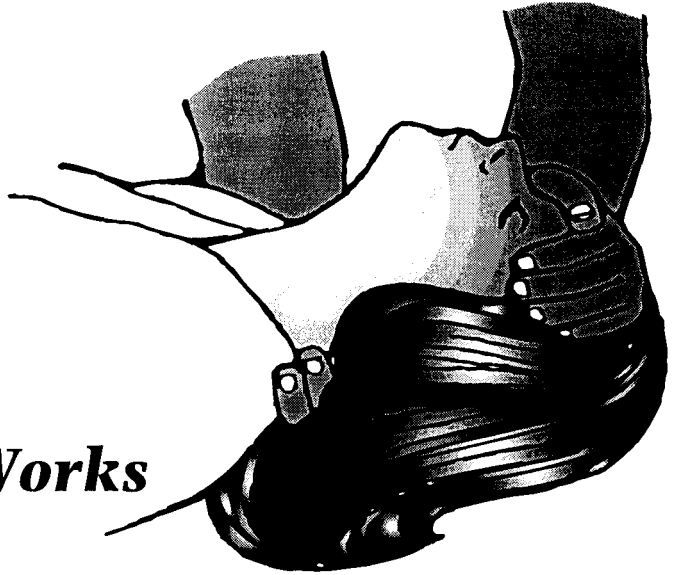


Healing Works

Daniel Benor



'Men often stumble over the truth but most of them pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing had happened.'

Winston Churchill

Spiritual Healing

Spiritual healing is probably one of the oldest treatments for physical and emotional diseases and dis-eases, and is practised in every known culture. Western science has long been sceptical of healing, believing it to be no more than suggestion, placebo or even charlatanism. Having trained in psychology, medicine, psychiatry and research, I was very much of this opinion myself until I observed Ethel Lombardi, an American Reiki healer, at work in 1980.

Ethel is a lively, middle-aged, Scotch-Irish woman with a no-nonsense air combined with a warm sense of humour. Her healee was 'Tom', a twenty-year-old college student. Tom had a lump under his left nipple and was scheduled for surgery to remove this about two weeks later. He had no faith in healing but was willing to try it in the hope that surgery might be avoided. I examined the lump and found it to be 1×2 centimetres, rubbery firm, less mobile than one would like to see with a lesion of this sort (suggesting it might be growing invasively), and moderately tender.

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Ethel gave a laying-on of hands treatment without touching the lump. She gave healing through the chakras, which are energy centres along the midline of the body. A few minutes into the healing and Tom started to weep. Without having spoken with him beyond the amenities of introducing herself, Ethel observed: 'You have some unfinished business in here with your father, don't you?' Tom nodded his head and began crying heavily. Ethel asked him no questions and made no comments on his abreaction, continuing only with her laying-on of hands. (She gave me a silent, mischievous glance, as though to say: 'Can you top that, Mr. Psychiatrist?') After about fifteen minutes, when he stopped crying, she said, 'Now that's fine. Just take in love and healing to replace whatever you've released.' In another fifteen minutes she declared the healing complete.

I was amazed upon re-examining Tom to find that the lump had shrunk by a centimetre, was soft, freely mobile and non-tender. I was very grateful that another doctor was present and that we had both measured the lesion before and after the healing, agreeing on its description. Otherwise I am certain I would have allowed 'retrocognitive dissonance' to convince me I must have mismeasured the lesion or misremembered its size and other aspects. A lump like that under a young man's nipple simply cannot, under conventional treatment, change so markedly in only thirty minutes.

This was the start of my study of healing, which has continued over the past fourteen years. I have carefully reviewed the literature on healing, have studied the work of many healers, and have learned

to develop my own healing gifts. I have also taught others to develop theirs. Healing is a gift which, like playing the piano, may be developed with practice. Most health carers have a good measure of this gift, even though many may not be consciously aware of it.

Benefits of Healing

The research published on healing is impressive. In my book, *Healing Research: Holistic Energy Medicine and Spirituality*, I have identified 157 controlled studies of healing on humans, animals, plants, bacteria, yeasts, cells in the laboratory, enzymes and more. A dozen are MA and PhD dissertations, mostly from the USA. Most were published in journals of parapsychology, because conventional scientific journals refused until the past few years to publish articles on healing. More than half of these demonstrate statistically significant effects.

My research shows that healing is effective in alleviating many problems. Pain is one of the symptoms most commonly reported to respond to healing. In fact, many healers discover their gifts when they place a hand on another person to express their caring and compassion, and this person reports that their pain disappeared. Oddly, pain may temporarily increase at the start of healing treatments, before the pain is alleviated with continued treatments.

Research shows that healing can alleviate the pain of headaches, backaches and tooth extraction, though it may not be as effective as standard postoperative pain medications in pain relief. Pain is an extremely complex symptom, with numerous mechanisms for its generation.

These include mechanical, chemical and thermal insults, neurological disorders, environmental stress, emotional anxieties, and more. Perception of pain and its tolerance are likewise most complex. My personal impression is that healing acts upon pain through multiple mechanisms, from physical, to emotional, mental and energy fields. We must also be aware that there may be motivational reasons for allowing pain to develop and continue, as it is one of the greatest stimulators and teachers for personal growth, not to mention a powerful motivator for social interactions such as generating demonstrations of concern and releasing a person from demanding situations.

Anxiety is also alleviated by healing. This in itself is a blessing, whether the anxiety is secondary to the illness or contributing to its aetiology. Clinical reports frequently mention that when healing is given, healees visibly relax, flush, and may even become drowsy.

With relaxation, some or all of the mechanisms of self-healing inherent in psychoneuroimmunology may be activated. These include alterations in nervous system tension levels, hormones, white blood cell and immune globulin levels and potencies, and more. One may hypothesise that healing adds directly to these self-healing mechanisms, though this has yet to be established. A start in clarifying this question has been made with the studies of allobiofeedback, which demonstrate with a very high degree of statistical significance that healers may alter electrodermal activity of healees. In this research model, the healer is given the electrodermal readings of the subject s/he is working on from a distance to influence.

Electrodermal activity reflects the tension levels in the autonomic nervous system and is generally accepted as a rough correlate of emotional anxiety and physical tension. (The lie detector test is based on this.) The studies of allobiofeedback confirm that healers may relax healees even where healees are unaware of when this is happening, since healer and healee are in different rooms.

Healing improves healees' attitudes to their illnesses. Surveys of healees universally demonstrate that the majority feel healing was of benefit, even when objective findings do not change. Healing also enhances the reparative activities of the body. Studies show that healing can accelerate wound healing in mice and humans. The fact that these studies, as well as one on anxiety, were done with the healer's hands near but not on the body supports the claims of many healers that they treat through interactions with an energy field around the body.

Another benefit of healing is enhanced recuperation from cardiac decompensation. A 1988 American study of hospitalised cardiac patients showed that with prayer healing sent from a distance the patients had significantly fewer cardiopulmonary arrests, required fewer intubations and less antibiotics and diuretics. This study is also significant for having been published in the respected *Southern Medical Journal*.

Space does not permit a more detailed summary, but suffice it to say that if healing were a medication, the evidence for its efficacy would enable it to be on the market. This is all the more so in consideration of its safety. There are no known negative effects of healing.

Clinical Applications of Healing

The clinical applications of healing are as broad as the ills known to humanity and other living things. There appears to be no disease or dis-ease for which there has been no report of benefits from healing.

Response to treatment is completely unpredictable, a characteristic of healing which it is difficult for conventional medicine to accept. A person might show no response at all in one instance to a given healer, but respond with dramatic relief a week later with the same or a different healer. People who have the same problems, by conventional diagnosis, may respond completely differently to healing, by the same or by different healers. Because healers are rarely trained in medical diagnosis or research, and because few conventional medical practitioners have investigated healing, these and many other aspects of healing remain to be clarified.

Healing may produce effects at physical, emotional, mental, relational and spiritual levels. Conventional medicine heavily emphasises the physical and therefore discounts many of the benefits of healing. Most healers feel that the physical is only an expression of the other levels, which are of greater importance. A person's emotional and spiritual growth are of greater significance than their physical condition. There is therefore a gap, at times an existential chasm, between spiritual healers and conventional practitioners.

In my own practice of psychotherapy combined with healing, I find that each complements the other and that the two in combination are far more effective than either alone. Healing markedly reduces

anxieties which clients bring to therapy or which are aroused during the course of therapy. It is particularly effective at reducing what I term meta-emotions, the fretting and worrying *about* worries. This is when people say, 'I can't take this stress any more. I'm going crazy!' or 'I'll never get out of this black hole of depression.' Healing generates a more rapid and deeper rapport between therapist and client. It brings with it an awareness in the therapist that the client is teaching her or him just as much as the therapist is helping the client. It introduces to the therapy love in its highest forms, a love which encompasses compassion, empathy, unconditional acceptance, forgiveness, self-healing, and an awareness that something greater than ourselves loves and accepts us unconditionally.

Healing introduces spiritual awakenings to the therapy. These are potent, as they come with an immediate awareness, not merely as suggestions from the therapist *about spirituality* which then must be assimilated intellectually and hopefully arouse more immediate awareness in a secondary fashion. These broaden the perspectives of therapist and client, making the healing of themselves a part of a healing of the All.

Healing unto death is also a healing. This is a major contribution to western therapeutic approaches, which tend to be death-denying and death-avoiding. Healing introduces spiritual perspectives which are enormously helpful in bereavement. Conversely, psychotherapy complements healing. When healing spontaneously releases old, buried emotional hurts, therapy can help people to understand the hurt, how they coped with

it in the best way they could (often having to bury it in repressed memories for survival), and how they can now deal with it more effectively. Suggestion plus spiritual healing is more effective than healing alone. Suggestion activates the client's self-healing mechanisms, which are, in turn, enhanced by the healing.

A few quotes to end with which highlight some of the most important aspects of healing:

'... all approaches heal the body in the identical way; the only difference is in how they limit their options.'

Hugh Prather

'The imagination of a man can act not only on his own body but even others and very distant bodies. It can fascinate and modify them; make them ill, or restore them to health.'

Avicenna (980-1037)

'... I have found three factors to be relevant to the therapist's quest for access to the inner resources of love: (1) the attempt to live one's own message; (2) the inspiration of courageous clients; (3) the awareness of one's own mortality.'

Bernie Siegel

Further Reading

S. Krippner and P. Welch, *Spiritual Dimensions of Healing*, Irvington, 1992

Daniel J. Benor, *Healing Research: Holistic Energy Medicine and Spirituality, Volumes I-IV*, Helix, 1993

Daniel J. Benor, *Healing Research Volume 2: Holistic Energy Medicine and the Energy Body*, Helix, 1994

H. Prather, 'What is Healing?' in R. Carlson and B. Shield (eds), *Healers on Healing*, Rider, 1988

Bernie Siegel, 'Love, the Healer', in R. Carlson and B. Shield (eds), *op. cit.*

