

Integrating the world's great therapeutic traditions
to create a ***new transformative medicine***



**RADICAL
HEALING**

Second Edition

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INTRODUCTION

Origins of a New Vision

In 1992 I presented an integrated system of holistic healing at a conference called “The Interaction of Western and Eastern Medicines,” held in Israel. The audience was largely professional, and while I had hoped it would be receptive, the response I got was remarkable. I had left my twelve-year-old daughter outside the auditorium to supervise a table of literature on my work. By the time I had finished the session and joined her, I found her surrounded by eager participants who had snatched up most of the materials, were fighting over what was left, and had pushed forward with such enthusiasm that she was backed against the wall. “I don’t think I can do this, Dad,” she said, laughing, throwing up her hands in mock surrender. One of the information-seekers explained to me: “This—the integration—was what we thought the whole conference was going to be about. But except for your talk, it wasn’t. The Chinese doctors talked about Chinese medicine, the Ayurvedic doctors talked about Ayurvedic medicine, and the naturopaths talked about naturopathy. We’ve already heard that before.”

I had presented to that audience a comprehensive vision of medical care—one that brought together the various holistic schools of healing, integrating their insights and skills. The structure of that presentation would become the skeleton of this book, *Radical Healing*. It was an exciting integration—and one that had been a long time in the making. For more than twenty years the search for that wholeness had been my professional—as well as my personal—quest.

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At the end of the 1960s, as I was finishing my residency training at Charity Hospital in New Orleans, my spirit of adventure was being nurtured in the womb of the French Quarter. Psychiatry residents were allowed a certain license, so my local foray into the world of alternative medicine—which at that time meant co-founding a free clinic for “street kids”—was regarded with benign indulgence. I became a familiar presence on Decatur Street. Whenever a wild-eyed flower child was found cowering in a corner, suffering the terror of a bad trip, he was turned over to me. I was even invited to speak to the annual AMA convention on the subject of “Drugs and Youth.”

But my young patients taught me more than I taught them. They introduced me to vegetarian food, yoga, and herbal potions, and sparked in me a curiosity about the frontiers of consciousness. Having grown up wandering alone through the woods and fields of the rural South, communing with the trees and frogs, this all sounded a familiar chord. When I became disillusioned with the medication-oriented psychiatry that was beginning to dominate the field, my new interests led me to India.

There I met a teacher who inspired me to probe deeper within. He called himself Swami Rama, a sort of generic non-name, equivalent in India to calling oneself “Father John.” A free spirit who managed to both embody and convey the boldness of ancient healing traditions, Swamiji encouraged me to look beyond the mind as I’d learned to conceive of it in my psychiatric training. When I began to grasp the power of doing that, and to see how the most profound healing had its roots in a process of radical spiritual unfoldment, I decided to give up the practice of medicine, return to the United States, and simply teach yoga.

But my medical training was discovered by my students, who would approach me with their ailments after class. I explained that I wasn’t practicing medicine anymore, but they wouldn’t be put off. “I know,” they would say, “but if I go to a regular doctor he’ll give me all this medicine that throws me off balance, and I’m really serious about yoga. . . .”

Soon I was back in India again, this time to study homeopathy and Ayurveda, techniques for healing that didn’t create negative side effects, that were effective because they promoted growth and evolution—mentally, emotionally, spiritually. When I returned to America this time I was full of enthusiasm, determined to set up practice in a new kind of medicine. But the reality awaiting me was sobering. I became acutely aware of how far I had stepped “over the line.” In 1973 most people,

especially in the medical community, laughed at homeopathy, and no one, it seemed, had even heard of Ayurveda.

Nevertheless, I set up shop in a rented, unfurnished house in a middle-class neighborhood in suburban Chicago. Having no money, I made do with a card table for my desk, a cardboard box for my files, and two borrowed folding chairs, one for the patient and one for myself. Another empty box in the living room, upside down with a cotton shawl over it, served as a makeshift magazine table. Waiting patients were invited to seat themselves on the floor. The only clothes I had were the traditional white homespun kurtas and pajamas that I had brought back from India.

All these eccentricities notwithstanding, my reputation spread. I was, at that time and in that area at least, one of a kind, and those looking for an alternative sought me out. One of them was a rather well-to-do lady obviously not prepared for my odd furnishings and Indian clothes. Though she benefited from what we did and went on to write a positive magazine article about her experience, she was jarred. “He met me at the door,” she began her account, “wrapped in a white sheet. . . .”

I was operating way outside the system. I began to feel insecure, concerned about my fringe status—at times frankly fearful of reprisals from the medical establishment. If not for the support of the local community of yoga students and Swami Rama, who came regularly from India to teach them, I might have lost courage. But I had found solid grounding in a healing work that rang true for me in the deepest and most satisfying way I could imagine. It combined harnessing nature’s medicinals—plants and other natural substances—with commonsense essentials such as diet, exercise, and cleansing, as well as the most profound principles of spiritual and psychological transformation. Before this, my life had felt fragmented—my allegiances to nature, to healing, and to spiritual pursuits pulling against my training in science, psychology, and medicine had seemed to scatter me in a half-dozen different directions. Now I was doing a kind of work that was fulfilling to all the many aspects of my being. I could be physician, psychiatrist, herbalist, Ayurvedic practitioner, homeopath, and teacher—all in one.

Patients continued to seek me out—sometimes, it seemed, too many. At times I was overwhelmed. I remember telling one patient in those early years, “I will try to help you on one condition. If you get better, don’t tell anyone.” I felt I needed more time to study each case, to investigate techniques that might help, and to explore how they might fit together. But, despite my initial insecurity, over the years the work proved sound.

By 1983 I had set up six clinics and trained more than twenty physicians. Meanwhile, holistic medical centers were being opened by others, too, and a growing number of researchers were beginning to document the effectiveness of various holistic approaches. Gradually the distinctive attributes of this new kind of integrative medicine began to become clear to me and I ventured to put them into words. Over the years I've continually strived to reformulate and refine these points.

Radical Healing is built on these unifying concepts; they are the practical essence of a medicine that is simple and universal, rooted in the perennial principle of healing as personal evolution. What follow are these fundamental points. You will see through the course of this book how they undergird a totally new, profoundly effective, and deeply transformative system of healing.

1. Self-awareness

Effective holistic medical therapy depends on self-awareness. This medicine is based on what you pick up by tuning in to inner cues—not on what a laboratory test might tell you. Your lab is your body; experiments going on there constantly allow you to find out what suits you and what doesn't. You make major decisions about your own treatment according to what creates a sense of well-being, what boosts your energy, or what brings clarity of mind.

This new kind of patient, operating on the basis of self-awareness, calls for a new kind of doctor, too—one who is a consultant and guide, a fellow explorer, not one who is distant or assumes an air of omniscience, or who hands you routine prescriptions. Operating from your own awareness also allows you to pick up signals and make adjustments in your life while you are still basically healthy, instead of waiting until you're sick. Remaining relatively healthy and only rarely venturing into illness situates our work in an arena quite different from what is customarily considered the proper domain of medicine.

2. Transformation

Bringing awareness to your body, to its unique reactions and processes, and to its symptoms and strengths, sets you up for growthful insight. For where you founder—precisely where your system begins to break

down—provides a valuable clue to what needs to change in your life. Working from the perspective of this process of discovery permits you to approach a health crisis with curiosity instead of fear, and with optimism instead of disappointment. Sickness and health become a major way you learn from life. Although dysfunction and disease point to what you need to work on, they also hold the seeds of your unfoldment. From this point of view, illness is an opportunity for growth and transformation, while “recovery” is only a return to an obsolete status quo. Authentic healing will often involve radical changes in how you live. Old habits and attitudes that supported the development of disease will fall away, to be replaced by new ones that go with a new way of being in the world.

3. Wholeness

One of the things that makes holistic medicine fascinating and fun is rediscovering that the parts tell us about the whole. As we will see, your hand or your face, or even your tongue, can speak volumes about the whole of you, not only your physical state, but your mind, too. (This may be why the hologram has become such a central organizing image in holistic medicine, since it demonstrates how every piece contains the whole.) From the holistic perspective, our suffering comes from forgetting our wholeness. The word *health* comes from the Anglo Saxon *hāl*, whence also come *heal* and *whole*. Perhaps the simplest definition of *healing* is “to make whole.”

Holistic healing requires, however, that the way we achieve wholeness not only makes us more complete as individuals, but also reintegrates us into the whole of nature. The unique value of medicinals made from natural substances is that they weave us back into our place in the body of the Earth. But there’s an even more profound dimension to the deepest healing: it’s also spiritual. The same root that gave us *heal* and *whole* gives us *holy*, too.

The state of wholeness that heals us must be extended to include the spirit, and reconnecting to the whole means freeing yourself from the narrow consciousness of the constricted ego. Letting go the fear and isolation of the narrow ego allows you to open up to a larger sense of who you are, to identify with a more encompassing consciousness—the universal matrix that sustains us, the healing force or higher power of the great spiritual traditions.

From this more complete, holistic perspective, illness is not an interruption of life, but a crucial and valuable effort to reach for more wholeness of spirit. Little pieces of life experience provide the step-by-step progress that takes you along your path of spiritual development. Often it's your health problems—even the small ones—that clue you in to what you need to address, leading you on to increments of the transformation that moves you closer to an identity with the Greater Whole. Such illnesses and ailments are critical components of spiritual life. Crises of the body are ultimately expressions of underlying crises of the spirit.

The Emerging Vision

The above principles are at first suggested and then repeatedly reinforced as one holistic approach after another is pulled into a combined framework. Though these points emerge with compelling clarity as the various schools of thought are integrated, up to now they have gone largely unrecognized because the field of holistic medicine has remained as fragmented as an unassembled jigsaw puzzle. This book aims to show how the pieces of that puzzle fit together and how the whole that results is greater than the sum of its parts.

Each of the great healing traditions has arisen in its own culture to help resolve problems peculiar to that setting, so each—e.g., Ayurveda, homeopathy, Traditional Chinese Medicine, European and Native American herbology, nutrition, and psychotherapeutic bodywork—has its weaknesses as well as strengths. By integrating them, superimposing one upon another in layer after layer of complementary perspectives and techniques, we can arrive at an amalgam that is far more potent and thorough than any one of them taken alone. That's why I've called the integrated approach that results from this synthesis *Radical Healing*.

It's *radical* because, as the philosophies and methods of these various traditions are melded, and the profound principles buried in them become clearer and stronger, an intensity of effectiveness becomes possible. Healing and reorganization accelerate and deepen. Though time is needed at certain stages to absorb and consolidate change, this integration makes spurts of rapid transformation possible. After using a synergistic blend of techniques I recommended, one patient commented, "I've made more progress in three visits than I did in years of psychotherapy."

The word *radical* comes from the Latin *radix*, which means “root.” Radical healing tackles the root causes of illness and the hidden impediments to optimal health. These are attitudes and emotional postures embedded in the mind and in the unconscious. They shape the way that subtle energy is organized, which in turn influences what happens in the physical body. Using pharmaceutical drugs to influence biochemical and metabolic reactions is superficial and very limited, compared with treatments that reach down into the deeper levels of human functioning.

Besides its relation to the Latin *radix*, the term *radical* has a less well-known and more technical botanical significance. It denotes the tiniest, hairlike terminals of a plant’s root, which extend its action into the depths of the soil, and, by finding and entering cracks and crevices in the bedrock, slowly fracture it and split it open. Some of the beliefs and assumptions about our reality that sustain and promote our suffering are the deepest and most resistant to change. It is those assumptions that can make diseases seem untreatable or “incurable.” The *modus operandi* of radical healing is to penetrate the strongholds of human limitation and rend them asunder, opening the possibility of a transformation and evolution that conventional medicine has not ventured to approach. Without that probing thoroughness, that radical intensity, we will not be able to heal the profound disorders that are now plaguing us, individually and collectively.

Besides presenting a new vision of medicine, *Radical Healing* is also intended to anchor that vision to practical, well-proven techniques—such as the use of herbal and homeopathic remedies, exercise, flower essences, and Asian diagnosis—and to offer you guidance in their use. You won’t truly *grasp* this new vision of healing until you have experienced its effects yourself. That’s why this book has to be, in part, a handbook. Read it, and don’t be afraid to try out what you’re reading about. By using it you will begin to feel its power.

Using the Power of Holistic Healing for Yourself

You have to do two things to effectively harness the power of holistic healing. First you have to continually cultivate your awareness of the new vision and, second, you have to learn to “do the technical stuff” needed to put it into practice. The interaction between those two generates the

magic and the fun. This book is designed to walk you back and forth across the terrain of the different holistic fields and specialties so that you become familiar with their views and methods. It explains the philosophies and practices of each—examining and teaching a variety of practical tools while continually clarifying and strengthening the vision that ties them all together.

The tools used for holistic healing are different from those used in the old kind of medicine. The more frequently used holistic tools, such as simple homeopathic remedies, diet, cleansing techniques, and energetic breathing, foster awareness rather than blur it; they reorganize rather than disrupt your mental and physical processes, bringing out emotions or concerns that are submerged, rather than covering them over and hiding them.

I've recounted a lot of case histories throughout the book. One reason for this is that they're fun. But the chain of narratives also supports a systematic explication of the theory of integrated holistic medicine as well as careful instruction on how to use it. Although you may want to use the book as a reference at a later stage, at the outset it's wise to go through it once from beginning to end. On this first time through, you might want to skim the more detailed sections. The book will take you through a progression of five sections to help get you clear on the mindset and learn enough skills to get started.

SECTION ONE. NATURE'S MEDICINALS

To begin, we plunge right into what's already "in your face" these days—the mysterious little bottles you see arranged in exotic-looking rows in your local health-food store. These are "nature's medicinals." Their immense (and rapidly growing) appeal stems from the fact that they are fundamentally different from conventional drugs. Instead of disrupting or diverting the chemistry of metabolism, they convey complex informational patterns directly from nature.

These patterns trigger a kind of physiological and psychological reorganization that brings you more into synchrony with the flux and flow of the larger gestalt of which you are a part. This is healing *into* harmony with nature. Though gentle in their action, such remedies can have an impact that is profound and curative in a way you may not have imagined.

By the time you've finished Section One, you will be able to walk into your health-food store or natural pharmacy, recognize the groupings of remedies, and choose the right one when you need it. Working

with these remedies is a great entree into holistic medicine: in a sense, natural medicinals start the ball rolling. For example, even before you have learned about subtle energy (*ch'i*, as the acupuncturist calls it), you can experience the effects it has on your body and mind, you can feel it shift. Later in the book you'll come to understand what was going on inside you when this healing occurred, and how it is part of a larger transformative process.

SECTION TWO. SELF-ASSESSMENT

Natural medicinals and other holistic remedies and techniques are highly individualized—as they have to be, because they are intended to provide for the reorganization and evolution of a certain person who is attempting to move through a specific crisis at a particular moment. Each crisis involves a specific pattern of resistance to change and flow into the future. To make effective use of the holistic tools at your disposal, you must somehow grasp the essence of that resistance or “illness” so you can choose the remedy or technique that fits. There are many systems for doing this—for “diagnosing,” so to speak, and each diagnostic approach has its own utility.

Modern high-tech diagnosis is based mostly on mechanical tests of the body's chemistry or tissue changes, which provide lots of detail at that level of function, but pick up information only late in the game. By the time such changes are evident, the disorder has progressed far enough to cause unnecessary suffering. What's more, a conventional laboratory approach lacks the richness of systems of assessment that tap body-mind interactions. Asian diagnosis, for example, looks at the body in a way that clarifies how physical symptoms relate to hidden emotional or spiritual crises. This section helps you begin to think in such holistic terms, and helps you to free yourself from preoccupation with conventional diagnostic labels that can leave you fearful and helpless. In Section Two you will learn a range of more constructive options for identifying your problem when you have one—and how to stay out of trouble by providing what your particular constitution requires.

SECTION THREE. FOUNDATION STONES

When the Karate Kid began his apprenticeship with Mr. Miyagi, he was put to painting a fence. At first he thought this menial work was

intended to teach him humility. Only gradually did he come to realize that the motions of the brushes were the same as those he would use in sparring. By then, they were thoroughly programmed in, *and* the fence was painted! The wisdom of the East may sometimes be elliptical, but it is also efficient. Yoga teaches that the processes you learn as you master the physical postures of hatha yoga are the same processes you will later apply to dealing with the much more slippery and elusive mind during meditation.

The same principle holds true in holistic medicine: Exercise, nutrition, and cleansing are important because what you learn by working with them on the physical level can be applied to the less tangible levels of energy and consciousness. Moreover, if you do not exercise, eat consciously, and cleanse your system, you may find the effectiveness of subtler healing techniques blocked. Most failures of holistic healing occur because such obstacles were not addressed. Section Three will lead you through the processes of demystifying nutrition, bringing excitement and discovery to exercise, and developing finesse in the intricacies of detoxification.

SECTION FOUR. ENERGY AND CONSCIOUSNESS

Up to this point in the book you will have focused on working with your body or with natural medicinals and how that work—a shift in diet or an herbal remedy—might affect your energy or your consciousness. But in Section Four we turn the tables. In this section you'll learn how the healing process can be initiated directly from the levels of energy or consciousness. For example, you'll learn to identify and support some of the important energy currents within yourself, or to avail yourself of the services of practitioners who can help you do so.

Holistic techniques for working with consciousness and the mind are most often based on the principles of the meditative traditions, which teach us that a simple shift in awareness can change the entire configuration of energy flow, which in turn reshapes physiologic events, eliminating what had become, or was on its way to becoming, a physical disease. We will see how this healing shift in awareness is cultivated by raising energy from one energy center (called a *chakra*) to another. We also take a close look at sexuality, since it frequently ties up and drains away the energy needed to power a healing transformation.

Working with energy and consciousness requires a suspension of effort and a relaxing into contact with larger aspects of your existence. As you open to these deeper levels of your being and allow them to reorganize

and heal you, you come increasingly into alignment and synchrony with your spiritual essence. The deepest healing, which only comes with such a reconnection to Spirit, requires that you traverse the darkest territories of the inner world. Here you grapple with the “shadow” aspects of your being, and discover that personal healing is your contribution to a larger process of healing, one of global proportions.

Ultimately, you will see that your body represents a weaving together of all the themes of holistic work, reminding you of what needs to be addressed next, revealing your spiritual challenges, and providing the ultimate map to guide your healing and growth.

SECTION FIVE. RESOURCES

This final section of the book provides the resources you will need to integrate holistic healing approaches into your daily life. There is a “Self-Help Index” to what works best for common problems; this is a powerful way to experience what you have read about in the previous sections. For the hands-on type, this is the juiciest part of *Radical Healing*. One practitioner, reviewing the manuscript, wrote in the margin, “This alone will be worth the price of the book!” You may think so, too. Even as you are reading, when problems pop up, turn to the back and try the simple, natural therapeutic measures listed. Then read on to understand why and how they worked. To help you get set up, there’s also a list of remedies you’ll need for a home medicine chest.

Discussions of points footnoted in the text will be found after Section Five. This includes references to research studies that support some of the more controversial ideas presented. In previous books I provided point-by-point documentation, which was possible because I was dealing with fairly circumscribed topics, such as nutrition or psychotherapy. In this present work—striving as it does to encompass the whole of so vast a subject—such detail is not feasible. Yet you will often want to ground the concepts in solid evidence. To make this possible, I have offered numerous references to books that deal authoritatively with specific topics.

Many of these books are logical extensions of what you learn here, and will be valuable to your continuing study; they will be found described in the annotated bibliography titled “Classic Books on Holistic Medicine” in Section Five. A brief description of each book is provided so that you can find exactly what you need. Many valuable concepts and techniques not mentioned in the text because of space constraints—such

as light therapy, or the psychological aspects of immune function—will be described in these listings, so don't overlook them. Following Section Five, there is also a short glossary of esoteric terms you might otherwise stumble over.

Bias and Inspiration

With the benefits of integration so ample, I offer this book as an initial attempt to pull the field together, though that is necessarily a work in progress. I'm sure that a decade or two from now the integrated model will be more evolved. I've emphasized what seem to me the disciplines destined to be key players in the emerging new medicine: herbology, homeopathy, Ayurveda, Traditional Chinese Medicine, and energy work. This choice does not so much reflect wisdom on my own part as it does the expert guidance I had in my training.

I was nudged into the study of homeopathy by Swami Rama, my spiritual teacher and mentor. "If you want to be a good psychiatrist, you're going to have to learn homeopathy," he told me in the early 1970s, when I first went to India. That made no sense at all to me then—in part, probably, because I hadn't the slightest idea what homeopathy was (and even less interest in finding out). However, after several more prods I asked him, "Well, what *is* homeopathy?"

I remember his provocative expression as he explained, "You know the arborvitae tree?" I did, having grown up with one in my yard and having always been attuned to the plants around me. "Well," he said, "it gets a little berry that looks rough—like a wart." I recalled the berries clearly. "In homeopathy," he continued, "you use that plant to treat warts." I laughed nervously. "Why are you laughing?" he asked. I didn't answer. I was shocked by what sounded absurd to my conventionally trained ear, and embarrassed that I had followed him halfway around the world to learn from him.

It was an uphill struggle for Swami Rama, but when he finally got me into homeopathy, I became enthralled. Through casual comments, inspiring anecdotes, and therapeutic suggestions for cases I was treating, Swamiji continued over the years to steer me gently toward the selection of approaches that I now use—though I have also added components on my own. In any case, I believe the foundation is strong: the basic building blocks of this integrative effort are the product of a yogic seer's

penetrating analysis and intuitive wisdom, as well as my own broad education, rooted in the twentieth-century West, and in my—sometimes consuming—curiosity and drive to grasp “the whole picture.”

At the very least I believe that this book will start the integrative process rolling—perhaps in the broad field of holistic medicine, but certainly for you, the individual reader. By the time you’ve finished it, you should understand what makes an approach genuinely holistic, and the life-changing potential it then has. You’ll know how to choose which such interventions suit your needs and how they can best be combined. You’ll have a grasp of where your transformational work might be heading, and you’ll be in a position to chart your own way. You’ll also have some crucial skills that you can use with the help of the charts and Self-Help Index.

Using the list of Classic Books on Holistic Medicine offered at the end, you’ll even know how to go beyond what this book offers, deeper into the topics of your choice. Most important, you will know how to keep your work with health connected to your unfoldment as a human being, to your discovery of your fullest potential, and to your spiritual evolution. You will have fully assimilated a new vision of medicine. You should, in fact, be ready to approach any challenge to your health the way Sarah, a patient I first saw fifteen years ago, did.

SARAH’S PSORIATIC ARTHRITIS

At the age of twenty-eight, Sarah had swollen joints and she was covered with sores. Despite the toxic medicine she took, her skin was still disfigured by the thick, scaly patches of a psoriasis that was only partially under control and an accompanying arthritis that often left her joints red, painfully swollen, and unusable. What’s worse, she felt constantly restless and ill at ease from the side effects of the drug. To top it all off, she’d been told to abandon her hopes of having a child, because the medication was very likely to produce birth defects. At her wits’ end, she finally took her sister’s advice and came to see me to try a more holistic approach.

Five years later, Sarah had been medication-free for four and a half years. She had two healthy sons, and her joints were fine. Her only traces of psoriasis were minor flare-ups when she didn’t eat properly or when she was under a lot of stress. But she’d gotten to this point only after making radical changes in her life. As she changed her diet,

her skin cleared. As she discovered how to assert her own strength in relation to her husband, and moved past a lifelong pattern of accepting other people's suggestions that she was weak and ineffectual, her joints grew stronger.

Sarah's illness had led her to make some fundamental shifts. She gave up on finding a magic pill to deal with her illness. She pushed past fear and persisted against all odds. She recovered her own power and confronted issues that had plagued her since childhood. Plunging into a transformative process that was scary—but ultimately rewarded with exhilarating triumph—she made radical changes and got radical results.

THE FUTURE?

A few years ago I was invited by a group of students at a New York-area medical school to speak on homeopathy and Ayurveda. Over the decades I've been asked to address such subjects at some of the most prestigious medical centers in this country, such as Einstein, Yale, Columbia, and the University of Minnesota, but always by the students for sessions they planned as "extracurricular"—never by the faculty. On this occasion, after I met with the group, they invited me to join them for a gathering of the student body with their new dean. Because he had a reputation for being energetic and progressive, they were enthusiastic. I explained that I really didn't belong there, but they insisted. In our hours of sharing a different vision of medicine we had formed a bond, and they seemed to want to carry this over into the fresh start that the new dean might bring. They assured me, "You don't have to say anything, just sit with us." Unable to resist their enthusiasm, I acquiesced.

The dean finished his presentation, which was energetic and determined, but not much more than business as usual. A student—not one of those who had attended my sessions—raised his hand. "What plans do you have," he asked hopefully, "to offer instruction in other, alternative approaches to treatment?" The dean seemed not to understand. The room fell silent. "Exactly what do you mean?" he asked the student. "Well, like homeopathy, for example . . ." the student explained, his voice still steady and confident, despite the growing tension in the hall.

For a moment the dean said nothing, though his face began to turn red. Finally he said, between teeth that he seemed to clench to contain himself, "We will never teach *homeopathy* in my medical school!" He

pronounced the word *homeopathy* as though it were both ridiculous and obscene. I wondered how many people in the room knew that I had, only moments ago, finished a talk in this same building on precisely that unspeakable subject. I could feel sweat break out on my forehead, and I began to wish I could make myself invisible.

Meanwhile the student, a senior who was doing clinical work and apparently feeling more self-assured than the underclassmen, wasn't willing to let it go at that. "What experience have you had with homeopathy?" he asked quietly. Everyone seemed to hold his breath. This time the dean's face darkened from a bright red to an ominous purple. The student pushed on, his voice still relatively composed, but now both a bit plaintive and slightly defiant. "How could you be so opposed to something that you know nothing about?" he asked.

The dean stood silent for another moment. I wondered if he might have a stroke. The anxiety in the lecture hall was almost unbearable. Suddenly he turned and began to erase the board where he had outlined his prior remarks. When he turned around again, his face had resumed some of its former composure and color. He began to talk about his plans again, as though the preceding exchange had never occurred. In the hour that followed, the students seemed deflated. The optimism they had shown before was gone. I felt saddened and a bit embarrassed—as though I had witnessed an emotional confrontation in a dysfunctional family.

I've since wondered whether academic medicine will be able to assimilate the fresh currents of innovation that are sweeping through this country. I had always expected that it would be the well-trained scientists who would best evaluate and selectively weave together the emerging discoveries and advances of the brash holistic pioneers. But despite some signs that the public's interest in such subjects as acupuncture and nutrition is at last beginning to be acknowledged by the medical establishment, it still lags far behind the cutting edge, mired in its preconceptions and in its ingrained habits of the past. I seriously doubt that mainstream medicine can accommodate an uncompromising application of holistic principles because, in the course of practicing medicine this new way, a number of startling conclusions inevitably begin to suggest themselves. Some of these are radical enough to shake the foundations of the more conventional medical world. For example:

- Healing requires letting go what is familiar and stepping into the unknown.

- Healing may mean challenging belief systems and daring to break taboos.
- Healing is about getting past the ego, though that is what our culture is built on.
- Healing involves reconnecting with lost aspects of oneself—some of which exist in other than our familiar “reality.”
- Healing oneself is an indispensable piece of the healing of the whole planet—our darkness is a part of the net that holds us all captive.
- Healing is the purpose of our lives.

It seems unlikely that the radical healing envisioned in this book will materialize in the medical centers of today. Maybe a new medical establishment will arise as the old fades. Or perhaps it will be, like our “schools without walls” and the latest “virtual universities,” a movement without the buildings or faculties or tenure or the crippling inertia that has so grievously burdened our conventional institutions. In any case, whatever turn of events ultimately shapes this important development, I strongly suspect that it will remain, at least for some time, consumer-driven. In other words, it is the appreciation and implementation of this new approach by people like you that will contribute most powerfully to its full flowering.

So my advice to you is to make use of it. It’s quite possible that at some point it will save your life. It’s almost certain that at each turn it will *change* your life.

Seize the power. And have fun!