



Frozen Shoulder and Other Painful Metaphors

What if you looked at every symptom as a metaphor, or as a message that your subconscious was sending you using your body as the messenger? Rather than shooting the messenger full of drugs to suppress the symptoms, another option is to investigate the symptom from an emotional perspective. The body and subconscious tend to be rather literal in terms of communication, so sometimes the simplest approaches and questions yield remarkable results.

Asking simple questions that stretch beyond the usual medical explanations can be quite revealing, such as “If there was an emotional component to this physical illness, what would it be, or what was happening in my life when the symptoms first started?” For cervical spine problems, ask “Who is giving me a pain in the neck? For lumbar spine problems, ask “Who is stabbing me in the back? For calf pain, ask “Why am I afraid of moving forward in my life?”

Sometimes the answers that come back seem too simple to be true, but it is best to reserve judgment until you explore whether the metaphor might actually fit your situation. Once you have a metaphor you can work with, you can experiment with creating a new metaphor that might address the message that your body is sending you.

Then, you can make appropriate adjustments in your attitudes and beliefs, so your subconscious

can translate those changes into action at the body level.

Frozen shoulder is one of the most dramatic examples of a metaphor made manifest in physical form. The condition usually starts with gradual onset of pain and leads to severe restriction of the range of motion. The synovium becomes progressively inflamed to the point where it is actually visible on an MRI scan. Codman, the famous orthopedic surgeon who described the condition in 1934 said it was “difficult to define, difficult to treat and difficult to explain from the point of view of pathology.”

It often occurs without a significant injury or obvious explanation leading some clinicians to describe a “periarthritic personality” which is the result of “poised indecisiveness” with an inability to express tension freely. The patient then becomes hung up on “dead center” in a state of disuse. From a metaphorical perspective, a repressed emotion, such as anger, is frozen in the shoulder, which often can be uncovered by asking about significant emotional upheavals that occurred just before the onset.

Once a possible emotional cause has been identified, a combination of acupuncture, Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) and hypnosis can be used to thaw the emotion in the shoulder and relieve the stiffness sooner than the usual time for healing which may take years.

The emotions are meant to flow continuously through the body like the qi flowing through the

meridians, and an “e-motion” can be considered to be “energy in motion.” Symptoms occur when the flow of energy is blocked.

Another helpful guide in this process is Louise Hay’s famous little blue book, *Heal Your Body: The Mental Causes for Physical Illness and the Metaphysical Way to Overcome Them*. It is an encyclopedic list of health problems, probable emotional causes and new thought patterns presented as affirmations. Despite what appear to be oversimplistic generalizations, it often provides useful insights into the underlying causes of symptoms leading to healing.

The next EFT workshop at OHS on 9/16/10 will focus on painful conditions and will include a discussion of metaphors for physical symptoms.

Spend some time thinking of metaphors for your aches and pains before the workshop and then come and learn ways to create new ones that will work for you. In closing, the recommended affirmation for calf pain is “I move forward with confidence and joy, knowing that all is well in my future.”