



## Are You What You Feel? Emotions and Your Immune System

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Just last week, I opened my mailbox and pulled out an envelope from the IRS. Talk about immediate stomach cramp and heightened anxiety. Turns out, it was an unexpected refund, though my pounding heart, cramping gut and throbbing head did not exactly get the message right away.

Perhaps you recall an emotional rollercoaster of your own? Hippocrates, the ancient Greek philosopher, certainly did and his teachings compelled others to begin investigating whether a balance of emotions was essential to good health. Well, 2000-plus years later we have proof. We know emotional balance is essential. We also know emotions can (and often do) affect health both positively and negatively.

What researchers still do not know is how it happens. To find out, clinicians, psychologists, endocrinologists and immunologists are collaborating in record numbers of cross-discipline investigations to uncover clues hidden in our minds, glands, brains and bodies. Putting the clues together invites new perceptions towards what researchers call a mechanism of action.

Their field is psychoendoneuroimmunology, PENI, and the researchers are looking to understand how: (1) emotional states (like stress or loneliness) cause alterations in the immune system; (2) changes beginning in our immune system cause alterations in our emotional states; and (3) evidence of emotional impairment (e.g., being depressed) might be predictive of physical disease.

Why is it important for us as Energy Medicine practitioners to make the time to read, think about, question, digest and apply the scientific findings about how our nervous, digestive and immune systems interact? For me, it is about priorities.

In order to become the best Energy Medicine practitioner I can be, I have committed to continuously improving and growing in consciousness. A part of that growth includes meditating. Another part includes reading and applying research results that may help me improve my emotional clarity.

I believe that my ability to heighten and strengthen the vibratory frequency of my connection to the infinite field of universal cosmic love grows as I put effort into being less restricted by my ego-based lower chakra emotions. To that end, I know that I need to transmute that first chakra will (survival) into the fifth chakra will (responsible action); that second chakra desire (personal pleasures) into the sixth chakra love (compassion, wisdom and intuition); and that third chakra focus on self (personal knowledge) into the seventh chakra focus on others (Universal knowledge).

If that means eating a more balanced diet so that I express fewer pro-inflammatory genes, I will. If that means practicing mindfulness to learn about living in presence with a non-judgmental attitude, I will. If it means learning to laugh<sup>1</sup> more often, I will do that, too. Whatever it takes. It is a priority and a sacred promise to myself and to those with whom I attune in any healing partnership, whether friends or clients.

I recall recently re-reading an article<sup>2</sup> authored by Dr. Jean Watson, founder-director of the Watson Caring Science Institute. In it, she reminded me that whenever I practice human caring and Energy Medicine, my impact is simultaneously individual and global. So true! When I am supporting, enhancing and facilitating a client's self-healing capabilities, I am benefitted. That is why taking care of me and my emotions, benefits my clients.

So back to our PENI researchers. What do we know? Here are just four of many findings I believe might be relevant to



us as Energy Medicine practitioners: if your client intake suggests a pattern of . .

\*upper respiratory tract infections, you might look to whether the client has a more negative emotional style and set an intention of support for the client to develop a more positive approach.<sup>3</sup>

\*of loneliness, you might suggest opportunities for social engagement and set an intention to reduce inflammations that the client tells you about as these can be aggravated by social isolation that is chronic.<sup>4</sup>

\*rheumatoid arthritis, you might suggest watching humorous films as laughter has been shown to significantly decrease pro-inflammatory cytokines and suppress the heightened expression of growth hormone and insulin-like growth factor associated with the disease.<sup>5</sup>

\*gastrointestinal distress, you might look to whether the client also complains of suffering from stress, then set an intention to ease third chakra concerns, thereafter referring the client to his or her primary care physician.<sup>6</sup>

Ultimately, I set an intention for the highest good for my client with the awareness that Cosmic Energy is in charge.

In conclusion, the World Health Organization suggests that depression and stress will be a planet-wide epidemic by 2030. Autoimmune disease and allergies are next in line<sup>7</sup>. Supporting our clients' self-healing mechanisms through Energy Medicine is our contribution and our privilege.

I plan to start with me first. What about you?



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