

Health and Sickness

from *Online Macrobiotic Dictionary, Part 3*

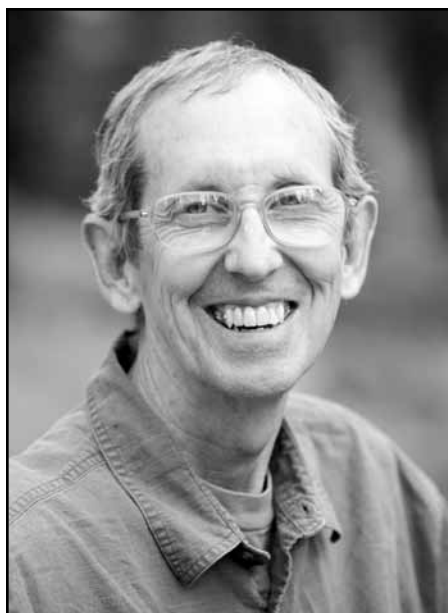
Carl Ferré

Work on the upcoming Online Macrobiotic Dictionary continues in this issue with concepts and theories related to health and sickness with help from Sandy Rothman, who continues to point out entries that need greater clarity. As always, we look forward to your comments and suggestions.

Adaptability: In nature, that which adapts is that which survives. The ability to adapt is the cornerstone of health. Macrobiotic practice needs to change as the conditions around one change and as one's condition changes.

Autonomic nervous system: The part of the nervous system that controls and regulates the internal organs and bodily functions such as breathing, heartbeat, and digestive processes without being consciously directed. The system contains two antagonistic (and complementary) sets of nerves. See also Sickness, Stages of.

Blood circulation: The human body contains two blood circulatory systems that are connected. Systemic circulation provides blood and thus



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oxygen and other vital substances to organs, tissues, and cells. Pulmonary circulation is where fresh oxygen enters the blood. Good quality blood circulation is vital to optimal health.

Blood formation and quality: The macrobiotic view of blood formation is that the villi of the intestinal walls take digested foods into its structure, assimilates, and finally transforms them into the red blood cells. These

red blood cells circulate throughout the body and transform themselves into body cells. Therefore, one's condition and character depend directly on one's food.

Blood pH: The pH scale measures the amount of acid and alkaline in any substance based on the activity of hydrogen in a solution. If acid predominates the pH is below 7.0 and if alkaline predominates the pH is above 7.0. The body has several buffer systems to maintain blood pH between 7.37 and 7.43 (slightly alkaline). Thus, the macrobiotic opinion is to consume food and drinks daily that are slightly alkaline forming in total.

Children, general care: For infants, breast-feeding is preferred and kokkoh (grain milk) is recommended if breast-feeding is not possible. Animal milk is not recommended and no animal products until age fifteen or sixteen is preferred, so the immune system has ample time to fully form. Other suggestions include wearing loose cotton clothing, eating miso soup with mochi, whole grains, (no animal foods), and vegetables, and

using the right amount of sea salt. Condition is indicated by bowel movement analysis.

Condition: The state of one's health. The macrobiotic view is that the normal condition of all beings is to be healthy. Sickness is seen as an abnormal condition caused by being too far out of balance.

Conditions of Health: Ohsawa defined seven conditions of real health as: no fatigue, good appetite, deep and good sleep, good memory, good humor, clarity in thinking and doing, and living with a sense of absolute justice. He said the first three conditions are worth five points each. The fourth, fifth, and sixth are worth ten points each. The seventh condition is worth fifty-five points. "In all, there are a total of one hundred points. Those who score more than forty points at first are in relatively good health. Should you total sixty points in three months, it will be a great success for you." (Essential Ohsawa 35)

1. No Fatigue: One should not feel fatigued or catch cold. A really healthy person does not shy away from difficulties and is adventurous. Fatigue is the real foundation of all diseases.

2. Good Appetite: The ability to eat the simplest food like whole grains and fresh vegetables with pleasure and gratitude, and joyful satisfaction during sexual experiences.

3. Deep and Good Sleep: The ability to fall asleep within three or four minutes after lying down, to sleep without dreams or speaking, and to awaken fully energized at a predetermined time.

4. Good Memory: The foundation of human behavior; helps one make sound decisions based on remembered experience, especially remem-

bering people who have been kind.

5. Good Humor: A person who is cheerful and pleasant under all circumstances, even during difficulties. Such a person distributes deep gratitude and thankfulness to all people, including perceived enemies. The healthy person never gets angry.

6. Clarity in Thinking and Doing: The ability to think, judge, and act with promptness and clarity to meet any challenge or necessity. Such a person has the ability to establish order everywhere.

7. The Mood of Justice: A full understanding of the Order of the Universe and the intention or goal to grasp the deepest meaning in life. A person who has the mood of justice lives by the biological law: From one grain, ten thousand grains—returning more than received.

Constitution: The physical condition and characteristics with which one is born. No two people have the same constitution—everyone is unique.

Chronic disease: A disease that lasts three or more months and for the most part cannot be prevented by vaccines or cured by medication. The macrobiotic view is that chronic diseases can be remedied by the study and practice of macrobiotic principles.

Cravings: A great yearning or desire for a certain food or drink—another example of a signal that the body is out of balance in some way. If the food is not beneficial to one's health, a substitution to a more healthy food is recommended. For example, if the craving is for cow's milk, one might try rice, almond, or soy milk.

Curing: It is natural to be healthy. Deviation from the natural state leads

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to sickness. Curing is the process of returning unnatural conditions to natural ones. The macrobiotic approach is studying the Order of the Universe, eating natural whole foods, and living with moderation.

Death: Macrobiotic thinking divides life into three stages: The world of infinity, the inorganic world of things, and the organic world of physical life. Death marks the end of one's physical life with the permanent cessation of all vital functions.

Discharge: Macrobiotics borrows this term to mean the body's natural ability to relieve itself of internal toxins. A discharge is thought to be the result of eating foods that are free from chemicals and excessive processing. The rate of discharge is dependent on the amount of toxins

and the faithfulness in following a macrobiotic dietary approach.

Diagnosis, self: Use of a number of techniques to determine one's daily condition. These techniques include the seven conditions of health, physiognomy (facial and body features), and observation of eliminations. The basic idea theory based on Chinese medicine is that the outside of the body indicates the condition of the inside. Specific areas of the face, body, fingers, and toes relate to the various internal organs providing valuable information in the remedy of any disease.

Disease (sickness, illness): An incorrectly functioning organ, part, structure, or system of the body caused by excess yin, excess yang, excess extremes of both yin and yang, or other imbalance such as excess acid or alkaline. Sickness is seen as a violation or lack of understanding of the natural order of the universe. The macrobiotic approach is to find the underlying cause and to remedy that rather than just dealing with the symptoms of a disease. Symptoms are viewed as the result of sickness, not the cause. This requires a sick person to accept responsibility to study the order of the universe to determine the underlying cause of his or her disease. Excess mucus, skin problems, and painful eliminations are all signs of the body trying to rid itself of toxins.

General weakness: A condition similar to fatigue that occurs due to a dilution of blood by excess water intake. The amount of water one needs is directly related to one's physical activity. Drinking too much causes general weakness while drinking too little can result in many disorders.

Hara: A point two inches below the navel considered to be the contact center between body and soul and used in Japanese medical and martial arts traditions. Concentrating energy on the Hara is thought to be beneficial to one's health.

Hereditary disease: The genetic transmission of diseases from parent to offspring. While a disease may have an hereditary characteristic, the macrobiotic view is to look to one's internal environment for an underlying cause and remedy.

Homeostasis: The instinctive ability of one's body to control internal conditions and keep them constant. Examples of homeostasis include body temperature, pH level, oxygen and carbon dioxide levels, blood circulation, and blood sugar level. "By eating whole foods, we will be able to maintain homeostasis and a good balance of nutrition in our blood, body fluid, and cells." (*Macrobiotics: An Invitation to Health and Happiness* 41)

Immune system: A complex network that includes the thymus, spleen, lymph nodes and lymph tissue, stem cells, white blood cells, antibodies, and lymphokines. This system protects the body from pathogens and other foreign substances, destroys infected and malignant cells, and removes cellular debris.

Incurable disease: "Incurable disease in man is a misnomer and a product of the imagination. I have seen thousands of incurable diseases such as asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, leprosy, and paralyzes of all kinds cured by macrobiotic practice in ten days or a few weeks. I am convinced that there is no incurable disease in

all the world if we apply this method correctly." (*Essential Ohsawa* 56-58)

Infectious disease: Diseases that are caused by a weak immune system that allows viruses or bacteria to penetrate into the body. The quality of red and white blood cells is most important in dealing with any infectious disease.

Ki disease: Ki energy is a theoretical unseen life force or universal energy that exists everywhere uniting all the manifestations of the universe, visible or invisible. It is referred to as "Ki" in Japan, as "Chi" or "Qi" in China, and as "Prana" in Sanskrit. Stagnation (the stopping or slowing down of ki energy) is the first step/cause of disease.

Medicine, Levels of: Ohsawa presented seven levels of medicine that evolve in the following order:

1. Symptomatic medicine is treatment to remove symptoms through artificial means such as an injection or a pill. This level also includes folk medicine in which health practices arise from cultural tradition and native remedies such as various foods. "Western medicine believes it has succeeded when it has eliminated symptoms or immediate consequences; it is not concerned with causes." (*Cancer and the Philosophy of the Far East* 30)

2. Prophylactic medicine is preventive medicine through the promotion of physical and mental health and the avoidance of known toxins such as carcinogens.

3. Art of health is the study of ways and means to acquire and maintain physical health. "All disease, unhappiness, crime, and punishment result from behavior that violates the Order of the Universe. The cure is,

therefore, infinitely simple. Merely stop violating that order and allow Nature to do her miraculous work.” (*Zen Macrobiotics* 26)

4. Macrobiotic medicine is the art of rejuvenation and longevity. Macrobiotics provides a healthy way to live. Suggestions to help remedy specific diseases are tailored to each individual case and are complementary to medical treatments. Macrobiotic health coaches (often referred to as counselors) may be consulted if and when needed. In all cases, the macrobiotic approach is to look for the underlying cause of the illness and to “treat” that rather than merely working on the symptoms of the disease.

5. Socio-moral and educational medicine establishes health, freedom, and justice in society. “Far Eastern medicine, originating 5,000 years ago, was not a medicine of symp-

toms, but a fundamental method of cure that is based on natural causes. This is why it was also a method of health, longevity, and happiness. It was not concerned with the disappearance of symptoms, but it was an educative medicine, which had as its end the development of man’s judgment.” (*Practical Guide to Far-Eastern Macrobiotic Medicine* 198)

6. Philosophical medicine is directed to thought, mind, and judgment. From a macrobiotic perspective, disease is seen as a divine warning. “Healing power is in our minds. The material for opening our minds and for healing disease, however, is food, the qualities of which we distinguish through our minds. If we cannot clear our minds, we cannot distinguish correct food. Healing power is in the mind. Sickness is given to us so that we may discover this mind.” (*Essential Ohsawa* 84)

7. “Supreme medicine, which is educational, biological, physiological, and a dialectical technique, aims to permit the ailing person to discover all by himself the constitution of life and the world. It cures, decidedly, not only all the disease of the present and future, but every misfortune, too.” (*Philosophy of Oriental Medicine* 15)

Meridians: A Chinese system of pathways in the body along which vital energy is thought to flow. These pathways are used in acupuncture and acupressure.

Metabolism: The processes that produce, maintain, and destroy material substances in the body, thus making energy available. These processes require water; dehydration slows down metabolism resulting in a lack of energy.



“A Macrobiotic Classic” – Michael Bauce; “Brilliant” – Christine DeRocher; “The Finest Book on Natural Healing I have read in 25 years of Chiropractic Practice” –JB Vaughan DC; “Learnt more in the first 20 pages than I have in two years of study” - student ; “I read your book very hungrily as your perception is so clear and rarely have I come across the understanding and intelligence that shines through in your writing. In that way, your book felt like a friend, a much needed friend, so thank you.-Penelope Bjorksten”; “The End of Medicine” is a beautiful book, in my opinion one of the more important books about macrobiotics written since Ohsawa” – Isobel Carr

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Natural immunity: Natural immunity (resistance to sickness without prior immunization) is a characteristic of health—the normal condition of all living beings. This immunity depends on the quality of red and white blood cells considered by macrobiotics as primarily created by one’s nutrition and activity. Thus, healthy blood leads to immunity from infectious diseases.

Natural therapy: “My therapy is very simple: Natural food, no medicine, no surgery, no inactivity...avoid animal protein as much as possible, and completely avoid refined sugar.” (*Zen Macrobiotics 26-27*)

Organs, yin-yang of: There are five yang organs and five yin organs that serve to transform food into energy. The yin, hollow organs (large intestines, gall bladder, stomach, bladder, and small intestines) change food into blood. The yang, solid organs (lungs, liver, spleen/pancreas, kidneys, and heart) transform blood into energy.

Physiognomy: The art of determining character or personal characteristics from the physical features of the face and other parts of the body. “Oriental physiognomy is based on biology, physiology, and embryology. It is useful and amazing. It tells one’s fate by his or her face and bone structure. Macrobiotics teaches the mechanism of such physical formations.” (*Macrobiotics: An Invitation to Health and Happiness 5*)

Pregnancy: To feel gratitude and have an understanding of nature and the source of life (the Order of the Universe) during pregnancy is considered of fundamental importance. The destiny of a woman’s child is partly determined by the foods she

eats and thoughts she thinks during pregnancy. Experience shows that it’s best not to make major changes in diet during pregnancy.

Sanpaku eyes: A very yin condition indicated by white showing on three sides of the eyeball, especially below the eyeball. “One who has this eye is suspicious, fearful, insecure, quick to misunderstand, and passive. His heart, sexual organs, liver, kidney, and lungs are very sick.” (*Macrobiotics: An Invitation to Health and Happiness 7*)

Separation: The feeling of separation from the Infinite, the source of life and nourishment, is the greatest sickness. Life is a continuous spiral with no separation between animal-plant-elements-pretatomic-energy-polarity-Oneness. The more this connection is realized, the greater the health.

Smoking: In his day, prior to important medical knowledge about smoking—in particular its effect on the heart—Ohsawa classified tobacco smoking as yangizing and thus opposed to extreme yin cancers and believed smoking to be beneficial in some cases. However, the harmful effects of smoking tobacco far outweigh any benefit in terms of yin-yang.

Stages of Sickness: Just as there is an orderly progression of life, there is an orderly progression of sickness beginning with fatigue and pain and ending with spiritual disease characterized by arrogance and intolerance. These diseases are often interconnected.

1. Fatigue: The real foundation of all diseases caused by a disorderly life (undisciplined, mean, ungrateful)

or a chaotic family or parents. Catching a cold even in cold weather is a sign of fatigue as is a lack of vitality.

2. Pain and suffering: Physical distress caused by capricious, sentimental, or exclusive judgment. Psychosomatic illness also fits in this category. Pain is one of the reasons why people seek medical attention. In macrobiotic thinking, it’s a signal that something is wrong.

3. Chronic symptoms: Long-lasting or recurring illnesses such as headache, painful chest, diarrhea, vomiting, ulcer, trachoma, leukemia and all skin and blood diseases caused by an excess of yin or yang in food.

4. Sympatheticotonic or vagotonic: Sicknesses of the autonomic nervous system. Sympatheticotonic disease is tension of nerves in the thoracic and lumbar regions of the spinal cord. Vagotonic disease is hyperexcitability of the vagus nerve resulting in bradycardia, decreased heart output, and faintness.

5. Functional and structural changes in the body or organs such as teeth, eyes, or heart.

6. Psychological or emotional: Examples include paranoia, schizophrenia, easy loss of temper, neurasthenia, restlessness, hysteria, lack of sociability or patience, exclusiveness, and cardiac dilation.

7. Spiritual disease: The feeling of separation from the Infinite or the order of the universe. Arrogant and intolerant people suffer from this last stage of sickness without experiencing the first six stages.

Symptoms of sickness: Signs or indications that something is wrong and needs correcting. Symptoms may last a long time, especially if the underlying cause isn’t found and remedied.

Synthetic chemicals: Compounds such as preservatives, sprays, and dyes that are created through a chemical process by humans, as opposed to those of natural origin, are avoided in macrobiotic practice if at all possible.

Ten-day cure: Ohsawa theorized that all disease could be cured in ten days by following a natural way of eating and drinking because the blood renews itself in a matter of months and because the blood feeds the disease. Ten days was believed to be enough time to turn the disease toward wellness. In actual practice, it takes much more time to cure most diseases of course.

Toxins: Poisons created by fermentation in the large intestines from excess protein or by eating chemical additives and preservatives. The body discharges these poisons in any way that it can, often through the skin.

Transmutation, biological: The natural or artificial changing of one element into another. Ohsawa, who read about this theory in a book by French scientist Louis Kervran, claimed to have transmuted sodium into potassium using low temperature, pressure, and energy. He went on to conclude that the body can change one element into another and thus that the body can produce all that it needs from a simple diet. The experiment and theory have yet to be duplicated or verified.

True fasting: Eating and drinking only that which is absolutely necessary to sustain life—not merely the detachment from all eating and drinking.

True health: “True health is that which you yourself have created out of illness. Only if you have produced your own health can you know how

wonderful it actually is. For this reason, many healthy people squander away their health; through ignorance, they spoil it without knowing its true value. He who knows the real worth of health spreads his joyous knowledge by telling others what he knows.” (*Essential Ohsawa* 82)

Viruses: Ultramicroscopic infectious agents that replicate only within the cells of living hosts. Macrobiotics views viruses as necessary for life and thus not enemies. Viruses are seen as signals that a change to a more healthy diet is needed.

Will to cure: The relentless drive to discover the underlying cause of a disease through an understanding of the Order of the Universe and the origin, mechanism, structure, and usefulness of the disease.

Yang disease: A disease in which excess yang is considered to be the underlying cause.

Yangization: The act of making something more yang by heat, pressure, salt, time (aging), and/or drying.

Yin disease: A disease in which excess yin is considered to be the underlying cause.

Yinnization: The act of making something more yin by cold, relaxation, sugar, water, vitamin C, vinegar, ginger, spices, and/or fermentation.

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