



# True Health

## Physical-Mental-Spiritual

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## The Sensitive Thyroid

## Gardening for Health

The thyroid is a small butterfly-shaped gland located just below the Adam's apple in the lower front of the neck. Its primary job is to produce an energy hormone (thyroxine) that acts like a gas pedal for the cellular machinery of the body. The thyroid regulates the temperature, function, and growth of the body's cells. Without thyroxine we become sick and die. Keeping the thyroid healthy should be a priority for all of us!

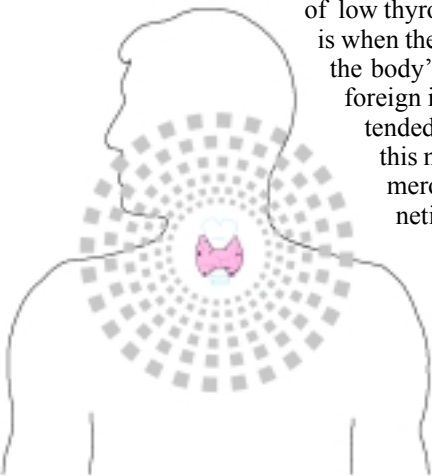
### Thyroid Power

While attending the annual meeting of the American Holistic Medical Association last year in Miami, I was fortunate to hear a talk by Richard and Karilee Shames. Richard is a medical doctor; Karilee is a psychiatric nurse. Their "tag-team" style of presentation was both entertaining and informative. The topic was "Thyroid Power" which is also the title of their popular book. Like their presentation, the book is very accessible – easy to read, even when covering complex medical concepts and terminology.

One of the themes of *Thyroid Power* is that as a society we are experiencing an "epidemic" of hypothyroidism (commonly called "low thyroid"). Low thyroid may affect as many as 10 percent of the American population. Historically, and even now in some parts of the world, low thyroid has resulted from inadequate iodine in the diet. Iodine is required in the production of thyroxine. That is why table salt contains iodine – to make sure that we receive enough of this essential element in our diet.

So how could there be a low thyroid epidemic? Richard and Karilee Shames believe that autoimmune disease is a major cause of low thyroid. Autoimmune disease is when the immune system attacks the body's own tissues instead of foreign invaders that it is intended to destroy. According to this model of low thyroid, numerous factors including genetic predisposition, psychological stress, and environmental toxins (e.g., pesticides, food additives, and chemical cleaners) can decrease the functioning of the body's organs. The thyroid is a particularly sensitive gland that is especially vulnerable to autoimmune disease. As noted in *Thyroid Power*, "Often those with autoimmune thyroid are extremely sensitive people, perhaps reacting more quickly or strongly to an external threat that may eventually affect everyone."

Many widespread signs and symptoms of illness are associated with low thyroid. Here are several of the most common ones:



My grandfather was a great gardener. He put out several large gardens every summer, wherever he could find open ground. He gave away most of what he grew to his children and neighbors. It was not something that he had to think about particularly, it was just part of the natural rhythm of his life. He was an organic gardener decades before the term became commonplace. I believe that for him gardening was just a natural expression of his connection to the divine, just like going to church (which he did at least three times each week). I guess I come by my gardening urge honestly.

### Cayce on Growing Food

I usually think of my grandfather when I recall what Edgar Cayce said when asked about cooperative farming: "... such projects, such undertakings, should be activities in the minds and in the physical activity of practically everyone; and most will wish they knew something about it before it's over!" (470-35) I have often wondered exactly what Cayce was getting at with this ominous statement. Did he mean that gardening was simply a good way to stay "grounded" and balanced for physical and mental health? Was he referring to possible future food shortages? Keep in mind that this reading was given in 1942 during the Second World War. Could he have been hinting at the current problem of food contamination with herbicides and pesticides, or perhaps genetic engineering of crops? Did the statement have some deep spiritual significance with regard to the evolution of our species?

Whatever Cayce may have been implying, I do know that I have kept that statement in mind when purchasing properties over the years. While living in the Midwest on a five-acre tract, I always put out a large garden. I think I must have driven the real estate agent crazy in choosing my present residence in Virginia Beach. I had to make sure the back yard was big enough, with enough good sun, etc.

I am not alone in my delight in growing things. Many TV channels carry gardening programs and at least one cable channel specializes in the field. Gardening books and magazines almost seem to reproduce at a faster rate than the plants themselves. One of the major messages of the various mass media forums is that you can be a gardener wherever you live. Even in New York City, most people can have patio plants, a window ledge garden, or a neighborhood plot.

Gardening is healthy, too! Studies have shown that gardening is excellent exercise. Medical research indicates that eating lots of fresh fruits and vegetables is good for you. You won't find any food that is fresher than that picked from your own garden. By growing it yourself, you can be confident that it is free from harm-



### Cooking Steel Cut Oats

In the book, *An Edgar Cayce Home Medicine Guide* it states on page 24: "One of the methods of doing this [cooking steel cut oats a long time] is to bring the cereal to a boil and then

pour the cereal and the boiling water into a widemouth thermos, which is closed and left overnight, cooking the cereal completely." The cereal generally just "slides" right out of the thermos. If not, I take my rubber scraper or a long handled serving spoon that I have and empty out the rest. On rare occasions, when the cereal is not as hot as I'd like in the morning, I reheat it in the small saucepan. If I myself did not use this method, I would never have the patience to make it for myself at all! It works and is easy to get started just before going to bed. D.B. e-mail

Thanks for passing along this helpful tip. For readers wishing to try this method, be careful when pouring the boiling water and cereal into the thermos. - D.M.

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- ▲ Fatigue not caused by exertion,
- ▲ Feeling of coldness,
- ▲ Anxiety,
- ▲ Depression,
- ▲ Overweight,
- ▲ Muscle and joint aches and pains,
- ▲ Mental haziness,
- ▲ Dry skin or eczema,
- ▲ Lowered sex drive,
- ▲ Dry hair or loss of hair.

The fact that these signs and symptoms are so prevalent in our society may contribute to an under diagnosis of low thyroid. To further confound diagnosis, the standard lab tests used to assess low thyroid may not be sensitive enough to identify the problem in some individuals. Also, these symptoms can be caused by other problems such as candida or toxicity.

*Thyroid Power* contains self-assessment inventories and suggestions for clinicians to avoid the pitfall of misdiagnosis of low thyroid. The problem is that the attending physician has to be flexible and cooperative in working with a potential low thyroid patient. That is why the book

contains sections on empowerment and how to work with your physician.

### Empowerment

One of the things that I like best about *Thyroid Power* is the strong emphasis on empowerment. "We operate from a deeply held conviction that in the long run each person is his or her best physician." The use of the will to make informed choices, take action, and accept responsibility is the essence of empowerment.

The patient/physician relationship is one of the chief areas where empowerment is manifest. One of the most important contributions a physician can make is to encourage the "will to be well" in patients. Since working closely with a physician is crucial to the *Thyroid Power* approach, the authors wisely included a "Show This to Your Doctor" section to smooth the way for patients on this healing journey.

*Thyroid Power* contains a brief discussion of chakra theory and energy centers. Persons suffering from low thyroid are encouraged to consider the possibility that thyroid problems may be symbolic. The fifth energy center associated with the thyroid "relates to communication and self-expression." Again we come back to the importance of empowerment – of speaking one's truth as a dimension of healing. (For more on empowerment, see "Multidimensional Healing" in the April issue.)

### Treatments for Low Thyroid

I like the holistic approach put forth in *Thyroid Power*. At a physical level, thyroid supplementation is a key component to healing low thyroid. The authors acknowledge that each individual is different, therefore a flexible approach to supplementation is needed. Some individuals respond better to synthetic thyroid hormone while others may do best with natural thy-

roid extract. This is why empowerment and a good patient/physician relationship is essential for applying this approach. You may need to try various types of supplement to find your best medicine. Diet and lifestyle choices can have a major impact on thyroid function. The book contains lists of foods that are helpful and harmful for healing the thyroid.

At a mental level, developing an empowering attitude is extremely helpful. Stress reduction through the use of visual imagery is also discussed.

The multidimensional healing model in *Thyroid Power* includes a social dimension. Working to make the environment less toxic is a social/political aspect of empowerment that can be healing at all levels. Participation in a support group that can help you to explore options and feel connected is recommended.

### Cayce on Thyroid Problems

Edgar Cayce gave a reading for a woman suffering from extreme anxiety and panic attacks. Even though a "mental/spiritual" reading was requested for this apparent mental illness, Cayce remarked that "In giving mental and spiritual advice or counsel, it is well to consider the entity as a whole. While the entity finds itself made up, as it were, of body, mind and soul, each of these may function in a consciousness without the awareness of the other." (2114-1) The whole reading is a wonderful exposition on the holistic aspects of the body/soul connection. I found the reading so profound that I used it as the basis for a chapter in a book on anxiety disorders titled *Living Nightmares*. The first chapter ("The Sensitive Thyroid") is based on the Cayce premise that the glands serve as links to the spiritual body. In this respect, "... one of the more sensitive glands to such is the thyroid ..." Cayce's depiction of the thyroid as a sensitive gland is consistent with the portrayal of this organ in *Thyroid Power*.

### Cayce's Holistic Approach

Reading 2114-1 provided explicit holistic treatment recommendations. The woman was encouraged to analyze her mental and spiritual ideals and apply them in her physical experience. She was told to find that upon which she could "rely for *spiritual* enlightenment, spiritual affiliation and associations." Specific selections from the Bible were recommended (the 30th chapter of Deuteronomy and the 14th, 15th, 16th, and 17th chapters of St. John.)

The treatment plan went on to specify physical treatments that addressed the thyroid dysfunction and sought to restore

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# The Shadow of Transformation

In the last issue we discussed the concept of illness as symbol. We briefly considered the views of Louise Hay, who regards all disease as symbolic of dysfunctional mental patterns. She insists that “we create every so-called ‘illness’ in our body.” We also examined the idea expressed by Edgar Cayce that “all illness is sin.” This is a complex and controversial topic worthy of our investigation.



tual, or symbolic cause for the illnesses discussed. In fact, a number of readings contain the phrase “purely physical” when describing the cause of the problem. For example, a man with tinnitus (ringing in the ears) asked Cayce, “What can I do about a disturbing noise that is in my ear (or is this purely physical, requiring physical treatment)?” Cayce responded, “Purely physical and not karmic. Remove the stress by head and neck exercise.

## Do We Make Ourselves Sick?

One of the concerns that has been raised about viewing illness as sin is the potential for inappropriate or unnecessary guilt. In the article, “Do We Make Ourselves Sick,” Ken Wilber calls it “iatrogenic guilt.” In medicine, iatrogenic typically refers to illness caused by treatment. Thus, in linking illness to symbolic causes (either mental or spiritual), there is a danger of causing harm (i.e., guilt) if the condition is of a purely physical nature. Furthermore, if illness is falsely attributed to a nonphysical cause, effective and appropriate physical treatment may not be provided.

This question is more than an academic exercise for Wilber. His wife died of cancer after trying almost every alternative and mainstream cancer treatment. Their story is documented powerfully in the book *Grace and Grit*. Wilber concedes that illness may be symbolic of a nonphysical pattern, but believes that illness is often of a *purely physical* nature. When such is the case, it should be treated with appropriate (and hopefully effective) physical therapies.

## Purely Physical Illness?

One of the things that attracts me to the Cayce information is the complexity and breadth of the material. The material is rich and complicated because reality is complex. Therefore when I encounter contradictions or apparent paradoxes in the readings, I dig a little deeper for I know that there is something of great value if I can stretch myself to assimilate it.

Having acknowledged that Cayce stated that “all illness is sin” in a couple of readings, I have had to struggle with the reality that in the 9,602 readings that are cataloged as “physical” on *The Complete Edgar Cayce Readings* CD-ROM, many do not contain even a hint of mental, spiri-

Have ... corrections osteopathically made in the 3rd cervical to the 1st cervical and 4th dorsal.” (5346-1) In another instance, a woman asked Cayce about the source of her gall bladder attacks: “What mental or spiritual condition brought them about?” Cayce replied, “Neither a mental or spiritual, but rather a purely physical reaction. And, as indicated, keep away from meats!” I have collected an entire file of quotes such as these where Cayce clearly maintains that illness can be *purely physical*, rather than symbolic of a mental or spiritual problem. In fact, in most of these readings, Cayce responded to direct questions about the spiritual and mental causes of disease. In numerous readings where the question was not posed to Cayce, the causes of illness were described, for the most part, in purely physical terms. In other cases, the mental or spiritual aspects of causation were emphasized. Illness can be a complex phenomenon.

The recognition that the cause of disease can be purely physical has not been easy for me. With my background in psychology and years of study of metaphysical concepts, I was initially inclined to regard all illness as symbolic, much as Louise Hay has done. The Cayce health readings have served to make me more flexible, tolerant, and humble in this regard.

## Shadow of Transformation

As I said at the beginning, understanding transformational healing is complex. Apparently, illness can be caused by many factors operating at various levels. Sometimes illness can be symbolic of a non-physical problem, or it may be purely physical. We must be careful not to oversimplify or we run the risk of iatrogenic guilt or inappropriate treatment (as noted by Wilber). I have seen this happen. I call it the “shadow of transformation.”

I know of wonderful, spiritually ori-

ented individuals who have become ill. In the course of healing, they have struggled with some of the same issues encountered by Ken Wilber and his wife during their healing journey. Just like the Wilbers, these individuals tried almost every conceivable alternative medicine approach (including Louise Hay’s), with only modest improvement. Just like the Wilbers, they also eventually partook of allopathic treatments without being cured. Along the way, some of their friends began to drift away or make remarks to the effect that there must be some unknown or unaddressed spiritual problem at the bottom of the condition. The afflicted individuals actually began to feel like sinners – as if they had failed doubly. Not only had they created the disease, but they had failed to heal themselves. Talk about guilt!

I suspect that the well-meaning friends were beginning to have some doubts about their own invincibility. After all, if wonderful, spiritual people can get seriously ill and not recover, what does that say about all of us? In psychology we talk about the shadow – that part of ourselves we don’t want to acknowledge or accept. If we are unaware or unwilling to deal with our shadow, we tend to project it onto others – hence, the shadow of transformation.

## Cognitive Dissonance

So how do we work with transformational healing in a way that is constructive and does no harm? First, let’s acknowledge the limitations of our understanding. This leads to humility, which is a good thing in healing.

Let’s also acknowledge that we are complex beings in a multidimensional reality, however we may choose to define it. Illness may come from any level of reality, including the physical.

We can help each other to become aware of possible causes of illness without forcing the issue. To force the issue is to trespass on another soul because it violates will. A gentle approach that respects the will of others is more appropriate. We can suggest possible explanations with an open-mindedness and humility that is respectful. I know this is difficult for some of us who enjoy telling others what is wrong with them and what they should do about it; but that issue involves our healing, not theirs.

When working as a consultant, even when I feel quite certain that there is a symbolic or hidden meaning at the core of illness, I still prefer to educate the client about the possibility of such a connection and leave it to their good judgment to de-

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# Health News



## Natural Chemotherapy?

A study published in the April issue of the *International Journal of Cancer* may help explain why antioxidant compounds found in fruits and vegetables can decrease the risk of cancer. Scientists report that a plant substance (quercetin – a type of antioxidant polyphenol found in apples) slows the growth and spread of pancreatic cancer cells in mice by causing the cells to self-destruct. Mice given quercetin survived for about seventy five days, compared with sixty seven days in mice not given the compound.

The researchers also found that other plant-based polyphenol substances were cancer protective. Fenistein (found in soy) inhibits growth of primary tumors in mice. Trans-resveratrol (found in wine and grapes) facilitates self-destruction in laboratory grown cancer cells. While acknowledging that more research is required to determine potential medical applications in humans, the researchers believe that the study results have important therapeutic implications for combinations of polyphenolic compounds.

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ful chemicals.

### Holistic Gardening

Reading 470-35 is a wonderful dissertation on all aspects of gardening, especially the holistic dimension. Here are some key points from this amazing reading:

*Self Sufficiency* – This reading could be a promotional ad for *Mother Earth News!* “For each and every individual should own sufficient of the earth to be self-sustaining. For the earth is the mother of all; just as God is the Father in the spiritual, the earth is the mother in the material.”

*Fertilizer* – Cayce was especially fond of natural fertilizers: “... vegetable matter or refuse of vines or grasses in certain characters of vegetation [compost] – but always mixed with the droppings of the chicken – for this is the better of *any* that may be had for vegetables!” I recently noticed that chicken manure was being heralded as a superior fertilizer at a local up-scale garden center. A half gallon milk-carton-type box sells for about six bucks!

*Consciousness* – Maybe a green thumb is just an extension of a green heart: “If the man who raises and cares for them [vegetables and fruits] does it with love, it makes all the difference! Don’t think a grouchy man can ever raise a headed cabbage or a tomato that will agree as well as those raised by a man who laughs and tells a good joke, though it may be smutty!” I laugh and chuckle (mostly to myself) more in my garden than anywhere else.

*Evolution* – Cayce linked food production with the evolution of our species: “You expect a new root race. What are you doing to prepare for it? You must prepare food for their bodies as well as their

minds and their spiritual development!”

Get your hands in the earth and grow in spirit as well as body. I invite you to take a virtual tour of my garden on the *True Health* Web site.



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termine what they choose to believe. Using the will to choose is the basis for soul development, a profound form of healing.

This simple technique relies on *cognitive dissonance*. Psychological research has documented the mind’s tendency to want to resolve discordant ideas (dissonance). When the discordant ideas are presented in a nonthreatening way, resistance and defense mechanisms are minimized. A gentle suggestion about the possible symbolic meaning of a symptom can be very powerful, especially when presented with humor that is loving and respectful. Then just leave it at that. Let the mind resolve the dissonance on its own.

If the person is open to symbolic interpretation of illness, then proceed in an open and respectful way, being careful not to instill iatrogenic guilt or encourage inappropriate treatment. If the person is not open to symbolic meaning of illness, just plant the seed and trust in cognitive dissonance – and the divine within.

Regardless of the cause of illness, even if it is *purely physical*, all healing can be transformational. We can use our wills to make choices, act on our choices, and take responsibility for the outcome (empowerment). We can become more aware and mindful of our multidimensional aspects (enlightenment). We can meet ourselves gracefully as we make our way back to the Source (soul development).



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balance to the glandular and nervous systems. Three medications were prescribed: Atomidine, Calcios (a calcium supplement), and a gold and soda solution that was sometimes recommended for neurological and psychiatric disorders.

Thus, the recommendations covered all three aspects of the self: the mental (“mind is the builder ... through that which the entity as a whole holds as its ideal”); the spiritual (“find that upon which it [the entity] may rely for *spiritual* enlightenment, spiritual affiliation and associations”) and physical (the Atomidine, Calcios, and gold and soda solutions).

Cayce did not specify the precise nature of the thyroid dysfunction for this woman. It is unclear whether her problem was hypothyroidism, hyperthyroidism, or some other abnormality.

### Other Treatment Options

Numerous other Cayce readings for persons with thyroid dysfunction provide additional treatment options. In at least twenty-six readings that are indicative of low thyroid, Edgar Cayce prescribed thyroid extract, typically under the direction of a physician. The thyroid supplement was a natural substance (such as animal thyroid). In some instances, thyroid extract was part of a compound containing the extracts from other glands (i.e., Tonicine).

Cayce sometimes traced thyroid problems back to disrupted nerve impulse from the centers in the upper spine. For this pattern, he typically recommended spinal manipulation. Interestingly, the authors of *Thyroid Power* suggest that chiropractic adjustments may be helpful for low thyroid. For Cayce, the ideal referral for thyroid problems was the osteopathic physician of his era who could provide both the manipulations and medical prescription: “We would take internally the Thyroid Extract in very small doses. This should be preferably given under the supervision of a physician who would also make the adjustments and manipulations ...” (669-1)

For low thyroid, Cayce recommended a diet with plenty of raw green vegetables and orange juice. When eating potatoes, “eat more peeling than the pulp ...” (536-1)



Visit the *True Health* Web site:  
[www.edgarcayce.org/th](http://www.edgarcayce.org/th)  
 for more information on thyroid power, gardening, and transformational healing.