

12 Steps: how to tap into the healing power of your mind

By Bev Silvester-Clark RN, Dip Counselling, Dip Psychotherapy

Years ago while I was the Charge Nurse of the Oncology Unit in Auckland I became deeply troubled by two questions:

Why do some people do so well despite a very bad prognosis?

Why do others do so poorly despite a good prognosis?

Unknown to me Deepak Chopra, the famous mind-body physician, was asking the same questions at the same time!

I listened deeply to patients as they shared their experiences with me and gradually it dawned on me that what was happening for people mentally, emotionally and spiritually had a great deal to do with their journey with cancer. There were huge resources we health professionals were not attending to in our search for the cure for cancer.

One day I was sitting with a man who was dying. He looked me in the eye and said “Bev, don’t get to the end of your life and realise you haven’t done what you knew you should have done with it”.

That challenge launched me on a long search of more than 25 years, away from a secure career path, looking for how to help people to access the power of their mind and spirit to support their healing.

Today, as a registered nurse in private practice, I encourage and facilitate my clients to explore the following ideas or concepts.

1. Satisfy yourself that a mind-body approach is scientifically sound

We have more than 30 years of solid research that confirms that the mind and body are a single unit; that whatever is going on in the mind influences the body and the body is influencing the mind. They are two faces of the same coin. In the early 1980’s the scientific discipline of psychoneuroimmunology (the science of mind-body) began.

Reading *The Molecules of Emotion* by Candace Pert, and *The Biology of Belief* by Bruce Lipton, would be a good place to start. Both authors are main stream scientists who are making solid science accessible. This understanding will inspire you to put it into practice.

2. Learn how to relax

Why? The immune system, the great healer and protector of the body, thrives in the presence of the relaxation response, and closes down in the presence of the stress response. This is the simple explanation as to why our modern stress filled lives are compromising our health.

3. Learn how to breathe

Of course we all know how to breathe, but there are quite harmful ways to do it. You may have noticed that the more anxious you are the faster and shallower you breathe, high up in the chest. The higher in the chest you breathe, the more you unconsciously activate the stress response. The lower down in the chest you breathe the more you activate the relaxation response. So, establish the habit of belly breathing. If you don’t know how look at www.authentic-breathing.com/belly_breathing.htm .

4. Learn how to meditate

We have much evidence that meditation has a profoundly positive effect on health and well-being. With modern day brain scanning techniques we can see changes in both activity and structure in the brain that correlate with health and peace of mind.

5. Learn to live in the present

All the wisdom traditions say the same thing. Now is the only moment we have and now is where healing takes place. Regretting or pining for the past, or fearing or hoping for the future takes us out of this precious present moment. Being in the present means living mindfully and consciously, rather than going along on automatic pilot. Meditation is the most effective method of learning to live mindfully and consciously.

6. Conduct a careful life style review – exercise, nutrition and stress patterns

Someone once said that if exercise could be put into a pill it would be the most widely prescribed and most beneficial medication of all time. There is no health issue that exercise doesn't help. This is definitely so with cancer. What we eat is of equal importance. A careful evaluation of sources of stress is also vital.

7. Consciously build close and loving relationships in your life: with people, pets and all aspects of nature. One of the most commonly reported changes in people who have made remarkable recoveries is their greater sense of relationship with a spiritual dimension.

8. Learn to use your imagination to talk to your body

The brain does not know the difference between something imagined and something actually happening. If you stop now and carefully imagine yourself slicing and eating a lemon you will find yourself starting to salivate. The brain instantly sends instructions out into your body to prepare to eat a lemon. Sometimes called visualisation, mental imagery is a language that the body understands. It allows you to talk to it, and especially, to encourage and support your immune system in its vital work.

9. Make friends with your feelings

Feelings are the power house of healing. We have much evidence now that keeping distress, grief and other uncomfortable emotions locked away inside is bad for health. Research also shows us that pleasure, fun and laughter are profoundly good for our health. A good laugh improves the strength of your immune system and reduces stress hormones. Self medicate frequently on laughter, fun, and intimacy. Your immune system loves that. Also seek out opportunities to attend to painful unresolved emotional issues that you know are sitting inside you. This is profoundly important for healing.

10. Understand the power of your unconscious belief system

“Be positive,” is a term that is bandied around with little understanding. The most important part of your mind to get positive is your unconscious, not your conscious mind. The unconscious is a vast accumulation of life experience. From this experience we construct a complex array of beliefs. These beliefs then run your life. So, are you confident that, deep in your unconscious, you have beliefs that support your right to live, to be well, to be loved, to be happy, to be fulfilled, to have peace of mind? If not, then it is vital to get help to look into that.

11. Have a clear sense of purpose for your life

Viktor Frankl, psychiatrist and holocaust survivor, observed that those who were able to find meaning in their experience, and hold a clear purpose, had a far better chance of surviving the horrors of the concentration camps. Studies looking at people who have recovered from cancer show the same to be true.

So, think deeply about what gives real meaning to your life. What inspires you? What are you passionate about? It is not enough to just want to be well. It is not helpful to just want to get your old life back. Sit deeply with the question “What am I becoming? What am I creating in my life?”

12. Celebrate your one magnificent life!

Be passionate! Be passionately committed to yourself, your life, your loves, your desires, your hopes, your dreams.

Feel free to visit Bev’s websites if you would like to know more:

www.creatinghealthinternational.org

www.freeyourlife.co.nz