



**“A thought is a real thing
that can turn biochemistry
on or off.”**

Holistic healing, redefined

Leading nutritional therapist and wellbeing coach Niki Gratrix talks about the profound effect of our thoughts and feelings on our health, why alternative treatments can be so hit and miss, and why patients and practitioners alike need to start thinking in truly holistic terms. Interview by Sarah Best.

The role of the mind-body connection in health and healing has been known about for millennia, yet orthodox medicine largely ignores it. Let's talk first about the positive side of this equation – the established healing power of positive thoughts and emotions.

What is the healing agent that has been more studied than any other in the history of medicine? The placebo effect! Every well-run study has to take this into account and then factor it out – factor out that a percentage of the subjects are getting better on a sugar pill, just because they believe it will make them better! How powerful is the human mind? In study after study, a significant percentage of patients are getting an improvement in the health condition being studied just through *belief*.

The orthodox view is that this is only important as something that needs to be factored out. *Hello?* They have it completely back to front and they're missing a huge part of health and disease. This phenomenon is one of the most important proofs of how profoundly internal subjective feelings and beliefs impact the physical body.

Let's now consider the flip side of that coin. I think most readers would be surprised at just how much is now known about the many specific, measurable ways in which stress affects our biochemistry, and therefore our health.

Yes, we now understand better than ever how chronic stress affects the body. At least 60% of illness, and possibly more, comes from the psycho-emotional side of things. A thought is a real thing that can turn biochemistry on or off. Your thoughts and feelings are translated to the nervous system, the master regulator of everything else in the body, including the endocrine, immune and digestive systems.

Chronic stress causes a part of the brain called the amygdala to continually over-stimulate the sympathetic nervous system. The sympathetic nervous system is the branch that responds to threats. When it is triggered, the parasympathetic nervous system, which is responsible for digestion, detoxification and repair, is down-regulated as energy is diverted to the emergency – with obvious negative implications.

When the sympathetic nervous system is consistently up-regulated into a hyper-vigilant state this causes multiple negative effects in the body. For example, the amygdala over-stimulates the whole brain, keeping many brain circuits in a state of hyper-arousal. This adversely affects the levels of neurotransmitters in

the brain, including serotonin and dopamine, leading to sleep and mood problems.

Could you give some additional specific examples of the effects of chronic stress on the body?

One of the most devastating is the effect on stomach acid and other gastrointestinal secretions, including pancreatic digestive enzymes. It is basic biochemistry that these are down-regulated when the parasympathetic nervous system is down-regulated, with devastating impacts on digestion.

Stomach acid is required for the absorption of vitamin B12, minerals and protein. Low stomach acid leads to vitamin and mineral deficiencies, methylation [a detoxification pathway] crashes, mitochondrial malfunction, blood sugar imbalances, sub-clinical low thyroid and a number of other effects. You can't get rid of chronic candida or blood sugar issues if your stomach acid is low, because of nutrient malabsorption. Incidentally, we've found through testing that around 80-90% of patients with ME or CFS [Chronic Fatigue Syndrome] have low stomach acid.

Another thing with stomach acid – and it's so missed, this one – is that it's one of the first lines of defence for the immune system because it's a sterilizing agent that protects us against ingested bacteria, parasites and other bugs. When this line of defence is not operating, it is easy for these to get into the system. Also, 80% of the immune system is in the gut, and when stomach acid is inadequate there will be a full-scale war going on in there because the immune system is tied up fighting these invaders. This allows latent viruses to keep reactivating. Good gut bacteria is fantastically important for the immune system.

A continuing state of chronic stress can severely affect every single organ and system in the body, and it can also cause higher levels of oxidative stress throughout the body. So your thoughts and emotions can affect your health in every way.

You specialize primarily in treating CFS/ME and you've observed in your practice that the chronic stress pattern you've outlined is a leading causal factor. I'm sure there will be many reading this who have CFS/ME, and many others who do not, but who nonetheless recognize this pattern in themselves, along with a number of the symptoms associated with CFS/ME. How different are these two groups?

First, I estimate that up to two-thirds of people with CFS/ME are living without a diagnosis because the diagnostic criteria are poor, they're often misunderstood and there is no biomedical test for the >>

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illness. So many could actually have the illness and just not realize it. Second, there is the subgroup of “adrenal fatigue” patients. Some 95% of CFS/ME patients will have adrenal fatigue, which is just one part of their problem. But I estimate there are epidemic levels of people out there who do not have full-blown CFS/ME, but are suffering from adrenal fatigue.

This epidemic of what I call the “walking wounded” with adrenal fatigue is completely missed by the medical profession. There is a continuum between optimal health on one side, and diagnosed disease on the other, and you can be anywhere on that continuum. The majority of people are nowhere near optimal health but not at a full-blown disease state either.

Orthodox medicine will only diagnose a problem with the adrenals when they have *failed*. This would be called Addison’s disease – and it is rare. Organs and systems can under-function without failing and when the adrenal glands under-function this results in many symptoms for the patient to endure – but medics will tell these people there’s nothing wrong with them.

Interestingly, with CFS/ME what is happening is multiple organs and systems are under-functioning at the same time, resulting in severe symptoms, but no single organ is failing. This is why the medics can’t find anything wrong with the majority of patients.

This can start with a physical trigger, a psychological trigger or an environmental trigger – the end result is the same. When one organ or system is under-functioning, that can affect another, which can affect another, and so on. I read a quote recently that sums it up very well: “In CFS/ME, you trade function for existence.” In other words, CFS/ME is an adaptation to burnout.

When it comes to determining who will and won’t get CFS/ME, there is also a genetic influence: some people get breast cancer under stress, while others get CFS/ME. When you push the body past its adaptive capacity, you manifest disease to rebalance the body.

We’ve already established that conventional medicine all but ignores the mind-body connection. Would you agree that the world of complementary and alternative medicine also grossly underestimates its power?

Absolutely. Most complementary and alternative practitioners are only paying lip service to the psycho-emotional side. They might recommend that patients “try not to get stressed” or take up yoga,

breathing exercises or meditation. Don’t let me give the impression that these steps are not helpful – they certainly are.

But they don’t address any of the internal variables which caused the problem – they don’t tackle the unconscious side of things. Telling someone with chronic fatigue syndrome to simply stop engaging in the behaviours which caused them to burn out is like asking a 40-a-day smoker to stop smoking, or a grossly obese person to eat 1,500 calories per day!

Stress is addictive and it perpetuates itself and this needs to be dealt with head on. We need tools to deal with the chronic, unconscious stress response within the amygdala. The power of brief psychotherapies, such as Emotional Freedom Technique, has been grossly underestimated. I predict the next wave of understanding in the alternative health field will be how much our psychology affects our health and wellbeing.

As well as a full appreciation of the importance of the mind-body connection, it’s also important to understand that the body is made up not only of the physical body we can see, but also the electric body (or “body electric”) – this is where emotions lie – and the light body or biophoton field, which is where your thoughts reside. These are the invisible parts of the body, governed by the realm of physics, not biochemistry. This is why acupuncture works, and where the Eastern concepts of *chi* and the chakra system come from.

No doubt, the average medical doctor would dismiss what you just said as “woo woo” and “unscientific”. What do you say to that?

This is odd because for a start a lot of medical testing equipment already acknowledges and uses the body electric. CAT and MRI scans measure the flow of electricity through the body. Also, we each have an electromagnetic field that surrounds us, which is why magnets can affect our emotions and why Wi-fi and geopathic stress are impacting human health.

As for the biophoton field, the biophysicist Fritz-Albert Popp proved that human cells emit laser-like light particles which contain energy and information. This field accounts for many of the things we can’t explain through biochemistry. Communication in the body is going on at the speed of light through these biophotons, or light particles – Popp proved it.

Ask most people where memories are stored and they’ll say in the brain. Medical science has shown we have circuitry in the brain for short-term memory but it hasn’t found the circuitry for long-term. It turns out that long-term memories are stored at the cellular level – in the biophoton field. The medical profession still acknowledges only the realm of the physical – the tiny amount of reality our senses can perceive.

Please tell us more about how these different bodies interrelate?

The body electric provides coherence to the physical body – specifically to our biochemistry. For example, enzymes are highly sensitive to voltage; the electrical properties of tissues. The Phase One and Phase Two liver detoxification enzyme system is controlled by the parasympathetic nervous system, and regulated by electrical impulses as well as biochemistry. Disordered electrical impulses from the nervous system cause deranged detox enzymes, causing the liver’s detoxification processes to be down-regulated.

Beyond the body electric you have the biophoton field, which is governed by the physics of light. The biophoton field is one reason raw food is so good for the body. Sunlight is captured and light particles are biochemically changed into food by plants – eating those plants raw gives an ultimate level of coherence to this field.

How important is sunlight turning out to be for health? It’s coming through now that it’s not just because of the D3 – it’s also the light particles. Vitamin D in a capsule that was made in a laboratory? It may be better than nothing in a Northern Hemisphere

winter, but everyone feels better with more sunlight.

We now know that a protein called tubulin transmits light to and from the nervous system, conducting information at the speed of light. DNA in each cell emits light which is picked up via tubulin and coordinated back to every cell in the body. Cells communicate through a field of light; a pulsating light field. The light body effectively tells the nervous system what to do.

Can you give an example of how this can impact us as individuals?

Let's take a patient with CFS/ME. In some cases we can do all the treatments to calm down the stress response in the amygdala, and there is improvement but they're still in a state of chronic unconscious stress. This is usually because of a past psycho-emotional trauma frozen into the biophoton field.

This brings us onto the work of a German medical doctor called Dietrich Klinghardt, who I think is the world's leading mind-body practitioner, and probably a genius. The Klinghardt Axiom is: "The body always strives to achieve equilibrium between stored unresolved emotional issues, toxin storage and the presence of pathogenic microbes." Therefore, "A patient cannot be 'detoxed' beyond the degree to which emotional issues are released."

I recommend the free interview with Dr Klinghardt – "Heavy Metal Toxicity, Chronic Infections and Psychological Trauma" – at klinghardtacademy.com. Like us, Dr Klinghardt finds that if you put a patient with unresolved emotional trauma on a heavy-metal cleanse, even the strongest biochemical detoxifiers produce nothing in the urine. Clear the trauma with Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) or Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) or similar techniques, and the heavy metals come flooding out.

Unresolved emotional trauma creates abnormal electrical impulses which travel down the central nervous system into the tissues and organs, and this creates severe abnormalities in both the intra- and extra-cellular environment – pH changes, conductivity changes, changes in receptors on cell walls and, as mentioned earlier, the effect on the liver detoxification enzyme system. This is the beginning of chronic illness.

In this light, let's now consider orthodox medicine and why it is that it has so little to offer those suffering the most common illnesses of our time.

Orthodox medicine is still focused on looking for a single cause and a single cure. This is taking a very mechanistic and reductionist approach to health, and humans are so much more complex than that. Orthodox medicine's Newtonian approach to the body is at least 400 years out of date. What is needed is a complete paradigm shift to move at least to an Einsteinian, systems-based theory which takes into account how one thing affects another. Answers will never be found in looking at individual body parts or organs in isolation.

The old model of medicine is totally inadequate at dealing with chronic complex illnesses, such as CFS/ME, heart disease, cancer, arthritis, osteoporosis, diabetes and depression. These are the major diseases blighting humans in the developed world and they involve multiple interacting systems and organs. For example, you'd think heart disease would involve just the heart and circulatory system. Wrong. A primary factor associated with heart disease is chronic inflammation, which is an immune system imbalance.

So what is needed is a systems approach where the human body is seen as a set of dynamic, interacting systems which cannot be understood by reductionist approaches that look at individual parts in isolation. Causes are multi-factorial, and coherent answers to chronic illnesses can only be found when the body is seen as greater than the sum of its individual parts. >>



Blocks to recovery

"I've identified four energy-depleting personality types arising from internal coping strategies that: (a) would usually have been learned at a young age and (b) cause behaviours which trigger burnout. The chronic over-achiever is the person who finds it impossible to slow down. The perfectionist puts a huge amount of energy into worrying about getting things wrong. The helper puts everyone else's needs before their own. The anxiety type is constantly on edge, usually due to some early trauma. All four of these types have associated behaviours that cause them not to get the rest and relaxation they need.

Pacing activities correctly is crucial to recovery from CFS/ME and I now think that some 60% of patients have difficulty getting pacing right. They either chronically under or overdo things and the reasons are 99% due to psycho-emotional issues.

The chronic over-achiever slowing down – what does that open up? It goes straight to their core wound, and means facing their lack of self-worth – the emotion driving this type in the first place. These people are prone to push through, going on extreme detox regimes, overdoing supplements, and so on. In other cases, patients won't push themselves at all due to fear. They had terrible experiences of the body failing them in the past, so they are frightened this might happen again – not realizing they are well on the way to healing and they *can* now do more."



“Understand that you possess the innate capacity to heal any imbalance.”

To what extent would you say the world of complementary and alternative medicine is operating from these principles?

If we look at the treatments out there that fall outside orthodox medicine, many of them call themselves “holistic” but they are still stuck in the old, allopathic medical model. An example of this would be prescribing St John’s Wort instead of antidepressants, without doing anything to address the underlying cause of the depression. These practitioners may be totally against pharmaceutical drugs yet still stuck in the old model of one-shot cures which only treat symptoms.

In the CFS/ME world, some experts say it’s all about one organ, i.e. the adrenals. For others it’s all about nutrition. This is a piecemeal approach, and chronic complex illness requires a *multi-factorial* approach. You’ll have someone working only at the nutritional level, someone working at the psychological level, and someone else working at the acupuncture level and they’ll each be getting great results with a percentage of patients. What they’re not realizing is that there are others using completely different approaches from theirs, yet getting this same level of results!

I follow with interest the conflicts within the raw food world, and the fact some experts are saying their way is the only way. I call this “megalomania bred of isolation”.

It’s the one-shot approach again! Their regime works great for them and for a lot of the people they recommend it to and they might be getting a significant improvement in 30-40% of cases, but that’s still only 30-40%. The other 60-70% need something completely different, or in many cases, multiple things.

We all need to eat plenty of raw plant foods for optimal health but you could send a patient down a dead end by putting them on a 100% raw diet. Some thrive on that, but others get much sicker on it. Yet some practitioners are completely oblivious to the warning signs, putting how bad the patient is feeling down to that amazing catch-all known as “detox symptoms”.

What might the solution be?

Experts need to be communicating much more with each other, and realizing that their approach is not the be all and end all. It wouldn’t take anything away from what they’re doing if they were to admit that their theories represent a *partial* truth.

I would say the majority of practitioners are good people, genuinely trying to offer solutions that help. If they understood that they are onto a partial truth, they would be able to help many more people – “This is what I have to offer and you might want to try this, this and this, too.”

I’m not suggesting that practitioners train and become experts in everything or even just, say, naturopathy and transpersonal psychology. Only that they become “integrally informed” practitioners – which means they have a framework of understanding and appreciation for *all* factors which can be affecting a patient’s health. It is crucial that they know how they fit into the wider picture, the strengths and limitations of their own modality, and when they need to refer the patient on to someone else. Patients also need to think in “multi-factorial” terms when making choices about which treatments and health practices might be helpful for them.

Unfortunately, the raw food world, the CFS/ME world, and the alternative health world as a whole all lack a roadmap showing how all these partial truths interrelate. Leaders need to start to communicate and cooperate with each other to come up with a cohesive and inclusive framework. That’s been my focus for the last five to ten years.

What might such a map, or framework, look like?

The best and most comprehensive one I’ve come across is the four-quadrant model identified by the American philosopher and teacher Ken Wilber, which is an operating system for everything in the cosmos that can affect a human being. This model is so comprehensive it can be applied across multiple disciplines, including politics and business, as well as health.

The model states that all of reality can be classified into four quadrants by differentiating between the objective world (the right two quadrants) and the subjective world of inner beliefs and attitudes (the left two quadrants). Further categorization can then be made between the individual and the collective. This model provides a map of all possible factors that can affect and influence human health.

So where digestive issues are playing a part in an illness, that is an upper right quadrant cause. An energy-depleting personality type is an upper left quadrant cause. Exposure to pesticides is lower right quadrant, and family relationship issues are lower left quadrant.

Within each quadrant there are also different levels of healing – for example the physical body, the body electric, the light body, and so on. It is useful to understand that conventional medicine exists almost entirely in the upper right quadrant and only at the *bottom* level of healing – i.e. the gross physical body. It deals with the physical organism using purely physical interventions.

Like medical doctors, many complementary and alternative practitioners are overly focused on the top right quadrant. So, for example, instead of drugs they are using nutritional supplements to treat symptoms, rather than identifying and addressing the true causes.

Nutrition is an important factor but it’s just one factor; one part of the story. When it comes to chronic complex illness, diet is usually less than 50% of the full solution, and it’s important people realize this. When dealing with illness, you have to treat each case at the causal level. There’s no point focusing on biochemistry if the causal level is the biophoton field.

Some practitioners working in the top left hand quadrant believe it’s all about mind and emotions. This is the “law of attraction” or “thoughts create reality” brigade. Here the influence of diet, deficiencies and toxins is often downplayed or ignored completely – at the expense of patient welfare.

In addition to getting stuck in one quadrant, practitioners can

<p>You – your internal subjective experience</p> <p>Thoughts, beliefs, attitudes</p> <p>Emotions, feelings</p> <p>The five senses – sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch</p>	<p>You – your body</p> <p>Anatomy and biochemistry of the body: atoms, molecules, organs, systems</p> <p>The body “electric”</p> <p>Popp’s biophoton field and the physics of the energy body</p>
<p>Everyone around you – culture and the group internal experience</p> <p>Relationships with friends, family</p> <p>Cultural beliefs</p> <p>Relationship between patient and physician/practitioner</p>	<p>Everything around you – the environment</p> <p>Environmental toxins – pesticides and other manmade chemicals</p> <p>Electromagnetic pollution</p> <p>Access to information – i.e. the internet</p> <p>Sunlight</p>

also get stuck at one *level* of treatment within a quadrant and risk offering one-shot-cure approaches. Multiple levels exist within each quadrant. So for example a practitioner can get stuck only looking at anatomy or biochemistry, without any consideration for the physics of the body. Practitioners in the upper left quadrant can also get stuck just treating the mental level, while ignoring the emotional trauma and unconscious personality traits which led to the patient getting ill in the first place.

It is noticeable that in the UK and the US there is a great deal of focus at the anatomical and biochemical levels, whereas in parts of continental Europe, especially Germany, there is much more emphasis on treatment relating to the physics of the body – the effect of geopathic stress and “electrosmog” and therapies which target the body electric such as bioresonance, energy medicine and microcurrent therapies.

This model can help any practitioner or patient start to identify the causes of any illness, and because it’s such a comprehensive road map it ensures you don’t miss anything out. This model is the result of a lifetime study of reality, summarized in Wilber’s book, *A Brief History of Everything*. I encourage readers who are interested in this model to read the book.

In closing, could you summarize how those readers struggling with a long-term and seemingly intractable illness might benefit from this knowledge?

Your expectations and attitude to recovery are *hugely* important to your chances of success. If you don’t believe you can recover you won’t try, so your thoughts will become your reality. With chronic illness, staying committed to a long-term plan of recovery is critical.

Understand that you are a dynamic, complex, adaptive system constantly reacting with everything in your internal and external environments and that you possess the innate capacity to heal any imbalance.

If you think you’ve only got one solution you’re going to get fanatical about it. For example, there is a big issue with CFS/ME patients being prescribed extremely rigid anti-candida diets – they become so obsessed with sticking to the diet that this can cause psychological problems, so then those need to be sorted out, as well as the candida. The same thing can happen when people get fixated on following a very rigid version of the raw diet.

We have to start looking at the big picture, which consists of *everything* that can impact us. Everything in the environment, including food and water and the toxins we’re being exposed to, and also our feelings, relationships and cultural beliefs, all of which have a massive effect on our biochemistry – more than we ever realized. Until you understand all this, you’ll be stuck looking for the one-shot cure, and you’ll go from one practitioner promising that, to the next, to the next, because this is not how chronic complex illness works. Understanding this can save you thousands of pounds, as well as your health. ■

Recommended reading

A Brief History of Everything by Ken Wilber

Consciousness and Healing by Marilyn Schlitz, Tina Amorok and Marc Micozzi

The Biology of Belief by Bruce Lipton

Molecules of Emotion by Candace Pert

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