Creating Balance
from Natural Body Natural Mind

Bill Tara

The following is excerpted from pages 137 to 139 and 142 to 144 of Bill Tara’s excellent new book Natural Body Natural Mind: Health, Ecology, and the Human Spirit. – Ed.

HEALTH AND HEALING

My intention in writing this book was to focus on the implications of creating a healthy life rather than on the details of treating sickness. I hope that I have done that, but do want to comment briefly on the use of macrobiotics as a way of healing specific illnesses. There are many books that cover that topic, and some are mentioned in the reference guide at the end of the book.

Creating health is a reflection of the value that we place on our lives. It is primarily a deeply personal choice. It does not require the assistance of a professional because it simply entails a firm commitment to change. This commitment is not a rejection of assistance, but assistance is only as powerful as our personal resolve allows. There are many problems that we may not have the skill to reverse or treat. There are ways of being that can maximize our health potential, and there are problems that lie beyond our personal ability.

The macrobiotic approach to health involves creating balance in all aspects of our lives. Diet and also some of the practices outlined in the next chapter are self-generated techniques that can be integrated with no supervision. They are things we can do on our own, and they can have profound effect on our well-being. How we understand the value of these actions is important.

At the foundation of macrobiotic living is the principle that much of the sickness we experience is a result of the way we eat and live our lives. There is an assumption that healthy actions nourish, strengthen, and enliven us. These actions reduce the incidence of disease, prolong life, and give us increased resources to heal ourselves when sickness arises. It is not a way of cheating death, avoiding age, or completely escaping from sickness. Death, aging, and illness are all part of the human condition. Living a healthy life simply means living to our full potential.

This is based on the understanding that when the body has suffered the abuse of unhealthy living, we are more apt to experience illness and less capable of enjoying our life. When the offending features of that neglect are removed and replaced by healthy influences, the body knows what to do. The body is a self-healing organism, and if given the right resources, it will do what it is designed to do—create as healthy a state of being as possible. It is the body that does the work; we are just making the work feasible.

I have seen thousands of people who have managed to recover their health through the most simple of methods.
Many have reversed the symptoms of cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and other potentially fatal illnesses. Even more people have cured themselves of less serious illness such as chronic headaches, digestive problems, sexual impotence, and a wide range of physical and emotional disorders. Their stories are an inspiration and demonstrate how powerful eating well and living well can affect our lives. There are also some that do not succeed. These stories need to be reflected upon as lessons that lead us to an even more effective understanding of health and healing.

The reasons for this variety of response are not a total mystery. The success of healing through natural self-generated means is dependent on several elements; strength of the individual, progression of any illness that may be present, the cause of the illness, diligence of practice, and attitude. Favorable outcomes are generally dependent on the relative strengths or weaknesses in these areas. A major problem lies in the fact that it is difficult to assess these in any consistent way.

I have seen people who have had enormous challenges overcome them and live healthy and vigorous lives. I have also observed those who struggled with seemingly lesser problems and were unable to gain the success they desired. Our approach should be based on common sense, compassion and the willingness to use all the resources available.

The stage of progression of a particular illness is often a great challenge. Many individuals only seek help with macrobiotics or any other natural approach to healing when conventional methods have failed. What should have been the first choice becomes the last resort. I say this not out of a fear or lack of respect for conventional treatment but simply because our cultural approach to healing is dominated by fear of sickness and a corresponding aggressive approach to symptoms by conventional medicine. In cases of accidental injury, traumatic wounds, serious acute symptoms, or a late diagnosis for a virulent disease, conventional treatment is a sensible choice. It is always possible to establish improved health after an operation or even drug treatment or chemotherapy. Most illnesses do not fall into this category.

Other than living a healthy life before being sick, the first approach to illness should be adjustments to lifestyle. If solutions such as dietary changes, exercise, and stress reduction were promoted with the same energy as medications and surgery, the human and social cost of illness would plummet. We will know when the medical profession is serious about health care as opposed to sickness service when there are cooking schools, yoga studios, and meditation classes in every hospital. These services are inexpensive, effective, and do not require college degrees or medical credentials.

If the problems are more serious, it may be necessary to visit an experienced health counselor to help design dietary and lifestyle recommendations that fit personal needs. This person can also recommend other helpers such as cooking teachers, masseurs, physical therapists, movement or exercise teachers, or stress reduction coaches that can tailor programs for individual needs. The great advantage of these simple techniques is that results can usually be measured in a matter of weeks if not several months. If significant progress is not being made and the symptoms are not dangerous, there is another step before medical treatment.

Acupuncturists, herbalists, and a wider range of health professionals are available to provide specific prescriptive advice and services. These therapies are noninvasive or minimally invasive using natural compounds and generally more sophisticated in their treatment. It is by starting at the most simple and working up that the best results are gained. The first stage allows the person to experience their own ability to manage their life and regulate their health. If progression of the illness has not been curtailed and there are no signs of overall improvement, that is when medical treatment becomes a practical option.

Medical treatment should not be seen as a failure for those following a natural way of life. Using natural approaches to healing teaches us about ourselves and can enhance our life experience, but when it becomes a moral imperative, it often leads to delusional thinking. There is no probable honor in dying or suffering to prove a point. Every problem cannot be solved by diet alone or by any technique, including conventional medicine. It is our choice if we wish to allow our sickness to be a teacher or to pass responsibility for our health to someone else.

Creating Balance

The issue of balance is always present in any discussion of health; the question is, what is being balanced? Obviously, the internal balance of our body and mind is of primary concern. In science, this process of balance is known as homeostasis. Homeostasis is the ability to regulate the internal environment of the body so as to maintain a stable, constant condition. The chemical environ-
ment of the body must be kept within certain parameters in order for us to be in good health. This state of balance is of course relative to a number of factors including adaptation to our environment, our activity levels, and other factors that have to do with challenges of nutrition and condition of our organs. This is why a sensible amount of experimentation is wise for the person in general good health to locate their zone of personal balance.

Sensitivity is of vital importance in the process of finding balance. The healthy dietary guidelines outlined here are designed to increase sensitivity. After a period of several months, most people will experience a greater ability to distinguish the effects of different foods on their system. As the body becomes used to new foods and a new pattern of eating, it is common to begin to crave the foods you need with an increased sense of awareness. This is the goal—discover by yourself what serves you best. If cravings occur for foods you know are not the best quality, simply choose a replacement, or try the food you crave in small amounts. I suggest that during your initial period of biological education you avoid using dietary supplements of any kind. Taking concentrated nutrients can give you a false picture of what is really going on in your body. If you decide to use any supplemental products after that time make sure they are bio-available and made from plant based organic products. Many vitamin products sold do not digest and simply pass through the system.

An imbalance in our ability to maintain biological integrity can be medically measured by testing the blood or organ function, but this loss of integrity is also perceptible to the individual. We experience these chemical imbalances through the way we feel and by our behavior. Our consciousness can give us the capacity to know when we have moved out of balance if we have some simple criteria to judge by. The usual classification of symptoms of imbalance into yin and yang categories can provide a useful system for understanding personal balance.

The expansive and contractive influences of yin and yang in the body provide the rhythm and harmony of all physical, emotional, and spiritual states. We must breathe in to breathe out, blood has to make its journey to nourish the extremities before returning to the center to discharge toxins and be reconstituted, we need to take in information before processing it as thought, we need inspiration in order to create. This constant flux of energy is the source of our being and shows its presence in every movement of nature.

**IMBALANCES IN YIN ENERGY**

Behavioral indications of a yin individual may range from a healthy state to an unbalanced state of being. A healthy yin state could be described as friendly, compassionate, humble, accommodating, or shy. These are pleasant attributes and define a more trusting and tolerant nature. Even though these characteristics reflect a yin quality, they are not disruptive or troubling to the individual or to those around them. It is a nurturing and aesthetic energy more drawn to thought than action. We need both yin and yang to survive.

---

"The expansive and contractive influences of yin and yang in the body provide the rhythm and harmony of all physical, emotional, and spiritual states."

---

Discover what millions of men, women, and children around the world have found – the macrobiotic path to “Infinite freedom, absolute justice, and eternal happiness.”

**Back in Print**

by popular demand

$15.95 plus $2.50 shipping = $18.45

*Essential Ohsawa* is the most comprehensive look at Ohsawa’s philosophy ever presented. In it, you will learn the essence of Ohsawa’s teachings – the need for and methods of simple, natural eating and drinking; and the concepts of the Order of the Universe and yin and yang.

George Ohsawa
Macrobiotic Foundation

PO Box 3998
Chico, CA 95927
800-232-2372 or 530-566-9765
530-566-9768 fax

foundation@gomf.macrobiotic.net

MACROBIOTICS TODAY ● May/June 2009 7
If the energy of yin is imbalanced, different qualities express themselves. An imbalance of yin is expressed by passivity, lazy, self-pitying, unmotivated, suspicious, fearful, or introverted behavior. The natural receptive qualities of yin become distorted and sink within.

When yin is in a state of imbalance, certain physical symptoms may occur as well. Weight gain in the lower body, swelling of the joints, inflammation, loss of muscle tone, sleepiness, allergies, chronic diarrhea, clear urine, or lack of libido. These are indications of a loosening of the integrity of the body. They are signs that the expansive yin has lost its balance with yang. This is not a medical diagnosis, these are indicators that the body is in a state of imbalance and needs to be pulled back into a more balanced state. They are easily recognized signs that allow us to correct our course.

**IMBALANCES IN YANG ENERGY**

The positive qualities of yang are expressed in behavior as being positive, enthusiastic, practical, solution oriented, outgoing, physically active, alert, and self-sufficient. Healthy yang responds with enthusiasm to challenge.

When yang energy is not balanced, it produces tension, rigidity, the desire to dominate or control, lack of humor, material selfishness, and the potential for anger and aggression. The natural desire to create and be an agent of change becomes immersed in greed or contempt for others.

There are often physical symptoms that accompany this imbalance, such as rigidity of muscles and joints, hardening of skin, constipation or hard stools, dark urine, and redness of complexion. The expressive vitality of yang has not been tempered with yin.

**HARMONIZING ENERGY**

Making balance with yin and yang is simple. It involves stimulating that which is flaccid, warming that which is cold, relaxing that which is tense, and nourishing that which is deficient. Certain foods, emotions, and activities can assist in this process. We all know this. When we are tired, we want to sleep; when we are hot, we want to cool down; when we are stressed, we want to relax. The question is, what do we use to achieve equilibrium, are we conscious of the adjustment, and what are the long-term effects?

If we wish to establish a diet that creates improved health, it is first important to make a transition from the modern diet and create a new foundation to build on. This change in direction is important, and the principles are easy. The healthy diet outlined below conforms to the general description of healthy diets in the Mediterranean, Asian, and North American regions as well as basic macrobiotic principles.

(Editors note, Chapter continues with diet recommendations based on establishing the center of diet with cereal grains, using a variety of vegetables, eating suitable proteins, and consuming fruits, seeds, nuts, sea vegetables, and other food as one deems appropriate.)

Bill Tara has been active in macrobiotics for the past 40 years as a teacher, counselor, author, and entrepreneur. He has given seminars in over 20 countries on the macrobiotic way of life, is the co-founder of the Kushi Institute, and founder of the Community Health Foundation in London, England. He now lives in Southern Portugal and is on the teaching staff of the Instituto Macrobiotico Portugal in Lisbon with his wife Marlene. He can be scheduled for seminars at Macrobiotics For Modern Times: www.billtara.net.