

the LETTER

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Book Review:

TIMELESS HEALING: The Power and Biology of Belief

By Dr. Glenn Terrell

Book Review: Benson, Herbert, *TIMELESS HEALING: The Power and Biology of Belief*, Simon and Schuster, 1996.

Dr. Benson, one of the most highly respected among scientists and authors on Mind/Body relationships has produced in this book one of the most convincing treatments of this controversial subject this reviewer has ever read. A physician himself, Dr. Benson is the founder of Harvard's Mind/Body Medical Institute.

"...the history of medicine is the history of the placebo effect..."

The best background statement Dr. Benson makes appears on pages 109 and 110. "In large measure, the history of medicine is the history of the **placebo effect**. Well into the twentieth century, despite the influence science had begun to wield in other realms of the world at the time, medicine still offered more care than it did cures, more attention than technology. Ironically, the reputation physicians have enjoyed throughout history, privileged and esteemed in every culture and time one can name, was built on and cultivated by the success of remembered wellness and on three modes of **belief**-inspired healing: the **belief** of an individual in a treatment, the **belief** of the caregiver, or the mutual beliefs." Dr. Benson uses the term "**remembered wellness**" for the **placebo effect**, which, of course, refers to the effect a **belief** (mind) has on the body, the central theme of his book.

Benson further describes the history of medical science dating from the famous, much quoted Flexnor Report to the Carnegie Foundation For Teaching mandating that only medical schools which taught the scientific medicine could produce licensed physicians. This mandate rejected other forms of medicine such as homeopathy, osteopathy, hydrotherapy and naturopathy, all dependent to a considerable degree on remembered wellness. Medical science ruled out the influence of the mind on the body. In fact, Benson claims, not to do so was disreputable in the profession, so much so that in the 1930's and 40s the **placebo** was thought to be useful only in research designed to determine the efficacy of new drugs or specific treatment procedures. If subjects responded as well when given a **placebo** as when given the drug or treatment in question, that was an indication that the treatment was a failure. As Dr. Benson writes in *TIMELESS HEALING*, "Never mind that **placebos** were 30 to 90% effective" in many studies and

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Self Efficacy: The Exercise of Control by Dr. Albert Bandura

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Editorial



By Lou Tice

The Pacific Institute

Greetings to The Pacific Institute family worldwide. This is the first issue of our new publication, The Pacific Institute **LETTER**, hereafter referred to as **THE LETTER**. Glenn Terrell will be the general editor of **THE LETTER**, but because of the content of this new publication, Glenn will need the cooperation of many of us worldwide to insure its success.

THE LETTER, to be published quarterly, will help all of us keep up to date on information applicable to the concepts we teach at The Pacific Institute, including book reviews, abstracts, and new theories by those in the behavioral and biological disciplines interested in cognitive science and mind/body relationships. Additionally, there will be an editorial in each issue by someone in The Pacific Institute worldwide. By definition, the editorials will be opinions on any topic related to TPI's education and the ways we market and deliver our curricula.

From the above description it is clear that, although **THE LETTER** will be published in Seattle, we want the content to reflect

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Tice Editorial

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important TPI activities internationally. Accordingly, please send Glenn information about books or articles you have read, studies you or your clients have conducted, and success stories you and your colleagues have experienced. Include enough information to insure clarity, with the understanding that it may be necessary for the editor to make reductions in length and to change language to insure clarity and to conform to space limitations. We stress the importance of validating your success stories with documentations that demonstrate the effectiveness of our education in accomplishing the desired outcomes, (eg. results of questionnaires and interviews, anecdotes, and in some instances, tests of statistical significance and pre-and post tests). Parenthetically, we do not ask that these validating procedures be of the sort that would be required in the preparation of a manuscript for publication in a professional journal. It is important to include some numbers, percentages or anecdotes that will indicate to the non-scientist, intelligent consumer and to our clients that our education helps produce the outcomes they want.

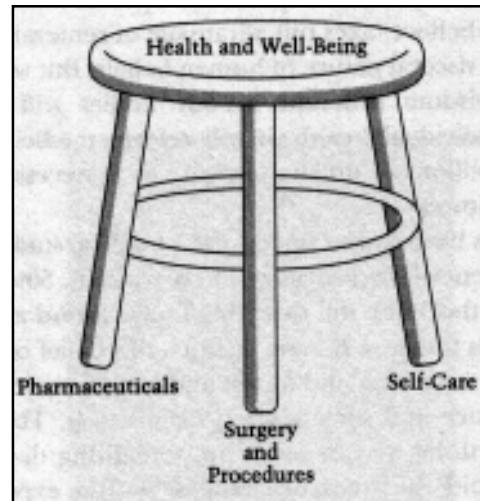
In this the first issue of **THE LETTER** I would like to recommend for your reading two new books: *TIMELESS HEALING: The Power and Biology of Belief*, by Herbert Benson, M.D. and *SELF EFFICACY: The Exercise of Control*, by the long time consultant to The Pacific Institute, Dr. Albert Bandura. Dr. Benson is perhaps the nation's most respected authority on mind/body relationships, while Dr. Bandura's efficacy theory provides support for many of the concepts we teach in our curricula. Dr. Benson's book will be reviewed in this issue of **THE LETTER**, and Dr. Bandura's book, considered by many people to be his magnum opus will be reviewed in the next issue.

We look forward to receiving your contributions for inclusion in **THE LETTER** and your suggestions as to how we can make this new publication most helpful for all of us. Our plan is to publish **THE LETTER** in September, December, March and June. The deadline for receiving manuscripts for inclusion in **THE LETTER** is one month prior to publication. Specifically, November 15 for the December issue; February 15 for the March issue; May 15 for the June issue and August 15 for the September issue.

Lou & Diane Tice

Lou & Diane Tice, Chairman, & Co-Founders
The Pacific Institute

TIMELESS HEALING



Graphic 1.1

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accounts referred to in his book. Despite these studies, plus the recognition of the National Institutes of Health given to unconventional medicine through the recent establishment of the Department of Alternative Medicine, doctors who focus their attention on mind/body medicine still are viewed with suspicion by many of their peers. Some of the studies referred to above are described below.

Graphic 1.1, as shown above, illustrates Dr. Benson's balanced approach, incorporating conventional medicine with **remembered wellness**.

Health and well being is the goal. Medical science uses medications and surgery and other procedures to promote good health, while patients engage in self care, not just through good diet and exercise, but also through the use of the mind through the development of **beliefs** that anticipate wellness. Benson also points to the importance of doctors transmitting to patients a **belief** in the **efficacy** of the medical treatments they are providing.

Here are several examples Dr. Benson gives of the **placebo effect** (the biology of belief or remembered wellness):

■ The effect of **belief** on the results of a test of the **efficacy** of a particular treatment of asthmatics: Two groups of subjects, one told that their breathing would be adversely affected by a treatment; the other group was told that the treatment would relieve breathing difficulty. The breathing of the patients in the first group became more difficult, while the subjects of the other group breathed with greater ease. Both groups received inert, distilled water. As Benson wrote, "thus bronchial constriction was caused by **belief** and prevented by **belief**."

■ The mere appointment with a doctor will frequently result in the alleviation of bodily symptoms because one's mind associates a doctor appointment with getting better.

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TIMELESS HEALING: book review

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■ Reviews of the literature on the effect of **remembered wellness** on pain reduction show that this phenomenon can be demonstrated in 30 to 70% of the studies reviewed, including those patients with chest pain, fatigue, dizziness, headache, back and abdominal pain, numbness, impotence, weight loss, cough and constipation.

■ Patients with moderately severe congestive heart failure showed significant improvement in a treadmill exercise when given eight weeks of placebo therapy.

The major focus of Dr. Benson's book, *TIMELESS HEALING*, is of course on the power of **belief** in human neurophysiology, in other words the medical model, while we at The Pacific Institute are primarily interested in the role of **belief** of **self efficacy**, on individual and collective human performance. Collectively, the two approaches, the medical and behavioral, demonstrate the enormous power of **belief** on both our health and our performance, on both our mind and our body. In fact, the more we learn about the mind/body relationship, the more convinced we become that the two are inseparable.

Dr. Benson describes the relationship between **remembered wellness** and the **Relaxation Response** (the title of another book by Benson) as being complementary, both being concerned with the "physical actions of **belief** on people's health." Having said this, Dr. Benson then proceeds to explain that one does not need to "believe that you need not call upon **remembered wellness** to generate the **Relaxation Response**." Although this seems to be a contradiction, this does not detract from the central theme of *TIMELESS HEALING*, i.e. a treatment of examples and mechanisms of mind/body relationships. Now for an explanation of the **Relaxation Response**. The relaxation response is the resulting bodily responses to relaxation brought about by focusing on a word, phrase, sound or muscular activity, while resisting the intrusion of other words, phrases, thoughts or actions. The focus can be on anything that to the individual is pleasing. Dr. Benson suggest the following:

Step 1: Pick a focus word or short phrase that's firmly rooted in your belief system.

Step 2: Sit quietly in a comfortable position.

Step 3: Close your eyes.

Step 4: Relax your muscles.

Step 5: Breathe slowly and naturally, and as you do, repeat your focus word, phrase, or prayer silently to yourself as you exhale.

Step 6: Assume a passive attitude. Don't worry about how you're doing. When other thoughts come to mind, simply say to yourself, "Oh well," and gently return to the repetition.

Step 7: Continue for ten to twenty minutes.

Step 8: Do not stand immediately. Continue sitting quietly for a minute or so, allowing other thoughts to return. Then open your eyes and sit for another minute before rising.

Step 9: Practice this technique once or twice daily.

According to Benson, the **Relaxation Response** can be elicited while walking, jogging or in a manner that is pleasing and effective for the individual. Benson and his associates at the Mind/Body Medical Institute claim short and long term practice of the

[See **The Power and Biology of Belief**, page 4]

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RESEARCH NOTES

Abstracts of studies showing measured outcomes of selected TPI clients:

1. **Automobile dealership:** The client reported the following improvements following participation in IIE:

- Used car sales increased from 23 per month to 100
- New car sales increased from 30 per month to 70
- Client was number one dealership in the state in terms of units sold (200 units ahead of the number two dealership)

2. **Major telecommunications company:** This client measured the impact of IIE on personal, professional and organizational development, using a combination rating scale/questionnaire instrument on such variables as self-empowerment, efficacy, optimism, attitude toward change, goal setting and affirmation skill, team work and resiliency. Results:

- The most favorable result of this study lies in the fact that 90% of the respondents would recommend that the company use the concepts and terminology of The Pacific Institute.
- Seven of the eight items on the personal scale were favorable to the value of IIE.
- Five of the six items on the professional scale were favorable to the value of IIE.
- The value of IIE was least favorable as applied to organizational development, a statistic which points to the importance of securing the participation of upper level management.

3. **Private school:** In a pre- and post test study, children were given a questionnaire covering TPI's expected outcomes after attending IIE. The questionnaire included 22 items on a five point scale, and including such variables as self confidence, the value of belief on performance, the role of comfort zones, goal setting, affirmations and end result thinking on performance. On all 22 items, the mean scores on the post test were higher than those on the pretest, an extraordinary finding, one which would be very unlikely to occur due to change alone.

The Power and Biology of Belief

Relaxation Response, along with sound nutrition, exercise and stress reduction skills produce the following results:

1. Decrease in blood pressure and medications of hypertension patients
2. Reduction in chronic pain, depression, anxiety and anger with 36% reduction in visits to managed care facilities
3. Seventy five percent of those with insomnia were cured, while improvement occurred in the other twenty five percent
4. Thirty six percent of women with infertility became pregnant within six months
5. Fifty percent reduction in number of visits to health maintenance organizations by those with psychosomatic illnesses
6. Patients with heart irregularities actually experience reduction in frequency of this condition
7. High school sophomores experienced improved self esteem

The Faith Factor

Dr. Benson noted that eighty percent of his patients used a religious focus when engaged in the **Relaxation Response**, and that twenty five percent of them felt “more spiritual” as a consequence of the response. Dr. Benson also reported that “not only did my research and that of my colleagues reveal that twenty five percent of people feel more spiritual as a result of the elicitation of the **Relaxation Response**, but it showed that those same people have fewer medical symptoms than do those who reported no increase in spirituality from the elicitation... “It appeared that **beliefs** (in this case spiritual) added to the response, transported the mind/body even more dramatically, quieting worries and fears significantly better than the **Relaxation Response** alone.” From the above, Dr. Benson speculates that religious faith was more influential than other **beliefs**. Dr. Benson points out that people who had increased spirituality during the **Relaxation Response** used two ways to describe this experience: 1.) the presence of an energy, a force, a power, God that was beyond themselves, and 2.) this presence felt close to them. And it was the people who “felt this presence” who “noted the greatest medical benefits.” Regardless their professed faith, people eliciting the response who experienced these sensations, and energy that seemed both internal and external to their bodies, and that felt good had better health as a result. It occurs to this reviewer that the Faith Factor hypothesized by Benson may be the aspect of the mind/body relationship he describes in greatest need of additional documentation. In the meantime, Benson views faith healing in the context of remembered wellness, and further contends that “even though faith and believers who have legitimate healing powers, ‘faith healing’ is a term our society has come to associate with religious entrepreneurs, with those who manipulate, rather than administer, with a greater concern for fund raising than care-giving.” But as society begins to embrace mind/body medicine and to grasp that remembered wellness is effective in handling the majority of medical

complaints, “so too must we acknowledge the legitimacy of some faith healing.” Finally, Dr. Benson is clear about the need of further research in the following statement: “Yet we must further study faith healing if we are to credit it for benefits over and above that of **remembered wellness** (placebo), i.e. the power of **belief**... Perhaps instinctively, human beings had always known that worshipping a higher power was good for them. And indeed, if they are calling forth the **Relaxation Response**, medical science could prove it was good for them! Dr. Benson speculates that perhaps humans are, in a profound physical way, “wired for God.”



The Pacific Institute **LETTER** reports studies, theories, books and journal articles that have application now or in the foreseeable future to the programs of The Pacific Institute. So we ask the question of what value to our programs is the Benson book on mind/body relationships? My answer follows: The subtitle of Benson’s book, *The Power and Biology of Belief* promises a relationship in that “**belief**” is a cognitive or mental skill and is central to The Pacific Institute’s education. Dr. Benson treats the effect of **belief** on our physiology or bodies, while The Pacific Institute teaches the effect of **belief** on our behavior, or more specifically, on our **self efficacy**. But that is not the whole story. Dr. Benson also is concerned with behavior and The Pacific Institute with our health. Benson teaches what he calls the **Relaxation Response**, the very basis of which are the cognitive skills of **visualization** and **affirmations**. He also sites studies that demonstrate the effectiveness of the **Relaxation Response** in raising **self esteem**, again a cognitive skill that is a by-product of The Pacific Institute’s curriculum, *Investment In Excellence*.

We spoke earlier of the controversial nature of the mind/body relationship, particularly with twentieth century western medicine. The basis of this controversy may be explained in at least two ways. Some writers in the domain of mind/body relationships are less than convincing because of what is thought to be inadequate documentation of research supportive of some of their claims. But Dr. Benson is a highly respected scientist, a graduate of Harvard University’s Medical School and a member of Harvard Medical School’s faculty. Furthermore, Dr. Benson’s approach is to determine the power of the mind on our bodies through research. The medical profession is moving, although not at breakneck speed toward a greater acceptance of some of the findings of scholars doing research on the mind/body connections. As noted, above the National Institutes of Health recently created a department of Alternative Medicine within the structure of the Institutes. And the US Congress appropriated 7.4 million dollars in 1996 to support the research activities of scholars working in this field. Dr. Benson is already recognized as probably the most effective scientist championing the case for mind/body medicine. His most recent book, *TIMELESS HEALING: The Power and Biology of Belief* is straightforward, balanced, and convincing.

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