



## Inner Resources for Healing--Robert G. Leroe, D.Min Chaplain (LTC) US Army

When you were admitted to the hospital, did you arrive with the attitude, "Here I am--fix me!""? Instead of being a passive patient, you can choose to be a partner with your health care professionals in the task of getting well. Each of us has the inner capacity to either combat illness, or surrender to it. The medical team needs your help. Assume some responsibility for your recovery by participating in the healing process.

Our attitudes and assumptions send our bodies various messages and instructions. We can tell ourselves, "I won't recover", and we may be right! A defeatist attitude may become a self-fulfilling prophecy. We can just as easily declare, "I'll beat the odds and be an exception; I'm going to get better!" When we express confidence, we're sending a live message to our bodies. Worry, depression, anger and self-pity send our bodies a die message.

Medical procedures and treatments can be stressful. Some cancer patients become nauseous just thinking of chemotherapy. Others have little faith in their procedures and see them as ordeals. We can either visualize treatment as curing us, or we can convince ourselves that we're incurable. The medicine works better when we're confident about its restorative abilities. We can fight for recovery or give up. Our state of mind will influence our physical condition. As we replace anxiety with confidence, we're preparing our bodies to be receptive to treatment. Hope contains a potent therapeutic power. The Bible says that "hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit Who was given to us" (Romans 5:5).

There is no need to succumb to illness--we can fight for our health. We can rise above our situation and gain control of life. If we give up, we're choosing not to recover. Pain is inevitable in life, but misery is optional. "The righteous have no fear of bad news; their heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord" (Psalm 112:7). Those with a lot to live for live long. The will to live is crucial to recovery, whereas fatalism is often fatal. How much time do you want?

There is a spiritual aspect to healing. We can get in touch with God, Who understands our pain and provides comfort and strength. We can enjoy His healing presence through prayer. We can let the Great Physician be our Companion in our illness.

One thing we have plenty of in the hospital is TIME--we can see this as a gift. We can use some of this time to consider the possible benefits and blessings of our illness. Through our pain we can become more sensitive to the needs of others, now that we've experienced suffering. We also have time to evaluate our priorities and to determine what's really important in life.

As we enrich the quality of our lives we create an environment of healing. This can be accomplished through the power of soothing music, touch, faith, photos of loved ones, laughter, good books, serenity, meditation, joy, and love!

Don't be quiet! Talking about concerns can help relieve them. This includes writing down any treatment questions and discussing them with health care professionals. We can verbalize our feelings to friends, or to our spouse, chaplain, support group, or in a personal journal.

We see life, not as it is, but as we are. Perception influences our physical response to the challenges of life. To choose depression is to succumb to dis-ease. Serenity is a choice which depends, not on our circumstance, but on our self-determined state of mind. From a Roman prison Paul wrote, "I know what it is to be in need and what it is to prosper. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every

situation...I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me" (Phil 4:12-13). Not everyone who is ill reacts the same way. Their needs may be the same, but how they handle them will vary. Some will overcome, others will be overcome.

The brain is the control center for the body's immune system. Our brains can either be put to work to help overcome illness and lower resistance to disease, or we can give in to stress and suppress our body's immune system. The brain can enlist the aid of what author Norman Cousins calls the "body's internal pharmacy." We jeopardize our health by negative attitudes. This doesn't mean we should deny our condition. We should be determined to defy and fight our illness.

Regardless of our condition, we can give ourselves the option to survive. The odds may be against us, but who's to say we won't be within the percentage that recovers? We can choose to be the exception. This doesn't mean we should deny reality, but in face of adversity we can maintain courage. A patient was told she had a slim chance of survival. With justifiable defiance she replied, "Statistics are for dead people. I'm not dead."

We can envision our medication working to remove our disease. Cancer patients have been known to view radiation treatments as healing rays of energy. The often untapped resources of the mind can reinforce conventional hospital therapy.

Faith in God is an important part of healing. A medical doctor remarked that to withhold prayer was like withholding a necessary drug or surgical procedure. Faith is trusting God, the Great Physician, in spite of our confusion, in spite of unanswered questions, all the time knowing that God loves us and wants what's best for us, even when we're unable to understand the purpose of our suffering. God may not change our situation always, but He will change us. Faith accepts the outcome/answer to our prayers as what is best, because God's answers are wiser than our prayers. If you're not a believer, maybe God is using your situation to get your attention. God doesn't make people sick, but when we experience trials we're often reminded of how much we need to trust Him.

In the midst of overcoming illness or recovering from injury, we can respond with the most potent medicine of all, confidence--in God, our physician(s), our treatment, and ourselves. We can be victors rather than victims!