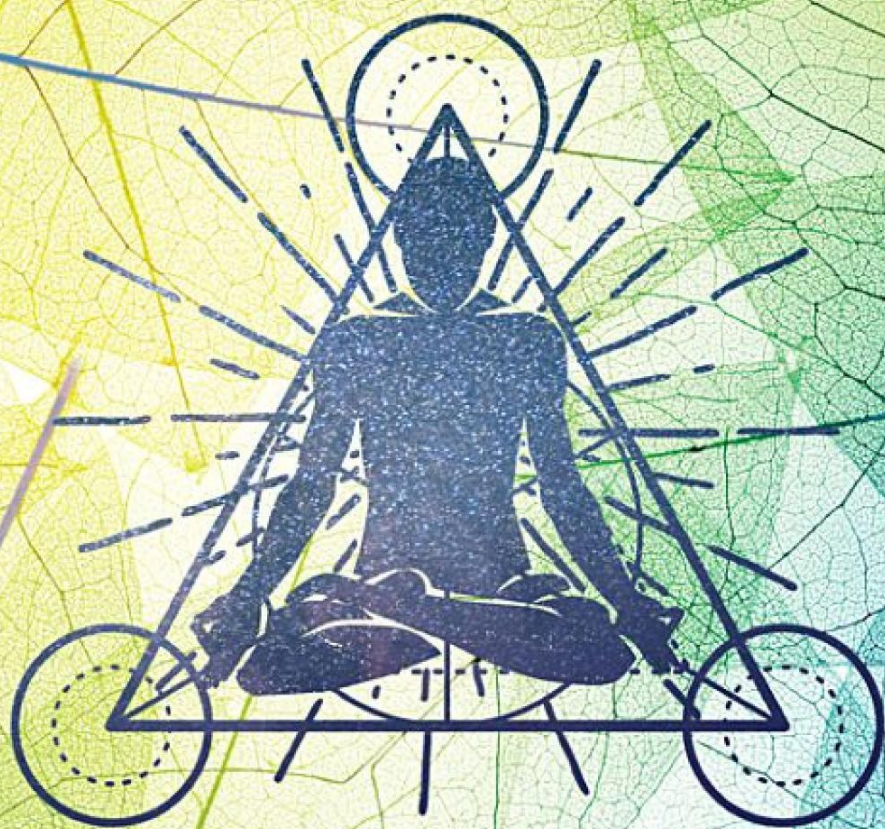


Deeply Holistic

A GUIDE TO INTUITIVE SELF-CARE



KNOW YOUR BODY, LIVE CONSCIOUSLY,
AND NURTURE YOUR SPIRIT

Pip Waller

Author of *Holistic Anatomy*

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Deeply Holistic

A Guide to Intuitive Self-Care

Know Your Body, Live Consciously, and Nurture Your Spirit

Pip Waller



**North Atlantic Books
Berkeley, California**

Praise for Deeply Holistic

“At a time when busy people are all looking for quick solutions such as magic tablets and surgical procedures, and when environmental factors such as peak pollution are ever more present, there is an increasing sense that the medical system is broken and elements of its philosophy could be flawed. It is therefore both timely and refreshing that Pip Waller shares the enlightened theory of self-care as a starting point in the context of holistic medicine. I am pleased to share this information with the health community at large, and the interested patient, as something worthy of their attention.”

—ADRIAAN BRITS, EDITOR, HEALTHYNEWAGE.COM

“In your hands is a book of super practical life wisdom written with down-to-earth mastery. Pip is a real deal healer, a vividly expert communicator, and a compelling guide to the practices of refined and relevant holistic self-care. She has lived and earned every tip, trick, and method that she lays out here, and her intimacy with the symphonic workings of the human body charges every paragraph with urgent inspiration to take proper care of yourself. Ignore this book at your peril.”

—LEILA SADEGHEE, HEALER, YOGA TEACHER, AND
THERAPEUTIC BODYWORKER

“Pip’s new book, Deeply Holistic, is inspirational. Self-help is indeed the foundation stone of health. In this book you will find so many great ideas and approaches that will put you in touch with all aspects of your physicality.”

—CARRIE JOST, HEAD OF THE SCHOOL OF CREATIVE
KINESIOLOGY

“A deep and gracious dive into body-mind-spirit healing. Read, implement, and transform yourself back to whole.”

—PAULA YOUPELL, RN, AND AUTHOR OF *HANDS ON
HEALTH* AND COAUTHOR OF *WEAVING HEALING
WISDOM*

“Deeply Holistic is a highly engaging and well-written book on how we as human beings function. I especially like how Pip has interwoven the self-care element, which is clearly laid out and easily accessible. I shall certainly be dipping into this book with my massage and anatomy and physiology students and clients. I would highly recommend it to anyone with an interest in human health and happiness”

—CELINE SAMSON, FOUNDER OF TONIC MIND BODY

“Deeply Holistic is a map to optimal health and well-being where you are the explorer. It is filled with fabulous recipes and fun exercises that nourish the body, mind, and spirit.”

—LUCY HARMER, CELTIC SHAMANIC HIGH PRIESTESS
AND AUTHOR OF *DISCOVER YOUR SPIRIT ANIMAL: THE
WISDOM OF THE SHAMANS AND SHAMANIC
ASTROLOGY: UNDERSTANDING YOUR SPIRIT ANIMAL
SIGN*

“What a feat! [Waller] writes such a warm, comprehensive, and contemporary guide to living healthily in the widest sense, embracing a wonderfully insightful and compassionate view of our physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual selves.”

—ANNE MCINTYRE, FELLOW OF THE NATIONAL
INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL HERBALISTS AND AUTHOR
OF *THE AYURVEDA BIBLE*

“This is a much-needed manual for holistic living! It is one of the few books I’ve read that is genuinely holistic and very balanced in its orientation—drawing from both scientific understanding and traditional wisdom while free of the many fads that are popular in the health literature these days. I will definitely be recommending Deeply Holistic to my clients and students.”

—MICHAEL VERTOLLI, DIRECTOR OF THE LIVING
EARTH SCHOOL OF HERBALISM

“Reading Deeply Holistic is an awe-inspiring, spiritual experience. Waller not only inspires the genuine desire to tend, heal, and care for the self—what a beautiful gift—but also provides the necessary tools to take vibrant health into your own hands.”

—SAVANNAH CLAYTON, HOLISTIC HEALTH COACH
AT NOURISH SHAKTI

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For everyone reaching for wholeness in themselves and in our world

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank all those who made this book possible:

The One who moves everything into existence, for the inspiration and the vision; this beautiful earth and all its beings, especially plants, for my life, and for all the experiences that have taught me what I know; all those whose ideas and discoveries and learnings and teachings underlie the material in these pages; and Ebonie, Tim, and all those at NAB involved in the creation of this book.

I am deeply grateful to my teachers, clients, and students over many years, from whom I have learned so much; to my parents, for starting me off on this journey into natural medicine when I was young; to my dear and esteemed friend and colleague Lucy Wells, for your invaluable help and a lot of great laughs; and to my beloved co-counsellor, Jenny Spinner, who has helped me be able to believe in both myself, and in basic human goodness.

Introduction

Holistic self-care is like gardening your life, to make an abundance of color and harvest from a compost heap. It brings an increasing awareness of the interconnectedness of everything, including the needs of body, mind, and spirit. We become more centered, able to feel and choose what is beneficial and avoid less wholesome directions.

This book maps out a variety of paths, helping you to find your own path. It is not intended as a finger-wagging prescription that “you must do” to be healthy. Health and well-being, being fully alive, does not mean the same thing for everyone. Each of us has particular challenges: a chronic illness, a congenital disease, a handicap of some kind, or permanent damage from an old injury or sickness. But in our own range and definition, we can be more or less well. Without self-acceptance there is no well-being, so always start with that.

The basic idea underlying all holistic systems of health and healing is that a vital force animates all life. Balance in this allows for health—imbalance creates disease. Holistic medicine is the approach of understanding, supporting, and promoting our innate tendencies toward wholeness and balance in the body, mind, and spirit. These areas are seen as intrinsically interlinked.

My favorite definition of health, from the ancient Indian system of medicine, Ayurveda, is *swasta*, meaning “to be established in yourself.” We are a long way from this in our modern world, and it is quite a journey to move toward it. A pathway back to more natural ways of living, this journey begins with listening to ourselves, cultivating a loving acceptance of the truth of our experience—learning to be real, building connections with ourselves, with others, with nature, and with the divine universal energy that pervades our world. At heart, deep holism means a refusal to join the zombie apocalypse—to not be numb, unfeeling, disconnected, on autopilot, unable to feel yourself or others.

Ayurvedic medicine describes a hierarchy of levels of treatment for any particular problem and suggests that it is wise to always try to solve a problem with the simplest of interventions first, before moving up the ladder to more complex—and ultimately to more dangerous—treatments. The first rung—the foundation for health—is self-care. In Ayurveda this includes good basic principles of

living: diet, exercise, spiritual practice, and so on, as well as the home use of herbs to treat simple ailments.* This book is not intended as a replacement for seeking help from healers and physicians. In our busy modern world, most of us need to support our own self-care efforts with treatments from a healer/holistic practitioner.

* A basic herbal knowledge used to be common knowledge in all cultures but is now unusual.

For us to be truly healthy we need to change the world, and for this to come from a balanced, holistic perspective—and therefore be truly helpful—we need to move from a heart-centered place of deep knowing, rather than the fear-driven place of the mind. Yet how can we listen to the heart when we are not in touch with ourselves?

In these pages, an overview of how to approach looking after yourself from a holistic perspective is laid out. It is not meant as a replacement for the very many good books detailing naturopathic and holistic methods of health care; I hope it will be user-friendly and inspire readers to make positive changes and pursue further explorations. *Deeply Holistic* contains directions and explanations for holistic/natural self-care, offered alongside a simple description of the actions and functions of the various body systems. Understanding the body is essential to self-care. If the basic anatomy and physiology found herein gives you a thirst for more knowledge, great—read *Holistic Anatomy*!

Throughout this guide, information about the care of our mind, emotions, and spirit—integral to the well-being of our bodies—is woven throughout. Think of the physical pain we normally feel in relation to emotional hurts: a broken heart often literally feels like we are bruised in the center of the chest; fear can be felt as an intense upset in the stomach; stress tightens up our bodies, causing all sorts of aches and pains. Taking care of our emotional health means making space for our emotions—that way our emotional upsets don't have to present as physical or mental problems.

Particular interrelationships between the systems will be very simply mapped out and explored in this book. Also included is useful information about human emotional functioning and taking care of your mental health; methods and ideas from the five-element system of classical Chinese medicine; naturopathic principles from the European and Ayurvedic traditions; and simple yet effective ways of working with spiritual energy, as well as a

consideration of the relationship between us and the world. A resource list at the back will direct you to further study.

This book is intended for laypeople who appreciate the holistic or natural approach and wish to gain an overview of a pragmatic and straightforward mind-body-spirit approach to looking after themselves. It may also be of interest to alternative healers, as well as those trained in the biomedical western approach to medicine who wish to broaden their understanding of naturopathic and holistic approaches to health care.

How to Use This Book

In each chapter you will find a general introduction to a body system, followed by information about self-care around emotional connections, exercise, eating, food for the mind, energetic and spiritual matters, relationships, community and environmental issues, supplements and herbs, and a few useful recipes.

Some suggestions will resonate more than others, and some may seem completely uninteresting and irrelevant (or even crazy!). A path to health and well-being is a journey more than a destination, and often the different methods will lead to one another; for instance, it may be that the physical route is the one that makes the most sense to you, so you take steps to change your diet in order to give your body good support. You don't think you've got any emotional stuff about food, but the physical viewpoint makes sense to you so you start eating healthily. Cutting out addictive pseudo-foods such as sugar and unhealthy fats can uncover emotional issues, because those drug-like foods are no longer blocking your feelings. Then you think "Ah! There's something I'd like to explore in the emotional realm." With this, your emotional awareness and the desire to learn how to understand and make space for your feelings grows.

On the other hand, some of you will know that your relationship with food is emotionally loaded, and will start working on your food issues, building self-love and acceptance and making peace with your feelings in a new way, and following this you become more able to give your body what it's asking for in terms of healthful nourishment and more able to leave behind the less-healthy eating of the past.

Still others may find that what resonates most is cleaning up the energy body so as to deepen spiritual practice (or their experience of connection with the divine), and they will decide to change their eating habits accordingly (perhaps eating in the sattvic way—see

page 15). This will detoxify the body and increase sensitivity to the nuances of the emotional life.

There is an intertwining of body, mind (attitudes and emotions), and spirit, so each affects (supports or pulls down) the others. Whichever strand of self-care is the easiest route for you to enter a place of deep caring for yourself, go with it. In some ways, it's about finding the trim tab needed to turn your life—a trim tab is a tiny piece at the end of the massive, unwieldy rudder that moves an enormous ship. Moving the small trim tab is easy, but it builds a pressure that causes the huge rudder to turn.¹

What changes toward increased health and well-being would be so easy and attractive to you that they'd take almost no effort at all? Start with those, and the whole ship of your life begins to turn.

You can dip into the book system by system as interests you, but it's also worth reading the whole thing cover to cover, as many gems of interesting information relevant to more than one system will be found throughout.

“The only transformation that interests me is a total transformation—however minute.”

—SUSAN SONTAG

1

An Overview—Saying Hello to Ourselves

“Just as the universe is a gigantic dance of stars and planets, spinning and turning in mysterious space, so the human body is an incredibly beautiful and complex creation, with millions upon millions of cells functioning in their different ways to make an integrated whole. Groups of similar cells are found joined together to form tissues. Different tissues together form structures with specific functions called organs. Organs are associated with various tubes and supporting structures in things called systems, which carry out areas of work in the body—like the different departments in a company or the various goings-on in a community; communication, control, energy input, waste disposal, transport, production, and so on.”

—HOLISTIC ANATOMY

General Overview of the Body

The basic physical material of the cells is *chemical*—atoms and molecules. Atoms are made of pretty much nothing except space and tiny subatomic particles. Quantum physics now understands the universe and everything in it to be made of energy. The energy moves and changes from one state to another—from one molecule to another. The body, like the universe, exists in a state of constant change and movement.

The body *tissues* are muscle—nervous, epithelial tissue that lines and covers everything (for example, the skin and the delicate internal membranes of the lungs)—and connective tissue. These tissues or building materials are arranged in various ways in the body to form its organs, tubes, and supporting structures.

Everything in the body is made from raw materials found in food—the food our mom ate when she was growing us or feeding us with her milk, or the food we have eaten ourselves throughout our lives.

For example, the strong fibers of tendons and ligaments (types of connective tissue) are made of *proteins*, and so are many of the

hormones that control functions in the body. *Glucose* (sugar) is used by cells to make energy, which is needed for many of their activities, as well as to make our DNA. Fats of many kinds are essential for health—for example, *omega-3 fatty acids* make up most of our cell membranes. Cholesterol is used to make steroid hormones. Vitamins and minerals are used in very many important processes. For example, to make *collagen*—which is the strong protein in the connective tissues of the body, used in many places, including the walls of the big arteries—vitamin C is required. If you want a strong, quality building, you need to start with quality materials.

The *organs*, each with their own area of expertise, are the heart, lungs, brain, liver, gall bladder, pancreas, kidneys, bladder, and uterus. These organs, together with other structures like the tubes of the guts and the blood vessels, form specialist *body systems*, which carry out the work of the body. For example, the heart and blood vessels make up the *cardiovascular system*, responsible for transport. The lungs, airpipes, mouth, nose, and voice-box make up the *respiratory system*, which brings oxygen into our body and removes carbon dioxide. The mouth, gastrointestinal tract (the tube of the gut that goes all the way to the anus), salivary glands, liver, gallbladder, and pancreas together make the *digestive system*, which processes food. The kidneys, bladder, and connecting tubes make up the *urinary system*, which cleans and filters the blood and helps monitor the amount of water in our bodies.

All the systems together—animated by the vital energy, which I will call *spirit* or *soul*—make up an individual person. The maintenance of harmony and balance within the organism is known in western physiology as *homoeostasis*. The body has ways of keeping everything within the right limits for optimal functioning—for example, if we get hot (by exercising, for example), the body cools itself down by sweating and opening the blood vessels on the skin to release heat (this is why we look darker-skinned or red when we are hot). If we are too cold, we constrict the blood vessels of the skin (so we look paler) and shiver to create more heat. Another example is that when we use up blood glucose by exercising, hormones are released that cause the liver to release its sugar stores in the blood. We need regulated blood sugar so that big users of energy like the brain and the muscles can have a constant supply. These are just a couple examples of homoeostatic mechanisms in our bodies. There are thousands of these that keep everything in balance.

It is the encouragement and promotion of this balance that we are interested in as a fundamental requirement for health. But we are

not just this body—we are deeply emotional beings, and we also have a mind, and a spirit, varyingly understood in different cultures.

We Are More than the Body

What Are Emotions?

Human beings are always feeling something. We feel our emotions in body, mind, and spirit. Emotional health depends on the free flowing and experiencing of all our emotions and is vital to the health of the body, mind, and spirit. Just as the body has built-in healing mechanisms to keep things in balance and to repair damage, so does the mind. Many of these involve physical outpourings of feelings. When we are hurt, we cry. When our boundaries are threatened, we feel angry and hot and may act to reinstate those boundaries. When we are scared, we laugh to give us courage—and when the danger is past, we tremble and shake to release fear. Understanding and respecting our need for emotional discharge or release is an essential part of remaining healthy and being able to be fully present within ourselves. Most of us need to reclaim this innate ability since our cultures have become increasingly emotionally repressed.

Then There Is the Spirit

Western physiology, alone of all systems of medicine in the world, does not address the existence of the soul or spirit. In holistic self-care, this is a vital dimension. But what does it mean? There are many paradigms or belief systems in the world that all attempt to describe what is beyond words, and therefore indescribable. The animating force, the energy that exists within each of us, in nature, in the world around us—what is it? Although we can't easily describe *spirit*, most of us have had experiences that have given us a taste of it. The feeling you get when you look at a magnificent sunset, or breathe in the deep and powerful energy of an oak forest. The experience of expansion that comes on the top of a high mountain. The return of hope like the rays of sun shining through clouds in a biblical sky. The way the hairs on your arms stand up when you hear beautiful choral music, or sit in a sacred building and get a sense of the divine. The opening that happens at the birth of a baby, or at the passing that is death. It is a mystery.

The nature of the ego/mind is that it can't stand mystery and wants everything to be solved. It believes itself to be in control—and it can't stand anything that challenges this belief. So it will come up with any number of doubts and arguments, proof that the

spirit does not exist. Unfortunately for us all, it is the mind that is dominating the current world, with pretty disastrous results all around. Bearing this in mind (or in heart), I suggest that you gently put aside the protestations of your mind and aim for an attitude of openness as you explore the ideas in this book, which attempt to share ways of caring for your spirit as well as your body.

The spirit or soul is not a simple entity. There are various aspects to consider. In the interest of simplification, I am looking at two major aspects in these pages—one is the energy that makes up our bodies and minds, the other is a connection to divinity.

Our Energy Is Affected By What We Do

Certain activities are “heavy” and lower our energy—some are detrimental, in the sense of making us toxic and prone to the accumulation of energies that make us sick. Although this is an energetic problem, the symptoms will show in the body, mind, and/or spirit. The heavier or lower in vibration that our energy is, the more insensitive and the less able to feel and experience more subtle realities we are.

Other activities are helpful in keeping our energy clean and light. The more clear and finely tuned our energy is, the more sensitive we become to being able to experience the truth that the world around us is made of energy, and that we are more than simply this body. From this platform—which is called the mode of goodness in the Vedic tradition—we are well-placed to begin to experience the energetic basis of the world more and more directly. If you wish to create more happiness and well-being, and more awareness of energy, in your life, you must cultivate good activities and habits and avoid habits that lower the energy, leaving you open to imbalance. You will find exercises and guidelines in each of the following chapters to assist in this process of cleaning and clearing your energy so that greater spiritual understanding can come to you.

Another way to relate to this is in terms of that well-known parable of feeding the good wolf: It is said that there are two wolves inside of us, always fighting each other. One, the good wolf, holds the energy of kindness, love, bravery, integrity, and honesty. The other is a bad wolf—full of greed, hatred, envy, fear, vengeance, and destructive anger. The question is, who wins the fight? The answer—it is the one we feed.

Our Basic Needs

What we need for optimal health is simple, in the sense that it is completely natural. At the same time, it can be a complicated business to get it, because in the twenty-first century the majority of us are living in a way that is not supportive of balance. This is a problem of the outer world—the environment—and the inner world, the condition of our minds and hearts. It can be that we are completely cut off from an environment conducive to health. It can also be that we are unable to make healthy choices for ourselves, even though we have access to such choices.

Our basic needs for the body include sufficient clean water and wholesome food containing all the nutrients we need, good-quality air to breathe, and the right amount of exercise and movement. For our minds, hearts, and bodies, we need meaningful work and joyful play, with a good balance between the two; right relationships—loving closeness with other humans on an individual and community level; deep connection to and awareness of nature, including plants and animals and the land on which we live; and spiritual connectedness. We also need access to healing when we are hurt—whether for our minds, bodies, or spirits.

The aim of this book is to offer examples of daily practices that are geared toward supporting the health of our bodies, minds, and spirits to help you find *your* path to health and well-being.

Rude Health^{*}

^{*} *Rude* originally meant “hearty and robust”; because it became associated with common people or “peasants,” it later began to mean “offensive.”

We have many built-in healing mechanisms to return us to health and balance when things are not right. Many of these are robust and noisy, as the old British saying “to be in rude health” implies. It is quite common for modern medicine—and modern culture—to view these kind of reactions as symptoms of disease, to be suppressed, rather than as the *homeostatic processes* they truly are. They include physical things such as fever, and emotional and mental things such as loud crying to recover from trauma. Certain kinds of vomiting and diarrhea are ways the body rids itself of toxins that would otherwise go deeper and cause illness. Consider the way a healthy young child reacts to eating something that their body does not like—rigorous vomiting. When we are healthy, we have more dramatic reactions to toxins. When we are full of toxins, the body has less obvious reactions—but this doesn’t mean the toxins are not causing damage.

The holistic approach has at its base a way of seeing symptoms as a warning light on your car dashboard—it is not the problem in itself but is an indication that a problem exists. Suppressing such symptoms creates chronic illness.

Right Relationship

We are part of a highly ordered universe, with its own control systems and homeostatic balancing mechanisms. So our health is dependent on the health of the environment in which we live—both internal and external. The health of our communities and societies and the health of our natural world impact our individual health. Interrelatedness is the thing—in other words, it’s all about relationships. It begins with our relationship with ourselves. Who are we? How are we? Can we actually tell how we are? How able are we to be aware of ourselves?

Many of us have a habit of ignoring ourselves—our feelings, our needs, our bodies. Yet without conscious awareness of what is going on within us, we can’t tell how our physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional health is, and what may need attention. So a first and very important step in self-care is to develop our self-awareness.

Self-awareness has become more well-known in recent years, with mindfulness practices from the Buddhist tradition and yoga nidra from the Vedic tradition finding their way even into the mainstream. Throughout this book on self-care, you will find meditations and exercises to help you build your relationship with yourself and with the world around you. Let’s begin with a simple exercise of saying hello to ourselves.

Saying Hello to Yourself

Take some time to be aware of yourself.

Sit comfortably and pay attention for a few moments to the information coming to you via your physical senses. Can you smell anything? How does the smell affect you?

What can you see? Look around the place where you are sitting, then take a moment to look at your hands. These are your hands, with you from the beginning of your life. How do you feel about your hands? Notice any thoughts.

Hold your hands, and feel the touch of your skin. Thank them for all the work they do.

Be aware of your tongue in your mouth. Is there a taste in your mouth?

Gently stroke your face. Here you are!

Now close your eyes. Listen to the sounds in the room. What can you hear? Can you hear the sounds of your own body?

Next, bring your attention inside your body. Put one hand on your heart and one on your belly. Out loud, or inside your head, say “hello” to yourself. (Literally! Say “Hello, [your name here].”) Notice how this feels.

Now pay attention to your body; be aware of your bones and muscles supporting you, holding you up, turning the page, scratching your head. There’s probably an ache here and there, drawing your attention to particular muscles. Feel the solidity of your bones.

Put your hands on your chest, in the center and slightly to the left. See if you can feel the beat of your heart. Feel for the pulse on the inside of your wrist, by the base of your thumb—this is the movement of blood around your body. The heart and circulation of blood are one of the main transport systems within the body. Pay attention for a few moments to the feeling of the blood passing through you.

Next, focus on your breathing for a few moments. Listen to your breath, and feel it entering and leaving your nose as you breathe. Place your hands one on each side of your upper chest, with the fingertips touching your collarbone, and your elbows held in to your sides. Your lungs are under your hands. Feel your chest growing larger and smaller as you breathe in and out. The lungs bring oxygen (and fresh *qi* or *prana*—life energy) into our bodies, and release carbon dioxide and old energy. Breathe in and out for some time, noticing that as you breathe in, new energy is entering your body, and as you breathe out, old energy

is leaving.

Oxygen is used by our cells to burn the food we eat, to make the energy we need for all our physical activities. Put your hands on your stomach area, and gently rub. The digestive system works to break down this food into small, usable parts. When they are small enough, these molecules are absorbed into the bloodstream. What you don't need is left inside the gastrointestinal tract and excreted. Give your attention for a few moments to appreciating the work your guts do to process the food you eat and allow you to keep your body nourished and clean.

Bring your attention to the feel of the seat beneath you, and open your eyes.

It's always good to have a stretch after you've been sitting for a while, so get up, move your body, and stretch your arms above your head. Then, go and drink a glass of water.

The Water of Life

Our bodies, like the surface of the earth, contain 60–70 percent water. We need the right amount of fluid in our bodies for the optimal functioning of our cells, tissues, and organs. A basic naturopathic principle common to most traditions is that we need to drink enough good, clean water for optimal health. Water is a great cleanser—perhaps the best. Water is used as a healing agent for many problems, because a lack of water in our bodies can lead to many signs and symptoms of illness.

The general recommendation is to drink around eight glasses of water a day. As you get to know your body well, you will become more attuned to its needs for water. It is interesting that when our habit is to not drink enough, the sensation of thirst tends to diminish. If we begin to increase the amount of water we drink, we begin to be thirsty again—our body responds to the increase in drinking by increasing its messages to us about its desire to drink more.

The more water we drink, the more diluted and copious our urine

output—what goes in must come out. And what comes out, must go in—water is used up in many chemical reactions in the body, so we always need to keep our body levels topped up. The *kidneys* help monitor and gauge the amount of water in our bodies, and increase or decrease the amount of water excreted as urine.

Put your hands on your back, as high up as you can reach. The kidneys are nestled in underneath the bottoms of your ribs, one on either side—give them a little rub. The kidneys make urine by filtering the blood. In one hour, all the blood in our bodies has passed once through the kidneys and been filtered. The urine travels via tubes called the *ureters* to the *bladder* for storage, until a convenient time comes to empty it. A good way to check your level of hydration is to keep an eye on the color of your urine—if it is anything darker than a very pale straw-color to pale yellow, you need to drink some water.

The kidneys not only control water balance, they are a major organ of elimination. Their main job is to excrete substances from our bodies that would otherwise poison us. Since toxicity is a major contributor to illness of all kinds, it is important to do what we can to support our *organs of elimination*—the kidneys, liver, bowels, lungs, and skin. All traditional healing methods include invoking and encouraging the body's own excretory forces to clear toxins. A person must have a certain amount of basic strength to undergo such healing methods, and will often need nourishing and replenishing treatments as well. The detoxification programs outlined in this book are more gentle varieties but are still only recommended for those in good health. If you are ill, it is always a good idea to consult with a qualified practitioner (and even healthy people benefit from balancing treatments from a holistic therapist).

The amount of urine made by the kidneys, along with a myriad of other bodily processes, is controlled by small chemical messengers called *hormones*. They are sort of homemade drugs, by which the body communicates with its various parts and controls its own activities. They are made and found all over the body, including in concentrated areas of specialized tissue called *endocrine glands*. Some famous hormones you will have heard of are insulin (deficient in diabetes), adrenaline and cortisol (involved with stress and inflammation), and testosterone and estrogen (sex hormones).

The endocrine system works with *the nervous system*, which consists of the brain, spinal cord, and nerves. You have sensory nerves that gather information of all kinds and feed it to the brain, and motor nerves that carry the decisions and commands of the brain.

One thing all life forms do is reproduce themselves. Human beings do this by *sexual reproduction*: female and male come together in union to produce an entirely new human. The miracle of reproduction is so intricate that it is astonishing how easily it happens!

We are born, we grow into adults, we age, and, at the end, we die. This cycle of birth and death is repeated everywhere in nature. Our relationship with it as individuals and as societies has an enormous impact on our own lives, and all the life on our beautiful planet.

The Energy of Life

For those of you who are not spiritually or religiously inclined, think of your *spirit* or *soul* as a way of referring to the underlying energy that makes everything up. The body is made of chemicals—water, proteins, fats, sugars, vitamins, minerals, trace elements. These chemicals are, basically, made of energy. I wrote in *Holistic Anatomy*:

Everything that exists is made of energy!

What is energy? It's a word we apply in all sorts of ways—oomph, zest, life-force, physical energy, mental energy, emotional energy, spiritual energy, kinetic energy, chi, agni, pneuma, nuclear energy—the stuff that allows other stuff to happen....

In the last fifty years science has also realized that energy is the stuff that drives the universe, drives every event in the universe and is in fact the basic constituent of the universe.... Although it can be measured and quantified, we have no real idea what it actually is. Physics finds that energy is the most fundamental property of the universe—everything can be created by or dissolved into energy, including matter itself. There is a background buzz of energy everywhere—the “Zero Point Field.”

If you like the scientific approach, you can take an experimental view of the spiritual or energetic aspect of holistic self-care presented here: try them out for yourself and pay attention to the results. There are many ways to support your energy—some of these are physical, such as taking salt baths or cold showers. Others are more cerebral, like the use of visualizations.

There are some good basic guidelines for keeping your energy

healthy. The two paradigms or philosophies about this that I am most familiar with are the Vedic (ancient Indian) way, and the shamanic, or earth-based one.

The Vedic tradition has a useful and simple way of describing the energy that makes up material reality—including our bodies. On the one hand, there is the heavy, low, *tamasic* energy of ignorance; on the other hand, there is the light, clear, pure *sattvic* energy of goodness. And in between is the *rajasic* or passionate energy, which is useful for getting things done, but when out of balance leads to greed and imprudence. Everything in the material world can be understood as a mixture of these energies. Activities that are in the mode of goodness include washing every day, wearing clean clothes, meditating, rising early and going early to bed, eating lightly of sattvic foods—vegetables (apart from garlic and onion), fruits, grains, beans and pulses, nuts, seeds, milk, ghee (purified butter)—and avoiding tamasic foods—meat, fish, eggs, food that isn't freshly cooked, and alcohol. Intoxicants of all kinds are tamasic, as is laziness, eating the tamasic foods, and living without integrity.

Shamanism similarly says that *everything is made of energy*, and that problems or imbalance with this energy underlie problems in the physical world. We are made of energy, and if our energy is balanced we don't get ill, and things go well. Shamanic healing techniques of every culture have been geared toward creating energetic balance. This generally involves recognizing our need to be deeply connected to nature. The energy—or spirit—of plants is called in to assist with this. Eliot Cowan's wonderful book *Plant Spirit Medicine* gives a great taste of this.² (For more on plant spirit medicine see Appendix C.)

When we experience trauma of various kinds, we can be put out of balance as well as lose parts of our energy or soul; this is known as *soul loss*. Soul retrieval is a shamanic healing technique in which the shamanic practitioner, skilled in journeying in *non-ordinary reality* or the spirit world, travels to find and bring back the lost parts, restoring the person to greater wholeness and integrity. Sandra Ingerman's book *Soul Retrieval* gives a beautiful explanation of this ancient healing practice that existed in many indigenous cultures.³

The opposite of soul loss is having the wrong kind of energy in the wrong place. Energy from the world can sometimes get into us. Having energy that isn't ours and doesn't belong to us is known as *intrusion*. This includes problems with energy "entities" of various kinds, and is associated with many kinds of sickness. To restore

health, the entity or intrusion is extracted.

Living without integrity—including any kind of dishonesty or lack of truth in our lives, hurting ourselves or others—makes us vulnerable to soul loss and intrusion. Other issues include ancestral problems to do with one's land or with the breaking of sacred laws (such as the misuse of sacred plants).

Building the Basics: Suggested Daily Practices for Holistic Self-Care

- Make space to connect with yourself and notice how you are feeling. Build a daily practice of meditation into your life. Affirm a decision to love and care for yourself as the precious being that you are. (Notice any feelings that come up around this statement). Make space for feelings in your life.
- Feed your mind and heart with positive, loving, and uplifting activities. Love more, listen more, share more, play more. If you don't know how to play, spend more time with children and take their lead. Make a list of everything that lifts you up, and add to it over time.
- Exercise is essential for health—but don't overdo it. Chinese and Ayurvedic medicine advise moderation when it comes to exercise. Both specify that exercise that makes you sweat profusely weakens your energy and should be generally avoided—contrary to the idea of no pain no gain!—* Scientific observation has confirmed the knowledge of the ancients—too much exercise is as harmful as no exercise. A Danish study found the healthiest exercisers ran, slowly or moderately, less than three times a week for between 1-2.4 hours. More than this was a disadvantage in the longevity stakes. Not running at all was also likely to kill you younger. However, enough exercise is surprisingly closer to less than more. The best exercise, if you can get it, is walking (or a little running) outside in nature. This gives you not only exercise, but the very important healthful effect of nature itself. Take a daily walk for at least twenty minutes, and ideally for an hour. Add in some stretching or other form of exercise that brings you joy.

* Ayurvedic doctors tell me that the ancient Vedic advice to stop exercising when the chest begins to perspire, or soon after, comes from a time when people's everyday lives were much more active. Perhaps in today's modern, busy, but often sedentary (i.e., sitting down a lot and not moving much) lifestyles, we need to work a bit harder in our exercise routines.

- Drink enough water. Start the day with a large glass of

(preferably) warm water on rising (with a small pinch of salt in it if you live in a hot climate or have been sweating a lot). Aim to drink around eight more glasses each day.

- Eat simply. There is no one-size-fits-all diet, though it is true across the board that junk food is poison. The main thing is to learn to listen to yourself, eating for your body rather than for your taste buds or cravings. Every chapter will explore diet in more specific detail.
- Pay attention to the breath using some kind of breathing exercises, the most simple was described earlier in the exercise “Saying Hello to Yourself.” Breathe in and out for some time, noticing that as you breathe in, new energy is entering your body, and as you breathe out, old energy is leaving. Many breathing exercises will be described in subsequent chapters.
- Take a look at your addictions and take steps toward freeing yourself. Cutting down on toxins like tobacco, drugs, and alcohol is fundamental to health and well-being. See pages 124, 134, 174, and 304.
- Use energy-cleansing methods to make sure your energy body or aura is in good shape. These include many practices from different traditions, including qigong and yoga. Later in this chapter, you will find one from the Mayan tradition.
- Feed your soul by connecting with the divine in whatever way works for you—this could be meditation, prayer, gratitude practice or other spiritual practice, connecting with nature, or simply affirming the benevolent nature of the universe.
- Consider maximizing your nutrition with supplements when indicated. The best way to bring more nutrients into your diet is with wild weeds, which are higher in minerals and vitamins than even the best-quality organic vegetables and fruits. If you can’t pick wild plants yourself, look to buy them. In some situations it is beneficial to take extra nutrients into your body in the form of vitamins and minerals. Current conventional farming methods strip the soil of nutrients and do not replace them. Artificial nitrogen-based fertilizers can make food grow large in size, but the soil is denuded of minerals and vitamins; *plants growing on this soil will therefore be lower in these essential nutrients.* A further problem is that if our digestive systems are impaired in any way (for instance, by overeating, or by eating foods that disturb the digestion), we can’t properly absorb the nutrients in our food. This means that even people who have always had access to plenty of good food can have

deficiencies in the minerals and vitamins vital for maintaining the health of the body. In the bibliography at the back of the book you will find some recommended manufacturers of good-quality supplements—don't bother taking cheap ones as they are generally completely useless. The better quality supplements are used with what are called *food state* vitamins and minerals, which are in a state that our bodies can absorb. Minerals in ordinary supplements are obtained by extracting them from the subsoil—more like mining than food production.

A Sane Approach to Healthy Eating

The best advice about how to eat for your health I have come across is that of writer Michael Pollan, who says “Eat food, not too much, mostly plants.” This sums it up very succinctly.

To stay healthy, *avoid processed food* like the poison it is. *If it comes in a packet and has lots of unpronounceable ingredients in it—don't eat it*, or at least eat it extremely sparingly (no more than once a month).

Stay away from refined carbohydrates—white flour, white sugar, and especially all the modern manufactured sugars like corn syrup.

Eat organic food whenever possible—and work to make it more possible. *Completely avoid any animal products not produced organically.*

No matter how good the food you eat is, you can't get to the goodness unless you are able to digest and absorb it well. To support the digestive process, eat slowly, sit down to eat, chew your food well.

Pay attention to your body and how it likes different foods—many people find that they can digest some foods well but not others. Eating too much overloads the digestive system and often means we can't get the nutrients from the food into our bodies. Many of us need to completely overhaul our eating habits and pay attention to healing our

guts so that we are able to properly digest our food and absorb the nutrients completely.

Healthy digestion and absorption depends to a large extent on having *a good population of the right kind of bacteria* populating our intestines—these are the probiotics found in fermented foods (including yogurt, sauerkraut, and kefir). These friendly coexisters are important not only for our digestion but for the functioning of our immune system.

Individuals have varying constitutions and different constitutional types tend to do better on different foods—but the main thing is to *listen to yourself and learn to respond to your own body's needs*. More on this in Chapter Nine on the digestive system.

If you are in any doubt about the importance of a good diet, I recommend the excellent movie *Forks over Knives*,⁴ which demonstrates the kind of diet I recommend in these pages as a cure for many serious diseases.

If you want to uplift your spiritual energy, it helps to follow the sattvic diet—eat grains and pulses, vegetables, nuts and seeds, and fresh milk products. Avoid meat, fish, eggs, alcohol, tobacco, garlic, onions, old or stale food, caffeine and other stimulants, and overly spicy or salty food.

The Mayan Energy-Cleaning “Egg” Exercise

The Mayans understood that there are two kinds of energy—light and heavy. Human beings take in light energy from above, digest it, and make heavy energy, which we release to the earth below us. We need some heavy energy in us to keep us grounded, but if too much builds up, we get too heavy and clogged up. Fortunately, our heavy energy feeds the Earth Mother—Pachamama—

energetically, just as our physical waste (urine and feces) feeds the earth physically by nourishing the soil.

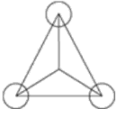
Sit in a straight-backed comfortable position, and settle into yourself by taking a few nice, easy breaths. Close your eyes, and imagine an egg-shaped mass of energy all around you. This is your energy body. Bring your attention to the very top of the egg, somewhere above your head. Imagine that there is a stopper or cork that you can remove, making a hole in the top of the egg. Remove the stopper, and as you breathe in, imagine/feel that you are pulling down light energy from above, filling up the energy egg. Take three or four breaths, then replace the stopper, and now bring your awareness to the bottom of the egg.

At the bottom, imagine there's a plug, which you can remove. Remove the plug and as you breathe out, imagine/feel that the earth below you is pulling the heavy energy in your egg down and out of your egg.

Pachamama is gobbling up the heavy energy—*mmm!*

After some breaths like this, or as soon as you start to feel a little lightheaded, put the plug back in to stop up the drainage hole, and return your attention to the top of your egg. Repeat the exercise a few more times until you feel that you have released all the heavy energy. Then, on the last breath, stop after you have filled up your egg with light energy.

With practice, this exercise can be done very effectively and quickly. It is a great one to do every day, taking only a few minutes of your time. If you get in the habit of doing it regularly, it can be an effective way of keeping your energy light and fresh.



Interrelatedness

We do not exist in a vacuum. We are individuals, but we are completely interdependent on our environment—on our families, our friends, our communities, and our physical environment. All of these need attention for our health to flourish. Holistic self-care is basically about understanding and respecting the need to keep the body, mind, and spirit well by giving each what it needs and protecting each from harm.

However, it is clear that creating huge piles of toxic landfill and polluting our seas and rivers is as irrational as filling our own bodies with toxins. This means that for our self-care to be fully effective, we need to become aware of and thoughtful about the gross imbalances in our societies, and create new policies that are more rational and balanced, to enable everyone to be healthy.

The body is separated into individual systems, which makes it easier to understand its complexity. However, *all the systems are intimately connected* with one another and cannot truly be separated. The health of each one is vital to the good functioning of all the others, and of the whole being.

The following chapters will contain a brief explanation about the working of each system and some guidelines for self-care particular to that system. However, many of the daily practice exercises for the health of the mind and spirit are usable for any system. The whole body is exactly that—whole—and everything is connected.

Useful Recipes

Flaxseed Rehydration Tea

Tea from linseed/flaxseed is perfect for rehydrating. Rich in omega-3 fatty acids, the tea nourishes the cell membranes, and tones and

protects the digestive tract from top to bottom.

INGREDIENTS

2 Tbsp linseeds/flaxseeds

1 liter/1 quart water

Makes approx. 250 ml/1 cup, enough for three days. Keeps up to three days in the fridge.

TO MAKE

Put the seeds and water in a pan and bring to a boil. Remove from heat and leave to stand with the lid on for 12 hours or overnight.

The next day, bring to a boil again and simmer for 1 hour. Strain off the seeds. These can be eaten—add to oatmeal or to baked goods.

Put 4 tablespoons of the remaining liquid into a large (ideally 1 pint/20 fl. oz) mug.

Dilute the thick liquid with half boiling and half cold water.

Drink 1 mug of the tea 3 times daily, half an hour before meals.

If you are in a hurry and don't have time to make the linseed tea by the full method, you can do a super-quick version for one day's tea, by simply boiling 1 Tbsp of flaxseeds with 250 ml/1 cup of water in a pan until the water is reduced by half. Leave it to cool, then drink it over the course of a day.

From The Herbal Handbook of Home and Health (The Domestic Alchemist)

Multimineral Powder

Wild plants are often richer in minerals than cultivated ones. This wild herb powder can be sprinkled onto soups and stews or added to smoothies or juices for an instant health boost.

INGREDIENTS

Collect as many of the following wild herbs as you can:

Burdock root

Dandelion leaves and root

Nettle leaves and root

Plantain leaves

Ground elder leaves

Peppermint

Red clover

Thyme

Sage

Yellow dock root

(Alternatively, buy a range of dried herbs)

Keeps 1 year.

Dry the plant material and grind to a powder in a coffee grinder. Mix thoroughly and store in an airtight container. Take 2–3 tsp daily as a food supplement.

Try adding it to a smoothie, or adding it to soup just before you eat it, or taking it with warm water.

From The Herbal Handbook of Home and Health (The Domestic Alchemist)

2

The Skin—Between Within and Without

“Our skin is the interface between within and without. It protects us from the outside world. Think of all the verbal expressions there are to do with skin—thick-skinned, thin-skinned, skin-deep, etc. How do you feel in your skin?”

—HOLISTIC ANATOMY

The skin covers the whole of the outside of our bodies. It is made up of many layers. Although the top layers are made of cells that are dead and are filled with a tough substance made of protein called keratin, the lower layers are dynamically alive and busy, dividing and making a new layer every day. At the same time, the outer layers are rubbed off or fall off daily. In this way the skin is continually being renewed. These layers together are called the epidermis. It takes about one month for the entire epidermis to be replaced with new cells.

The skin has many functions. It provides *protection* for the delicate inner parts of the body. Its thick and tough keratin layer responds to pressure by getting even thicker—if we walk with bare feet, the skin responds by building extremely thick layers of keratin, which can become as hard as horn. When we work with our hands, hard patches known as *calluses* form.

Our *hair and nails* are also formed from keratin, arranged in different ways to form the hard stuff of our nails and the flexible strands of our hair. Both hair and nails are alive only at their root or bed, from where they grow. The hair and nails grow constantly. To keep them healthy we need a good blood supply and the same nutrients needed for healthy skin.

Energetics of Hair

Although hair is dead and made of keratin, the roots are alive. A French hairdresser who studied shiatsu, Remi Portrait,⁵ has created a way of cutting hair with a razor in which the hairdresser connects with the person's energy and cuts their hair with sensitivity to the meridians. These haircuts are amazing, respecting the integrity of the hair and the profound effect it has on the nervous system. Interestingly, this is backed up by Native American wisdom that says that long hair acts as an antenna for intuition. Native Americans know that hunters, trackers, and warriors can sense more when their hair is long than when it is short.

There is further protection for the deeper tissues, provided by a layer of fat right underneath the skin that is attached to it. This subcutaneous fat also insulates us from cold, and acts as a storage place for fat, which can be used to make energy when food is scarce.

The skin is also *elastic*—it allows for stretching as the body moves. This elasticity decreases with age and when we are not fully hydrated. If you gently pinch the skin on the back of your hand and then let it go, it will spring back into place immediately if you are young, and more and more slowly as you age.

The skin is made *waterproof* by the oily substance sebum that it is made by many small sebaceous glands found below the epidermis in an area called the dermis. The sebaceous glands secrete into the hair follicles, keeping the hair healthy and protected as well as spreading the secretions over the surface of the skin. If the skin is not able to make enough oily sebum, it becomes uncomfortably dry and cracks.

The skin responds to outside influences in many ways. When we wash with harsh detergents (soaps and shampoos), the oil is stripped from our skin, making it dry and irritated. This then causes more sebum to be made. It's sebum that makes our hair oily or greasy—so actually, the more you shampoo, the more greasy it becomes. To deal with greasy hair, try washing it less, using more

gentle methods—natural or non-soap-based shampoos (clay or green gram—discussed later in the chapter). Some choose to stop using shampoo altogether, cleaning the hair by washing it with water and brushing it daily, working the oils from the root to tips of the hair. Neither Patti Smith nor Adele use shampoo.

When we are in hot sun, there are cells in the skin that make a pigment called melanin, which protects us from burning damage from UV light. The more melanin in the skin, the darker it is.

There is an amazing and powerful *immunity* provided by the skin—our first defense against pathogenic organisms. The barrier of the tough outer layer of the epidermis is part of this, plus a special reaction between watery sweat and oily sebum forms an acid mantle on the skin. We need good-quality nutrients in the skin to ensure a good, strong acid mantle. It is damaged by being stripped of oil by soaps and detergents.

“Toxic ‘skin care’ products... It might surprise you to learn that the chemist and beauty shop are full of products to supposedly make you look beautiful that actually harm your skin as well as our environment. Some of them are considered more toxic even than some pesticides....

Sodium lauryl sulphate is in just about everything, including baby products, although it is a very strong detergent that can cause eye irritation, permanent damage to the eyes, skin rashes, hair loss, flaking skin, and mouth ulceration.

Combined with other ingredients, it can form nitrosamines, which are carcinogenic. Sodium lauryl sulphate easily penetrates the skin and can lodge itself in the heart, lungs, liver, and brain.

Fluoride and talc are carcinogenic. Other nasties include propylene glycol, alcohol, and isopropyl.

As for mineral oil—baby oils are usually made of this; it strips the natural oils from the skin and forms an oily film over the skin, which prohibits the release of toxins. It can also cause photosensitivity, chapping, dryness, and premature aging. Want to put it on your baby?”

—HOLISTIC ANATOMY

The Politics of Beauty

Many of us are starved of love and subsequently feel bad about ourselves. We are bombarded with lies about how “beautiful” people look—and how we should look, or no one will want us. This makes us vulnerable to spending time and money on trying to change the way we look. Worldwide, a \$460 billion profit was made by the beautification industry in 2014—and this is predicted to rise to \$675 billion by 2020. Beautification industry advertising, supported by rows of glossy magazines, hammers us with the false notion that we are ugly and unattractive without altering or covering up our faces and bodies with makeup, perfumes, and even surgery.

We don't have to be bamboozled by these false ideas of beauty and desirability. Rather, we can apply ourselves to loving and accepting ourselves—and one another—as we are, redefining our standards of beauty. We can stop buying toxic toiletries, cosmetics, and other personal care products.

Protection is not the only function of the skin. It is also one of our major *organs of elimination*—this means it's one of the organs with which the body can get rid of substances that it doesn't want because they are at worst harmful or at best useless.

The skin can also *absorb* small molecules, including the tiny molecules in essential oils—it is possible to apply these oils to the skin and for them to be absorbed into the bloodstream. Essential oils are also excreted from the body via the skin. You can experience this when you eat aromatic spices and garlic: the next day you can smell these spices in your sweat. (Essential oils are also excreted by the kidneys and the lungs.) Herbal remedies can also be applied in the form of hand and foot baths, a very effective method of treatment used by some herbalists, because the medicinal components of the plants will be absorbed across the skin into the bloodstream. (The famous French herbalist Maurice Messegue works in this way.)

Another function of the skin is to breathe—to exchange small amounts of oxygen and carbon dioxide. In Chinese medicine the skin is known as *the third lung*. There is a relationship between eczema (an inflammation of the skin) and asthma (an inflammatory reaction in the lungs).

The skin is crucial to the *regulation of body temperature*, by the opening and closing of the blood vessels in the skin as well as by sweating.

Another highly important job of the skin is *making Vitamin D*. A kind of steroid hormone obtained by exposure to the sun rather than from diet, vitamin D is needed for healthy bone formation, the heart, immunity, and generalized repair and many metabolic processes. We need direct exposure to the sun on a regular basis to make vitamin D. Because many of us stay out of the sun too much—working inside, and covering up the skin when go out with clothes and sunblock—vitamin D deficiency is becoming more and more common. Signs and symptoms of a *Vitamin D deficiency* include depression, body aches and pains, fatigue, weakness in the hair and nails or hair loss, persistent or frequent infections, and sweating of the head.

Our skin is an important sense organ for touch. Its multiple nerve endings send constant messages to the brain. Stroking the skin is essential not only for its health, but for our entire well-being. Massage and touch have been part of every health care system of every culture for millennia. Without touch, babies don't grow and can even die. Conversely, stroking and touching has been found to increase growth in premature babies—babies in incubators given daily gentle massage grow more than babies who weren't massaged, even on the same amount of food. Most non-human primates spend 15–20 percent of their time touching one another, so we can assume we need a lot of physical contact too. Many of us in the twenty-first century, particularly in the USA and the UK, are not touched enough. This causes stress that leads to disease creation, and very likely has far-reaching implications for our societies. Some countries are more tactile than others—a study from the 1960s by pioneering psychologist Sidney Jourard studied the conversations of friends in different parts of the world.⁶ In one hour in England, two friends touched each other zero times. In the United States, it was twice. In France, 110 times per hour. And in Puerto Rico, 180 times...

As our first line of self-defense, on the front line of day-to-day wear and tear and mishaps, the skin *renews* itself daily, and *repairs* itself quickly if damaged. To this end, it needs a good supply of the

right building materials and needs to be able to transport these building materials everywhere it needs them. For this, as well as for its vital role in elimination and immunity, it is blessed with a *very rich blood supply*. (A good blood supply is needed for healing anywhere in the body, and a poor blood supply can be involved in problems anywhere in the body.) When the skin is torn or cut, it heals itself with special *scar tissue*, made of tough and fibrous collagen fibers. Scars are not as strong or flexible as normal skin.

To help a scar form efficiently and strongly, regularly stroke up and down in line with the scar several times a day as it is healing. This will encourage the collagen fibers to line up neatly along the join of the scar, which makes for better-looking scars.

The key to understanding a skin problem can be found by considering its functions:

Excretion: Is there a problem of toxicity? Is the skin trying to eliminate something from the body that the body doesn't like—a food, an environmental toxin or pollutant?

Blood supply: Sometimes a problem in the skin is due to a problem with the circulation.

Protective barrier: Is something upsetting your immune system? An allergen of some kind may be creating an immune reaction that shows itself in the skin. Or, if there is a skin infection—like impetigo, which is an infection by bacteria that normally colonize the skin—you might ask why the immune system is not working properly and letting this common bacteria cause a problem. It can be that the skin is damaged in places, or it can be a general problem with immunity that is coming out in the skin.

A very common cause of skin problems is that we are eating something our bodies cannot currently tolerate. This is due to what is called *leaky gut syndrome* (see page 140) in naturopathic medicine. This is a situation in which the digestive system is absorbing partly digested or undigested proteins into the bloodstream, and these proteins (for example, from cows' milk or wheat gluten) are triggering an immune reaction in the blood, which is expressed in an inflammation in the skin.

A detox diet or a simple elimination diet is often very useful in improving skin problems that are linked to food intolerances. This involves cutting out most foods for a short period, then one at a time reintroducing foods, starting with the usual prime suspects, and watching to see a reaction (see Appendix A).

Holistic Self-Care Suggestions for Supporting Your Skin

We can improve the health of our skin, hair, and nails by nourishing its basic qualities—we need to keep it well-hydrated, well-oiled, and acidic.

- Be in the sunlight and fresh air every day for at least an hour (build up gradually to avoid sunburn). Stop covering your skin with makeup or sunblock—avoid sunburn by a combination of building your tolerance to strong sunlight, by increasing your exposure gradually day by day, and by covering up with clothes and hats and staying in the shade when you’ve reached your limit. We need the vitamin D our skin makes from sunlight for the health of our skin as well as the rest of the body—it is essential for good immune functioning of the skin itself.
- Keep yourself well-hydrated. Aim to drink eight glasses of water a day, with a little pinch of good quality sea salt or Himalayan salt in some of them if needed. If this seems an impossibly huge amount because you currently drink very little water, make a start by gradually increasing how much you drink. (See pages 182–184 and 189 for detailed information about water.) Cutting out alcohol, tobacco, caffeine, and sugar, and reducing salty foods, will help you to stay fully hydrated.
- Up the omegas. Essential fatty acids, especially omega-3s, are needed to make quality sebum and therefore protect the skin. Omega-3 essential fatty acids are needed for healthy cell membranes and are the key ingredient of the body’s own anti-inflammatory homemade drugs. A lack of them is very common today and can be the main underlying cause of ANY inflammation-based problem anywhere in the body (including skin and joint inflammation, asthma, heart disease, and even cancer). They are found in dark green leafy vegetables; seeds—such as flaxseed (linseeds), chia seeds, and nettle seeds; walnuts; soybeans; and non-vegetable sources, including eggs.*

* I no longer recommend krill or fish oils, because: 1) the toxicity of the sea due to increasing pollution; 2) the unsustainability of such sources from an ecological perspective; 3) their unsuitability for a sattvic diet, which is highly beneficial for keeping your energy clear and pure.

- Do what you can to reduce stress. Stress is a major cause of illness. This theme will be explored in every chapter of this book, as it is relevant to every system. The skin is so rich in nervous tissue, and so tied up in our self-image and our

relationship with the outer world, that it is very reactive to stress. The fight or flight reaction of our sympathetic nervous system (see pages 196–199) affects the skin powerfully: in order to protect us from serious harm during potential danger, the blood vessels in the skin constrict tightly, to ensure minimum bleeding if we are cut. This means if we are stressed a lot (or all) of the time, the skin has a chronically diminished blood supply, which impairs its ability to excrete toxins and obtain the nutrients it needs for rejuvenation and healthful functioning. De-stressing your life as much as you are able is therefore essential for the health of your skin (and everything else). Having fun and learning to actively express love and appreciation for ourselves and others—including our children, family, and friends—counters stress. One major cause of stress is giving ourselves a hard time. Many of us suffer low self-esteem. Cultivating self-love and acceptance counters habits of self-criticism (and criticizing others), blame, and self-doubt. Loving ourselves means we are more able to love others. This requires a lifetime commitment. Start now, with the following self-love face massage.

Self-love Face Massage

Give your face some love with a face massage. While applying oil to your face, massage your jaws and your eyebrows to release stress. Do some “face yoga” by alternating between a big smile and a kissing posture. Remember to breathe. Firmly but lightly scratch your head, then pull your fingers to the ends of your hair, all over your scalp. Gently massage your ears. Finish by stroking your face gently and lovingly. Combine this with some self-love affirmations—“Lovely, lovely [say your name]. I love you and I always will.”

- Cut out toxins from your life. If you smoke, make the decision to quit (see page 135). Smoking (and other toxins) takes a huge toll on your skin, depriving it of oxygen and using up essential vitamins and minerals. Smokers usually look much older than nonsmokers, due to the effect of smoking: it destroys vitamin C in the body, and vitamin C is needed for collagen formation—

without it the skin ages rapidly (see page 66). It's also a good idea to look at your alcohol consumption. Alcohol seriously dehydrates you, puts pressure on your liver and therefore decreases your ability to deal with toxins, and damages the small blood vessels (think of that jolly red nose of older drinkers).

- Plan a detox diet for a month, to eliminate toxins and problem foods from your diet (see Appendix A). After the period of detoxifying, reintroduce foods gradually, one at a time, in order to observe the effects. Sometimes, especially with severe or longstanding chronic skin conditions, there might not be much improvement in the initial time of cutting the food out, but if you reintroduce a food you are intolerant to after having a break from it, usually the skin will react with a flare-up, telling you that it's best to cut that food out for a long period (say at least a year), and perhaps take steps to heal your gut, which may be "leaky" (see pages 26, 140).
- Strike a pose with the specific *yoga asanas* (poses) recommended for the skin: *Dhanurasana* (Bow Pose), good for promoting circulation in the whole body, encourages lymph drainage, therefore detoxifying by pressure on the abdomen, and is a very good stress-reducer. Shoulder stand, plow, and downward dog are all helpful, due to their powerful effect on the circulation. The deep relaxation of *Shavasana* (lying flat on your back, hands at your sides, facing the ceiling) switches on your parasympathetic nervous system—the state of deep relaxation in which all repair, rejuvenation, and healing happen.

WARNING

It is not recommended to do yoga at home alone for the first time. Find a good teacher and follow their instructions. Make sure they know of any health problems you have so they will be able to tell you when a pose is not safe for you.

- Dry skin brushing has a good general tonic action for the skin, because keeping it clear of too many dead cells and stimulating the lymphatic and circulatory systems will help keep the skin clear of toxins and supplied with plenty of nutrients for repair and rejuvenation (see page 93).
- Keep the skin well-oiled. Sesame oil is the most compatible

with human skin. Try a routine of dry skin brushing, followed by a shower—only using soap if needed on the smellier parts of your body, but definitely not all over, or try a soap-free cleanser like the ones suggested at the end of this chapter. After the shower, apply oil all over your body, rubbing it in well—in Ayurvedic medicine it is recommended to rub downward, all over your body, so as to “pacify the Vata.”*—Once a week, or more or less as you have time, give yourself a thorough oiling by applying generous amounts of oil all over your body and face before you wash. Let the oil soak well in to your body for twenty minutes, then take a warm shower and wash it off using *green gram*—finely ground mung beans (see the recipe at the end of the chapter)—to remove the excess oil without stripping your skin completely. This gives your skin a serious treat.

* Vata is one of the three doshas, or energies, that make up an individual. All of us are made of all of them, but in every person one or more are more dominant. Vata is the energy that controls bodily functions associated with motion, including blood circulation, breathing, blinking, and your heartbeat.

- Use breathing exercises, since the skin has a close relationship with breathing and the lungs. In yoga, breathing exercises are called pranayama. See pages 32, 50, 83, 131, 135, and 270.
- What about the emotional angle? There could be an emotional aspect to skin problems (as with any other problem). It is said that the skin protects our individuality. Could there be a lack of self-acceptance? Suppressed anger? The presence of old, buried things that need resolution? Anxiety or fear, a feeling of being threatened by somebody? (This could be current or old, real or imagined.) Are other people getting under your skin and irritating you—or overstepping your boundaries? Irritation, anger, and annoyance that may be unrecognized or suppressed can be an underlying contribution to any inflammation. Sometimes, if it’s a case of working to let go of irritation and anger, the first step is to acknowledge and allow that we are angry or irritated. (See exercise on page 34.) In any case, having a skin problem can itself be stressful and upsetting. Feelings need to be given space for expression or the suppression of them will cause deeper problems.
- Keep your energy clean. A simple but effective way to clear your aura or energy body is to use cold water. A quick energy-clean is simply to wash the hands and wrists in cold water. However, for a more serious energy-clean for the whole body, take a five-minute cold shower. (Yes, I know! Not easy. If you

balk at this, try starting with warm water and gradually making it cold.) Even better than a cold shower is to take a dip in some wild water—a river, stream, or ocean, or stand under a waterfall for a few minutes. You will feel amazing afterward.

- Clean hair. Hair is said to accumulate energy, because it acts like an antenna. Curly or frizzy hair is particularly likely to collect energy. To keep your energy body clean, consider looking after your hair from this perspective. You might keep your hair short if you find you are vulnerable to this phenomenon, or cover your hair in certain circumstances (as in Kundalini yoga, when a white cloth is used to cover the hair). If you feel you have “picked something up” and your hair feels energetically “dirty,” you can clean it by smoking it in burning sage (see page 116), or wash it with salt mixed with conditioner. Or use the salt-and-surgical-spirit cleansing method described on page 209.
-

* If you take B vitamins, it is best to take a B-complex, all the B vitamins together.

- Consider supplementing. Useful vitamins and minerals for the skin are *vitamins C, D, and E* (which are antioxidants), and vitamin C for collagen formation. *Vitamin A* is needed to maintain and repair skin. The *B vitamin biotin* is needed in the formation of skin, hair, and nail cells. Even a mild deficiency of it can cause problems. *Niacin*, and other *B vitamins*, help the skin stay hydrated.* *Silica* makes children’s skin and hair soft and silky, and their nails perfect. As we age, silica levels decrease as calcium levels increase. Silica is an essential component of collagen, and it is also essential for the elasticity in our skin; it also helps keep our hormones balanced, which is necessary for healthy skin, hair, and nails. *Selenium* is protective against skin cancer. *Copper** and *zinc*, along with vitamin C and silica, are involved in the development of the elastic fibers of the skin (and elsewhere). Zinc is also essential for all tissue regeneration and healing. It is necessary to have a good amount of these nutrients in your diet (see page 147 for a nutrient chart), but also they are healing and regenerating for the skin when *applied externally*—you can make use of the nutrient-packed nature of fruit and vegetables by making delicious fresh fruit face packs. See the recipe at the end of the chapter.
-

* Do not take copper as a supplement without professional advice. There is plenty in food—especially in nuts and seeds, greens, and pulses. Too much

copper can be dangerous. However, it is now being added to skin creams, as it is very beneficial when applied to the skin.

Loving Yourself

Sit or stand in a relaxed way in front of a mirror. Begin with your eyes closed, and take several slow, relaxed breaths, breathing in new, fresh energy, and breathing out the old, tired energy. Feel the air moving in and out of your nostrils. When you are ready, open your eyes and look in the mirror.

Look at yourself, into your eyes. Notice how it feels to do this. Does it feel comfortable? Weird? Funny? Crazy? Boring? What kind of thoughts come into your mind as you look at yourself? Are you able to focus on looking at your eyes, or do you get distracted by a close examination of your face and all its real or imagined flaws? Concentrate on your eyes. What color are they? Are you familiar with them? Do you recognize yourself when you look in the mirror, or are you surprised?

Look deeply into your own lovely eyes (yes, they are lovely!) and say out loud: “[Your name], I like you and I always will. I love you and I always will. You are beautiful just as you are.” Repeat the phrase at least three times.

Notice how it feels to do this exercise. Embarrassing? Silly? Moving? Enjoyable? Horrible? Impossible?—whatever you feel, don’t make any attempt to change it. Just notice. Every few days, review how you feel before and after doing this, and make a note of it in a journal. Does it change? Get easier? Get more difficult?

Repeat this exercise every day for at least a month, in the morning, at lunchtime, and in the evening—and every time you look in a mirror for any reason, remember to say to yourself: “I like you and I always will. I love you and I always will.”

Daily Pranayama

Sit comfortably, with your spine upright. Close your eyes and take a few breaths, saying hello to yourself and noticing how you're feeling. Put your thumb close to your right nostril, your fore and middle fingers on the space between your eyebrows (the third eye area), and your ring finger close to your left nostril, and breathe all the way out as far as you can using both nostrils. Now close your right nostril and breathe in through your left nostril, counting 1, 2, 3, 4. Now open your right nostril, and at the same time, close your left nostril and breathe out through your right nostril to the count of 8, and then breathe in through the same (right) nostril to the count of 4. Then close your right nostril, open your left nostril, and breathe out to the count of 8, then in through the same (left) nostril to the count of 4. Then cover your left nostril and open the right, breathing out to the count of 8, then in to the count of 4, again uncovering the left while covering the right, and returning to breathing out of the left nostril to the count of 8. This is two complete cycles—repeat the exercise ten times more to make a total of twelve. Then relax your hands in your lap and just take a few more breaths, noticing how you feel now. Rub your hands together and then gently place them over your eyes. Gently rub your eyes, then open them inside your hands and slowly move your hands down to your lap. Give gratitude for the opportunity to do this healing breathing exercise.

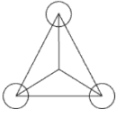
Exploring Anger

You can explore this by asking yourself: Who am I angry at, now or in my past? Who overstepped my boundaries? Who haven't I forgiven? Whom am I feeling irritated by? Make a list (you might find that it's pretty long!). Begin by giving yourself full permission to feel your feelings—it can be surprisingly difficult to do this. The first step is to give them some space.

It is true that holding on to anger against others is unhealthy and ultimately hurts us at least as much (and usually more) than the object of our anger. It has a powerfully negative effect on the immune system, especially on the parts that destroy cancerous cells.

However, forgiveness and letting go of past hurts is not easy for most people. I have found that I was able to forgive some old grudges when I said aloud “I’ll never forgive you!” (I discovered this after trying the more traditional method of affirming “I forgive the past and move joyfully toward the future.”) What I noticed was that I became more aware of some old hurts that I hadn't really let go of. I tried “I forgive [person's name here],” but it just didn't work for me.

Then one day I found myself saying “I’ll never forgive so-and-so!” and it made me laugh and laugh. I kept it up for a few months. Usually it made me laugh, sometimes I would cry as I remembered some difficult experience. I made a “hit list” of old, unresolved stuff, and I regularly looked through it. I found that over the weeks I was able to cross more and more people and events off that list. The “I’ll never forgive,” which made me really laugh (or sometimes cry), helped me to move much more quickly toward forgiveness than just trying to go straight for the letting go part.



Interrelatedness

When wanting to maximize the health of the skin, consider especially the functioning of the nervous, circulatory, lymphatic, immune, digestive, and endocrine systems. Since the skin is involved with detoxifying the body, and obviously adversely affected by pollution, the state of the outer world is clearly very important to its health.

Useful Recipes

Detergent-Free Ways to Wash

Hair Mud

Suitable for all hair types except very dry. Either use it as a shampoo or leave on for 20 minutes as a deep cleansing hair pack. Your hair feels incredibly clean after use.

INGREDIENTS

½ Tbsp rhassoul mud powder (this is a Moroccan mud from the Atlas Mountains, but you can actually use any sort of clay)

2 Tbsp herbal infusion: chamomile for blond, marigold for red, nettle for brown, sage or black tea for black

Mix the mud and herbal infusion well. Leave it to stand for 5 minutes. Stir again and add more infusion if needed. Massage the clay through your hair like a shampoo. Leave on for a few minutes, then rinse off thoroughly.

Makes enough for 1–2 applications. Keep in the fridge and use within 1 week.

Courtesy of Teri Evans. From The Domestic Alchemist: 501 Recipes for Home, Health, and Happiness.

Feed Your Face—Fresh Fruit Face Mask

Since the skin loves minerals and vitamins, and fresh fruit are full of these, they make the ideal treat for the delicate skin of your face.

Before you start, wash and exfoliate your face for maximum benefit from the mask.

½ banana

3 cherries (stones removed)

3 strawberries

1 Tbsp honey

Blend the ingredients until smooth, spread the mixture over your face, relax for 10–20 minutes, then wash it all off for a glowing and happy complexion.

Note: You can use an avocado in place of the banana for a richly nourishing mask for dry or sensitive skin, or a tomato for spotty skin.

3

The Skeletal System (Bones and Joints)—Framework

Bones

The skeleton, the solid framework of the body, consists of 206 bones. Living bone is vibrantly alive, and continually changing. It has a rich blood and nerve supply. Bone cells make and reabsorb a beautiful design of calcium phosphate and calcium carbonate salts in a fibrous network. The more weight-bearing exercise a bone is asked to do, the stronger it gets, building more calcium into the bone. This process is so dynamic that when we wake up in the morning after lying in bed all night, our bones are actually less dense than they were when we went to bed!

The bone is covered by a fibrous, tendon-like membrane called the *periosteum*. The outer layer of a bone is solid and compact, but the inside parts are not—they are either spongy, full of holes that are themselves full of red bone marrow, or hollow and full of yellow bone marrow.

The functions of the skeleton are support, movement, protection, making blood cells, and storage of calcium, phosphates, and fat. Calcium is necessary for muscle contraction and nerve conduction, among other things. Our body needs a good level for healthy functioning. If we are deficient in calcium, the body will take it from the bones overnight, as usual, but will be unable to replace it by laying more of it down the next day. So a lack of calcium, or difficulty absorbing it (and other nutrients), makes our bones weak. All blood cells are made in the red bone marrow, inside many bones, so healthy bones are necessary for healthy blood and healthy immunity.

Bones grow first in the womb, as a skeleton made of cartilage—the tough, bendable tissue in your ears or the tip of your nose. Cartilage is made of a background substance called glucosamine (a sugar/amino acid mix). Gradually, solid bone is made by the laying down of calcium and phosphate salts.

Osteoporosis

Osteoporosis occurs when bones become weak due to lack of calcium phosphate. The bones commonly become thinner and more brittle with age, especially if we have led a sedentary lifestyle, had a poor diet, and especially for women after menopause, because the female hormone estrogen is needed for healthy bone formation.

The development of osteoporosis has its roots in childhood, because a sedentary childhood will mean that we don't develop really strong bones, therefore later in life when we lose bone density we get into trouble. To prevent osteoporosis, make weight-bearing exercise part of your life now, and make sure you have a good supply of absorbable calcium in your diet. Kefir is a particularly good source of calcium and has been shown to improve bone density in osteoporosis sufferers. Also, maintain a diet high in potassium and low in sodium to prevent osteoporosis.

Bone is therefore a mixture of a very tough yet flexible cartilage component and a hard, rigid, and unyielding calcium component. Cartilage is found in most of our joints as well as in the ears and nose, and in the windpipe or trachea and its larger branches.

Bones not only regenerate themselves daily, they are also able to heal when broken. The bone cells—osteocytes—get busy and lay down lots of strong calcium phosphate salts where the break occurred. A break generally takes around six weeks to heal.

“When we are young we are incredibly juicy. Our bones are flexible and do not easily break—a young person is more likely to sustain a ‘green stick’ fracture on injury to a bone. To see what this looks like, literally take a green stick, a small, alive twig, straight from a tree, and try to break it.

Later on we start to dry out, this process continuing throughout life. Another reason to live a ‘juicy’ life.... It's good for our bones.”

oxygen (red blood cells), and clotting (platelets). Red blood cells require a lot of *iron and B vitamins* for their formation. Women are commonly short of iron because of the extra blood loss during menstruation. It's important to eat extra iron-rich foods at that time of the month, or all-month-round if you have heavy periods. White blood cells don't need so much iron but do need *vitamins C and A, and folic acid* (one of the Bs). *Vitamin D* keeps white blood cells alive for longer in the blood, so we don't have to make so many new ones. Some metaphysical healers say that the bone marrow, our deepest tissue, reflects our deepest beliefs about ourselves.

- Keep your energy clean with a bone-friendly bath. Warm salt baths are a lovely treat for your bones, joints, and muscles—and also are a very useful way to clean the energy body. Run a warm bath and add a generous handful or two of sea salt—or use one of the bath salt recipes at the end of the chapter. Soak in the bath for at least twenty minutes. To get the full energy-clearing benefit, completely submerge yourself, including your head, for some of the time. Finish the bath with a gentle shower—and if you feel in particular need of energy “debugging,” make it a cold one.
- Maximize nutrition with supplements if you can't get enough from your diet. We generally need a full complement of minerals to ensure top-notch bone formation, and many of us don't have enough of these in our diets. These include *magnesium, chromium, silica, zinc, manganese, boron, copper, potassium, and strontium*, plus vitamins *A, B-complex, C, and D*. But don't take supplements instead of cleaning up your diet.

You may need to take Vitamin D3 in the winter—and even all year round if you don't get enough time in the sun. It is not easy to get enough vitamin D from food alone. However, one way to get more is to eat sunbathing mushrooms. Mushrooms, like our skin, make vitamin D from sunlight. They continue to do this after you pick them—so to really boost the vitamin D content of mushrooms, put them in the sunshine for around sixty minutes before you cook and eat them (cooking doesn't destroy the vitamin D).⁷

Vitamin D is essential for healthy bone formation—you mainly need to get this from sunlight, but you can also make sure your diet contains it (see nutrient chart page 147), and that you give your skin sufficient building blocks for its healthy function, particularly in the form of omega-3s.

allow maximum space between the bones of each joint. Take up yoga and benefit from its mixture of stretching and deep breathing. You will need help from a teacher to know what moves would be helpful for you and which are to be avoided if you suffer from joint problems.

- Mobilize your shoulders. Make a habit of regularly putting your shoulders through their full range of movement. If you are working at a desk, get up every half hour and move around and stretch—lift your arms above your head. They don't get moved that way enough in most modern ways of working.
- Sleep deeply. In our deep sleep we produce melatonin and growth hormone, which are essential for repair of connective tissue (and muscle). Sleep occurs in roughly four-hour cycles—and we need two of these each night, in the dark, for optimum health. Disrupted sleep leads to increased inflammation in the body—and painful joints and muscles lead to disturbed sleep, which in turn leads to more inflammation; in fact, disrupted sleep or insomnia can even be the cause of the aching body.
- Give your hardworking hands regular self-massage. The wrist, hands, and fingers together contain twenty-seven bones, with various synovial joints between them to allow a fantastic range of movement. They deserve a bit of attention in return. One simple thing that helps them is *pumping the joints*, which is great for encouraging the formation of fresh synovial fluid and nourishing the cartilage. You can do this with your fingers and thumb and with the wrist itself—pull your fingers to full open position, then push together, then open again. Always end by gently pulling to increase the joint spaces. The Chinese massage technique *Tui Na* includes this kind of approach.
- Some regular bodywork is very useful. My personal favorite is *McTimoney chiropractic*, and my brilliant practitioner (Sue Wine of Chester) has introduced me to *Feldenkrais*—conscious, gentle movement that increases body awareness. There are useful exercises online that you can do at home to get a taste of Feldenkrais.⁹ It's all about keeping good alignment for your joints. You might prefer osteopathy or massage or some other kind of bodywork. A good massage practitioner will work around your joints and help the muscles to relax, making the joints more spacious. See what local practitioners you can find and make use of them.
- Look at your emotional connections. It is understood that joint problems can be emotionally related to *anger* issues. See pages

- Connect spiritually to Mother Earth. Our bones are like the stones of the earth—hidden deep inside, providing strength, full of minerals. Our connection to Mother Earth is crucial to our well-being. She provides everything we need on the material level—food, shelter, clothes. Similarly, there is an energetic connection with the earth that we can grow, maintain, and deepen. Indigenous people understand the importance of this connection with the earth, and scientists looking at “earthing therapy,” discussed next, are studying the physics of it. Connecting with the earth brings a deep sense of security and strength to our lives.
- Stay grounded with “earthing therapy.” The earth has its own electromagnetic field, just as our bodies do. When you are *grounded* or connected physically to the earth, free electrons, which are a potent antioxidant, are released into your body—clearing damaging and disease-causing free-radicals from your body at the cellular level, giving beneficial changes in heart rate, and decreasing levels of inflammation. Modern life cuts us off from our natural physical connection to the earth’s vibrations—we spend a lot of time indoors, and when we go out we wear shoes that insulate us. People with inflammatory problems of the joints and muscles (like arthritis and rheumatism) can be helped by increasing the time they are exposed to the earth’s electrical vibrations. This earthing therapy was initially developed by Clint Ober, and biophysicist James Oschman is developing the scientific understanding of it. Oschman¹⁰ says

The moment your foot touches the Earth, or you connect to the Earth through a wire, your physiology changes. An immediate normalization begins. And an anti-inflammatory switch is turned on. People stay inflamed because they never connect with the Earth, the source of free electrons, which can neutralize the free radicals in the body that cause disease and cellular destruction. Earthing is the easiest and most profound lifestyle change anyone can make.

To get enough exposure to the earth’s electromagnetic field to make significant changes in your health, sit or walk with your feet bare on the earth for at least forty minutes a day. When weather doesn’t always permit, you can invest in special grounding shoes, sheets that electrically earth your bed to the ground, earthing pillowcases, or earthing mats for the floor or hand, to use while sitting at a computer or watching TV.

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