The Four Pillars of Healing

by Dr Joe Dispenza

It became clear to me, after years of interviewing people who had experienced spontaneous remissions and healings, that most of these individuals had four specific qualities in common. They had experienced the same coincidences.

Before I describe the four qualities common to these cases, I would like to note some of the factors that were no consistent among the people I studied. Not all practiced the same religion; several had no religious affiliation. Not many had a background as a priest, rabbi, minister, nun, or other spiritual profession. These individuals were not all New Agers. Only some prayed to a specific religious being or charismatic leader. They varied by age, gender, race, creed, culture, educational status, profession, and tax bracket. Only a few exercised daily, and they did not all follow the same dietary regimen. They were of varying body types and fitness levels. They varied in their habits pertaining to alcohol, cigarettes, television, and other media. Not all were heterosexual; not all were sexually active. My interviewees had no external situation in common that appeared to have caused the measurable changes in their health status.

Coincidence #1: An Innate Higher Intelligence Gives Us Life and Can Heal the Body

The people I spoke with who experienced a spontaneous remission believed that a higher order or intelligence lived within him or her. Whether they called it their divine, spiritual, or subconscious mind, they accepted that an inner power was giving them life every moment, and that it knew more than they, as humans, could ever know. Furthermore, if they could just tap into this intelligence, they could direct it to start working for them.

I have come to realize that there is nothing mystical about this greater mind. It is the same intelligence that organizes and regulates all the functions of the body. This power keeps our heart beating without interruption more than 100,000 times per day, without our ever stopping to think about it. That adds up to more than 40 million heartbeats per year, nearly three billion pulsations over a lifetime of 70 to 80 years. All this happens automatically, without care or cleaning, repair or replacement. An elevated consciousness is evidencing a will that is much greater than our will.

Likewise, we give no thought to what our heart is pumping: two gallons of blood per minute, well over 100 gallons per hour, through a system of vascular channels about 60,000 miles in length, or twice the circumference of the earth. Yet the circulatory system makes up only about 3 percent of our body mass. (1) Every 20 to 60 seconds, each blood cell makes a complete circuit through the body, and every red blood cell makes anywhere between 75,000 and 250,000 round trips in its lifetime. (By the way, if all of the red blood cells in your bloodstream were lined up end to end, they would reach 31,000 miles into the heavens.) In the second it takes you to inhale, you lose three million red blood cells, and in the next second, the same number will be replaced. How long would we live if we had to focus on making all this happen? Some greater (more expanded) mind must be orchestrating all of this for us.

Please stop reading for one second. Just now, some 100,000 chemical reactions took place in every single one of your cells. Now multiply 100,000 chemical reactions by the 70 to 100 trillion cells that make up your body. The answer has more zeros than most calculators can display, yet *every second,* that mind-boggling number of chemical reactions takes place inside of you. Do you have to think to perform even one of those reactions? Many of us can't even balance our checkbooks or

remember more than seven items from our shopping lists, so it's fortunate for us that some intelligence smarter than our conscious mind is running the show.

In that same second, 10 million of your cells died, and in the next instant, almost 10 million new cells took their place. (2) The pancreas itself regenerates almost all its cells in one day. Yet we give not a moment's thought to the disposal of those dead cells, or to all of the necessary functions that go into *mitosis,* the process that gives rise to the production of new cells for tissue repair and growth. Recent calculations estimate that the communication between cells actually travels faster than the speed of light. At the moment, you are probably giving some thought to your body. Yet something other than your conscious mind is causing the secretion of enzymes in exact amounts to digest the food you consumed into its component nutrients. Some mechanism of a higher order is filtering liters of blood through your kidneys every hour to make urine and eliminate wastes. (In one hour, the most advanced kidney dialysis machines can only filter 15 to 20 percent of the body's wastes from the blood.) This superior mind precisely maintains the 66 functions of the liver, although most people would never guess that this organ performs so many tasks.

The same intelligence can direct tiny proteins to read the sophisticated sequence of the DNA helix better than any current technology. That's some feat, considering that if we could unravel the DNA from all the cells of our body and stretch it out end to end, it would reach to the sun and back 150 times! (3) Somehow, our greater mind orchestrates tiny protein enzymes that constantly zip through the 3.2 billion nucleic acid sequences that are the genes in every cell, checking for mutations. Our own inner version of Homeland Security knows how to fight off thousands of bacteria and viruses without our ever needing to realize that we are under attack. It even memorizes those invaders so that if they enter us again, the immune system is better prepared.

Most marvelous of all, this life force knows how to start from just two cells, a sperm and an egg, and create our almost 100 trillion specialized cells. Having given us life, it then continually regenerates that life and regulates an incredible number of processes. We may not notice our higher mind at work, but the moment we die, the body starts to break down because this inner power has left.

Like the people I interviewed, I have had to acknowledge that some intelligence is at work in us that far exceeds our conscious abilities. It animates our body every single moment, and it's incredibly complex workings take place virtually behind our back. We're conscious beings, but typically, we pay attention only to events that we think are important to us. Those 100,000 chemical reactions every second in our 100 trillion cells are a miraculous expression of the life force. Yet the only time they become significant to the conscious mind is when something goes wrong.

This aspect of the self is objective and unconditional. If we are alive, this life force is expressing itself through us. We all share this innate order, independent of gender, age, and genetics. This intelligence transcends race, culture, social standing, economic status, and religious beliefs. It gives life to everyone, whether we think about it or not, whether we are awake or asleep, whether we are happy or sad. A deeper mind permits us to believe whatever we want, to have likes and dislikes, to be allowing or judgmental. This giver of life lends power to whatever we are being; it bestows on us the power to express life in whatever way we choose.

This intelligence knows how to maintain order among all of the cells, tissues, organs, and systems of the body because it *created* the body from two individual cells. Again, the power that made the body is the power that maintains and heals the body.

My subjects' illnesses signified that, to some extent, they had gotten out of touch or distanced themselves from part of their connection with this higher order. Maybe their own thinking had somehow directed this intelligence toward illness and away from health. But they came to understand that if they tapped into this intelligence and used their thoughts to direct it, it would know how to heal their bodies for them. Their greater mind already knew how to take care of business, if they could only make contact with it.

The abilities of this innate intelligence, subconscious mind, or spiritual nature are far greater than any pill, therapy, or treatment, and it is only waiting for our permission to willfully act. We are riding on the back of a giant, and we're getting a free ride.

Coincidence #2: Thoughts Are Real; Thoughts Directly Affect the Body

The way we think affects our body as well as our life. You may have heard this concept expressed before in various ways—for example, in that phrase "mind over matter." The people I interviewed not only shared this belief but also used it as a basis for making conscious changes in their own mind, body, and personal life.
To understand how they accomplished this, I began to study the growing body of research on the relationship between thought and the physical body.

There is an emerging field of science called *psychoneuroimmunology* that has demonstrated the connection between the mind and the body. I can describe what I learned in these simplistic terms: Your every thought produces a biochemical reaction in the brain. The brain then releases chemical signals that are transmitted to the body, where they act as the messengers of the thought. The thoughts that produce the chemicals in the brain allow your body to *feel* exactly the way you were just *thinking*. So every thought produces a chemical that is matched by a feeling in your body. Essentially, when you think happy, inspiring, or positive thoughts, your brain manufactures chemicals that make you feel joyful, inspired, or uplifted. For example, when you anticipate an experience that is pleasurable, the brain immediately makes a chemical *neurotransmitter* called *dopamine,* which turns the brain and body on in anticipation of that experience and causes you to begin to feel excited. If you have hateful, angry, or self-deprecating thoughts, the brain also produces chemicals called *neuropeptides* that the body responds to in a comparable way. You feel hateful, angry, or unworthy. You see, your thoughts immediately do become matter.

When the body responds to a thought by having a feeling, this initiates a response in the brain. The brain, which constantly monitors and evaluates the status of the body, notices that the body is feeling a certain way. In response to that bodily feeling, the brain generates thoughts that produce corresponding chemical messengers; you begin to think the way you are feeling. Thinking creates feeling, and then feeling creates thinking, in a continuous cycle.

This loop eventually creates a particular state in the body that determines the general nature of how we feel and behave. We will call this a *state of being*. For example, suppose a person lives much of her life in a repeating cycle of thoughts and feelings related to insecurity. The moment she has a thought about not being good enough or smart enough or enough of anything, her brain releases chemicals that produce a feeling of insecurity. Now she is feeling the way she was just thinking. Once she is feeling insecure, she then will begin to think the way she was just feeling. In other words, her body is now causing her to think. This thought leads to more feelings of insecurity, and so the cycle perpetuates itself. If this person's thoughts and feelings continue, year after year, to generate the same biological feedback loop between her brain and her body, she will exist in a state of being that is called "insecure."

The more we think the same thoughts, which then produce the same chemicals, which cause the body to have the same feelings, the more we physically become modified by our thoughts. In this way, depending on what we are thinking and feeling, we create our state of being. What we think about and the energy or intensity of these thoughts directly influences our health, the choices we make, and, ultimately, our quality of life.

Applying this reasoning to their own lives, many interviewees understood that many of their thoughts not only did not serve their health, but also might be the reason their unhappy or unhealthy conditions developed in the first place. Many of them had spent nearly every day for decades in internal states of anxiety, worry, sadness, jealousy, anger, or some other form of emotional pain. Thinking and feeling, feeling and thinking like that for so long, they said, is what had manifested their conditions.

From this, they reasoned that to transform their physical health, they had to address their *attitudes*: groups of thoughts that are clustered in habitual sequences. One's attitudes create a state of being that is directly connected to the body. Thus, a person who wants to improve his health has to change entire patterns in how he thinks, and these new thought patterns or attitudes will eventually change his state of being. To do this, he must break free of perpetual loops of detrimental thinking and feeling, feeling and thinking, and replace them with new, beneficial ones.

Here's an example: Developing one digestive ailment after another and living with constant pain in his spine finally prompted Tom to examine his life. Upon self-reflection, he realized that he had been suppressing feelings of desperation caused by the stress of staying in a job that made him miserable. He had spent two decades being angry and frustrated with his employer, coworkers, and family. Other people often experienced Tom's short temper, but for all that time, his secret thoughts had revolved around self-pity and victimization.
Repeatedly experiencing these rigid patterns of thinking, believing, feeling, and living amounted to toxic attitudes that Tom's body just "couldn't stomach." His healing began, Tom told me, when he recognized that his unconscious attitudes were the basis for his state of being—for the person he had become. Most of those whose case histories I studied reached conclusions similar to Tom's.

To begin changing their attitudes, these individuals began to pay constant attention to their thoughts. In particular, they made a conscious effort to observe their automatic thought processes, especially the harmful ones. To their surprise, they found that most of their persistent, negative inner statements were not true. In other words, just because we have a thought does not necessarily mean that we have to believe it is true.
As a matter of fact, most thoughts are ideas that we make up and then come to believe. Believing merely becomes a habit. For example, Sheila, with all her digestive disorders, noticed how often she thought of herself as a victim without the capacity to change her life. She saw that these thoughts had triggered feelings of helplessness. Questioning this belief enabled her to admit that her hardworking mother had done nothing to prevent or dissuade Sheila from going after her dreams.

Some of my subjects likened their repetitive thoughts to computer programs running all day, every day, in the background of their lives. Since these people were the ones operating these programs, they could elect to change or even delete them.

This was a crucial insight. At some point, all those I interviewed had to fight against the notion that one's thoughts are uncontrollable. Instead, they had to choose to be free and to take control of their thinking. Everyone had resolved to interrupt habitual negative thought processes before they could produce painful chemical reactions in their body. These individuals were determined to manage their thoughts and eliminate ways of thinking that did not serve them.

Conscious thoughts, repeated often enough, become unconscious thinking. In a common example of this, we must consciously think about our every action while we are learning to drive. After much practice, we can drive 100 miles from point A to point B and not remember any part of the trip, because our subconscious mind is typically at the wheel. We've all experienced being in an unaware state during a routine drive, only to feel our conscious mind reengaging in response to an unusual engine sound or the rhythmic thump of a flat tire. So if we continually entertain the same thoughts, they'll start off as conscious ones, but they'll ultimately become unconscious, automatic thought programs. There is a sound explanation in neuroscience for how this happens. You'll understand how this happens from a scientific standpoint by the time you finish reading this book.

These unconscious ways of thinking become our unconscious ways of being. And they directly affect our lives just as conscious thoughts do. Just as all thoughts set off biochemical reactions that lead to behavior, our repetitive, unconscious thoughts produce automatic, acquired patterns of behavior that are almost involuntary. These behavioral patterns are habits and most surely, they become neurologically hardwired in the brain.

It takes awareness and effort to break the cycle of a thinking process that has become unconscious. First, we need to step out of our routines so we can look at our lives. Through contemplation and self-reflection, we can become aware of our unconscious scripts. Then, we must observe these thoughts without responding to them, so that they no longer initiate the automatic chemical responses that produce habitual behavior. Within all of us, we possess a level of self-awareness that can observe our thinking. We must learn how to be separate from these programs and when we do, we can willfully have dominion over them. Ultimately, we can exercise control over our thoughts. In doing so, we are neurologically breaking apart thoughts that have become hardwired in our brain.

Since we know from neuroscience that thoughts produce chemical reactions in the brain, it would make sense, then, that our thoughts would have some effect on our physical body by changing our internal state. Not only do our thoughts matter in how we live out our life, but our thoughts *become* matter right within our own body. Thoughts . . . matter.

Out of their belief that thoughts are real, and that the way people think directly impacts their health and their lives, these individuals saw that their own thinking processes were what had gotten them into trouble. They began to examine their life analytically. When they became inspired and diligent about changing their thinking, they were able to revitalize their health. A new attitude can become a new habit.

Coincidence #3: We Can Reinvent Ourselves

Motivated as they were by serious illnesses both physical and mental, the people I interviewed realized that in thinking new thoughts, they had to go all the way. To become a changed person, they would have to rethink themselves into a new life. All of those who restored their health to normal did so after making a conscious decision to reinvent themselves.

Breaking away often from daily routines, they spent time alone, thinking and contemplating, examining and speculating about what kind of people they wanted to become. They asked questions that challenged their most deeply held assumptions about who they were. "What if" questions were vital to this process: What if I stop being an unhappy, self-centered, suffering person, and how can I change? What if I no longer worry or feel guilty or hold grudges? What if I begin to tell the truth to myself and to others? Those "what ifs" led them to other questions: Which people do I know who are usually happy, and how do they behave? Which historical figures do I admire as noble and

unique? How could I be like them? What would I have to say, do, think, and act like in order to present myself differently to the world? What do I want to change about myself?

Gathering information was another important step on the path to reinvention. Those I interviewed had to take what they knew about themselves, and then reformat their thinking to develop new ideas of who they wanted to become. Everyone started with ideas from their own life experiences. They also delved into books and movies about people they respected. Piecing together some of the merits and viewpoints of these figures, along with other qualities they were contemplating, they used all this as raw material to start building a new representation of how they wanted to express themselves.

As these individuals explored possibilities for a better way of being, they also learned new modes of thinking. They interrupted the flow of repetitive thoughts that had occupied most of their waking moments. Letting go of these familiar, comfortable habits of thought, they assembled a more evolved concept of whom they could become, replacing an old idea of themselves with a new, greater ideal. They took time daily to mentally rehearse what this new person would be like. As discussed in chapter 1, mental rehearsal stimulates the brain to grow new neural circuits and changes the way the brain and mind work.

In 1995, in the *Journal of Neurophysiology,* an article was published demonstrating the effects that mental rehearsal alone had on developing neural networks in the brain.6 *Neural networks* are individual clusters of neurons (or nerve cells) that work together and independently in a functioning brain. Neural nets, as we will affectionately call them, are the latest model in neuroscience to explain how we learn and how we remember. They can also be used to explain how the brain changes with each new experience, how different types of memories are formed, how skills develop, how conscious and unconscious actions and behaviors are demonstrated, and even how all forms of sensory information are processed. Neural networks are the current understanding in neuroscience that explains how we change on a cellular level. In this particular research, four groups of individuals were asked to participate in a five-day study that involved practicing the piano, in order to measure the changes that might take place in the brain. The first group of volunteers learned and memorized a specific one-handed, five-finger sequence that they physically practiced every day for two hours during that five-day period.

The second group of individuals was asked to play the piano without any instruction or knowledge of any specific sequence. They played randomly for two hours every day for five days without learning any sequence of notes.

The third group of people never even touched the piano, but were given the opportunity to observe what was taught to the first group until they knew it by memory in their minds. Then they mentally rehearsed their exercises by imagining themselves in the experience for the same length of time per day as the participants in the first group.

The fourth group was the control group; they did nothing at all. They never learned or practiced anything in this particular experiment. They never even showed up.

At the end of the five-day study, the experimenters used a technique called transcranial magnetic stimulation along with a few other sophisticated gadgets, in order to measure any changes that took place in the brain. To their surprise, the group that only rehearsed mentally showed almost the same changes, involving expansion and development of neural networks in the same specific area of their brain, as the participants who physically practiced the sequences on the piano. The second group, which learned no piano sequences at all, showed very little change in their brain, since they did not

play the same series of exercises over and over each day. The randomness of their activity never stimulated the same neural circuits on a repetitive basis, and thus did not strengthen any additional nerve cell connections. The control group, the ones who never showed up, evidenced no change at all.

How did the third group produce the same brain changes as the first group without ever touching the keyboard? Through mental focusing, the third group of participants repeatedly fired specific neural networks in particular areas of their brain. As a result, they wired those nerve cells together in greater measure. This concept in neuroscience is called *Hebbian learning*. (7) The idea is simple: *Nerve cells that fire together, wire together.* Therefore, when gangs of neurons are repeatedly stimulated, they will build stronger, more enriched connections between each other.

According to the functional brain scans in this particular experiment, the subjects that were mentally rehearsing were activating their brain in the same way as if they were actually performing the endeavor. The repetitive firing of the neurons shaped and developed a cluster of neurons in a specific part of the brain, which now supported the pattern of conscious intent. At will, their thoughts became mapped and plotted in the brain. Interestingly, the circuits strengthened and developed in the absolute same area of the brain as the group that physically practiced. They grew and changed their brain just by *thinking*. With the proper mental effort, the brain does not know the difference between mental or physical effort.

Sheila's experience of curing her digestive illness illustrates this process of reinvention. Sheila had resolved that she would no longer revisit memories of her past and the associated attitudes that had defined her as a victim. Having identified the habitual thought processes she wanted to release, she cultivated a level of awareness where she had enough control to interrupt her unconscious thoughts. She therefore no longer fired the same associated neural networks on a daily basis. Once Shelia gained dominion over those old thought patterns and no longer fired those neurological habits of thinking, her brain began pruning away those unused circuits. This is another, related aspect of Hebbian learning that we can sum up as follows: *Nerve cells that no longer fire together, no longer wire together.* This is the universal law of "use it or lose it" in action, and it can work wonders in changing old paradigms of thought about ourselves. Over time, Sheila shed the burden of old, limited thoughts that had been coloring her life.

Now it became easier for Sheila to imagine the person she wanted to be. She explored possibilities that she had never considered before. For weeks on end, she focused on how she would think and act as this new, unknown person. She constantly reviewed these new ideas about herself so that she could remember who she was going to be that day. Eventually, she turned herself into a person who was healthy, happy, and enthusiastic about her future. She grew new brain circuits, just like the piano players have done.
It is interesting to note here that most people I interviewed never felt like they had to discipline themselves to do this. Instead, they loved mentally practicing who they wanted to become.

Like Sheila, all the people who shared their case histories with me succeeded in reinventing themselves. They persisted in attending to their new ideal until it became their familiar way of being. They became someone else, and that new person had new habits. They broke the habit of being themselves. How they accomplished this brings us to the fourth credo shared by those who experienced physical healings.

Coincidence #4: We Are Capable of Paying Attention So Well That We Can Lose Track of Relative Space and Time

The people I interviewed knew that others before them had cured their own diseases, so they believed that healing was possible for them too. But they did not leave their healing up to chance. Hoping and wishing would not do the trick. Merely knowing what they had to do was not enough. Healing required these rare individuals to change their mind permanently and intentionally create the outcomes they desired. Each person had to reach a state of absolute decision, utter will, inner passion, and complete focus. As Dean put it, “You just have to make up your mind!”

This approach requires great effort. The first step for all of them was the decision to make this process the most important thing in their life. That meant breaking away from their customary schedules, social activities, television viewing habits, and so on. Had they continued to follow their habitual routines, they would have continued being the same person who had manifested illness. To change, to cease being the person they had been, they could no longer do the things they had typically done.

Instead, these mavericks sat down every day and began to reinvent themselves. They made this more important than doing anything else, devoting every moment of their spare time to this effort. Everyone practiced becoming an objective observer of his or her old familiar thoughts. They refused to allow anything but their intentions to occupy their mind. You may be thinking, “That’s pretty easy to do when faced with a serious health crisis. After all, my own life is in my hands. ”Well, aren’t most of us suffering from some affliction—physical, emotional, or spiritual—that affects the quality of our life? Don’t those ailments deserve the same kind of focused attention?

Certainly, these folks had to wrestle with limiting beliefs, self-doubt, and fears. They had to deny both their familiar internal voices and the external voices of other people, especially when these voices urged them to worry and to focus on the predicted clinical outcome of their condition.

Nearly everyone commented that this level of mind is not easy to attain. They had never realized how much chatter occupies the untrained mind. At first they wondered what would happen if they began to fall into habitual thought patterns. Would they have the strength to stop themselves from going back to their old ways? Could they maintain awareness of their thoughts throughout their day? But with experience, they found that whenever they reverted to being their former self, they could detect this and interrupt that program. The more they practiced paying attention to their thoughts, the easier this process became, and the better they felt about their future. Feeling peaceful and calm, soothed by a sense of clarity, a new self-emerged.

Interestingly, all the subjects reported experiencing a phenomenon that became part of their new life. During extended periods of introspection on reinventing themselves, they became so involved in focusing on the present moment and on their intent that something remarkable happened. They completely lost track of their body, time, and space. Nothing was real to them except their thoughts.

Let me put this in perspective. Our everyday, conscious awareness is typically involved with three things:

• First, we are aware of being in a body. Our brain receives feedback on what is happening within the body and what stimuli it is receiving from our environment, and we describe what the body feels in terms of physical sensations.

• Second, we are aware of our environment. The space around us is our connection to external reality; we pay attention to the things, objects, people, and places in our surroundings.

• Third, we have a sense of time passing; we structure our life within the concept of time.

However, when people inwardly focus through serious self-reflective contemplation, when they are mentally rehearsing new possibilities of who they could become, they are capable of becoming so immersed in what they are thinking about that, at times, their attention is completely detached from their body and their environment; these seem to fade away or disappear. Even the concept of time vanishes. Not that they are thinking about time, but after such periods, when they open their eyes, they expect to find that just a minute or two has elapsed, only to discover that hours have gone by. At these moments, we don't worry about problems, nor do we feel pain. We disassociate from the sensations of our body and the associations to everything in our environment. We can get so involved in the creative process that we forget about ourselves.

When this phenomenon occurs, these individuals are aware of nothing but their thoughts. In other words, the only thing that is *real* to them is the awareness of what they are thinking. Nearly all have expressed this in similar words. "I would go to this other place in my mind," one subject said, "where there were no distractions, there was no time, I had no body, there was no thing—nothing—except my thoughts." In effect, they became a no-body, a no-thing, in no-time. They left their present association with being a somebody, the "you," or "self," and they became a nobody.

In this state, as I was to learn, these individuals could begin to become exactly what they were imagining. The human brain, through the frontal lobe, has the ability to *lower the volume to,* or even shut out, the stimuli from the body and the environment, as well as the awareness of time. The latest research in functional brain scan technology has proven that when people are truly focused and concentrating, the brain circuits associated with time, space and the feelings/ movements/sensory perceptions of the body literally quiet down.8 As human beings, we have the privilege to make our thoughts more real than anything else, and when we do, the brain records those impressions in the deep folds of its tissues. Mastering this skill is what allows us to begin to rewire our brains and change our lives.