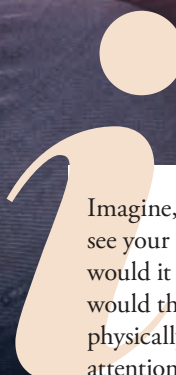


The Body of *Emoti*

The energetic frequency of our emotions has a profound impact on our bodies. EMMA PALMER explores how to take charge of emotions for optimum wellbeing.

A person is shown from the waist up, sitting in a meditative lotus position on a wooden pier. They are wearing a white long-sleeved top with ruffled detailing and dark grey trousers. Their hands are held in a mudra (gesture) in front of them. The background is a soft-focus sunset over water with hills in the distance. A large, stylized lowercase letter 'm' is overlaid on the left side of the image.

m

A large, stylized lowercase letter 'i' in a light orange color, positioned to the left of the first paragraph of text.

Imagine, for a moment, that you could see your thoughts and emotions. What would it be like to touch them? How would they feel? While you'll never physically see them, if you pay close attention, you'll recognise that your body feels them every single day.

Newton's third law states that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. The energy of our emotions is constantly creating its very own equal and opposite reactions. Our bodies take in what we think and feel, and if we suppress our emotions, our bodies start to stockpile them. Eventually, the body reaches a tipping point when it says, 'I can't hold this anymore', and more often than not, the suppressed emotions resurface within the body. As Brené Brown says, "The body keeps score and it always wins." This begs the question: what are emotions, and how can something we cannot touch, or feel, impact our health so powerfully? Moreover, how can we take charge of our emotions in a way that supports our body's daily demands?

What is an emotion?

An emotion is a complex physiological reaction to both internal and external stimuli; however, quantum physicists believe emotions are simply forms of energy. According to quantum physics, our body is made up of 99.9 per cent space vs. dense matter. If the space was removed from the atoms, neutrons, protons and electrons from our body, the physical matter remaining would be approximately the size of half a grain of rice. This notion suggests that in the presence of ill health, the energy can't get sick; however, it can get blocked and fragmented, which may then lead to the manifestation of physical illness.

Traditional Chinese medicine also recognises the relationship between organ health and emotions. For example, anger and irritability impacts the optimal functioning of the liver, whereas anxiety tends to impact the heart, which may explain why the heart rate increases rapidly when in a state of panic. With the power of this information, we must ask ourselves whether our health is a direct outcome of a balance of this energy.

The body and mind intertwined

The ancient science of yoga acknowledges the mind-body connection and how they are intimately influenced by one another. It's a challenging concept that every emotion, thought and experience we've had makes its way into the biochemistry and cellular memory. Neuroscientists explore the complexities of how thoughts carve their way into pathways that connect emotions to the body and brain. Similarly, neuroplasticity highlights the intelligence within the brain's capacity to change and replace one thought for another. The brain constantly rewires itself to create new neural pathways every time we choose a different reaction.

The body and trauma

The effect of strong emotional

responses on the body can be understood when we process traumatic experiences. If the experience remains dormant, the memories of trauma become locked and stored in the cellular memory. Trauma impacts our systemic health, including the way we think and process experiences, how we feel about ourselves, our sense of self-worth, how we view the world and our relationships with others. In the presence of trauma, it is imperative that we are aware of our emotions in order to process them in a healthy way.

In her work, Dr Candace Pert reiterates how unexpressed emotions are lodged in the body. She states that emotions make their way into our conscious awareness in order for us to have the capacity to process the unexpressed emotions. Any feeling that arises can be translated through the tissues, glands, muscles and

cells through a network of peptide chains and their associated receptors. Physiologist Walter Cannon indicated that these receptors have their own innate wisdom, and once the emotion is released, healing and regeneration within these receptors is restored.

The impact of negative emotions

Research shows that negative thoughts and emotions lead to a chronicity of the stress response, and even have the capacity to reduce our lifespan by shortening DNA strands. What's more, constant feelings of negativity have an impact on our hormone balance and hinder the brain's production of endorphins, which give us feelings of happiness and joy. Repressed negative emotions contribute to enervation, which is an experience of little or no energy that triggers cellular changes in





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positivity tend to recover quicker from stressful experiences, benefit from a healthier immune system, create healthy sleeping cycles and have a generally more positive outlook on life. Other emotions such as forgiveness contribute to improved immunity, increased lifespan, reduced pain receptors and have even been shown to impact the cardiovascular system by lowering excessively high blood pressure. Studies have also shown that a positive mindset has the capacity to influence healthy DNA replication.

Adopting an attitude of gratitude also contributes to our physical health and wellbeing by making us feel happier, more likely to exercise and even sleep better. A 2014 study published in the *Journal of Bodywork and Movement Therapies* identified

that those who practised yoga at least twice a week had a greater sense of meaning and purpose as well as gratitude. Furthermore, a 2013 research paper identified that 86.5 per cent of yoga practitioners had an increased sense of happiness when they regularly practised yoga.

How, then, can yoga practice support us to change the way we process life experiences so that our emotions have a positive impact on our physiology?

Awareness of Self

One of the first ways to generate change is to have an awareness of the emotions sitting dormant within the body. *Svadyaya* is a code of observance in the practice of yoga that relates to the dedication to observe

the digestive, immune, reproductive and cardiovascular systems.

According to the American Medical Association, stress and anxiety contribute to 80 per cent of health issues. This theory is supported by findings from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which indicate that 85 per cent of all diseases appear to have an emotional component. An increasing amount of research continues to show how the stress response significantly impacts an array of physiological functions such as regulating blood sugar levels, hormone balance, immune system health, digestion and reproduction.

The impact of positive emotions

So, what happens to the body when we manage and process our emotions in a positive way? Research shows that individuals who experience greater





and reflect on our thoughts, emotions, choices, desires and actions. This self-awareness gives us the opportunity to have a deeper understanding of our internal reactions and to be empowered to generate change. This practice gives us the opportunity to experience a richer, deeper connection to others and ourselves.

By simply giving our emotions the opportunity to be expressed, we lead ourselves to greater physical health and ultimately change our biology.

Moving emotion

One of the best ways to move emotions is to move the body. In yoga, *asanas*, (postures), and *pranayama* (breathing techniques), are primarily designed to move energy throughout the body.

The practice of asana has the capacity to release emotional stagnation stored within the cellular memory. As we move from one asana to the next, we release blocked and trapped emotions. Just as we move the body, so too do we move our emotions, which explains why in forward bends we experience emotional breakthroughs and release. This movement of energy specifically refers to the energy of *prana*. When *prana* is out of balance, emotions and thoughts become fractious, which ultimately influences the mind's cognitive ability to process experiences in a more positive way. Yoga postures naturally generate a continuous repetitive stimulus every time we challenge ourselves to move beyond what we think is possible. The

brain develops new neural pathways, resulting in the capacity to think, contemplate, understand and react in more positive ways, therefore experiencing a greater, longer-lasting experience of joy.

Empowered choice

Does this mean that everyone who processes their emotions will avoid experiencing ill health? No, but they certainly show how powerfully influential they are on our physical bodies. As Maya Angelou wisely said, "When you know better, you do better," and if we know how our thoughts and emotions impact our physiology, this gives us the empowered choice to process our emotions and change the quality with which we live our daily lives. ANH

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