

Chiropractor, Heal Thyself!

By Simon A. Senzon

I spend a great deal of time caring for others—my family, patients, friends, my community—where is there time for my own health and well-being, for the development of my body, heart, mind and spirit? I am sure this question can be applied to just about any health practitioner. For the chiropractor it takes on a deeper level of significance because we are at the forefront of wellness and human potential, we are the leaders in our communities, and we are the link in a long lineage of chiropractors who focused on life, vitality, well-being and spiritual growth. How can we, in this busy world, create the time to continue this legacy, develop our individual selves, and push even further into that vitalistic vision that evolution itself is somehow moving forward through our own optimal well-being? These should be the essential questions for any physician as the old adage, “physician heal thyself,” is so true. Thus, chiropractor heal thyself, more specifically embraces our lineage and focuses our present to embody the future well-being that we wish to create in the world through our precious human vessels.

CHIROPRACTIC'S LINEAGE OF PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL GROWTH

This lineage that I speak of certainly predates chiropractic. In fact, several of the books and pamphlets from D.D. Palmer's *Traveling Library* (the books that he had bound together for travel purposes) focused on self-development and wellness. Juliet Severance's pamphlet, “A Lecture on Life and Health” or “How To Live a Century” (1881) is a great example. Severance instructs the reader on the benefits of a diet based on fruit, vegetables and grains, while abstaining from stimulants and alcohol. Other authors in Palmer's collection included instructions on exercise, meditation and spiritual development.

Many of the spiritual ideas from Palmer's library made their way into the philosophy of

chiropractic as practices of contemplation and experiential insight into the link between Innate Intelligence and Universal Intelligence. Nowhere in chiropractic is this type of connection between one's inner self and the universe more apparent than in the later writings of B.J. Palmer. From 1949 to 1961, the year of his death, B.J. Palmer wrote 16 books, in which he gives instructions for how to let Innate contact you, how to merge with the infinite, and he even related personal experiences of his own spiritual awakening. For example, after spending countless hours studying the 40,000 vertebra of his osteological collection (sometime around 1948), he recognized a unity of innate intelligence in all peoples, in all times. From that time onward and in all of those books, he referred to himself, as “We.” This pronoun represented his Innate and Educated minds speaking as one. And Innate also represented the voice of the Universal Intelligence that governed everything.

For some, this spiritual dimension is at the heart of the philosophy of chiropractic, an awareness that the very self is but a drop in the ocean of the infinite, and that the chiropractic adjustment is designed to assist one to realize this.

But is the chiropractic adjustment, coupled with such a profound contemplative stance, enough to truly Heal Thyself? Perhaps. (This teaching certainly captures the mind, soul, and spirit and the chiropractic adjustment does wonders for the body.) But is this enough, especially today, when we know so much about wellness, growth and human potential? And what of those chiropractors that are not so concerned with the spiritual depth that Palmer wrote of? Can't they still draw from this lineage and achieve their own optimal well-being?

In order for us to address these questions we should study the latest ideas in human growth and potential, another history in America, one that goes alongside chiropractic's history and yet does not really emerge as a major force until after

B.J.'s time. He and his father can both be viewed as early visionaries of what would soon be called the Human Potential Movement.

INTEGRAL TRANSFORMATIVE PRACTICE

The Human Potential Movement represented a wide variety of ideas and practices. The phrase itself was coined in 1965, by one of the early pioneers, George Leonard in discussions with Michael Murphy, two leaders of the movement to this day. After 30 years of exploring the many facets of optimal health and wellness, they started Integral Transformative Practice as mapped out in their book, "The Life We Are Given" (1995). In the book they acknowledge the extraordinary research that has gone into human growth, especially at the Esalen Institute, founded by Murphy. Two of the important insights gleaned from this research were; intensive weekend or weeklong trainings were difficult to integrate into daily life, and focusing on one path towards transformation such as yoga or exercise or diet, was slower than "cross-training." By creating a long-term daily program, one could more effectively activate the innate capacities and achieve a much fuller potential.

Murphy and Leonard started a program for busy adults in America to develop a long-term daily practice aimed at personal transformation of body, mind, heart and soul. Integral Transformative Practice (ITP) started with a group of about 30 people who got together once a week for two years and also did their practices on their own. ITP groups have since been started worldwide. A video/DVD called, "The Tao of Practice" was developed, which includes the basic exercises and meditation practices central to ITP.

By focusing the practices on long-term transformation, ITP does some important things. It takes the individual away from the idea of immediate gratification or the "quick-fix" mentality and allows for the unfolding of one's potentials over time. Daily practices can then be viewed as an end in themselves. It focuses on the core of ITP, which is integral transformation, or transformation of body, mind, heart and soul. This type of transformation does not limit one to a focus on benefits in one area of life, or self, but on all components of one's being and most importantly, on depth. A more sublime and truer self emerges with long-term practice.

INTEGRAL LIFE PRACTICE

Ken Wilber, another leader in the Human Potential Movement, is a great supporter of ITP.

In fact, he and his staff of instructors at the Integral Institute, in Boulder, Colo., have developed a modular and scalar program, which is based on ITP and also a host of other research into human development. Their program is called Integral Life Practice (ILP) to distinguish it from Murphy and Leonard. Wilber's approach is outlined in his newest book, "Integral Spirituality" (2006), and also in a DVD set developed by Integral Institute.

There are several things that make ILP incredibly innovative, such as the focus on individual lines of development, the four pillars of practice, and the modular and scalar approaches. This last innovation is perfect for the busy chiropractor as an entire daily practice including body, mind, shadow and spirit (the four pillars), can be done in as little as 10 minutes per day. According to Wilber, the research shows that even if you just spend one or two minutes on each practice consistently every day, you will make substantial progress! And the key is to do several practices together, what Wilber calls, "integral cross-training," because taken together the various practices speed up one's overall development or transformation.

The practices of ILP are designed to incorporate at least four lines of development; physical (body), which includes a workout that focuses on muscular strength, combined with more subtle energy workouts such as yoga and chi kung; cognitive (mind), which centers around the ability to take wider perspectives; spiritual (soul and spirit), which focuses on meditation or centering or contemplative prayer; and psychodynamic (shadow), which includes techniques to re-integrate those aspects of our personality that have been broken off or repressed. By including this in one's daily practice, it allows the individual to grow in his emotional and relational lines of development alongside his cognitive, spiritual, and physical.

DAILY PRACTICES FOR THE CHIROPRACTOR

Since many chiropractors already do integral practices, most could just add one or two things to what they are already doing in order to synergistically cross-train. First and foremost, and what is missing from ILP and ITP, is that every person pursuing such a path should have their spine checked for vertebral subluxation. We know that by releasing the inner potential of the body's wisdom they will get more benefits from any practices. So without a doubt, if you are a chiropractor and you are not having your spine

checked regularly, do so.

Second, pay closer attention to how you are standing when practicing, feet on the ground, fully breathing, notice areas of tension in your body, breath into them, focus on this moment. Aligning those things a few times per day will certainly act as a transformative practice as you continue to practice for the coming years.

Also, use the concept of shadow during the day in the office. Are there times when you get upset or stressed or angry, or even overly joyous? Try to determine what parts of those feelings you might be projecting at someone or something or rather what parts are yours and what parts are legitimately not yours.



Cognitively, practice expanding your perspective. Try B.J.'s practice; spend a few minutes at lunch or before the day starts. First acknowledge your own innate intelligence, how marvelously it governs your body's organization and creates all of your parts. Then reflect on all of the patients that you saw last week. Recognize that they each have the same innate intelligence within them. It is the same as yours, only specific to them. Then recognize how it is that same intelligence that organizes the intricate quantum structures of every atom as well as governs the vast gravitational forces throughout the universe. Then, just for a moment, acknowledge the "WE" that B.J. spoke of.

Finally, take a few moments in your day and try a guided meditation or simply count your breathing. You may also contemplate one of the essential teachings of the philosophy of chiropractic that through your life the universe is given consciousness, awareness, breath and a precious human vessel. Through that vessel evolution itself takes place on the exterior and the interior. Chiropractor, Heal Thyself! **TCL**