

# Choosing to Heal

By Wanda Buckner

Sally was sure she couldn't be helped. She came to my Healing Energy Services office because a friend suggested it, not because she thought anything could be done. She matter-of-factly told me about her on-the-job injury and the resulting pains and limitations. She recounted the doctors she'd seen and the therapies she'd tried. She was on Workers' Compensation and planned to apply for Social Security Disability Insurance.

I asked Sally if she liked her job. No. Was it stressful? Yes. Did she want to work again? Sally paused. For a long time. If Sally did not want to return to work, she would not recover. Her body would support her desire and remain compromised.

When Sally weighed the pros and cons of recovering and returning to work against being painful and limited in her activities for the rest of her life, she chose to recover. Sally healed physically, mentally and emotionally and returned to her job. She finished thirty years with the company and retired with a healthy body and full benefits.

At sixty-four, my mother experienced debilitating angina. The pain was excruciating. It doubled her over and took her breath away. Mom's primary physician sent her to a specialist. However, he could not find a cause for her intense, seemingly random, gut-wrenching pain. Mom would have to live with it. She gave up driving; she was afraid she would be gripped with pain, have an accident and kill herself, or worse yet, someone else. She quit going shopping, eating out and visiting friends. She refused to leave the house for fear of suddenly convulsing in agony. I bought Mom stamps and stationery, accepting that she would be a shut-in for the remainder of her life.

Between the pain and the isolation, Mom felt life wasn't worth living. She decided she'd either find the answer or she'd die. Mom made an appointment at an out-of-state, highly respected, heart diagnostic center. A cardiac catheterization showed a small anomaly on her heart, a protrusion that sometimes occurred on the hearts of alcoholics. However, this anomaly was not enough to explain her pain and Mom had no history of drinking. Despite her effort, time and expense, nothing was solved.

Assured by the cardiologist that the pain was not about her heart, Mom looked for other causes. The pain was slowly killing her—it robbed her of her appetite, her energy, her zest for life. Could it really

be heartburn as others had suggested? Mom systematically eliminated foods from her diet. Within a month, she had her answer. The culprit was tea! The health questionnaires Mom filled out asked how many cups of coffee did she drink a day, how many cigarettes did she smoke, how many alcoholic drinks did she have? The answers to these was none. No one asked about tea.

Mom found out she was so sensitive to caffeine that even the smallest amount triggered severe angina. Her discovery also explained her sensitivity to many prescriptions and over-the-counter medications—the often unlisted ingredient, caffeine. After Mom gave up tea and everything else that might have caffeine in it, she lived angina free another thirty years.

### **Giving away or keeping our power**

Too often we give our power to a doctor, a naturopath, a shaman, a healer, a guru. The power to heal lies within ourselves. This is well illustrated in a reading I did for Leona about other lives she and her cat, Princess Daisy, shared. At the time of the reading, Leona was experiencing vague symptoms that depleted her energy and compromised her well-being to the point she could hardly work.

Princess Daisy recounted this life and its lessons to Leona.

I am a cat. An extraordinary white cat. I am unbelievably beautiful and pure. And I am an Oracle. Leona is the keeper of the Oracle. I don't mind life revolving around me at all. I rather like it. It's sort of a reversal. Wisdom flows through me. People come to me to hear the truth. Some come with very specific questions. Some come with more profound questions, but oftentimes I tell you, they have given away their power. The answers lie within themselves and they have given that power to me to give them answers for their lives. I do not ask for that power, but when they come to me, I give them what they ask.

The lesson of this life is not to give away your power. Leona already knows this. The answers do not lie outside of her; they lie within her. It is still good that she asks [doctors and other healers] about her condition, because each question gives more information. But you cannot gather leaves and make a tree. You have to plant the seed to make a tree. The seed is within her and it will grow. It is not outside of herself. The power is within.

Princess Daisy is right—no one can heal us but ourselves. We need the knowledge, expertise, and experience of medical and complementary providers to support our healing. But in the end, it is us who must decide to heal.

Sheldon told me he had tried everything for his incapacitating pain; he hoped hypnotherapy might help. It was increasingly difficult for him to meet clients at the work site; at times he could walk. According to his doctor, his prognosis was grim and inevitable—due to a progressive nerve disease he would experience a slow degradation of his ability to control his body leading to complete disability. The only question was whether the disease would progress swiftly or slowly.

I asked Sheldon if a physical test confirmed this diagnosis. He said, “No.” The determination was based on a process of elimination considering his symptoms and his genetic heritage. As Sheldon described his attacks and when they occurred, I listened for patterns. I asked him to consider the possibility that there might be another, simpler, explanation for his symptoms. He often experienced attacks on Monday mornings. I noted that he dressed more formally during the week, including a belt and loafers. I asked Sheldon to stop wearing a belt and see what happened. I also suggested he call these episodes “incidents” rather than attacks. The new language minimized the importance of his symptoms. After only three sessions of hypnosis, Sheldon gained control of the length and severity of his incidents. Using a keyword and light touch to the affected area, he could dissolve the pain. Some months after our last session, Sheldon wrote, “I just had to tell you, I haven’t had any more incidents!”

Physicist and mathematician Stephen Hawking has a progressive motor neuron (ALS: Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, or Lou Gehrig’s) disease that has left him almost completely paralyzed. He has a tracheotomy and uses a voice synthesizer to speak. Hawking says he is wholly dependent on other people, but in his mind, he is free (*Stephen Hawking: Does God Exist?* Video. 2012.) Hawking is healed, even though he is not cured.

My friend Maria had cancer for a very long time. She went through agonizing treatments that left her exhausted. Sometimes the cancer was in remission, sometimes it wasn’t. Many times, she thought she would die. Many times, she wished she would die. But she didn’t. Instead, Maria fell in love. When she fell in love and enjoyed living, despite her recurring bouts of illness, she healed. For the remaining months of Maria’s life, she lived fully and loved fully. In the peace and joy of love, she died—healed, but not cured.

### **Cured or healed or both?**

Healing is influenced by the demands of our lives; the support of those we love; our attitude about our situation; and our view of life, death, and life after death. If we believe our lives extend

beyond this realm, death may feel less final and may even be welcome. If we believe we will be punished throughout eternity unless we conform to the requirements of our religion, then our time living will be consumed by fulfilling those demands. If we believe our lives end with our physical bodies, we are pressured by having only one opportunity to get it right. If we believe our illness is a punishment for a deed done in this life or a past life, that is the framework from which we will experience our illness and the framework from which we must be healed.

Elizabeth is waiting to die and has been for some years now. She has outlived her husband, her siblings, and her peers. Her home is comfortable, her family loving, and her care excellent. She has no life-threatening disease. She lives in an adult retirement community with a full program of activities. Her lunch and dinner are provided. Light housekeeping keeps her apartment tidy. When asked if she is happy, she says, “No.” If asked if she’d rather be dead, she says, “Yes.”

Jacqueline, Elizabeth's sister, wrote to tell her how happy she was in her new apartment—there were lots of activities, she didn't have to cook or even make the bed. Jacqueline couldn't believe her good fortune. “How did I get so lucky?” The two sisters are in the same situation, but their outlooks are different. If Elizabeth saw the blessings in her surroundings and the beauty in the details of her day, perhaps she would heal.

The placebo effect is a prime example of self-healing. We swallow a sugar pill and believe we will be healed and we are. The mechanism through which this happens is of great interest to scientists and doctors. A 2008 Harvard placebo study treated volunteers with IBS (irritable bowel syndrome) with sham acupuncture using needles that did not penetrate the skin. Even so, forty-four percent of participants reported relief of their symptoms. When combined with “attentive, empathetic interaction with the acupuncturist,” 62% reported relief. (*Harvard Health Letter*. Harvard Health Publications: Harvard Medical School. April 2012.) Deepak Chopra in *Quantum Healing: Exploring the Frontiers of Mind/Body Medicine*, 1989, reports multiple stories of miraculous healings and the ability of people to self-heal. Dr. Joe Dispenza, in *You are the Placebo*, 2014, discusses and advocates using mind over body to heal. He gives many examples of people who successfully healed using his mind/body techniques.

“The body heals itself. This might seem to be an obvious statement, because we are well aware that wounds heal and cells routinely replace themselves. Nonetheless, this is a profound concept

among CAM systems because self-healing is the basis of all healing.” (Marc S. Micozzi, *Fundamentals of Complementary and Alternative Medicine [CAM]*. 2011.)

### **Choosing healing**

To be cured is to be rid of a specific disease or condition. To be healed is to be at peace with ourselves and the universe. We cannot always be cured, but we can always be healed. A young woman confided to me that her male friend had Stage 4 metastasized cancer. He was doing all the possible medical treatments as well as positive affirmations, meditation, and mental imagery. But the cancer marched on. She asked, “Why isn’t it working?”

If our obsession with being cured blots out everything else, we lose opportunities to live fully in the days we have. Death is inevitable. However, even faced with a life-ending disease, we can heal. We can use the days to review our life, to express gratitude, to mend relationships, to see friends and family, and to complete whatever seems unfinished. In the time we have, whether moments or years, we can use our breath to love and appreciate this world and those around us.

When we are ill, we can choose to treat or not to treat our condition. We can choose western, eastern, alternative or complementary interventions or use any of these methods in various combinations. To choose one type of intervention does not eliminate all others. We can choose and choose again. Sally chose to return to work. Mom refused to accept that nothing could be done about her pain. Sheldon let go of the doctor’s diagnosis and allowed another possibility. Hawking accepted the restrictions of ALS. Maria chose to heal, though she could not be cured. The most important choice we make is the decision to heal. All else follows.