

Your Thoughts Can Bring Healing

When it comes to your health, your thoughts are key. The Bible tells us to fix our thoughts on what is true, honorable and right. We're told to meditate on those things that are pure, lovely and admirable (see Phil. 4:8).

You must consciously monitor your thoughts on a daily basis, choosing forgiveness and love over the dangerous emotions that ultimately destroy your health. At first it may take minute-to-minute monitoring until you get control.

One way to overcome playing old tapes of pain, self-doubt and anxiety is to go deep into the Word of God. Invest in inspirational tapes or praise and worship music.

God heals today as He did in the past; He is the same yesterday, today and forever. So it follows that we can be healed of our past, set free in the present and be all that we can be in the future. In other words—whole, healed and free!

Your current state of physical health is a reflection of your emotional health. Many chronic complaints—headaches, backaches, fatigue, muscle tension, panic attacks, anxiety and depression—are triggered by stress, buried or repressed pain, unforgiveness and grief that was never released.

Letting go of dangerous emotions will make room for positive emotions to emerge and for healing to take place. Every day is a new beginning, another chance to live in forgiveness, unconditional love and truth.

YOU ARE WHAT YOU THINK Thoughts of love cause a release of healing substances in the body. Anxious thoughts cause your body to release cortisone and adrenaline, which suppress your immune response. Peaceful, tranquil thoughts release chemicals

that help your body relax and adjust.

You must learn to love yourself and others unconditionally. The power of love can heal us of the dangerous emotions that threaten to destroy our lives and our health. Choose to love, and you'll be able to live life to the fullest.

When you let go of harmful emotions, you are free to experience pure love without fear. You will know a peaceful trust that will replace the mistrust that has held you captive in the past.

This is the way God made us. We thrive mentally, physically and spiritually when we develop a lifestyle of loving people unconditionally.

Love is the healing emotion that cancels out dangerous ones. It is so powerful that it eliminates fear (see 1 John 4:18).

I believe that you can be healed if you have the willingness and desire to do the work. Looking within yourself takes courage, but that is where God comes in. Prayer and a close walk with Him are imperative.

God will hold you up, and with His help, the healing process will be accelerated. You can be free to experience life as God intended it to be.

EMOTIONS AND ILLNESS Dangerous emotions can create a pathway to illness. Many times when we are suffering from anxiety, depression, stress and resultant physical illness, a spiritual depletion has taken place.

We are body, mind and spirit. Neglecting the spiritual portion of our beings will not bring wellness. There will always be an emptiness that only God can fill.

Spiritual depletion is an unnatural state of being. No wonder there is an epidemic of depression, anxiety and chronic disease. It's because one-third of our total being is not

being fed.

Research has uncovered one of the greatest healing miracles of all time—spirituality. More than 300 studies confirm that people of faith are healthier than nonbelievers and less likely to die prematurely from any cause. Having faith can also speed recovery from physical and mental illness, surgery and addiction.

According to Dale A. Matthews, M.D., an associate professor of medicine at Georgetown University School of Medicine in Washington, D.C., and author of *The Faith Factor: Proof of the Healing Power of Prayer* (Viking Penguin, 1998), the body responds positively to faith. Blood pressure and pulse rate tend to be lower, oxygen consumption better, brain wave patterns slower and immune function enhanced if you practice your faith regularly.

Faith also gives us a sense of peace and an ability to look beyond our present problems with hope. Looking ahead can reduce stress and lower our risk of anxiety and depression. For many of us the church is a place where we feel connected and have a sense of meaning and purpose. There we are surrounded by people who care and take an interest in our lives. We are also nourished spiritually.

GOD'S WORD ON DANGEROUS EMOTIONS The Bible offers us spiritual food to help counteract the depletion that accompanies health-destroying emotions. The following are a few examples:

Anger: "My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires" (James 1:19-20, NIV).

"Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry" (Eph. 4:26). Otherwise, your anger will go deep down inside you.

Anxiety: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:6-7).

Most of the things we worry about never happen. For the things that do, God is always there to help us through.

Bitterness: "Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many" (Heb. 12:14-15).

Bitterness can destroy us from the inside out. It is like rust that corrodes our spirits, takes away our peace and makes it impossible to have a healthy relationship with anyone.

Harboring past hurts invites resentment. Instead, use the hurts as opportunities to develop spiritually.

Emotional baggage: "Cast your cares on the Lord, and He will sustain you; He will never let the righteous fall" (Ps. 55:22).

Sometimes feelings, thought patterns and past experiences continue to traumatize a person each time they are triggered or recalled. We must deal with our emotional baggage because it will keep us from experiencing lives of freedom.

Fear: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me" (Ps. 23:4).

We must consciously reject every fear that comes into our minds and tries to take us captive. We rebuke it and ask God to allow His peace to surround us.

Frustration: "Be at rest once more, O my soul, for the Lord

has been good to you" (Ps. 116:7).

Often frustration is a result of our own failures. It is a feeling of irritability and restlessness. But sometimes it is a sign that we need to shift gears or that we are not walking on the correct path. In this case, frustration can be a needed catalyst for change.

Grief: "'In my distress I called to the Lord, and He answered me. From the depths of the grave I called for help, and You listened to my cry'" (Jon. 2:2).

Grief is a fact of life. Although it is never a pleasant experience, it is a process we must allow ourselves to walk through. Otherwise it will resurface again and again and prolong our suffering.

So, grieve, but only for a season. Then prepare to move forward again.

Guilt: "'I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions, for My own sake, and remembers your sins no more'" (Is. 43:25).

It is imperative for us to forgive ourselves. We have to believe that if we have repented of our sins, God has forgiven us and forgotten them.

Loneliness: "God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you'" (Heb. 13:5). Loneliness can open the door to all kinds of maladies in our bodies, minds and spirits. It has been linked to the most dreaded disease of our day—cancer.

We can take comfort in knowing that even when it seems everyone has abandoned us, we are never alone once we ask God to come into our lives and live in us.

Unforgiveness: "'For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your

sins'' (Matt. 6:14).

I cannot stress this point enough—unforgiveness will destroy our minds, bodies and spirits. More importantly, if we do not forgive, we will not be forgiven.

Forgiveness is a primary key to overcoming dangerous emotions. Sometimes it isn't easy, but there is good reason for us to forgive one another. In an article entitled, "Forgive to Live," Health Magazine published the findings of a new study out of the University of Tennessee.

Research subjects had their blood pressure and heart rate monitored as they discussed being betrayed by someone close to them. Initially blood pressure readings shot up for all the participants. But the levels for those who had forgiven soon returned to normal.

The readings for subjects who were grudge-holders, on the other hand, remained high. Interestingly enough, women were more likely to be unforgiving than men.

From this one study, we can see how resentment and unforgiveness can take a physical toll. This clearly supports the wisdom of observing the biblical mandate to forgive those who hurt us or sin against us.

As I mentioned before, our emotions impact the quality of our lives. But you need not be an emotional statistic. You can be a victorious survivor who has been strengthened by adversity and trials.

Whether the trauma happened in your childhood or is due to a recent experience, ask God to renew you emotionally, physically and spiritually. Begin meditating on the truth of His Word.

Healing for your emotions will come as you allow God's wisdom to flow through your life's experiences. Learn to accept and

offer His love. Forgive, trust God and live.

Read a companion devotional.

Janet Maccaro, Ph.D., ., *holds a doctorate in nutrition and a degree in natural medicine. She is a respected lecturer and author of Breaking the Grip of Dangerous Emotions, published by Siloam Press, from which this article is adapted.*