

APPENDIX J

THE IDEAL ATTITUDE FOR HEALING

IDEALS

An ideal is a standard by which one lives. "The ideal gives us a sense of stability, guidance and orientation, as well as a criterion for judgments." (Puryear & Thurston, 1987, p. 95)

"An ideal is not a goal. It is a motivational standard by which to evaluate our goals and our reasons for pursuing those goals. The goal is what; the ideal is why! A spiritual ideal is not so much a goal toward which we move as it is the spirit in which we grow. It is a living and dynamic standard by which we quicken and measure our daily motivation." (Puryear, 1982, p. 112)

IDEALS AND HEALING

Edgar Cayce consistently emphasized the importance of purposeful living. This was especially true with regard to healing. For example, this question was sometimes posed: "If you are healed, what will you do differently with your life?"

The question was intended to bring a deeper sense of meaning to the experience of illness. The sick individual was challenged to explore the context of the experience; to view disease as a growth opportunity. Perhaps suffering can sometimes be a way of calling our attention to some greater purpose in life.

In other words:

- What is the standard by which we measure health?
- Is health merely a goal to be achieved?
- Is there a greater purpose in the pursuit of wellness?
- Do we daily give thanks for our wellness?
- Do we truly desire to be well or merely to avoid pain?
- Do we expect to be healed when we become ill?
- Do the thoughts and emotions we entertain have anything to do with health?
- Does our lifestyle (behavior) affect our sickness and healing?
- Do health and healing have anything to do with our purpose for living?
- What is the ideal attitude to hold regarding health and healing?

These are some of the questions that we ask ourselves during the soul searching experience of serious or persistent illness. Most people know the answers to these questions. Yes - our thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and purpose in life contribute to health or illness. Yes -

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the attitude we hold regarding health and healing is important. So what can we do about what we know? How can we create and maintain an ideal attitude for healing?

THE IDEALS EXERCISE

The Cayce readings frequently suggest an ideals exercise designed to examine and modify dysfunctional attitudes and behaviors based upon spiritual considerations. This exercise consists of writing down one's ideals on paper. The process involves making three columns headed *Spiritual, Mental And Physical* and listing words under each which signify the meaning of each category. The spiritual ideal is a person or concept which conveys the highest sense of purpose or meaning to which one may aspire. The mental ideal is the mental attitude which is consistent with the spiritual ideal. The physical ideal is the behavior or physical manifestation of the spiritual ideal. Thus, the holistic perspective is maintained by the coordinating of physical, mental and spiritual ideals.

The technique is cognitive-behavioral since it brings to awareness the attitudes and beliefs upon which a person is operating and links the mental dimension to concrete behaviors. The mental and physical ideals are modified to be consistent with the spiritual ideal. The difference between this technique and many contemporary cognitive-behavioral (psychological) models is the role of the spiritual ideal as the standard for mental and physical processes. The Cayce readings do not advocate a value-free approach to healing. However, the values are not to be imposed by an outside agency - each person must work through the process individually to find one's own balance.

The readings state that ideals will change as one progresses through life. Therefore, the ideals exercise is an ongoing process of reorientation. It may be viewed as a tool for maintaining balance and integration at all phases of one's life.

The use of ideals has important clinical implications. Persons who have high spiritual ideals, but whose mental attitudes and physical behaviors fall short of these spiritual ideals, may be prone to self-condemnation (and depression) for failing to live up to their own standards. Or, they may project their perceived shortcomings onto others. Self-blame or blaming of others is likely to lead to psychological and/or interpersonal problems. On the other hand, a person with low spiritual ideals (or the complete absence of them) may find life meaningless, boring and empty. A person without a sense of ideals will often experience illness as a tragedy. Disease provokes fear and a sense of being victimized by something outside and beyond oneself.

Focusing on ideals shifts consciousness. We have to take some degree of responsibility for our situation. We must define a course of action that takes all aspects of our experience (spiritual, mental and physical) into consideration. People who are able to make such an attitude adjustment feel more empowered to deal with illness. They have a greater sense of purpose and meaning in life. They have a reason to be healed - to manifest a high spiritual ideal.

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The word "transformation" is sometimes used in such instances. Often, individuals who experience exceptional healing speak of their illness as a "gift." They attest to a remarkable change in their attitude towards illness, health and life generally.

DEVELOPING AN IDEAL ATTITUDE FOR HEALING

In working with this protocol, you are being asked to examine your ideals. Do the Ideals Exercise described above. Don't trust it to memory - do the exercise on paper. Then, spend a few moments each day to review your ideals. Ponder these questions:

- What is your purpose for being healed?
- Is health merely a goal to be achieved?
- Do you daily give thanks for whatever degree of wellness that you experience?
- Do you truly desire to be well or merely to avoid pain?
- Do you expect to be healed?
- Are your thoughts and attitudes conducive to being healed?
- Is your lifestyle (behavior) conducive to being healed?
- Have you included the spiritual, mental and physical aspects of the protocol into your ideals?
- What is the ideal attitude to hold regarding health and healing?

REFERENCES

Puryear, H. B. *The Edgar Cayce Primer*. New York: Bantam Books, 1982.

Puryear, H. B. & Thurston, M. A. *Meditation and the Mind of Man*. Virginia Beach, VA: A.R.E. Press, 1987.