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INTRODUCTION

Jenny was sixty-five when we met. She had broken her hip three times in her life, always in the same place and always because of an accident. The first time she fell off a horse, the second time was in a car crash, and the third time she fell down a flight of stairs. The accidents were many years apart.

The first time Jenny broke her hip was two weeks after her fiancé had died, when she was twenty-one. She never married after this, but went to live with her parents. When she was forty-five, her mother died; a few weeks later Jenny had a car crash and broke her hip again. When she was fifty-seven, her father died, and a few weeks later she fell down the stairs and broke her hip yet again. Each time she broke her hip, the person upon whom she was most emotionally dependent had died.

With each death she transferred her dependency to the next person in line—from fiancé to mother to father. When Jenny, who was now having to use a walking stick to get around, realized this pattern and the emotional relationship to her accidents, she vowed

to take herself off on a solitary retreat to: “Find out who I am so I can walk by myself for once.”

It is people like Jenny who have made me so grateful to be doing this work, to witness their courage, strength, and ability to look within themselves for the answers to their dilemmas. But to be able to do this work has also meant that I’ve had to go on my own journey of personal work, for I have always believed that we cannot help anyone else any further than we have gone ourselves.

I was introduced to meditation when I was only fifteen. We lived in London, and it was during the school vacation. My mother wanted to go on a meditation retreat for three days. She did not trust leaving me on my own as I was a fairly wild teenager and my older siblings were all busy elsewhere. As I had already met some of the people who would be at the retreat, I reluctantly agreed to go with her—I reckoned I could survive three days. However, the outcome was that she stayed three days and I stayed ten. I don’t remember any of the teachings, but I do remember the meditation, the merging into the quiet, the stillness. And I loved it.

By the time I was twenty-one I was teaching meditation. It had become my way of life, my focus, and my healer. I had had a difficult childhood, with an emotionally abusive father. My parents were divorced when I was six, and I was in boarding school from age eight. Consequently, I was carrying a lot of old, repressed anger. Through meditation I came face to face with those lost feelings. I also connected with a sense of myself that was deeper than the anger. Eventually, I was able to observe my feelings without identifying with them. This enabled me to heal an enormous amount of the pain and confusion.

Meditation also led me in different directions. For three years I immersed myself in Jungian psychology by joining a Jungian dream-therapy group, studying and encountering the archetypes and unconscious. It awoke a deep awareness of the human experience. I went on to study rebirthing, massage, reflexology, and bioenergetics. This was the late 1970s in London, an exciting time of exploration and personal development, and I did it all.

Eventually I came to the Metamorphic Technique, a treatment that had evolved out of reflexology but approached the reflex points from a very different perspective. Metamorphosis suggests that the spinal reflexes mapped on the foot are not only the reflexes for the spine but also reflect the nine-month time period of gestation from conception to birth. By working with this understanding on these reflexes, a level of change in our inherent patterns of health and behavior can be affected. The creator of this work, the late Robert St. John, also explored other relationships between the physical and the non-physical, and here I discovered a way of looking at the body that expanded my thinking and awoke my intuition.

In 1982 I wrote *The Metamorphic Technique* with Gaston Saint Pierre, the founder of the Metamorphic Association. As that book was finished I knew that one chapter within it was going to take me even farther. It was the Principle of Correspondences, the relationship between mind, emotion, and spirit, and the cells within the physical body, based on the work of the 18th-century philosopher Emanuel Swedenborg.

Meditation was and still is my sounding board, so I used my quiet times to contemplate this extraordinary bodymind relationship that was unfolding in front of me the deeper I delved. I found that when I was really quiet I could intuitively *feel* what the body was feeling, that I could enter into the body and *hear* what symptoms or illnesses were saying. As I included ancient Chinese acupuncture and the Eastern chakra teachings with personal experiences and those of my clients, my understanding became clearer. I began to see that the mind is reflected in every part of the human body, that through the body we can get in touch with the issues that we have been repressing, denying, or ignoring in the mind.

In 1990 I was ready to put together all the ideas and insights I had accumulated into my first book on this subject, *The Bodymind Workbook*. Within a few years I wanted to go further—to enable the readers to enter into an understanding of their own bodymind, to awaken their own intuition, to learn how to listen to their own bodies. In 1996 I published *Your Body Speaks Your Mind* in England,

where it continues to be a bestseller. Ten years later this updated version brings together an even greater awareness of this remarkable bodymind in which we live. However, most of the Western world is not exactly in agreement with me.

Human beings are extremely good at inventing unbelievably complicated pieces of technology and stunningly beautiful designs, at understanding detailed scientific theories, or producing majestic musical compositions. As a race we have developed, and continue to develop, our mental and creative capacities beyond every limitation. But there is one area where our understanding falters. This is in relation to ourselves and in particular to our own bodies. Although we can tour outer space and surmise how the universe began, we are unable to agree on how the body works. A great number of different approaches to understanding the body have developed over the last few thousand years, each totally valid on its own yet differing vastly from the others.

In the West most people believe that the body is a thing: a machine that needs to be fueled (with food and water) and exercised in the hope that this will stop it from going wrong. We greatly enjoy the pleasure the body gives and work hard to keep it looking good. If something in this machine goes wrong then it can usually be mechanically repaired. Difficulties are cured with surgery, radiation, or drugs—the offending part is cut out or eliminated with chemicals—and life goes on as before. In this context, modern Western medicine has worked wonders. It is extraordinary when we consider the breakthroughs that have occurred: the development of antibiotics and vaccinations, laser surgery, and organ transplants, to name but a few. Medical science has saved millions of lives and dramatically reduced suffering. Modern understanding of the body machine and the ways in which it can go wrong is undeniably impressive.

However, this approach does not always work. Sometimes the side effects of drugs cause worse complications. Other difficulties may emerge even if the original cause is cured. Or the problem might go beyond the bounds of medicine; there may simply be no available cure. For instance, illnesses related to stress are numerous,

and their incidence is rapidly rising. Maladies directly caused by stress include migraine headaches, irritable bowel syndrome, muscle tension, and chronic fatigue, to name but a few. Modern medicine does not have a cure for stress, and, as it does not acknowledge the influence of a patient's mental or emotional state on their physical well-being, no medical cures are available. Yet up to 70 percent of patient visits to the doctor are for stress-related illnesses.

In Hippocrates' day a physician took into account not just the physical symptoms but also the climate, race, sex, living conditions, and social and political environment of the patient. However, in the seventeenth century, René Descartes posited that the mind and body operate separately with no interconnection, thus rendering the body to the status of a machine, something that could be fixed by mechanical means. Western medicine was developed on the basis of this idea. But such a mechanistic approach left us with a void in our relationship with our bodies. As much as we may be able to apply corrective procedures to repair many of the things that go wrong, it is without a sense of living inside this machine or of any connection to the energy that makes it work.

In the East, particularly in China and Japan, we find a very different approach. Far from seeing the body as a machine, people view it as an energy system. This understanding is far older than the Western model—it dates back at least 5,000 years—and has proved to be extremely effective in curing illness and disease. Eastern medicine is based on detailed maps of energy, the *meridians*, that flow through the body. These maps chart the type of energy flow as well as where and how to access it. Each patient is also diagnosed according to the elements: earth, water, wood, metal, and air. Each element is seen as relating to specific functions in the body and when out of balance can manifest as symptoms. Illness is recognized as an imbalance or blockage in the flow of energy caused by poor habits, stress, or negative emotions. Balance is therefore sought through adjusting the energy flow.

While Western medicine sees the patient as a machine, acupuncture (and related healing methods) sees the patient as an energy system that is alive and constantly changing. Rather than pointing

the finger at outside *causes* when something goes wrong, they look to outside *influences* and the circumstances of the patient's life, mindset, and feelings, and at how it all interacts. In *The Web That Has No Weaver*, Ted Kaptchuk highlights this difference when he explains that a Western doctor will ask, "What X is *causing* Y?" while the acupuncturist will ask, "What is the *relationship* between X and Y?"

There are also cultural and religious factors that help to explain the development of the Western approach to medicine. In early Christianity the body was seen as something that threatened one's moral virtue. Lust and desire were unacceptable and to be repressed. There are wonderful descriptions of the early missionaries who went to persuade the "wild and sinful" people of Hawaii that they needed to be saved. In the blistering heat of the tropics the missionaries preferred to stay dressed in layers of dark wool clothing rather than expose their bodies to the sun and run the risk of exciting their lust. Surrounded by the brown and laughing Hawaiians, happily naked or barely clothed, many of these missionaries died from the heat and bacteria generated beneath their garments.

For hundreds of years the Church was believed to own man's soul, while doctors simply looked after the body. This differs from the traditional Native American culture, where there is no separation of mind and form, and a doctor is seen as a doctor of the soul as well as of the physical body. Although he or she may have no formal medical training, the shaman or witchdoctor learns how to interpret everyday events as well as the "other world" in order to understand the specific causes of illnesses.

In other cultures the body is revered as the vehicle through which we are able to develop beyond our personal limitations. In both Buddhism and Hinduism great value is placed on the preciousness of human life in the belief that it is only in a human form that we can achieve true spiritual fulfillment. Sickness is seen as being both of the mind and of the body, for ultimately both mind and body are limited, impermanent, and temporary. The medicine the Buddha offered, therefore, is that which leads to complete freedom, beyond the bounds of the physical.

Into this picture of the body—as just a machine or as a vehicle for enlightenment—comes another dimension. The last few years have seen a growing recognition of the direct relationship between the mind and the body with the emergence of a field now known as psychoneuroimmunology. This new understanding does not deny the organic causes of illness—such as germs, bacteria, or microorganisms—or that some illnesses are genetically inherited. At the same time, we all know that not everyone in the office falls sick when “the flu is doing the rounds,” and that a disease does not have the same effect on every afflicted person.

It appears that our emotional and psychological states do greatly influence the onset and passage of illness, as well as our ability to heal. “Medicine is beginning to see that the origin of disease cannot be spoken of without including lifestyle, diet, social milieu, the environment, and, perhaps most interestingly, consciousness and the emotions,” writes Marc Ian Barasch in *The Healing Path*.

Back in the 1970s and 1980s it felt like I was discovering all these different pieces of a jigsaw puzzle that, when put together, created an extraordinary map of the physical body, with this other underlying map of the psyche and emotions. Since that time there has been an explosion of understanding of the bodymind relationship. No longer are people like myself regarded as oddities; even conventional medicine is beginning to concur that the mind plays an important role in the health of the whole. Perhaps the greatest contribution has been made by the scientific and medical community, through such people as Dr. Candace Pert and Dr. Andrew Weil. Dr. Pert first discovered and scientifically proved the role of neuropeptides, which has transformed our understanding of how the mind directly affects the body. And Dr. Andrew Weil has made integrative medicine—which takes into account the whole person, not just the symptoms—completely mainstream through his books and medical practice.

Because of these changes in our understanding, it felt appropriate and timely to update this book. My aim is to enable you to read this map—your own bodymind—for yourself. The enclosed CD contains two different visualization practices to help you with

the process. The two practices—“Talking with Your Body” and “Bodymind Appreciation”—enable you to develop a deeper relationship with yourself, so that your body is no longer a stranger but becomes a treasured and trusted friend.

I sincerely hope you discover the same excitement that I have found as you explore your bodymind. In understanding the interconnectedness of the many aspects of your own being, the interconnectedness between all beings—between all life—becomes clearer. Our world is built upon this interconnection, relationship, and communication. May this understanding bring you health and happiness!

—DEB SHAPIRO
Boulder, Colorado
2005

PART ONE

FINDING MEANING IN THE
MIDST OF CHAOS

ONE

MIND & MATTER UNITE

I want to make something very clear. Illness is real. Accidents happen. Medicine can help. I am not writing this book in order to convince you that the sole reason for your illness is in your mind and that you must have done something wrong or are to blame for being ill. And I am not saying that simply by understanding how the mind and body work together you will be able to miraculously cure yourself of whatever ails you.

What I am saying is that the role of the mind and emotions in your state of health is a vital one. It is only a part of the overall picture, but it is the part that is invariably overlooked. By understanding this relationship you can understand yourself more deeply and can claim a greater role in your own well-being. I remember having an upset stomach when I was a child and my grandmother asking me if I was having a problem at school. What she knew instinctively we are at last beginning to prove scientifically: that there is an intimate and dynamic relationship between what is going on in your life, with your feelings and thoughts, and what happens in

your body. Recently, a *Time* magazine special showed that happiness, hopefulness, optimism, and contentment “appear to reduce the risk or limit the severity of cardiovascular disease, pulmonary disease, diabetes, hypertension, colds, and upper-respiratory infections.” At the same time, according to this article, “depression—the extreme opposite of happiness—can worsen heart disease, diabetes, and a host of other illnesses.”

If we separate an organism into its component parts it cannot function. Each piece has a role to play, even if it is a very small role, so if only one part is malfunctioning it will affect the whole. Recently our car broke down. When we went to pick it up after it was fixed, we were told that it had been just one small wire that had caused the problem, yet the engine could not function properly without it. In the same way, if you ignore the role that your feelings and thoughts play, you are ignoring one of the most important component parts that make up your whole being. And it may be the one that needs to get fixed.

AS YOU THINK SO YOU BECOME

Generally speaking, most of us tend to think of our bodies and minds as separate systems and believe they function, for the most part, independently. We feed and water the body, take it for walks, or give it exercise, and enjoy its sensory capabilities. Likewise, we feed the mind with ideas and intellectual pursuits and amuse it with various sorts of entertainment, while also experiencing all sorts of emotions that we usually attribute to the way we treat ourselves or how other people treat us: making us feel either good or bad. When anything goes wrong in any of these systems we go to someone to sort it out, such as a doctor to treat the body or a psychotherapist to treat the mind.

Yet instinctively we know that is not the whole story. For instance, can you remember the last time you had an interview for a job? Or went on a first date with someone you really wanted to impress? In either case, no doubt you wanted to appear calm and collected but at the same time you were feeling quite self-conscious and nervous. Can you recall how your body felt? Self-consciousness will