

What's left behind provides clues about hereafter

By Ruth Ostrow

DURING the past few weeks, I have been to see several holistic healers. I've been having problems breathing, due to a stuffy nose, itchy throat, and the general allergies of spring.

Rather than hit the antihistamines I wondered if certain foods, or habits, could increase or decrease the amount of ... well ... mucus and other undesirable side-effects of this exquisite time of year.

I visited an ayurvedic doctor trained in an Indian system of healing, a homeopath and an energy healer. All of them got me to think about my body in ways I had not done for ages. We have to observe our bodies carefully if we are to self-heal, the ayurvedic doctor said, before asking me so many questions I thought I would explode.

Each healer had a similar routine, discussed here because the principle makes profound common sense.

We give away our power to other healers, be they traditional or natural, when the reality is that by observing our own bodies and how they function each day we can glean vital information to help us eradicate uncomfortable symptoms of disease, or provide a useful diagnostic tool. Prevention is always better than cure.

The primary and most important questions seem to be around digestion. The digestive process determines whether or not we assimilate enough essential vitamins, minerals and fluids into our bloodstream and cells.

When our digestion is stuffed it can cause endless biological problems around the body. So questions about poo provide important data on how our digestive system is working.

Do you poo every day? At the same time each day? Is the poo soft or hard? Many people would feel uncomfortable even reading this, it's a very Western thing to be embarrassed about our evacuations.

In other countries, particularly India, where doctors value the digestive system as king, it is normal to inspect the faeces each day and make observations about colour, texture, and density in order to understand if all is working well.

Excessively watery poo might mean not enough moisture is being absorbed into the body, as constipation is another version of poor digestion.

Urine, too, is important. If it is strong smelling and consistently dark it's a sign of dehydration. It is dangerous and damaging to not get enough fluid, and according to one medical doctor I visited, could lead to the mucus in the throat and lungs becoming thick and gummy, resulting in possible infection.

It is important to observe the foods we eat and the effects they have on the body.

We all know about healthy eating. But do we know how our own bodies react to certain foods? Something healthy for one person, such as grain, may cause allergy in another.

Often we are so preoccupied with getting to work, or getting the kids off to school, we don't sit with our bodies and listen to what they are telling us: ``I don't like this food, I feel bloated and uncomfortable after this. This makes me very hyperactive, nervy." It took a colleague of mine to make me aware that I might have a mild blood-sugar disorder. After not eating for a few hours I would get really edgy, cranky, tired and couldn't think straight. She pointed this out, and the fact that my hands were often trembling.

I hadn't even noticed. Now I carry nuts around and eat them continuously, which has made a huge difference to my moods and efficiency levels.

There are smells like consistently sour breath which are significant, or tongues which look furry, showing a body environment which is moist, hot and ripe for fungus.

All these things can be observed easily and often remedied by eating the right foods such as light salads to combat a sluggish system, or calming, warm foods to combat feelings of nervous hyperactivity.

Natural vitamins can replace mineral loss whilst the digestive system is being brought up to scratch, and different breathing techniques and exercises can be used to cleanse the liver and vital organs in order to help many problems.

Lastly, holistic healers ask lots of questions about emotions which can be toxic. Grief can literally make the chest and throat constrict due to that feeling of repressed tears.

Anger can make the stomach produce acid, and can make organs like the bladder contract, trapping urine and leading to infection.

Fear and compulsion can deplete our adrenal glands, leaving us exhausted.

Repressed emotions need healthy expression. Deep breathing can release much of what is trapped inside us.

During the day ask yourself, how am I breathing? Shallow breathing is a sign of stress, but it also compounds the stress because not enough oxygen enters the bloodstream.

For me, a simple program of increased water intake plus conscious breathing has helped enormously with my allergy symptoms. Having a good emotional purge has helped too.

Whether we consult conventional or natural doctors, we can go a long way to helping ourselves by simply stopping, observing bodily functions, and hearing what our good friend the body has to tell us each day.

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