or surgery. Usually a change in diet or behaviors helps tremendously, to the point that medicine-other than symptom relieving medicine or surgery is not needed. Many patients use Tibetan Medicine regularly as a preventative, and so many diseases and ailments are caught in the very early stages.

TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE

Traditional Chinese medicine is gaining popularity in the U.S., as more and more people are learning the benefits of acupuncture, acupressure, deep massage, Qigong, and the herbal medicines. Westerners are the new kids on the block when it comes to receiving these treatments, as over a quarter of the population of the world practices TCM, also known as Oriental medicine.

The National Institute of Health and the World Health Organization believe TCM to be a viable alternative to Western medicine, and now many health insurance companies will cover acupuncture as a treatment for various ailments. Very exciting for those of us who find acupuncture to be a great help in lessening pain and improving circulation.

Acupuncture originated in China around 3,000 years ago and is the most common form of medical procedure in the rest of the world, because the same treatment not only relieves immediate pain, it is a preventative procedure because it realigns the Qi (pronounced "Chee.")

The Qi is the body's vital energy, all things rise from Qi and it flows and connects a person to the earth and sky. It is also the source of the body's natural healing, all disorders can be traced to a Qi imbalance, and the acupuncture points on the body release the bound Qi and allow it to flow naturally-the body can then begin to heal itself.

Diagnosis in acupuncture involves the practitioner asking a long list of questions, some usually considered by Americans to be of a private nature. The questions consist of everything from listing sleeping patterns to a typical day meals to how many times the patient has a bowel movement in a 24 hour period. These are necessary questions, as the more information the acupuncturist has, the better to tell where the Qi is blocked.

The patient typically will then lie down on a massage table (in the East acupuncture is usually done in the sitting position) and the practitioner will insert very thin needles into some of the 2,000 plus points in the body which connect to 14 pathways, or medians. The insertion of the needles does not hurt, and contrary to what you may have heard, he/she does not twist or bore them into the skin. They are inserted just underneath the surface and the patient is left in a soothing, dimmed room for about an hour. There are different sizes and lengths of needles, each for a specific ailments and point. The needles are made of super thin stainless steel and are pliable; they are discarded after each use.

Another form of TCM is herbal remedies; these are often used in conjunction with acupuncture. Because all things are interconnected, pains and conditions in the body have a lot to do with one's emotions and thinking process. That is why people who experience chronic pain are also frequently depressed. TCM practitioners will often give the patient herbs to help relax or calm them along with the acupuncture sessions. This is called tonic herbalism, and some popular herbs used are probably already in your kitchen. Green tea and ginseng are two of the most well known herbs used in TCM, but here are some others-considered "warm" foods which will help maintain good health and restore balance to a depleted Qi: Rice and noodles, broccoli, egg whites, fish and chicken. It is no coincidence that these are some of the main ingredients in all Eastern cooking.

In order to get a holistic view of TCM, we have covered acupuncture (prevention and treatment), herbal remedies and diet, it is only right that we should touch on exercise. Enter Qigong (Pronounced Chee Kung.) Qi, of course, still means energy, and gong means work or practice. The art and practice of Qigong involves practicing posture, breathing, meditation, and slow regulated movement of the limbs. Qigong is a great exercise, and because of its popularity, you can usually find classes in your area simply by opening the phone book.

VITAMINS

Why bother taking vitamins at all? Our forefathers survived just fine without multi vitamin packs, why can't we? The answer to that question is easy, go look in your cupboards. Our forefathers ate a lot better than we do. High processed, homogenized, pasteurized, canned and prepackaged fast food means less chance of natural occurring vitamins surviving for any length of time.

While some of us pick our own fruit and grow our own vegetables, most of the country chooses to rely on packaged, store bought fruits and veggies. These aren't as healthy as they look, either. The longer the apples and tomatoes are off the vine, the faster they begin to lose their nutritional value, losing vitamins during processing and shipping. Your body needs vitamins to boost your immune system, ward off colds and other viruses, and even keep you even tempered, so to speak. Did you know with a vitamin deficiency that you are less likely to clot when you cut yourself? Vitamins play a much bigger part than we think, and the average diet does not include all the vitamins necessary to keep the body in top shape.

A good multi-vitamin is your best choice, but here again you can be misled into believing that 100% of the USDA recommended dosage is good enough. They mean 100% total, not 100% of each vitamin necessary. Think about it, they can't possibly pack the right amount of every kind of vitamin that you need into one pill a day, and most multi vitamins sold in your local grocery store are cut with fillers and preservatives.

Nope, you'll have to visit your local food co op and get some natural, all inclusive vitamin supplements. Along with eating well, these supplements contain everything you need for balanced vitamin intake, with none of the fillers and preservatives that I, for one, resent paying for.

So let's talk B vitamins as an example. You need several different kinds of B vitamins alone. B6 and B12 are just two, but the most commonly talked about. Vitamin B6 promotes the development of red blood cells, and B12 helps promote energy and fights Alzheimer's disease. You need these and other vitamins to be in the purest form possible in order to be the most beneficial.

Let's skip back for a moment, the history of vitamins, if you will. Vitamins began being "discovered" by scientists and surgeons around 1914, and the word "vitamin " comes from the word "vital" as in vital energy for life, but as far back as the 1600's sailors knew to eat citrus fruits to prevent scurvy. It wasn't until later that they knew it as vitamin C.

Now we will skip forward to the future. Many vitamins are now available as liquids. Remember cod liver oil? Well now most vitamins can be taken from a spoon rather than choked down (although if you were one of the kids forced to down cod liver oil, you were choking anyway), what's more, they taste good now as well.

Now before you get all excited and run out to stock up on each vitamin that you are deficient in, let me remind you that you can, in fact, 'overdose' on vitamins, kind of. The

water soluble vitamins such as B's and C's will simply be expressed through your urine if you've taken in more than your body needs, but fat soluble vitamins such as D and E can accumulate and cause problems such as diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, and rash.

I recommend contacting a homeopath to test for vitamin deficiencies before you run out and spend a lot on vitamins. Knowing exactly what you need the most and in what daily dosage will save you some money, because again, you really need to purchase each vitamin separately, rather than in a multi-vitamin pill.

YOGA

Yoga is not something that has to be difficult or only works with certain types of people. It is something that you have to want to take part in, something that you have a desire to learn. Without this desire to learn and the desire to change and heal in the most holistic way possible, yoga will be of no use to you. Yoga can only produce results when you put forth the effort and the willingness to learn. Yoga is easy if you want to learn it. The desire to change is what motivates you to learn and progress in your yoga career. What yoga does is create a positive balance between your mental and physical health. This connection may take awhile to create, but once it is created, you are well on your way to a healthy and happy life.

The routines that yoga bring to your life are not difficult or special, they are just different. These routines carry on throughout your day not just when you are acting out your yoga routine. Throughout your entire day, yoga encourages you to watch everything that you do and every thought that goes through your mind. By watching these types of things in your life you become more and more aware of how you live your life on a day to day basis. You may be surprised at what you see.

Many people are completely unaware of the way they live their lives and have no idea that they are allowing their ego and desires to run their lives. When you allow this to happen there is no happy balance between your body and your mind. The more you work on this and watch every feeling and thought that goes through you, the closer you become to the happy balance between your body and soul.

Yoga is something that can remain on one level or you can bring yoga to a higher level. It all depends on how you want to use your yoga. It can be used as just a simple exercise to keep your body in shape, you can take it to the next level and exercise your mind as well as your body to create the healthy balance between the two or you can take it to the highest level of self meditation.

Using yoga for any of these levels can be effective if you want it to be. Your effort and desire is what drives this type of alternative healing method. Without your honest and pure effort to want to experience the great results of yoga, your yoga will remain just an exercise whether you want it to or not.

Yoga is easy to learn if you start at the lowest level possible. By beginning at the pure exercise level, you are learning the ways of yoga. You cannot bring yoga to any higher level if you do not have a full understanding of the practice you are taking place in. Yoga is just like anything else, you need to begin at the lowest level before you can progress to a higher level of yoga success.

There are many tapes, DVDs and videos that are available today to help you learn yoga from your own home. Many of these are effective, but you want to ensure that you are purchasing something of quality and legitimate yoga teachings. By learning the “trendy” yoga tips, this will not get you anywhere. Do your research, find out which videos and learning tapes are authentic. Yoga is an alternative treatment that can change your life if you learn the correct forms of yoga.

Yoga is easy to learn if you learn the proper way. Enjoy this alternative method of holistic healing for yourself.

YOGA - HATHA YOGA

Yoga is one of the most popular types of alternative medical treatments and is growing rapidly every year. Yoga is more commonly known as a mere physical therapy treatment. Hatha yoga is only one of the many types of yoga that exists in the world today. Yoga was originally meant to be a spiritual treatment of the mind and the soul. It has, in today's world, become more of a physical treatment than anything else. Hatha yoga is the type of yoga that prepares your body for its spiritual journey. This is mainly done with physical and breathing exercises as well as asceticism. This type of yoga requires the most physical exercise than any of the other types of yoga.

A few of the main factors for Hatha yoga are concentration on your breathing and your posture. This type of concentration can be more difficult than you think. Once you try this for yourself and see what this type of concentration can do, you will want to continue with this type of yoga. The purpose of practicing a great posture is to practice great meditation. You need to find a position that you can sit in for a long period of time. If you cannot be comfortable in your meditation and yoga positions, then you will be unsuccessful. The more postures and positions that you can acquire, a better meditative state will result.

Hatha is the form of yoga that anyone should begin with. Hatha begins with the basics of yoga and teaches you the inner workings of meditation and how you should begin. Once you master your own postures and positions of meditation comfort, it is time to master your breathing patterns. If you can master your own breathing patterns, than mastering your mind is not far out of reach for you. It takes many steps to reach these different levels of meditation and yoga. With practice and concentration anyone can do it.

If you are beginning your new adventure with yoga, Hatha is the form of yoga that you should begin with. If you want your yoga career to be successful you must begin with

the proper steps and then learn in the right order. If you only learn the superficial methods of yoga, then you will not experience the desired results from this amazing technique of holistic meditation.

In today's world, Hatha yoga mostly used for its physical exercise. We do not take advantage of the other benefits that Hatha yoga can give to us. It is a form of yoga that if done properly, can heal you in the most holistic way possible. Hatha yoga does evolve from its physical exercises. It is these exercises that begin and promote the mind and soul healing. No matter why you are participating in yoga, you can receive all of these benefits. The only way you can recognize them or use them to your benefit is to practice the other side of yoga, meditation. If you are unaware that these features, they will be of no use to you. When practicing yoga, you need to be aware of everything going on within you. Pay attention to yourself and you will instantly be able to see the changes that are going on within you.

Hatha yoga can be easy to learn if you are open minded and want to learn. It is a technique that can be mastered if you put all your energy and concentration into it. By learning the techniques of Hatha yoga, you are well on your way to an alternative way of healing in the most holistic way possible.

YOGA - HOT YOGA

Yoga is a common phrase around many households, but very few people are completely knowledgeable in the field of yoga. Yoga has many different types and practices, one being "Hot Yoga". This is the nickname for Birkram yoga. This type of yoga was named after its creator, Bikram Choudury. The reason it is called hot yoga is because this form of yoga is practiced in hot rooms.

These rooms are normally at an average temperature of 115 degrees Fahrenheit. This type of yoga focuses on balancing and stretching. This type of yoga is also used to create pressure in your body. This pressure is created by blocking the circulation and blood flow in your body with your stretching and then feeling the blood rush through your veins with the release of your stretch. You can feel your veins being flushed out and cleansed. This is one of the main points of hot yoga.

Hot yoga has 26 different poses for you to practice. The reason that this is performed in a hot room is so that your entire body is warmed up. This allows you to work deep into your muscles and tendons. This helps to heal and exercise your body inside and out. This type of yoga, like many others, is great for decreasing any chronic pains that you may have and even maintaining the health that you already have. You can reduce stress, lose weight and more with this form of yoga. You will find yourself in great physical and mental health by practicing hot yoga.

You may think that these yoga poses are not something that you can do, but you are wrong. That is why they are performed in a hot room. The heat helps you to go as deep as possible into the yoga pose and saves your body from feeling any pain. With these 26

poses you begin with the standing poses, backbends, forward bends, and then twists. Once you reach the last of the 26 poses you will feel like you have accomplished something amazing, which you have. Each of these poses are done twice and held for a certain amount of time. Depending on whether you are a beginner or a professional with yoga, these times will differ so that you do not injure yourself and you are familiar with the process. Each of these poses does not only work your muscles and limbs, but it also works on your organs and nervous system. It does this because hot yoga promotes sweat and in this sweat your inner toxins are released.

There are a few tips that you need to be aware of before you begin your hot yoga practice. This type of yoga includes an extreme amount of sweating. This means that it would be best for you to wear as little clothing as possible and clothing that you would be comfortable sweating in. Also because of all this sweating, it is important to drink plenty of water before beginning your hot yoga session.

If you are searching for your hot yoga studio there are a few things that you should look for. There are many hot yoga studios that are not certified by Bikram himself. This means that they are not authentic and may not follow the proper procedures. Before you sign up for any classes, you need to ensure that the studio has been certified by Bikram. This will ensure that you are getting the proper instruction that you require. Hot yoga is a great alternative method of healing and can help you make that healthy connection between your body, mind and soul. Yoga of all kinds can help you achieve this connection, but hot yoga does this in a more obvious and powerful way. Try out hot yoga for yourself and you will instantly feel the results of its power.

YOGA - KARMA YOGA

If you are not familiar with the art of yoga, there are many different forms of yoga that can be practiced. Karma yoga is the one type of yoga that brings together the physical and the spiritual worlds together. Other types of yoga focus on one or the other. With karma yoga, if practiced properly, you can experience both. The basis of karma yoga was founded from ancient Hindu religions and philosophy. From this basis, karma yoga has evolved with every passing century into a meditative state that can be achieved by no other form of yoga. Karma yoga combines the two main philosophies of the world. This means that it combines the theory of Western philosophy, that life should be lived with pleasure with the Eastern philosophy that life should be lived for knowledge. With karma yoga, both of these theories are combined in the act of karma. By learning karma, you are learning the knowledge of the world and living in complete and pure happiness.

In order to progress with your karma growth, it solely depends on the way you live your life. If you live your life for wealth and material possessions then you are acquiring bad karma. If you live your life for pure happiness and love then you have good karma on your side. If you do not work on yourself and the life that you are living then karma yoga cannot help you. The type of person that you already are, reflects the results that you will see by participating in karma yoga.

By practicing this form of yoga you will find yourself learning more and more about life as you continue to work at your goals. Karma yoga can guide you in the right direction towards selflessness as well as towards the right actions you should take in life. Karma yoga can only guide you in the right direction, you yourself have to take the next step and follow the guidance that you have been given.

Karma means "to do". This means by practicing the act of karma yoga, you are learning how to live your life in the form of good karma. You want to ensure that you are living a life of happiness and freedom. You do not want to be a slave to your ego for your entire life. This form of yoga, combines itself with self meditation as well. By using both of these holistic forms of treatment, you are well on your way to good karma and a turn around in your life. Karma yoga is about action, controlling your actions and ego to use them for good. You need to monitor your selfish desires and live your life for pure happiness and for yourself. Living for others and what others expect of you is the way to bad karma and an unhappy life. You need to live for yourself, by doing what other people expect of you or want you to do, you are not happy. Many people in the world convince themselves that they are happy, when they are not. Karma yoga can cure you of this inner unhappiness.

Karma yoga is something that you must work at everyday to achieve the results that you are so desperately searching for. Karma yoga includes great forms of meditation and physical exercises. By combining these two forms of holistic healing, you are on your way to good karma and learning the true ways of the world. You already know what life is meant to be lived for, it has always been in your sub-conscious. Karma yoga helps bring this knowledge to the surface and helps you see the way your life should be led. This means living your life for happiness and selflessness. Karma yoga can be done by anyone, you will see this immediately!

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