

Taking it on Faith

Trusting ourselves, our doctors and a higher power
... is this the key to healing?

by Elana Zaiman

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**Do you trust your doctors?
Do you believe in your body's
ability to heal?
Does prayer play a part in your
healing process?**

Dr. Larry Dossey, internationally known in the field of spirituality and medicine, has been gathering research in these areas for years, and he has discovered that an affirmative answer to these questions is essential to the healing process. He is not alone.

Trusting Our Doctors

In his book *Healing Words* (Dossey, 1993), Dr. Dossey writes that we must choose our doctors with care. He suggests that we find doctors whose belief structure is similar to our own. By this, he does not mean that we must choose doctors whose religion matches ours. Rather, he means that we must choose doctors who are on the same wavelength as us in regard to the healing process so we can trust them to help us. Yes, credentials matter, but credentials should not trump trust.

As an example of a wrong fit in belief structure between doctor and patient, Dr. Dossey cites a letter he received from a woman living with AIDS who wrote, "I began to realize my doctor doesn't believe I'm going to live ... It takes me two weeks to recover from a visit to him. He leaves me depressed and feeling sick ... Why do I feel like my own physician is *killing* me?"

Clearly, this match between doctor and

patient was far from ideal. Worse, it was destructive. Unfortunately, this kind of mismatch happens every day when patients feel their beliefs are at odds with their physicians or other medical providers.

Trusting Ourselves

Trusting our doctors is important, but it's not enough. Our thoughts and beliefs about our body's ability to heal also affect our healing in powerful ways. In his book *Be Careful What You Pray For ...* (Dossey, 1997), Dr. Dossey illustrates the power of mind over body in citing a study about retinal detachment. He relates how eye surgeon Dr. Graham Clark discovered a 400% difference in healing time after surgery between his most and his least successful healers. Why the difference?

After assessing the data, Dr. Clark felt the answer was more psychological than medical. He noted that those who healed quickly: 1) confronted their situation directly; 2) trusted their surgeon; 3) were optimistic about their results; 4) were confident about coping during and after the surgery; and 5) were able to accept the bad with the good.

On the contrary, those who healed slowly tended to feel: 1) trapped; 2) suspicious of others; 3) pessimistic; 4) unable to cope; 5) entitled; 6) angry about being dependent on others; and 7) helpless. This study and others Dossey cites confirm what many have been saying for years: Our mindset is crucial to the healing process.

*"Given the evidence,
it's worth making trust
a cornerstone in your
healing process."*

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The Role of Faith

Beyond our doctors and our belief in our own bodies, many find healing power in their faith system or spiritual practice.

“Research suggests a link between religion and better mental health and well-being. Some spiritual practices may reduce stress,” writes Eve Glicksman for AARP. (Glicksman, 2008). “This may also ease symptoms and help offset the harmful effects of stress on the immune, endocrine and cardiovascular systems. Some studies have shown that people of faith recover faster from depression, grief and anxiety disorders.”

Glicksman bases her statements on research from the American Cancer Society and Duke University’s Center for Spirituality, among others. And while the specific role of faith and prayer is unclear, Glicksman offers some possible connections.

“Having religious beliefs may help you feel more in control if you’re sick. Praying may reduce anxiety and instill hope. Belief in a higher power can give people a sense of purpose. It can strengthen the will to live and comfort the dying. Faith may also help you cope better with being disabled or chronically ill,” she writes.

Given the research, it seems that we would all be better served by mak-

ing trust a cornerstone in the healing process. And we don’t have to wait. We can start today.

First, we must find doctors we trust. Dossey suggests we ask ourselves this simple question: “Does my doctor make me feel better or worse when I’m around him or her?” If the answer is better, we’re with the right doctor. If the answer is worse, we have more searching to do.

Second, we must trust in our body’s ability to heal. If we find ourselves feeling pessimistic, angry or trapped, we must acknowledge these emotions and consider taking up meditation and other self-care techniques to develop a more positive approach to healing and a better relationship with our bodies.

Third, we can try placing our trust in God, the Universe, or a transcendent power beyond ourselves. We don’t have to be part of a faith community to pray on behalf of ourselves or others. We can cry out to the Universe with an ask, a hope as simple as, “Please send (me/my relative/friend) healing. Please give (me/my friend/relative) the strength to heal.”

Maybe all we pray for won’t materialize, but asking strengthens us, and that is a step in the right direction.

We must move toward trust. Our health is worth it. We are worth it. ♦

Sources:

Dossey, Larry. (1993). *Healing Words: The Power of Prayer and the Practice of Medicine*. San Francisco, CA. Harper.

Dossey, Larry. (1997). *Be Careful What You Pray For ... You Just Might Get It*. San Francisco, CA. Harper.

Glicksman, Eve. (2008). “Religion and Spirituality: Can Faith Help You Heal?” Retrieved December 14, 2015, from www.aarp.com. Read the entire article at <http://tinyurl.com/wise-faith>.



BRAIN GAMES ANSWERS / From Page 18

Answers to Crossword Puzzle

E	C	H	O	A	B	A	S	E	G	A	L	
T	H	O	U	R	U	B	E	N	S	E	R	E
A	I	N	T	C	L	E	A	T	U	N	I	T
L	O	V	E	A	L	L	T	R	U	S	T	A
D	R	O	W	N	S	B	E	T	A			
T	E	E	T	E	N	A	N	T	E	D		
S	A	N	E	R	F	I	L	C	H	A	L	I
A	P	E	D	N	O	R	T	H	O	G	L	E
F	E	W	S	I	R	E	S	A	P	S	E	S
E	X	T	R	A	C	T	S	C	D	T		
O	A	H	U	S	L	E	I	G	H			
D	O	W	R	O	N	G	T	O	N	E		
W	I	P	E	L	A	N	E	S	N	O	R	M
E	V	E	R	A	T	A	L	E	A	M	O	I
T	A	N	S	E	W	E	D	L	E	N	T	

Answers to Sudoku

8	4	5	6	7	9	2	3	1
1	6	3	5	8	2	7	4	9
9	2	7	4	3	1	8	5	6
7	3	6	8	5	4	9	1	2
4	5	1	9	2	6	3	7	8
2	8	9	7	1	3	5	6	4
6	7	4	3	9	8	1	2	5
5	1	8	2	6	7	4	9	3
3	9	2	1	4	5	6	8	7



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