

LISTEN TO YOUR IBS

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CHAPTER ONE

~ Get Your Life Back ~

“If we listen to our insides, we will also find that inner therapist who says, ‘Pay attention! I’m going to make you hurt a bit now so you will wake up’. For this reason I sometimes call pain and suffering ‘God’s reset button’. It is sometimes the only thing that will Make people change.”
- Dr. Bernie Siegel, MD

CHAPTER ONE

~ Get Your Life Back ~

Doctors will usually tell you that irritable bowel syndrome, ulcerative colitis, and Crohn's disease are different illnesses. However, I do not see it that way. I have heard from dozens of readers who started with IBS and then developed colitis, or started with a diagnosis of colitis and then developed Crohn's. For myself, the progression has gone the other way. I started with severe Crohn's Disease, then after I'd healed myself significantly, the gastroenterologist talked about my colitis. The last time I saw a gastroenterologist (about 8 years ago), he talked about my irritable bowel syndrome! Now, I have no need to see a gastroenterologist, and my family doctor just talks about how healthy I am.

This is why my treatment plan is not based upon a label, or diagnosis. It is based upon your symptoms. It doesn't really matter what label people want to give you. What I care about is helping you to heal yourself and restore your digestive and whole-body system to health, so that you no longer need any label at all! Over 10,000 people have been through my program to date, and I have received hundreds of emails from people who have cured themselves of IBS, colitis, Crohn's, diverticulitis and any number of variations thereof. My complete healing program for ALL digestive diseases is called *Listen To Your Gut* and it is available at: www.ListenToYourGut.com

But if all you have is IBS, then there's a lot of information in that program that is not applicable to you (and it's more expensive). Therefore, this book, *Listen To Your IBS*, deals only with healing yourself from irritable bowel syndrome. Though IBS is nowhere near as severe as Crohn's or colitis, it still has the power to completely disrupt and take away your quality of life. Depending on the severity of your IBS, you may not be able to sleep at night, deal with constant pain throughout the day, be unable to engage in social activities due to diarrhea or flatulence (gas), have trouble eating due to pain and bloating, suffer from mouth ulcers, anal fissures, constipation, spasms, cramping, hemorrhoids, etc. Because nutritional intake and digestive health are the foundation for the health and

wellbeing of our entire body, any problem with your digestive system (no matter how mild) is impossible to ignore for very long and seriously impacts your quality of life.

MY HEALING JOURNEY

It is my hope that the contents of this book can be for you, as they were for me, the pathway to autonomy and peace. And I'd like to start this journey by sharing my story of healing with you. During my initial diagnosis in 1986, the exploratory tests revealed a fairly severe or widespread case of Crohn's with ulceration present throughout the small and large intestine. Coming from a family of physicians and pharmacists, I had complete faith in the sophistication and efficacy of medical science. At the time of my diagnosis, I knew absolutely nothing about alternative medicine. I merely assumed it was a substandard system of healthcare used by people in third world countries who were uneducated and did not have access to modern medicine, or couldn't afford it. Therefore, in complete faith, I did everything the medical establishment told me to do (and not do) for the first three years after being diagnosed with Crohn's Disease. I finally reached my breaking point when I was ingesting thirteen pills per day, terribly weakened from all the diagnostic and exploratory tests and basically had a life that consisted of thinking or dealing with pain and discomfort on a daily basis. Or I would engage in the flip-side of that, which was desperately trying to ignore my physical body in the hope that it would all just go away. Sound familiar? Practically everything I ate made me ill (intestinal bleeding, pain, cramping, etc.). By this point my doctors suspected I had Crohn's in my stomach as well, and were pretty much insisting I have surgery. After three years, I finally decided that living like this was no longer acceptable; there had to be something else I could do, something that would give me my life back.

So I went to my gastroenterologist, who headed up a national research team on Crohn's Disease and Ulcerative colitis, and I asked him for all the books and papers he had on the subject (this was before the Internet). He loaded me up with a stack of

textbooks and some of his latest research and I took it home and read everything. That's when I realized that the medical profession had very limited information/knowledge about inflammatory bowel disease, or irritable bowel syndrome. I didn't find anything that could even possibly help me, in my present condition, that I hadn't already tried. That realization, coupled with a horrible course of steroids (Prednisone) and the alarming statistics of recurrence rates following surgery, prompted my departure from the medical establishment. The medical treatment protocols did not work for me and I knew I had to find something that did. Also, as many of you have already realized, the drug treatments for digestive disorders often result in "side effects" that are worse than your original problems!

I spent the next seven years researching and experimenting with alternative and indigenous healing therapies as I lived and worked in Japan, England, and Canada. I developed my own methods of dealing with each phase of symptoms. I learned to listen to my body and take responsibility for it. Constantly seeking new knowledge and techniques, I used myself as my guinea pig and conducted multiple, controlled trials to ascertain what worked and what didn't.

However, I didn't want to write and sell a book about healing methods that worked for me, without finding out first whether they worked for others as well. So, in 1995 I drew up a brief sixty-page booklet of my methods and circulated about 200 copies via friends, family and the Internet for the next three years. My main concern was that my diets, techniques, and methods would actually work and help people other than just myself. I wanted to know that the therapies and process that worked for me would also work for others. Based on the positive, affirming feedback I received (along with emails from people exclaiming, 'please publish this!'), I then decided it was time to gather all my information together into a comprehensive book format. That book was the first edition of *Listen To Your Gut*, published in 2000, a second, revised edition of *Listen To Your Gut* was published in 2006. This book, *Listen To Your IBS*, was then published in 2007 at the request of my readers who had healed themselves of IBS and wanted to refer their friends or family members with IBS to my program, but suggested I put together a new book, just for IBS (since they didn't need all the other stuff for people with colitis or Crohn's). So, this book is the result of that initial research, plus subsequent feedback

from thousands of readers and consultation clients, evolving scientific research, improved nutritional information and improved healthcare products and protocols.

The Importance of Emotional Healing

My healing process is based upon a mind/body/spirit paradigm; in order to heal, we must heal *all* aspects of the Self, not just the physical body. This book deals primarily with healing the physical body – although I do address the importance of emotional healing throughout the book as well. There are many excellent books already on the market that deal specifically with emotional/mental/spiritual healing (see Appendix A for my suggestions) and I strongly encourage you to look at these aspects of your healing simultaneously. Dis-ease is not just a physical phenomenon. By using the diets, therapies and protocols in this book in conjunction with increasing awareness of the emotional/mental contributors to your dis-ease, you should experience fairly direct results in your physical body. You may be able to reach the stage where you're off all drugs and managing the cycle of your disease, along with flare-ups, by yourself and without (or rarely) having to resort to drugs and hospitalization.

The Brain-Gut Axis

However, for full and complete healing to take place, I cannot emphasize enough that you must also address the emotional and psychological components of your dis-ease. Many people refer to the gut as 'the second brain' and indeed there is even a book by that title that details exactly how the gut biochemistry parallels and interacts closely with the brain. For example, 60% of the neurotransmitters in your body are not found in your brain, but in your gut! Medical journalist Chris Woolston presents this concept well in his article, *Gut Feelings: The Surprising Link Between Mood and Digestion*. Here are some pertinent extracts from his article:

“If you've ever felt your insides twist in knots before a big speech, you know the stomach listens carefully to the brain. In fact, the entire digestive system is closely tuned to a person's emotions and state of mind, says William E. Whitehead, PhD, a professor of medicine and an adjunct

professor of psychology at the University of North Carolina...Doctors now see intricate links between the nervous system and the digestive system. The two realms constantly exchange streams of chemical and electrical messages, and anything that affects one is likely to affect the other. The connections between the two systems are so tight that scientists often refer to them as one entity: the brain-gut axis. (The brain-gut axis is a hot topic in medicine. In the summer of 2001, more than 100 researchers from around the world gathered in Los Angeles for a convention called "2001: A Brain-Gut Odyssey.")...It may surprise many people to learn that the gut actually contains as many neurons (nerve cells) as the spinal cord...With all these messages, the connection between the brain and the digestive system is a busy two-way street. The central nervous system releases chemicals (acetylcholine and adrenaline) that tell the stomach when to produce acid, when to churn, and when to rest. Similar signals help guide the movements of the intestines. The digestive system responds by sending electrical messages to the brain, creating such sensations as hunger, fullness, pain, nausea, discomfort, and possibly sadness and joy...The influence of the mind on the gut goes beyond functional diseases. For instance, people with Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis -- two conditions with clearly physical origins -- often suffer flareups during times of emotional stress. And in a recent survey, 68 percent of people with basically healthy digestive systems said stress gives them stomachaches.”(1)

In fact, the brain-gut axis (that Woolston refers to in this article) and the undeniable interplay between the mind/emotions and the gut have become so important that a new field of medicine has emerged to specifically study and research this interplay, called Neurogastroenterology.

Before I have my first phone consultation with a client, I ask them to email me their history, if they wish. Most of the time, people send me just the physical information and data about their bodies. Occasionally, a client will mention that a flare was likely

triggered by the stress of a particular situation. But I have yet to have anyone write with full awareness of how much and how crucially their mind and emotions affect their physical body. And no one has told me about any therapies or techniques they're implementing to effect healing of their emotional body. When I bring up this important aspect of healing during sessions, some clients get it right away and immediately begin implementing Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT), or craniosacral therapy, or hypnotherapy – and they are the ones that get the quickest results in their healing path. Some clients have the belief that emotional healing is something they might look at *after* their physical symptoms are resolved. And these clients often have very frustrating healing journeys, where for long periods of time it doesn't seem like they're making any progress at all, even though they're doing everything physically possible to heal themselves. You'll hear me say this often throughout this book: Until you heal your emotional/spiritual body, you will not see the desired results in your physical body, or even if you do, they will not last long-term. You must heal *all* the roots of your illness - physical, mental, emotional and spiritual - to effect long-term healing.

Please try to understand this concept that emotional events, trauma or feelings (past or present) produce clear, measurable results in the gut. When you fully accept and 'get' this concept, your healing will move to a whole new level. Dr Emeran Mayer at the UCLA School of Medicine outlines some of these very real physical consequences of emotions and stress in the digestive system in his article *The Neurobiology of Stress and Emotions*:

“...the emotion of fear is associated with inhibition of upper GI (stomach and duodenum) contractions and secretions, and with stimulation of lower GI (sigmoid colon and rectum) motility and secretions. The former may contribute to a sensation of fullness and lack of appetite, the latter to diarrhea and lower abdominal pain. Interestingly, when the emotion shifts to anger, the pattern of upper GI activity is reversed, with stimulation of gastric contractions and acid secretion...in humans living in modern societies we are increasingly beginning to realize a phenomenon that has been referred to as the wear and tear, or the allostatic load, of stress. This

detrimental effect of stress may manifest following a one time severe stressor (life threatening situation), following repeated smaller stressors, or following a major sustained stressor over a period of time...while acute stimulation of the immune system has a beneficial effect, chronic stress can be associated with suppression of cellular immunity, and detrimental effects on health.(2)

We were on holiday in Mexico one year with my parents and my Dad was in a grouchy mood one evening. Then he had some wine with dinner (alcohol makes him more aggressive) and at some point vented some of his bad energy on my 2 year old son by shouting at him. I didn't think much of it as it was a very mild expression compared to what I'd grown up with. But when we were back in our room my son told me that, "Grandada made my tummy feel bad." I was stunned and enlightened at the same time. At that point, I hadn't talked to my son about mind/body connections or feeling via the gut, or anything of that nature. But there it was, the plain truth, in his own words. He was able to recognize immediately the emotional effect of that hurtful experience in his gut. And what would years and years of living with someone who 'makes your tummy feel bad' do to your digestive health? If you want to achieve full healing, you'll also need to look at, connect with, and heal the emotional woundings, fear, anger, etc. that have lodged themselves in your gut.

I once had a series of sessions with an advanced rolfing practitioner (a type of bodywork therapy), named Jeffrey Maitland, who lives in Scottsdale, Arizona. Jeffrey treats professional athletes, dancers, and NBA stars like Charles Barkely, and he is also a Buddhist monk who holds a doctorate in Philosophy. He explained a bit of his view on the mind/body interplay (based on twenty years of treating people's bodies): "All thought/emotion originates in the gut and travels upward through the torso and then through the neck for expression through the mouth. People tend to experience problems in their body dependent on where their blocks or wounds are along this pathway." If you take the time or utilize a therapy that allows you to connect with your gut, I guarantee you'll find past traumas or woundings that are still held in your gut.

You will have the best results from this book if you simultaneously pursue emotional/mental healing along with physical healing. Talk therapy (most forms of counseling and psychoanalysis) are of limited use and not very effective. You need to pursue forms of healing that *integrate* your mind and body. You need to release the trauma or wounding from the cells and tissues of your body, as well as your mind. Therefore, the types of healing therapies that I've found work best are: Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT), hypnotherapy, spiritual or energy healing, craniosacral therapy and acupuncture/acupressure that is combined with emotional release (the craniosacral therapist and acupuncturist needs additional, special training in somato-emotional release). These therapies will be explained in detail in Chapter Six.

CURED VS. HEALED

In developing and following the methods and therapies outlined in this book, I have improved my own health to the point where I have been drug and surgery-free for over 16 years. For the most part (although I have my down spells too, which I'll talk about in other chapters), I live a full and active life; I have three children, own my own business, travel every few months, exercise regularly, etc. As far as I'm concerned, I no longer have Crohn's Disease – or colitis, or IBS! However, I eat mostly organic, unprocessed food, live in a toxin-free home, take supplements when needed, utilize EFT when needed, and attend an advanced yoga class where we work with the prana (lifeforce energy) for two hours a week. My digestive system is the most sensitive part of my body and I will always take special care of it. I still experience intestinal disturbances from time to time and still use some of the therapies in this book when required. But, the spectre of "disease" and all its accoutrements (drugs, surgery, hospital visits, exploratory tests, etc.) is no longer a part of my life. Actively seeking better health by hiring a housekeeper, visiting my naturopathic doctor, being careful to eat mostly unprocessed, organic food and seeking ongoing emotional healing is still very much a part of my life.

People ask me, 'are you cured?' The word 'cure' to me means that your body is so healthy that you never even have to *think* about your body again, let alone treat it specially or support it with healing herbs and treatments. If I were to say I was 'cured' then I would be able to eat processed, crap food, drink copious amounts of alcohol and stay up all night for a week - and feel no ill effects. So, I don't use the word 'cured', I prefer the word 'healed'. I can go out and eat a hamburger and fries whenever I want to and feel no ill effects. But, if I ate fast food for a week non-stop I'd feel pretty bad! I can also travel anywhere in the world (except India) and eat the local food with no trouble. But, by the end of two weeks, I'll be feeling the need for better quality food. Actually, the United States is one of the most difficult countries to travel in, since the average restaurant uses a lot of chemicals, artificial ingredients, and processed foods in its cooking. Whereas the average restaurant in Thailand, for example, uses fresh vegetables, seafood, noodles and the only irritants are the hydrogenated oil used for frying and sometimes some MSG in the sauces. I once spent three weeks in Thailand and felt great.

Taking special care of my digestive and immune system will always be a part of my life. I don't have the tolerance levels for toxins that other people have. I can't be stressed or sleep-deprived for months without the effects showing up in my body in the form of constipation, or low hemoglobin, or flatulence, etc. However, I can heal all those things, very quickly, by addressing the corresponding emotional/lifestyle issue and then following the applicable healing therapies in this book. No matter how bad my condition has been over the years I have never resorted to drugs or surgery, but have always healed myself using the natural methods in this book. I wish for each of you this same freedom and control over your life, body and health.

Instead of viewing your health and healing as an end-point, it will help you immeasurably to view it as a journey. You will be much happier along this holistic healing path if you can view it as a process and celebrate each improvement along the journey – rather than anxiously rushing, pushing and waiting for your body to be cured/healed so you can get back to your 'regular' life. Instead of looking at how far you still have to go, if you can focus on how far you've come and all the improvements you have made, you will have a lot more peace and happiness along your Healing Journey.

Holistic healing is a long, winding path and there are no quick-fixes or silver bullets here (like in drug therapy).

The initial phase of your healing may take the longest and produce the least ‘visible’ results because you have to build your foundation first. You have to start at the roots of your illness and just like building a house, laying the groundwork and pouring the foundation don’t look like much, but they are of crucial importance. For example, let’s say you have a mycobacterial (fungal-bacterial hybrid microorganism) infection as one of your ‘causative roots’. Treating and resolving such an infection can take anywhere from six months to two years (see Chapter Two), but once you get that infection under control, you’ll see improvement. And by the time you completely eradicate that infection, you’ll probably have automatically eliminated your diarrhea and spastic colon. You will also have restored the integrity of your intestinal walls, mucosal lining, and bacterial flora throughout your gut. Therefore, your digestive and absorptive abilities will now be up to normal. Because you have treated your whole body holistically, you will most likely have cleared up other health issues as well. And by healing your past and present emotional woundings, you will now be creating a job and relationships that support you as a healthy, vibrant person – not as a sick, wounded person.

Initially, it may seem very scary to you to be completely in charge of your own health and to have all the tools and responsibility to heal yourself, no matter what arises. Some people find it easiest to quit the drugs cold turkey (although strong drugs must always be weaned off gradually) and completely remove them as a treatment option, while others find it easier to go off and on their drugs while incorporating more and more natural healing methods. The first way is definitely a much quicker way of healing, but it has to suit your personality. Remember that stress is a huge component of IBS and anything that causes you stress is not going to help you heal. Therefore, first and foremost, you must always follow your own gut and introduce change at a pace that feels right for you.

ETIOLOGY AND PATHOGENESIS OF IBD AND IBS

Many people spend a lot of time and energy searching and hoping for the etiology (cause) of inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) and irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) to be revealed. I suppose that most people believe that if we knew what caused IBD or IBS, we would know how to cure it. This is because we are still looking to fulfill the equation of one pathogen (disease-causing agent) equals one disease, which can be cured with one drug. This is the mindset bestowed on us by the commercial medical and pharmaceutical industries that we have accepted easily (even though the scientist knows the truth to be far more complex).

However, ascribing to this model leaves many questions unanswered. For example, autopsies reveal that most people have an average of 16 viruses in their brain. So why is it that most of us experience no abnormal symptoms or diseases as a result of these viruses? In addition, let's say for example, that it is discovered that Virus X causes IBS. Okay fine, but that still doesn't explain why you contracted that virus and your twin sister didn't - similar genetic makeup, similar environment, why the difference in susceptibility? If you look at some of the most contagious diseases on our planet, there are always some people who, although exposed, do not contract these diseases. Even when they're living and working in the midst of an entire community of people manifesting a particular illness, some people will not contract that illness. Why not?

The current medical/pharmaceutical model of illness cannot answer any of these questions. Perhaps this is because their construct of disease is flawed. Personally, I think the popular medical model is far too simplistic to adequately portray and understand all the factors involved in the disease/healing/balancing process. I hope this book will stimulate your own thought process and encourage you to open up to unconventional possibilities and ideas, to pursue the many layers of truth and the many facets of reality, rather than latching onto the flat, easy, one-dimensional answer.

Our bodies are not machines, where one plus one equals two. We are complex, many-layered entities capable of containing any number of apparent contradictions simultaneously. We can be both hot to the touch on the outside with sweat pouring off our skin, whilst being freezing cold on the inside - so cold our bones ache and it hurts to

breathe. We can feel a well of deep love and attachment to a dysfunctional parent whilst simultaneously hating them for what they have done to us. A father loses his child and his hair turns completely white overnight. A mother lifts a truck single-handedly to save her child trapped beneath it. How are these things possible? As you begin to open to the expansiveness of humanity, you begin to understand. You also begin to glimpse the possibilities that are present within yourself.

What does all this have to do with healing your illness? Quite simply, it opens you to the possibility of delving into and collaborating with your body. Merging with all aspects of your body/self and treading the pathway of healing together - as a multi-dimensional but unified being, with all parts relating to and supporting each other. It releases you from viewing and treating your body or your intestines as something functioning independently of you and your desires. Subscribing to the medical model will cause you to view the malfunctioning parts of your body with impatience and annoyance, even anger. If you see your body in this manner, you'll just want to feed it the right pill and have it perform properly, damnit! But your body is not a machine, you can't separate the parts from the whole. And what place has healing in the midst of anger and resentment?

Opening yourself up to the possibilities of humanity and your unique reality will also create a space for you to integrate the different levels of yourself and begin taking some responsibility for your present state. Taking responsibility for the state of your body and your health may be as simple as saying, "Okay, well, since I got this particular disease and not some other, there must be a reason for that. I'm going to start looking at the lesson(s) here for me."

If there was no point in your developing IBS , no lessons for you to learn, no journey for you to take, then why did you develop this illness? A scientist identifying Bacteria X as the pathogen (agent of disease) is not going to answer this question. If all the members of your family, or your class, or your community were exposed to the same environment, then why did you contract IBS when they didn't? Looking for the missing pathogen is not going to give you the answer. Only you can answer these questions. Only you can unite and integrate all the levels of yourself to identify all the contributing and

influencing factors in your particular pathogenesis. This is your Healing Journey and no one else can walk it for you.

My Opinion on IBS/IBD Etiology

I have had many readers ask me, 'what do *you* think caused my Colitis/Crohn's/IBS etc.?' Well, I see each of these conditions as points along a continuum, from mild to severe. With IBS at the far left side and Crohn's at the far right. So it would look like this:

IBS----Diverticulitis----Ulcerative Colitis----Crohn's Disease.

Medical doctors maintain that each of these diseases are separate and distinct from each other. But I've heard from far too many people whose IBS has turned into Colitis, or whose diagnosis of Colitis has metamorphosed into Crohn's. When this happens, doctors tend to say 'oh, well you were misdiagnosed in the first place'. In my opinion, each point along this continuum - with it's accompanying symptom profile - is merely an indication of how much your health has been compromised to date and which areas of your body need healing. As you progress along the continuum (from left to right), the symptoms indicate that the damage is not just localized but increasingly more systemic.

I believe the causative factors of these conditions are varied. If you go back over your own personal health history, I think you'll find a mix of the following damaging events, that singly or in combination have degraded the health of your gut and immune system:

- **Vaccination** - childhood, adult, flu vaccines, etc. Causes direct damage to bacterial flora of the gut and long-term, immune system damage. See Chapter Four for more details.
- **Antibiotic Use** - any antibiotic therapy that is not followed by full-spectrum probiotic therapy causes lasting, pervasive damage to the bacterial flora of your gastrointestinal tract (from mouth to anus), which in turn leads to increased infestation of yeast, parasites, viruses, bad bacteria and other pathogens. These pathogens degrade the mucosal lining and damage the intestinal wall (symptoms include bloating, gas, inflammation, bleeding, etc.), which leads to Leaky Gut Syndrome, which then triggers allergic and auto-immune response. Certain antibiotic drugs can cause ulcerative colitis all by themselves (like Novo

Clindamycin), and the pharmaceutical information that comes with these products even explicitly warns of this. Yet medical doctors continue to prescribe them and also don't follow usage with probiotics.

- **Environmental and Food-borne Toxins** - processed foods with preservatives, Monosodium Glutamate (MSG), artificial sweeteners and flavors, nitrites and other proven toxins and carcinogens, microwaved foods, toxins contained in skin care products, shampoos, cosmetics, furniture, carpets, and the air (to name a few sources) all cause cellular and systemic damage. Lots more on this in Chapter Four.
- **Emotional Trauma or Abuse** - don't underestimate the damaging effects of abusive or traumatic emotional experiences on the body, and the gut in particular. For some of you, this may be damage from your past that was never resolved/healed, and/or ongoing emotional patterns or experiences that continue to degrade your health daily.
- **Parasites & Pathogenic Microorganisms** - if your gut ecology is already weakened or imbalanced, travel to a foreign country or ingestion of tainted food/water can be the 'straw that breaks the camel's back'. If your bacterial flora is already imbalanced with a deficit of beneficial bacteria, then it's very easy for parasites, yeast, bad bacteria, or fungus to flourish. These pathogens then degrade the health of your intestinal mucosal lining, which can result in decreased absorption of nutrients, bloating, spasming, inflammation, ulceration, bleeding and subsequent damage to your systemic health.

Each of these causative factors - including lesser factors like whether or not you were breastfed, your mother's health while you were in utero, hereditary/genetic weaknesses, heavy metal levels in your body, mercury amalgam fillings in your teeth, pesticide exposure, etc. - will contribute in varying degrees and combinations to your particular pathology. Different people are susceptible to different factors and something that strongly affects your friend adversely, may only mildly affect you adversely. There is seldom just one factor (pathogen) in isolation that causes IBS. However, I believe each of us is capable of identifying our own particular pathology, or the causative factors of our own ill health and then taking the steps that will be particularly healing to each of us.

This book is designed to assist you in identifying the physical contributors to your illness and to provide you with some tools and ideas to correct and balance your physical environment. There are many books available to help you identify the mental, emotional and spiritual elements of your illness and I've listed a few really good ones in the Recommended Reading list (Appendix D) at the back of this book. Maybe you've become very wrapped up in searching for the cause of your illness, thinking that if science could only identify the pathogen, you could then take a drug that would cure you. If this has been causing you stress, for the sake of your own healing, I encourage you to put aside the quest for the etiology of these diseases. Don't worry about it, don't let it frustrate you, don't devote any more time and energy to it. Turn your focus instead to healing yourself, getting in touch with your body and allowing it to heal itself no matter what the cause. The great thing about this book is that the process and therapies will work irrespective of the cause of IBS. In fact, since all treatment is based on easily identified symptoms, you don't even need an official medical diagnosis to use and benefit from the healing tools provided in this book. All you need is the willingness to connect with your own body and to open yourself to your own wisdom and intuition.

HOW DO YOU SEE YOURSELF?

Please be aware that you also have a choice as to which label or diagnosis you accept for yourself and your condition. How do you define yourself and your health? Do you see your intestinal malfunction as you simply experiencing intestinal problems, or do you see your intestines as diseased, do you see or define yourself as an ill person? Then think of the implications your mindset has on your healing process. Does your definition or label of yourself and your condition place you in a position of positivity, does it foster a healing environment for your mind/body? Or does it carry an inherent negativity and place you in a defeatist disease environment?

You can label and define your own reality using words of positivity within a healing framework that gives you access to positive action. Instead of talking about your

illness, you can talk about your healing pathway or your healing journey. This will also help you to start viewing your body as a whole, instead of as separate compartments where the parts and systems of your body function separately and independently. Your digestive tract is not the isolated “bad” part of your body, it is merely the area where your whole-body imbalance is evidenced, or displayed first. I was once talking to Karen Stewart, the owner of NutritionWorks health store in Scottsdale, Arizona, and she said, "All illness is simply an opportunity for growth. It's the body pointing out what you need to work on next. And the body uses the *strongest* parts of itself to deliver the message." I stared at her, fascinated, as the realization of what she was saying gradually grew in me. "Well think about it," she said, "the body wouldn't use its weakest part to give you the message, it wouldn't risk its life like that, it's going to use the strongest part." I found her words very empowering. Instead of viewing your gut as the weak part of your body, where illness shows up first, you can view it as the strongest part of your body, willing to sacrifice itself for your growth and understanding. Regarding your gastrointestinal tract in this manner will also foster a spirit of teamwork within you and gratitude towards your gut for offering itself up for your growth and development. In her fantastic book, *Mutant Message Down Under*, Marlo Morgan relates that:

"The Real People tribe believes that we are not random victims of ill health, that the physical body is the only means our higher level of eternal consciousness has to communicate with our personality consciousness. Slowing down the body allows us to look around and analyze the really important wounds we need to mend: wounded relationships, gaping holes in our belief system, walled-up tumors of fear, eroding faith in our Creator, hardened emotions of unforgiveness, and so on."**(3)**

When I first began healing myself, I found my healing required equal attention and resolution of both physical and emotional/spiritual/mental issues. However, I'm now at the point in my Healing Journey where symptoms I experience are rarely related to my physical body at all, but rather they are just messages, or indicators of something I need to resolve emotionally or spiritually. As soon as I address the emotional component - for

example, resolve a conflict, forgive someone, connect with and share my deepest feelings with a loved one, speak my truth, say 'no' where I need to, etc. - the physical symptom instantly disappears, with no physical intervention necessary. I've also noticed that my body will first give me a feeling, or intuition. If I explore that and connect with my deeper self (or higher/spiritual self), and take appropriate action, the issue is resolved there. However, if I don't, my body will then give me a mild symptom. If I ignore this, a stronger symptom, or escalation of that same symptom will occur, and so on with increasing ramifications in my physical body until I finally stop, connect with my body and my higher self (or subconscious) and receive the message or follow the pathway of emotional/spiritual healing that needs to take place. As soon as I do this, the symptom begins to heal/resolve and in many cases disappears instantly - unless I've allowed things to escalate to the point where physical healing is also necessary.

Give Your Body Time & Space To Heal

I once had a series of consultations with a reader who was following the exclusively elemental diet and supplementation plan outlined in my second book, *The IBD Remission Diet*, but he was finding progress depressingly slow with lots of ups and downs and he was becoming quite discouraged. I was really mystified as to why he was seeing so little improvement until about the third session when he said, "I'm finding it very hard to concentrate at work..." *At work??* It never even occurred to me that he would be working full-time whilst suffering from malnutrition and colonic bleeding! What did this poor man's body have to do to get his attention enough to make him lie down and rest and relax? In addition, it then came out that his family was paying for him to be on the IBD Remission Diet so that he would be perfectly strong and healthy for his wedding in about two months time. Since he was of a certain ethnicity, he had only met his bride once, the wedding would last for three days solid, and there were 350 people invited. Talk about pressure! A normal, *healthy* person would probably get ill under that kind of stress. How could he possibly expect his body to heal under that tremendous workload, emotional stress and pressure?

We really need to put aside the western concept of 'healthcare': That of using drugs to suppress symptoms so we can go about our business as usual. If your body is ill,

it is crying out for you to pay attention, slow down and listen to it, and give it the time and space to heal. Another reader said to me, "I can't take any time off, I can't afford it". Nonsense! If you were in the hospital you wouldn't be going to work, would you? The longer you let things escalate, the longer it will take you to heal. Natural healing cannot take place without giving your body adequate rest. True, root-level healing requires a lot of energy. If you use up your available energy by going to work or looking after your kids and household full-time, or being completely stressed out, how will your body get the energy it needs to heal itself? Try to remember that your physical body (although responding to physical factors) is also being directed by your higher/spiritual self – which is not trying to punish you or make your life hard, it is simply trying to communicate a very important message to you and really has only your best interest at heart. The sooner you slow down, take some time out, connect with your higher/subconscious self (see Chapters Six and Seven for details on how to do this), and resolve your emotional distress, the sooner your physical body will begin to heal.

THE HOLISTIC HEALING JOURNEY

As you tread this path of holistic healing, keep in mind that healing of any sort is rarely a linear, progressive process. Usually it occurs in cycles or spirals, but it's important to keep in mind that the spirals do spiral upward, so there is continuous improvement overall. Alternatively, you could view the healing process as one where you're doing well, moving in a straight line upwards, then you have a rough spot (often referred to as a healing crisis), so the line dips down for a bit, but then the line climbs upwards again as your healing continues. Symptoms experienced during a healing crisis can include skin eruptions, nausea, headache, sleepiness, unusual fatigue, constipation, diarrhea, head or chest cold, ear infections, boils, or any other method the body uses to loosen and eliminate toxins. A healing crisis will usually last around three to seven days – and occasionally longer if you're very run down and weakened.

There are numerous different theories as to why the body doesn't just heal in a straight, uninterrupted manner. Personally, I think it's because the body heals in layers, starting with the easiest imbalances and then moving progressively deeper into the more difficult, serious imbalances or malfunctions. As well, part of the healing and balancing process involves the periodic release of toxins, which may make you feel sicker and temporarily worsen your symptoms. As unpleasant and scary as this may be, toxin release and elimination is still an integral part of the healing process. When this happens, even though it feels like you're getting sicker, you've got to try to remember that it's actually part of you getting better. At times like this, you can get scared and it's very tempting to feel that the natural healing methods just aren't working for you and to get back on your drugs again. But whilst the drugs will suppress the symptoms (in the short term) and relieve your immediate fear and worry, they will continue to damage your body and degrade your health overall. Drugs do not heal. They merely suppress symptoms whilst damaging the body further.

True, root-level healing (healing the cause, not just masking symptoms) is a winding pathway with ups and downs along the way, but always improving overall. I know this is a very confusing process. Discerning between whether you just need to give your body time, or whether the treatment you're pursuing isn't working for you, is a very difficult decision to make. Unfortunately, there's no simple formula I can give you in these instances, since everyone's body is unique and there are so many factors involved in the healing process. You're just going to have to really tune in to your body and your intuition during these times (see "Dialoguing With Your Body" in Chapter Six) and trust your body and higher/spiritual self to lead you step by step along your healing pathway. I cannot emphasize enough how much it helps to have a support network of family, or friends, or like-minded healthcare practitioners around you at these times. When you get scared or frustrated, nothing is as valuable as someone who can pray with you, or give you a bodywork treatment that helps you connect with yourself and your strength, or just be there to listen, or hold you while you cry or vent. Having a caring support network will greatly increase your chances of success with natural healing.

I think there's also another more nebulous phenomenon at work in the healing process, and the best way I can describe it is to give you an analogy. Let's look at a

middle-aged man (for example) who's got a good career, a nice house, a wife and kids. This man appears to be leading a pretty good life. What the outsider can't know is that this man was sexually abused as a child, but he's never discussed it with anyone or dealt with the memories. He was bullied terribly at school and had few friends in college. All his life, he's held himself tightly wrapped and under control and so appears fairly stable and 'together'.

However, severe interpersonal problems with his wife lead this man into counseling. It's only when he begins to acknowledge his trauma, when he begins the process of healing his wounds, that the tight, rigid bonds that have held him together begin to unravel. All of a sudden, this apparently healthy, successful man can't sleep at night and begins to perform poorly at his job. He doesn't get his yearly bonus so he and his wife have to sell one of their cars. You see, this man seems to be degenerating, he seems to be falling apart and getting worse, but what is really going on is that he is healing himself. He is actually getting better. For the first time in his life he is actually dealing with and healing all the deep-seated, tightly controlled wounds he's been carrying around.

I believe a similar process occurs when we start to access and heal the deeper layers of our physical body. Regardless of the depth and severity of your illness, the balancing homeostatic mechanism will have caused your body to hold on tightly for as long as possible, to assume some form of control or pseudo-balance in order to keep your body functioning. Although there may be serious long-term imbalances present in your system, they may not be apparent initially. However, as you start to heal your body and nurture and support it in its natural healing process, your body will gradually release its hold over these imbalances and offers them up for healing. When your body un.masks a long-term, systemic imbalance, you can become very ill quite suddenly. It may *appear* that your condition is suddenly and drastically worsening, and you may panic thinking the holistic healing methods aren't working at all. I know it's hard (especially the first time it happens) but try to remember that it's probably only temporary and your body needs your support and positivity the most at this time. I really encourage you to try not to panic when this happens. It helps to have someone close to you who can act as your sounding board, to help you stay rational and determine whether you actually do need

additional help, or whether you just need to give it a few more days to settle down again. It's helpful if you can find a very skilled and empathetic naturopathic doctor to help you assess whether you're in danger, or whether you're just going through a healing crisis. Someone who can pray with you or offer some kind of spiritual healing is also invaluable at this time and will *really* help you to get through the fear that may overwhelm you, without resorting to drugs (which will only set your healing back). As you implement more and more of the therapies and diets in this book, you'll come to have a lot more confidence in the methods listed and in your own healing ability. But again, only do or don't do what you feel is right and safe for you. Don't give your power and authority over your own body away to anyone, especially not to me or the guidelines in this book!

CHILDREN WITH IBS

As the parent of a child with IBS, you're going to have to walk a fine line between ministering to your sick child, and not letting their dis-ease take over your family or obliterate your other children's needs. Please try to spend quality time with your other children and remember that just because they're physically healthy, it doesn't mean they don't have needs that are just as crucial to their mental, emotional and spiritual health. Devoting all your time and energy to your sick child doesn't serve them or their siblings (or your spouse/partner) in the long run. Strive to maintain a balance of interaction and attention within your family and it will only impact positively on your child with IBS. Dr. John Harrison, MD, who wrote one of my favorite books, *Love Your Disease - It's Keeping You Healthy*, has a wonderful approach to maintaining a healthy family dynamic:

“Children respond very quickly to a change in the reward system and are very aware of its ramifications, as demonstrated by the five-year-old client of mine overheard by his parents as he pointed out to his three-year-old

sister: ‘If you want Mummy to look after you, just get sick, that’s what I do.’ When children come into my office and one member of the family is ill, I am careful to pay equal attention to the healthy. Since some of them like coming to see me, I arrange times for them to visit when they are well. They begin replacing illness with wellness.”(4)

There are entire books written on the family dynamics surrounding and often supporting illness, but for now, the main factor to be aware of is to spend quality time with and give attention to your healthy children as well. Your ill child can also be a caring, contributing member of the family too. Look for and point out ways (no matter how small) that they can demonstrate caring and concern for other family members. This will help your child to feel like a more equal, capable member of the family, whilst balancing the family dynamic. Also, waiting on your sick child night and day and catering to their victim status is not going to help them be well. It’s just going to help them be weaker.

Try to come up with words and actions that make your child feel strong. Give them as much autonomy and decision-making responsibility as you can. Help your child to feel that he/she is in control, that she has options, that he has the strength to make decisions and reclaim his body. A child that's been subjected to the damaging, invasive, traumatic exploratory tests, drugs, or surgery involved with an IBD diagnosis is going to feel very violated and probably victimized and helpless. It's up to you to restore your child's feelings of control, safety, and empowerment with his/her body.

I once read a letter in *Mothering* magazine (www.mothering.com) from a mother whose two year old son began having violent epileptic seizures along with various other symptoms. They gave their child, at the age of two, complete control over his health and healing. He made the decisions regarding which doctors he wanted to see (they took him to medical, naturopathic and homeopathic physicians) and also which drugs, herbs, or homeopathic remedies he wanted to take and when. They basically gave him complete and total control, trusting that he was able to connect with and know his body better than anyone. At the end of a year they discovered that he had some very rare but severe allergies and if they had made him take the prescription drugs (which would have

suppressed the frightening seizures, but not addressed the root cause), he would have suffered permanent brain damage as a result. It took a winding journey, or healing pathway, of a year to pinpoint the exact problem, but then the child was then completely healed and symptom free. I was awed by their story, and to this mother (and father) I give the utmost respect and admiration. So if you think your child is too young to make his/her own decisions about their health and body, keep this testimonial in mind.

Remember that children are mirrors and our greatest teachers. If your child is ill, also look to yourself and your own actions. What message, or gift of teaching is your child trying to give you? What do you need to change or heal within yourself? If your child is hyper and stressed, look to your own energy - are you stressed, or tense, or controlling, or worried, etc? How's your relationship with your spouse or partner? When my husband and I are in conflict, our kids go nuts. As soon as we resolve the issue between us and restore an energy of peace and joy to the home, our children instantly, automatically, follow suit. Healing your child will also involve healing yourself in some manner. Pursuing a pathway of natural healing together will also involve lessons and gifts of wisdom for you as well as your child.

PROGRAM RESOURCES

The contents of this book comprise the results of my personal research and experimentation into alternative, natural healing methods. Their results and effectiveness have now been confirmed by thousands of readers worldwide. But like any endeavour in life – whether it's a weight-loss program or an innovative business plan – people often feel the need for additional support and resources along the way. Therefore, I've set up a website: www.ListenToYourGut.com with many useful resources and services and lots of free stuff available – be sure to check it out.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Choose the area from this book that is easiest for you to work on and begin with that first. As anyone with intestinal problems knows, stress is the number one trigger and inflamer of these disorders, so don't increase your stress (or your child's stress, if your child is the one who's ill) in your efforts to heal yourself or your child! Just take it slowly and easily, realize and accept that you're on a long, winding path and there are no miracle cures or quick-fix remedies. Your illness (or imbalance) encompasses your environment, upbringing, past issues/occurrences, financial state, career satisfaction or lack thereof, diet, family, intimate relationships, lifestyle, stress, stability, security, peace, self-love, exercise, genetic make-up, your doctor-patient relationship and drugs ingested, to name a few.

The diets, therapies, and techniques in this book demand that you take full responsibility for your health and healing, and appoint only yourself as your final, ultimate authority. Do not give this authority away to anyone, not to me, not to your physician, your naturopathic or homeopathic doctor, your spouse or parent. You have everything you need to heal yourself – it is your responsibility, and you are the only trustworthy repository of final authority for your body/mind/spirit. There are many pathways to healing. This book may comprise part, or all, of your pathway. Only you know what's best for you, only you possess the map of your Healing Journey.

All the information included in this book is of my own personal opinion and experience. My only intent is that you examine it from your point of view, take what you need, adapt whatever you want, and feel free to discard whatever you don't need. Some of the information and ideas presented in this book may be difficult for you to accept. Some of my approach (e.g. no pharmaceutical drugs) may be too radical and you may feel it's not safe for you - no problem! Just listen to yourself and only do what you feel comfortable with. You know yourself better than I do and you should certainly stick to what you feel is true and works best for you. I often got emails from readers saying, "I'm going to follow your book because I feel I can trust you, so I'm going to do what you say." And I would write back saying, "No, do NOT give your power and authority away!

Use my books as a resource or guidebook, but *always* trust yourself first and foremost. You are the *only* one who knows the best/right path for your body."

It will probably take you quite a while to work through and incorporate the diets, protocols and therapies outlined in this book, but it will also be well worth it. Imagine what it would be like to be 100% drug free. Imagine what it would be like to be able to socialize, go out for dinner, go on a date, give a presentation at work and not have to worry about gas, bloating, spasming, pain, diarrhea, or constipation messing up your time. Yes, the path is difficult, and time-consuming, and at times nothing can be more frustrating than having to face your own self. However, as you begin to achieve this freedom, you'll also come to realize, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that nothing is more worthwhile.

www.ListenToYourGut.com

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