

# Is your mind your best medicine?

Wouldn't it be wonderful if your mind could heal your body? Well, there's growing evidence to show that through meditation, visualisation techniques and a positive attitude, people can cure themselves of anything





**T**here are few things more terrifying than a diagnosis of serious illness, whether it's for you or someone you love. It's the moment the world stops spinning and all your plans and dreams, even your arguments and daily giggles, pale into insignificance. The only thing that matters is how you, or your loved one, can get well again.

After the initial shock, it's easy to feel helpless as your condition is managed by teams of medical experts. But many alternative practitioners and healers, along with some conventional doctors and nurses, believe that people can supplement their healing and in some cases even cure themselves of terminal conditions that conventional medicine has been unable to help.

Although the link between the mind and the body is still one of the least-understood phenomena in the scientific world, it's an area that's being keenly explored. There's growing evidence that with a positive attitude and certain visualisation techniques, some people can cure themselves of anything from depression to cancer.

In his book *How Your Mind Can Heal Your Body* (\$9.99, Hay House), former pharmaceuticals scientist Dr David Hamilton says: 'Research published every other week is building a considerably strong case that our previous assumptions and beliefs – that the mind could not heal the body – are just plain wrong.'

Recent studies at Harvard University in the US have been able to show the incredible power



happen in practice? Dr Hamilton believes so. He claims the mind can heal almost anything with the right mental attitude, belief, determination, and a positive outlook. Over the years he's collected stories from people who have healed themselves of medical conditions, from heart problems to hay fever, through visualisation. Many cancer patients, for instance, imagined the cancer cells being removed from their body.

What's more, the mind's incredible capacity to control many physical symptoms, from pain to Parkinson's disease, is backed up by the placebo effect.

'Recent research has shown that when a person takes a placebo and believes it to be a real medicine, chemical changes occur in the brain that can alter immune and growth hormone levels,' Dr Hamilton explains.

'So we know for certain that thoughts, emotions and beliefs are not just subjective ideas in the mind, but cause real chemical and physical changes in the brain and throughout the body,' he continues. 'Chemical changes in the brain lead to

University College Hospital in London, which offers a mix of reflexology, aromatherapy, reiki and massage. 'We've seen that it benefits patients in many ways, making them feel relaxed and positive about their situation,' he says. 'It is without a doubt valuable to patients, and they like it. We don't know how, for instance, reiki healing works, but it does.'

## Miracles do happen

When Jeanne Ames, 59, from Norfolk, was diagnosed with an enlarged heart and leaky valve (dilated cardiomyopathy), the prognosis for her future didn't look good. The potentially terminal condition left her breathless, suffering from chest pains and unable to walk without a stick. In early 2002, doctors explained that she'd probably need a heart transplant – although the chances of getting one were slim – as well as a heart bypass operation.

As an experienced energy healer of 18 years, Jeanne decided to set to work on herself, using meditation, NLP and crystal healing techniques. She imagined her heart growing stronger by the day, and also began visualising the colour orange surrounding her heart – in colour therapy, orange is related to this organ.

Jeanne's health started to improve in just a few months, and in April 2002 her consultant commented on the dramatic improvements, as she was now able to walk without getting breathless or using a stick. A heart specialist at Papworth Hospital, near Cambridge, told Jeannie there was now no need for a bypass, because there was no longer any sign of an enlarged heart or valve failure. In fact, her heart was normal. The specialist



Clockwise from above: Jeanne was diagnosed with a crippling heart condition in 2002; Jeanne (right) with a friend; after using energy healing on herself, she's now made a full and remarkable recovery



was unable to explain her miraculous recovery.

To those who doubt the possibility of spiritual healing for serious conditions, there is an argument to support spontaneous remission and recovery. Doctors have long known of occasional instances of skin and kidney cancers that just vanished. And a recent study of Norwegian women found that spontaneous remission of breast cancer may have occurred in over 20 per cent of cases. But why does this happen? Is it just by chance, or can it be down to a person's outlook, emotional response and attitude to life?

There is some evidence that our immune system is capable of wiping out even advanced disease. In February this year, the journal *Lung Cancer* reported on a man whose tumour had spontaneously disappeared. The patient had high levels of a certain antibody molecule in his blood, and this same molecule was also found where the tumours had been. Doctors at Japan's Nagasaki University said this indicated that his immune system had destroyed the tumours. But how and why did his natural defences react in this way?

Prof Peter Johnson, Chair of Medical Oncology at Cancer Research UK, is a British pioneer of research into this field. He explains: 'The immune system's role is tantalising because we know something is at work in spontaneous remission, but we don't know what makes the system do it. The question is, how do you turn the immune system →

## 'Our thoughts, emotions and beliefs can cause real chemical and physical changes in the brain and the body'

of visualisation in particular, and discovered that it seems to work because the brain is unable to distinguish between what's imagined and what's real.

One study had a group of people visualising they were playing and hearing a series of piano notes for two hours a day for five consecutive days, while another group actually played the same notes. MRI brain scans of both groups were nearly identical.

Does this mean if we visualise ourselves getting better it will

cellular and genetic changes that heal the body.'

He's found that techniques such as neurolinguistic programming (NLP), visualisation, meditation and affirmations all produce amazing results, as will any form of healing – provided that the person really believes it's going to make them better.

Nowadays, many hospitals offer complementary and holistic healthcare on top of medical help. Steve Rowley is a senior nurse in the oncology department at

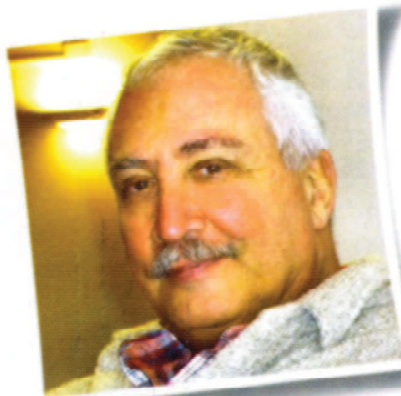


## Spreading the word

For instance, the heart chakra is linked to relationships 'close to our heart'. Martin believes that when negative feeling towards a loved one is held in, the resulting tension, if intense enough, can manifest into a symptom like breast cancer.

In 1975, aged 35, Martin wasn't happy in his IT job with a firm of New York stockbrokers. With worsening ailments including trouble walking and a paralysed right arm, he went to hospital and was told he had a malignant tumour in his spine. Surgery was his only option, but it proved impossible to remove the tumour without cutting his spinal cord, which might have killed him. Doctors were forced to leave it.

Eight months later, Martin booked a trip to Martinique in the Caribbean for the new year, where he met a Zen master in a bar. They talked for hours about the power

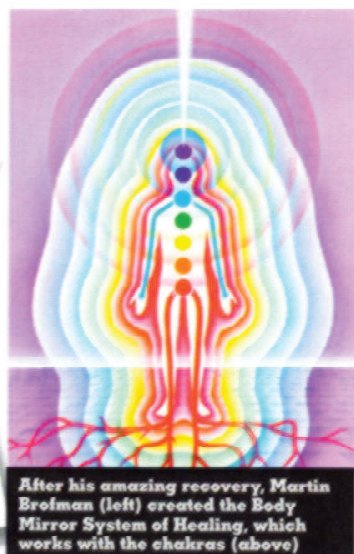


Martin began to see his tumour as the result of his stressful lifestyle. The Zen master taught him to heal with the Silver Method, which uses affirmations, meditations and visualisations. Determined

'We create our reality through our thoughts. Cancer begins in the mind, and that's where you go to get rid of it'

Believing wholeheartedly that his health was improving, he tirelessly repeated the affirmation, 'I'm getting better and better every day', and looked forward to his next examination, visualising being told the tumour was gone.

Two months on, he was told exactly that. This spurred him on to leave his job and do something more fulfilling with his life. Having adapted the Silver Method to his own style, he now travels the world teaching others to use it.



**After his amazing recovery, Martin Brofman (left) created the Body Mirror System of Healing, which works with the chakras (above)**

'My body was my teacher'

**T**he ambulance screamed round the corner. Lying on the stretcher inside, I felt rigid with pain and prayed I'd soon be back home.

At 7am, I'd woken my daughters, aged four and seven, to get them ready for school. I dressed quickly and stepped into my shoes – then suddenly a breathtaking pain struck me across the back of the head. By the time our au pair arrived I was retching and crawling on the floor, begging her to watch the kids and call a doctor.

suddenly and dramatically that there was nothing for it but an ambulance and hospital. A CT scan showed nothing, and doctors said they were migraines, but I knew it was more severe.

Still, I ignored the episodes for as long as I could – some five years – as well as the double vision I had from time to time. I put it down to middle age. A series of tests failed to find a cause, and nobody made a connection with my headaches.

My condition deteriorated dramatically at what should have been a happy time. After years of frustration, putting the demands of work and home before my desire to write a book, a project close to my heart was taking off.

Just 18 months before the first headache hit me, my father had died of leukaemia. One of his most precious possessions was a book published in 1629 by an ancestor of his, John Parkinson – England's first famous gardener and Charles I's herbalist. When my father died, I read it properly for the first time and loved the author's words of wisdom. Now, in autumn 2002,



my proposal for a book about him had just been accepted by a publisher when I got a letter from my local hospital in Maidstone, Kent, asking me to come in and see the neurologist.

Two days later, my husband and I sat in the doctor's office. He came straight to the point.

'You've got a brain tumour and it's going to have to come out.'

I managed to murmur, 'How?'

'They can cut down the side of your nose and go in through there. The scar is barely visible once they sew it up again. Or they take the top of your head off, lift the brain aside and can get at it that way.'

I was speechless.

'We'll be in touch,' he said as he waved us on our way, promising to refer us to a specialist.

We staggered out in silence. It was as if the world had frozen and all the pieces of my life that I called normality were rearranged.

I tried to carry on as usual, and continued with my book during the day, but at night the shattering possibility of death or blindness emerged in terrifying nightmares. I'd wake shivering, having dreamed I was hurtling downhill towards a pitch-black lake.

Meanwhile, my double vision worsened, with dizziness and headaches a daily reality. Even so, I didn't listen to my body. I left it in the hands of medical experts – except nobody could decide what course of action to take.

At the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery in

**Clockwise from below: Anna's daughters as children; her ancestor's botanical imagery inspired her; meditating to release feelings**



the conviction and clarity of his message, she encouraged me to go to a workshop, where I heard him explain the Body Mirror System of Healing, which he developed nearly 40 years ago in response to his own healing from cancer. Although sceptical at first, I realised I had nothing to lose and made an appointment with Martin.

He nodded as I explained my symptoms. 'We work with the idea that your body is a mirror of your consciousness,' he told me.

I wasn't sure what this meant, but I was about to find out. I sat in a chair with my eyes closed while Martin lightly put his hands over the parts of my body that correspond to the chakras, the centres of

read: 'I never lived with my father.' I saw how exploring John Parkinson's story was a response to longing for a closer connection with my dad. As a child I only saw him fleetingly, and when he died I felt as if I'd never been interesting enough for him to be with me. But I was a grown woman of 42, so I tried to bury it.

Now I saw how those feelings had shaped my actions and reactions.

Even after my dad's

death, I was bridging the gap between us by unravelling the forgotten history we'd shared.

In the months that followed, I continued the process Martin had begun, using meditation to examine my inner feelings and release them. I spent 15 minutes, three times a day, visualising my recovery, using imagery borrowed from John Parkinson – seeing the tumour cells dissolving and being carted away in a wheelbarrow.

My husband took to calling my meditation sessions my 'medication', and they proved to be just that. Over the next few years, my tumour was monitored by scans, initially three months

apart, then at six-monthly intervals because it appeared to have stopped growing. I began imagining 18-month intervals, with the tumour on its way out.

Eventually, a scan in March 2005 showed that the white lump I'd seen stubbornly growing since 2002 had collapsed.

My consultant confirmed this, and reduced my scans to every 12 months. Over the following year, my headaches and dizziness stopped, and in December 2007 I had my last scan. My doctors decided there was nothing further to worry about.

I had no doubt that my recovery was due to me accepting what had caused the tumour and willing it to disappear. My consultant only

said that anything that made patients feel better in themselves was helpful for their recovery, but I was more convinced. Healing had taught me the powerful effect my mind could have on my body. It was one of the most vital discoveries of my life, despite – or perhaps because of – it being beyond the logical intelligence I'd once considered so powerful.

We all have a healing ability we can develop, and I was determined to use mine. In January 2005 I'd started learning the Body Mirror System of Healing at one of the intensive four-day courses Martin teaches in the UK, which I now organise. A year later I set up Hand Magic Healing, where I use the Body Mirror technique, Hawaiian massage and the knowledge of herbs I learned from John Parkinson's work to help people back to health.

By the time my book was published in 2007, my recovery was complete. I now look back on my illness with gratitude, and see that the most painful incident in my life also gave me my greatest opportunity. **SPIRIT&DESTINY**

## 'Martin declared that my tumour was the result of tension in my relationship with my father. I couldn't believe it'

London, my consultant, Michael Powell, renowned for treating pituitary tumours, told me the tumour was growing with a branch of my carotid artery wrapped around it – so he couldn't operate or even biopsy it. He thought my headaches had been caused by the tumour bleeding, but couldn't say whether or not it was cancerous.

I was prepared to give up my eyesight, but not to die. I had to get to the bottom of this problem that threatened my life.

In 2004, my half-sister Sarah Jane told me about a healer called Martin Brofman who she'd seen lecturing at the College of Psychic Studies in London. Impressed by

energy that interlink with the body's neural and endocrine systems.

I felt a charge, like electricity, surge through my head where the tumour was. About 30 minutes later I stood up, feeling disoriented and unfamiliar with my body.

Martin said he saw my emotions in the colours around my chakras, created by energy vibrating at different frequencies. He could pick up difficulties from my past – and declared that my tumour was the result of tension in my relationship with my father. I couldn't believe this could have caused a brain tumour.

The next day, the understanding dawned as I reread the first draft of my book. The second sentence

- *Nature's Alchemist* by Anna Parkinson is published by Frances Lincoln, priced £25. For more information on Anna's work, see [www.hunahealing.co.uk](http://www.hunahealing.co.uk)
- To find out more about Martin Brofman, see [www.healer.ch](http://www.healer.ch)
- For more on Dr David Hamilton, see [www.drdauidhamilton.com](http://www.drdauidhamilton.com)
- If you've had miracle healing or are living with illness, contact healer and writer Sarah Dyer ([sjdye85@hotmail.com](mailto:sjdye85@hotmail.com)), who is compiling stories for a book.