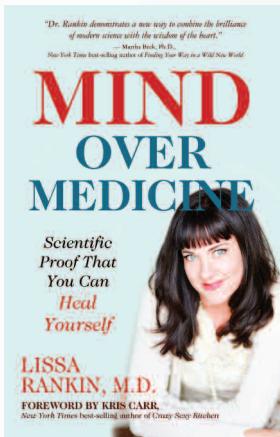


The Heart of Healing



We've all heard of the placebo effect, spontaneous remission and people who have healed when the doctors predicted otherwise, but do we really understand why these things happen?

In her book, "Mind Over Medicine: Scientific Proof That You Can Heal Yourself," author Lissa Rankin, MD, set out to uncover the true reasons people heal, and in doing so managed to heal herself from a number of chronic conditions, including debilitating allergies, high blood pressure and cardiac arrhythmias.

Citing scientific research and clinical studies, Rankin explains how our beliefs, emotions, relationships and lifestyle either elicit the relaxation response in the body or trigger the stress response, known as fight or flight.

"When your body is in the middle of a stress response, your body's self-maintenance and self-repair functions come to a screeching halt," Rankin says in the book. "The stressors of daily life — things like loneliness, unhappy relationships, work stress, financial stress, anxiety and depression — result in forebrain thoughts and feelings that repetitively trigger the hypothalamus to elicit stress responses."

The repetitive triggering of the stress response leads to the breakdown of systems in the body. It's through the counterbalance of the relaxation response that the body can truly heal, says Rankin.

"When you feel optimistic and hopeful, loved and supported, in the flow in your professional or creative life, spiritually nourished, or sexually connected to another person, the relaxation response takes the place of the stress response ... and the body can go about its natural self-repair process, preventing illness and taking its stab at treating disease that already exists. As a result, disease is more likely to be prevented in well people, and disease may even be treated in sick people," she says in the book.

Rankin walks readers through practices she used to heal herself, including meditation, uncovering and changing limiting beliefs, and finding a creative outlet through painting. She offers exercises to help uncover what the root cause of a person's illnesses may be and what needs to change in their life in order to set the body up for healing.

The below excerpt and exercise is taken from Chapter 10: 6 Steps to Heal Yourself.

STEP FOUR: DIAGNOSE THE ROOT CAUSES OF YOUR ILLNESS

If you have a health condition, your doctor may have already given you a diagnosis — angina, Crohn's disease, diabetes, breast cancer, whatever. As I've said before, if you're experiencing symptoms and haven't yet seen a doctor, please get to it — pronto. We've come a long way in the past century, and modern medicine has much to offer, so it's crucial to find out if your doctor can offer conventional treatment options. (Remember: you can always investigate your options and choose to say no to those treatment options. It's your body, your life.)



Lissa Rankin MD,
author of
"Mind Over
Medicine:
Scientific
Proof That
You Can Heal
Yourself"



But what if you've seen five doctors, have a medical chart three inches thick, and in spite of everyone's best efforts, nobody has been able to figure out what's wrong with you? If you're one of those frustrated patients whom doctors haven't been able to give a diagnosis, don't despair. Sometimes your diagnosis is right around the corner, and it's just a matter of seeing the right physician. But other times, a conventional medical diagnosis simply doesn't exist, which is actually great news.

It's not that your symptoms are "all in your head," because clearly, they're in your body. But when you're experiencing symptoms your doctor can't diagnose, it's often because the symptoms are the result of repetitive triggering of the stress response without adequate relaxation-response counterbalancing. Conventional medicine simply doesn't yet have a catch-all diagnosis for that physiological cascade of symptom-inducing effects.

Whether you have a traditional diagnosis, you're experiencing symptoms nobody can diagnose, or you're healthy but interested in preventative health, chances are good that you're not optimizing your body's capacity for self-repair and improving your chance of cure. That's where the next step in this process comes in. Almost every illness is either caused or exacerbated by triggering of the stress response, which happens in the body but starts in the mind. While you can mitigate some of the stress response without understanding what is triggering it, you're better off digging deep and diagnosing the root cause of *what is triggering those stress responses in the first place*. If you're engaging in stress-relieving activities, such as meditation, creative expression, sex or exercise, but you're not alleviating the source of the stress, you're not optimizing your body's chance for cure. If, however, you can heal the problem from the root and stop the stress response at its origin, you're much more likely to wind up cured.

When you diagnose the root causes of what is triggering your stress responses, you gain insight into how your body may be suffering as the result of your mind and how you can not only prevent future stress responses, but initiate natural relaxation responses that have been proven to prevent and cure disease. Remember, prevention is always better than treatment, especially given that some manifestations of chronic stress in the body may be hard (though not impossible) for the body to undo after the fact.

While it may be too late to prevent an illness that already affects you, it's never too late to reduce stress responses and activate relaxation responses. While results vary and some conditions are more susceptible than others to reductions in stress responses and increases in relaxation, when you mobilize the body's natural mechanisms of self-repair, anything is possible and spontaneous remission just might happen, even when you've been told your condition is "chronic" or "incurable."

...Illness offers us a precious opportunity to investigate our lives without judgment, diagnose the root cause of what might be contributing to an illness, realign ourselves spiritually, and do what we can to make our bodies ripe for miracles. When viewed with compassion and without judgment, illness can be a potent opportunity for personal growth and spiritual awakening.

Remember, before you go through these diagnostic exercises, make sure you have the right support. We're about to get down and dirty, and I want to make sure you feel

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safe, loved, and nurtured, not just by someone else, but especially by yourself. With that in mind, let me walk you through a few exercises I use with my patients to help them diagnose the root causes of what might be contributing to an illness.

**DIAGNOSTIC EXERCISE #1:
WHAT DOES YOUR BODY NEED IN ORDER TO HEAL?**

- Close your eyes and breathe deeply.
- Tap into the wisdom of your Inner Pilot Light.
- Ask yourself, “What does my body need in order to heal?” Your Inner Pilot Light might offer treatment intuitions — yes or no on a medication, for example. But I invite you to dig deeper. Beyond what your doctor is recommending, what else does your body need in order to heal? Be willing to tell yourself the truth.
- With nonjudgmental mind, spend 20 minutes listening quietly to what your Inner Pilot Light communicates to you. Remember, you don’t have to take action on anything that comes up. The goal is simply to discover the truth about what your body needs in order to heal. Pull out your journal and write about it if you feel so inspired.
- To download a guided meditation leading you through this process, visit MindOverMedicineBook.com.

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