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My Body Was My Teacher

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Abstract

In 2002, a BBC producer in her mid-forties, suffering from severe headaches and double vision, was diagnosed with a brain tumour in her right cavernous sinus, next to the pituitary gland. The tumour proved inoperable and proposed diagnoses included chondrosarcoma, meningioma and chordoma. This article shares how the writer learned from an American healer, Martin Briefman, to see her illness as the language of her consciousness. She explains how she used only meditation, visualisation and healing to clear her symptoms and dissolve the tumour.

Key words: brain tumour, healing, spiritual healing, self-healing, consciousness, Martin Brofman

My story

The ambulance screamed round the corner past my daughters' school. Lying on the stretcher, rigid with pain, I prayed I would soon be home with them again.

I look back now and see that that morning in 1996 was the start of an incredible journey which led me to psychic powers I didn't believe existed and certainly never imagined that I would possess.

The day had begun normally enough. That morning I had a busy day at work at the BBC on my mind. I would be in the studio recording a programme and everything needed to be ready. After waking my daughters, I dressed quickly and stepped into my shoes. As I did so, a breathtaking pain struck me like an axe across the back of my neck. By the time our startled au pair arrived I was helpless – retching and crawling, begging her to look after my children and call a doctor.

This headache turned out to be the first of several. They arrived suddenly, and so dramatically that there was nothing for it but the ambulance and hospital. I was twisted in pain for several

days, barely able to move or drink, until the pain gradually wore off, leaving every muscle in my body aching. For years, doctors ascribed these episodes to migraine but I knew it wasn't, although I managed to ignore them for as long as I could. Meanwhile, another problem was beginning to bother me. I had double vision from time to time. I put it down to middle age and the approach of my forty-seventh birthday. A series of tests failed to find a cause and no one made a connection with my headaches.

Looking back now, I can see that I would have done well to listen to my body. But then I didn't know what I know now – that your body mirrors your life. Its illnesses express tensions in your unconscious feelings and once those are resolved, it can return to balance, which is healthy. It took a near fatal illness and my first encounter with healer Martin Brofman to teach me that.

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 suddenly taking off.

Not long before the first headache hit me, my father had died. One of his most precious possessions was an ancient book, published in 1629 by an ancestor called John Parkinson. This man was England's first famous gardener and Charles the First's herbalist. When my father died, I read the book properly for the first time and fell in love – with the author's wisdom about plants and with his story that I gradually pieced together. I had just had my proposal for my book about him accepted. *Nature's Alchemist*, the book that this story became, was published in 2007. But before achieving this goal that I had dreamed of, I had a very steep mountain to climb. I'd taken unpaid leave so I could concentrate on writing the book. Two weeks later, a letter arrived from my local hospital summoning me for an appointment with the neurologist.

A few days afterwards, my husband and I sat in his office while the doctor 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 that way. The scar is barely visible once they sew it up again. Or they take the top of your head off and lift the brain aside and they can get at it that way."

I was speechless.

"We'll be in touch," he said, as he waved us on our way.

We staggered out in silence.

This news changed my life. Doggedly I continued to work on my book during the day, but at night the shattering possibility of death or blindness emerged in terrifying nightmares. I would wake shivering with fear at three in the morning. I didn't understand these dreams but I knew that they reflected the real state of my mind at a deep level, while in my day to day reality I did everything I felt was practical to overcome the brain tumour and its effects. In the beginning I had total faith in the medical experts.

I was accustomed to spending a little time each morning meditating and I continued to do so, in spite of the fact that my world seemed to be falling apart. Sometimes a voice would emerge in

meditation which I recorded in my diary because it seemed significant, but which I cannot say that I understood at the time. For example, three months after the diagnosis I wrote:

The solution to the problem is in the person. Find the person who is in charge of the problem. Is it you? Put the person in the place where the problem can be solved, starting on the thin ice of truth. When the person is in the right place, the problem will go. Pop!

I wrote this at a time when I was struggling to get the best medical treatment available for the problem that had been discovered. I consulted several doctors. When I met one I didn't like, or the medical system seemed to fail me, I would rehearse the meeting over and over in my head afterwards, saying to them, "It may be only a job to you but it's my head and I've only got one of them, so take care!" But it took over a year of unprecedented chaos and confusion for me to start listening to myself.

I was saved from serious surgery by the experts' confusion. At the National Hospital for Neurology in London, the charming consultant who ultimately took charge of my case, Michael Powell, is internationally renowned for treating pituitary tumours. He told me the tumour was growing with one 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 he couldn't say exactly what I had. "Ninety-five percent of pituitary tumours are just that," he said. "Then there are about four percent which are meningiomas. The remaining one percent are made up of about 150 different things and yours is one of those."

So there was no clear diagnosis or prognosis. All I knew was that the scans showed it was growing. A year after the initial diagnosis, the radiologist's report dated 17 October 2003 from The National Hospital of Neurology and Neurosurgery in London was clear but confusing: "The right cavernous sinus lesion has enlarged a little, especially posteriorly...The appearances are very atypical for the common causes of a mass in this general region. The change seems rapid for chondrosarcoma, and appearances are odd indeed for chordoma or meningioma." The lump was now about 15 mm. in diameter. I was increasingly cross-eyed, dizzy and nauseous. Some days I had so little energy I had to goad myself out of bed. Other days I felt normal. Massive headaches arrived to cut me down when I was least expecting them. And no one could tell me what might happen next. On top of this, the hospital lost my scans three times.

I managed to get copies of the MRI films and sent them to a radiologist in Seattle and a neurosurgeon in San Francisco – both recommended by my stepbrother who is a doctor with his own personal experience of cancer. Both agreed that what I had was a chondrosarcoma but the radiologist thought he could 'zap' it and the surgeon thought he could cut it out. A friend showed my scans to a Parisian neurosurgeon she respected and he agreed with my British consultant that the best policy would be to "wait and see." They were worried about disturbing the tumour in any way in case they needed to do surgery later. On the unscientific basis that I am a European, I decided to bow to the European doctors' judgment and wait and see, although I feared that this meant that they would operate when the symptoms became so severe that they outweighed the damage that surgery in that area would do to me. Placed as it was, I'd been told that damage was almost inevitable to the facial and optic nerves.

My journey of personal healing

Meanwhile I had begun to explore different forms of healing, something I had never previously considered possible. I read '*The Journey*' by Brandon Bayes, which was my first introduction to

the notion of a connection between the emotional and the physical state of the body. I began a form of self-healing, clearing emotional memories from the chakras, which I now call Old Wounds healing. I have found this process so useful that I published a version on my website and it forms part of my forthcoming book. This had a dramatic effect on my previously poor relationship with my mother, that astonished me, but for me it was a notable piece of evidence that changes I made in my private mental space had an effect regardless of time or physical distance.

For a little while I had been summoning the image of my mother at the time of my birth to mind in my meditation sessions. I knew just a little of the story. My mother had been left by herself to give birth in the Chinese Military Hospital in Singapore. She had a long and lonely 24-hour labour. I felt, rather than thought, my own commitment at birth to take care of my mother and look after her. I allowed myself to see that it had been my choice to allow my mother to be dependent on me. No wonder then that she seemed to take this commitment for granted in my adult life. The resentment I had felt towards her began to dissolve as I looked on her life with compassion. I simply felt I did not have the time or energy in my life to be angry with her any longer. I was able to let my mental image of her float away, leaving me feeling free and strong. This allowed me to imagine more than I had ever consciously known about her situation at the time, and let it go.

I knew that what I was 'seeing' was the product of my imagination, but I also felt, perhaps for the first time, that my imagination mattered as much as what I might then have called 'objective' or corroborated fact.

I could have collapsed with astonishment when my mother telephoned me a few weeks later from Spain. 'Hello,' she said. 'I just wanted to say, I'm really sorry for the way I treated you in the past.' This was totally out of character for her. My mother is a rebel and a fighter, a tough, creative woman who doesn't apologise.

"Thank you," I said. And as I put down the phone, I digested the magnitude of what had just happened. "So," I said to myself, this stuff really works."

As it turned out, my imagination had the power to change the 'facts' with such force that the new reality could be perceived by other people. My family were astonished to see the relationship between my mother and myself gradually blossom into the friendship it is today. It took me some time to learn that healing the body works on exactly the same principle.

I carried on applying this 'psychic washing cycle' to other phases of my life, but my symptoms did not improve even though my relationships with my loved ones began to change for the better. I had Reiki, spiritual healing, and a beautiful initiation from a Tibetan monk into the experience of Sanjay Menla, the medicine Buddha. I found all of these sessions had some power but only the last gave me a sense of inner illumination that kindled hope and clarity in me at a deeper level, despite my symptoms.

My half-sister introduced me to the work of the American healer, Martin Brofman, and she took me to workshops where I listened to him explain the Body Mirror System of Healing. This is a technique he developed nearly 40 years ago in response to his own healing from terminal cancer. I was sceptical at first, but I suddenly realised that since every conventional avenue of recovery I had tried had turned into a blind alley, it was time for me to decide how I would recover. I began by going to Martin for a healing.

I met him by appointment in London. He was round and told funny jokes, and he seemed a long way off my idea of a mystic. But it was Martin's work that led me to understand with clarity things I had only dimly perceived before. When I needed further help, I gradually learned that healers could boost my energy and clarity but that ultimately the healing I needed was to be found within me. My body gave me the language to access it, and it was a language I needed to learn. Martin spoke with extraordinary certainty about things I didn't quite understand.

He told me, "We work with the idea that your body is a mirror of your consciousness." I wasn't sure that I knew what this meant, but I was to find out very quickly. I sat in a chair with my eyes closed, while Martin lightly touched the parts of my body that correspond to the *chakras*, the main centres of biological energy that interlink with the body's neural and endocrine systems. I felt a charge like electricity surge through the part of my head where the tumour was, and about thirty minutes later I stood up, feeling, like Alice in Wonderland, a long way away from my feet.

Martin says:

With a brain tumor, it is the crown chakra that is involved, and this energy center is associated with the parts of the person's consciousness concerned with unity or separation, and their relationship with authority and/or their father. Thus, in looking at the events in the person's life at the time the symptom began, we can examine them within this context to see what perceptions need to be changed, or what situation needs to be resolved.

Martin explained what he had seen at the different levels of my energy. I recognized my life in all of his comments, but I was startled when he declared the brain tumour was the result of not doing what I wanted to do in my life and revealed tension in my relationship with my father.

No one knew about this tension better than me but I had dismissed it as a childhood story I had outgrown. I couldn't believe that it could have contributed to the development of a brain tumour.

It was at home the next day that understanding dawned. The first draft of my book was by then complete and I sat down at my desk to revise it. At the second sentence, I stopped. I'd written, 'I never lived with my father.' In that moment I saw how exploring my ancestor's story was an unconscious expression of my longing for a closer connection with my father.

As a child I had seen him only fleetingly because my parents' marriage had broken up when I was a baby and my father worked in South East Asia whilst my brothers and I returned to England with my mother. Our relationship seemed superficial and disappointing. When he died from leukemia at age 74, I felt like I had failed a vital exam, as if I had never been interesting enough for my father to be with me. By then I was grown woman of 42, so I tried to bury this feeling along with his body at the funeral. Now I saw with sudden clarity how those feelings had shaped my actions and reactions since birth. Even after his death I was bridging the gap between us by unravelling the forgotten history that we shared.

In the months that followed, I continued the process of discovery I had begun. I went to one of the intensive courses that Martin teaches where he insists that "Anything can be Healed" (the title of his book), and anyone can be a healer. I found to my surprise and excitement that I did have the ability to perceive other people's biological energy and to make a material difference to their lives with my intention.

My inner world was transformed. I knew, with absolute clarity, that I was going to get better, although I had no idea how. Even after this point, however, there were many days when I felt intensely depressed. For many months my symptoms were worse rather than better. I suffered badly from low energy and poor vision. The regular MRI scans showed no change. However, I continued the Old Wounds meditation, exploring and releasing my feelings, and deciding to do what I wanted to do, rather than what I felt I should do. This included leaving my job and learning to trust that what I wanted to do was alright.

I also took time to visualize my complete recovery, using imagery I borrowed from my gardening ancestor, to see the tumour cells dissolving and being carted away in a wheelbarrow. I reached the point where I was able to lie in the MRI scanner and enjoy the experience, knowing that I could go to a beautiful creative space in my mind, while the machine made drilling and cranking noises all around me.

Eventually the scans showed a slight sign of change. The white lump that I had seen stubbornly growing after every scan was beginning to collapse inward like a sail that the wind has gone out of. My husband, who was intensely sceptical about healing, but called my meditation sessions my 'medication,' looked at the image and said, "Only a little bit more for you to do."

I took heart. The scans were scheduled further and further apart. Six months later the scan showed a pronounced indentation. I was no longer suffering the symptoms that had been with me before. I had no headaches, the dizziness and tension had left me and my energy was greater than it had been for many years. In July of 2006 my consultant wrote that since I "seemed to be well" and there was "no change in the situation," I would no longer have to go to the hospital for scans.

Developing my own healing gifts

Soon after this I began to practice professionally as a healer, using Martin Brofman's Body Mirror System of Healing, which I have found to be profoundly effective. Martin has understood and decoded the body's emotional language in intense detail, and once you learn to speak this language, you have a powerful healer on your side. There is no greater healer than your body.

Working professionally as a healer has taught me more and more about a 'reality' I would not have considered when I became ill. It is a different view of 'facts' that lie alongside the conventional view of reality but that also embrace it. It is the reality of the metaphysical dimension that embraces the physical dimension and that we can all have access to if we allow ourselves to tune into it.

Since I understood that my body was teaching me to embrace the emotional and imaginative aspects of my mind in the life I was living I have felt that I am being invited to explore 'heaven on earth' in the present moment.

Once the tumour was considered to be 'stable' by the medical profession, I explored the possibility of some surgery to correct the extreme deviation of my right eye. I undertook the surgery amid conflicting advice from different surgeons, considering that I was prepared to lose my right eye if necessary since I was now sure that I wasn't going to prematurely lose my life. But, anticipating success I continued to send energy to my right eye. The operation has been a success, so that I have kept the sight in both eyes and have been able to live without double

vision again. While I have no way to prove this, I strongly believe my self-healing practices contributed to the successful outcome of this surgery.

Follow-ups to my early lessons

Since 2006 I have listened to my body and I have been able to correct other ailments in a similar way. I have never worried about my health and if I have symptoms, I have recognised them as part of the language I am speaking to myself. Eventually I went back to the National Hospital to ask for another scan, because I had never seen an MRI image that showed the tumour had gone completely. At the very beginning of 2011 I met my consultant to see the results, nervous in case they would unaccountably show 'no change' again.

This time my consultant searched a computer image, as the old MRI films were no longer in use. He looked hard. He couldn't find it. Eventually, he said happily, "Oh yes, That's it. Let's see. 5 mm. across and 13 mm. long. There's no blood in it. Nothing there to worry about.'

I felt a triumphant thud in the pit of my stomach, like a pool ball hitting the net. This tiny thing, the size of the tip of my little fingernail, was no more than a piece of scar tissue. What did the consultant think of it? Would he declare that this is a miracle? Would he say that he couldn't understand how this had happened? Well, not exactly. This charming man, on the verge of retirement, has been having some problems and needing surgery himself. He has other things on his mind. He said, "Well of course we don't have the earlier image on this computer, so I have nothing to compare it with. I think we never knew exactly what it was, did we? But it was obviously some sort of meningioma. Well that's it. I don't think you need to come back for about seven years. I won't be here then. I'll have retired. It will be someone else. Take care!"

I could have kissed him!

The 'Body Mirror System of Healing' is taught by Martin Brofman and others worldwide. See www.healer.ch for details. 'Anything Can be Healed' and 'Improve your Vision' by Martin Brofman are published by Findhorn Press. A brief article describing his healing approaches can be found at <http://www.healer.ch/bmsarticle.html>.

Anna Parkinson is a writer and healer who journeyed from scepticism to an understanding of healing through her own potentially fatal illness. In 2002 a diagnosis of a brain tumour created a profound change in her life, which proved ultimately to deliver a richer healthier understanding of living that she now shares through her work.



Anna Parkinson's book about practical self-healing, '*More Magic than Medicine*' will be available from March 2012. See her website: www.hunahealing.co.uk for details.

Her book about her ancestor, a famous 17th century herbalist, '*Nature's Alchemist, John Parkinson, Herbalist to Charles I*' was published 2007 by Frances Lincoln.

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