

SEEDING A N

O V E R V I E W

M A R I L Y N S C H L I T Z

While science has contributed to our understanding and treatment of disease, it has also served to limit the development of a model in which personal relationships, emotions, meaning, and belief systems are viewed as fundamental points of connection between body, mind, spirit, society, and the environment. For increasing numbers of healthcare consumers and professionals alike, the biomedical model fails to offer a system for understanding the fullness of lived experience—minimizing or negating completely the possibility for human transcendence in the face of illness and disease.

For more than three decades, the Institute of Noetic Sciences has addressed this limitation. We have held a guiding premise that the interface of inner experience and the outer world may provide the greatest opportunity for breakthroughs in understanding health and healing. In the mid-1970s, scientists initiated a modest program of research on the inner mechanisms of the healing response. At that time, the notion that consciousness-related factors could play a role in bodily health and the healing of disease was both novel and unacceptable in mainstream biomedical thinking. Medicine focused largely on the physical.

Much has changed in these three decades. Mind-body medicine has come of age, and we have increasing recognition, grounded in serious and disciplined research, that we all possess an innate healing system. The efficacy of this system rests on the premise that brain, mind, and spirit act in concert when healing occurs. As a “metasystem,” it responds to symbolic processes as well as physical stimuli.

Inspired by the promise of this new perspective, and by new developments in the field of consciousness studies, the Institute of Noetic Sciences today continues to nurture the

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NEW MODEL OF MEDICINE

Integral Health and Healing

development of mind-body medicine—conducting and sponsoring research that expands our understanding of the significance of consciousness in the physical world. We are exploring the potential role of factors such as faith, prayer, intention, subtle energies, and biofields.

Recognizing that healthcare is in a time of crisis—crisis of care, confidence, and cost—we are being called on to make our system more humane, effective, and empowering of the patient. A reevaluation and revisioning of the theoretical underpinnings of modern medicine is called for, as we seek to create a new map. And although there is no universal consensus on just what this new map looks like, we suggest in the pages that follow that this new map includes the mapmaker, as both a product and a participant in that which he or she seeks to know and represent.

This “integral perspective” calls for deep change within practitioners and patients as together we embark on a transformation in worldview. We speak to this transformation in a new IONS book that will be published by Churchill Livingstone in the fall of 2004: *Consciousness and Healing: Integral Approaches to Mind-Body Medicine*. Ken Wilber writes in his introduction to this book:


The crucial ingredient in any integral medical practice is not the integral medical bag itself—with all the conventional pills, and the orthodox surgery, and the subtle energy medicine, and the acupuncture needles—but the holder of that bag. Integrally informed health-care practitioners, the doctors and nurses and therapists, have opened themselves to an entire spectrum of consciousness—matter to body to mind to soul to spirit—and have thereby acknowledged what seems to be happening in any

event. Body and mind and spirit are operating in self, culture, and nature, and thus health and healing, sickness and wholeness, are all bound up in a multidimensional tapestry that cannot be cut into without loss.

This view of an “engaged epistemology” can be seen clearly in the formulation of an integral healing model, uniting the many dimensions of human consciousness.

Ultimately, we see this special issue of *Shift* and our new book, *Consciousness and Healing*, as a call to action for health professionals and patients alike. Medicine is in trouble. Each of us carries the responsibility to help craft a new, more fitting map. Simply by taking the time to consider an integral perspective, we are helping to hospice an old paradigm that is ceasing to work.

In so doing, we must be gentle with ourselves, with each other, and with a system of medicine that is struggling with its very existence. Change can be hard. But it is also revitalizing and ultimately transformative.

Just as one paradigm dies, so another will be born. For this, we may enthusiastically offer ourselves up as midwives. As we engage in this endeavor, we are not alone. Together we can change the future. As noted by Michael Murphy and George Leonard in their book, *The Life We Are Given*, “Through transformative practices . . . we can share the most fundamental tendencies of the world’s unfoldment—to expand, create, and give rise to more conscious forms of life. Like evolution itself, we can bring forth new possibilities for growth, new worlds for further exploration.” And so, finally, we present this special issue as a gesture of friendship and support for your own integral healing journey. Together, we can facilitate a tipping point that may seed a new model of medicine and a new vision for humanity—now and for generations to come. 

IONS
is pleased
to offer our
membership a special
rate on *Consciousness and
Healing: Integral Approaches
to Mind-Body Medicine*.
Please call
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