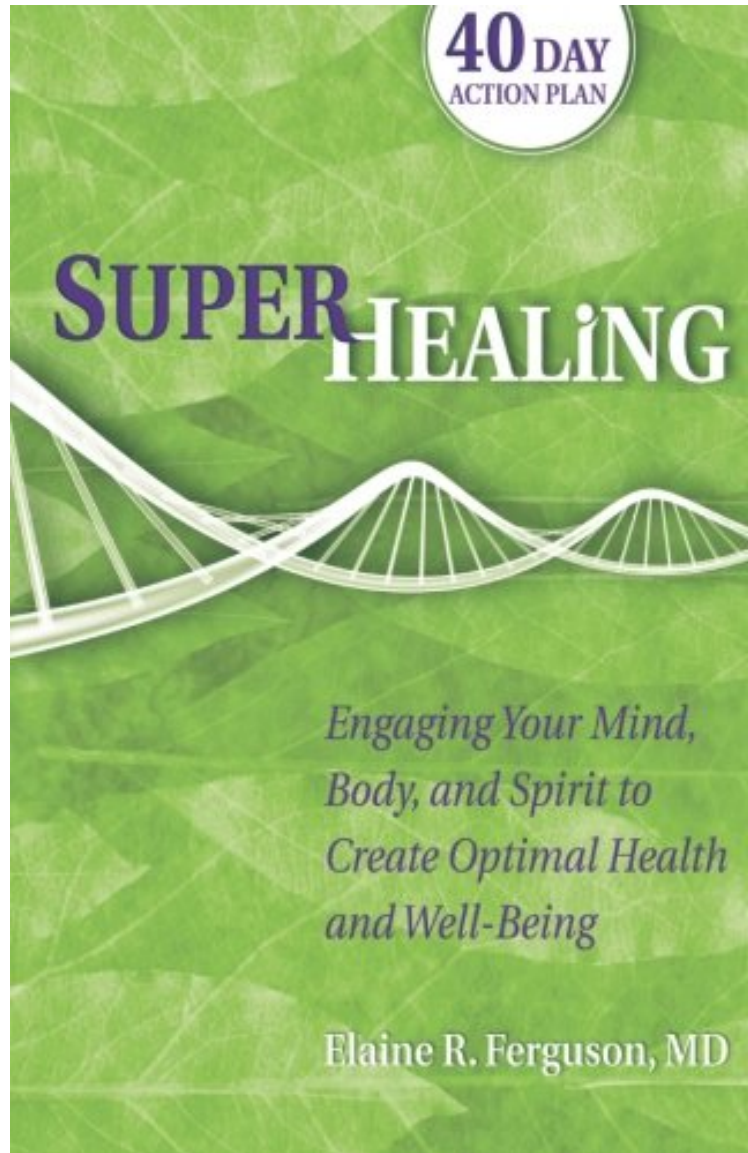


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# Superhealing: Engaging Your Mind, Body, and Spirit to Create Optimal Health and Well-being

*Elaine Ferguson MD*

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From Hippocrates in ancient Greece to the medical healers of today, the impact that the mind-body connection has had on overall health has been widely recognized. And while advancements in technology are vast, the constraints of conventional medicine are an impediment to successfully preventing, reversing, or addressing the causes of chronic diseasesdiseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity, arthritis, acid reflux, cancer, and more. At times, these advancements have even proven fatal. In *Superhealing: Engaging Your Mind, Body, and Spirit to Create Optimal Health and Well-being*, Dr. Elaine Ferguson uses an integrative approach to healing as a way of eradicating the physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual limitationsillustrated from the real-life stories she has witnessed throughout her medical careerthat lead to chronic diseases and imbalance. Throughout *Superhealing*, readers will explore the truth about genetics and disease; the central role and significance stress has on the mind-body connection, as well as the distinctions between feelings, thoughts, and emotions and how both positive and negative emotions factor into one's health.

About the AuthorElaine R. Ferguson, MD, an Ivy League-educated physician, is a graduate of Brown University and Duke University School of Medicine. She has practiced holistic medicine in the Chicago area for over two decades in both public and private practice. Dr. Ferguson is the current Senior Medical Director for the U.S. Postal Service Great Lakes Area. Over the course of her career, Dr. Ferguson has lectured on holistic medicine at various colleges, universities, and medical schools. Her consulting practice, One Health, offers a line of downloadable, educational audio and workbook products designed for those with various physical conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, and post-surgical recovery. These products are available on her website [www.HowtoGetWellFaster.com](http://www.HowtoGetWellFaster.com). Dr. Ferguson has appeared on numerous national television and radio programs including "The Balancing Act" a Lifetime television premier morning show. Dr. Ferguson lives with her husband, Victor, in Valparaiso, Indiana. To learn more visit [DrElaine.net](http://DrElaine.net). Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.

Introduction: The Foundation of Superhealingthe Unity of Mind, Body, and Spirit The separation of psychology from the premises of biology is purely artificial because the human psyche lives in indissoluble union with the body.

Carl Jung It was the very first time i'd ever confronted a cancer patient. Just the thought of it made me nervous. Cancer is our worst, most ferocious enemy, the taker of life, the proverbial thief in the night, and the deliverer of unbelievable pain. I'd seen specimens of cancer in the lab and learned the details of how cells go astray, overgrowing and creating a path of such overwhelming consumption that the cancer leads to its own demise along with the body of its host. And here it was, finally, in the flesh. I was on the psychiatric rotation, my first clinical second-year rotation in a hospital after the most intensive year of learning I'd ever known. My mind was filled with facts, figures, and theories that would be the foundation of my clinical experience as an eager medical student. On this particular day, I was assigned to interview a young woman whom I'll call Melissa (not her real name, of course). She looked healthy, but she lay in the bed listlessly. Unfortunately for Melissa, she had been - diagnosed with malignant melanoma (skin cancer). In 1975, there wasn't much that medical treatment could do for her other than to attempt to postpone as long as possible the inevitable, painful death that lurked ahead. Melissa was pretty, but her deep sadness, understandably, veiled her beauty. My assignment was to interview her to see whether there were any signs of a mental illness accompanying her terminal physical disease. She was sweet, cooperative, and probably very lonely, so my visit seemed to be a welcome relief from the glaring silence that otherwise filled her room. At age twenty-eight, Melissa was already the mother of four. She talked about her children and her husband much more than she did about herself. During those brief moments of expressing herself, she seemed to forget the death sentence that awaited her. Then reality returned, and she spoke passionately to me about her concerns about what was going to happen to her children after she died. Listening to Melissa, I was speechless. Fear and regret streamed through me. I wanted to help. I wanted to grab her and hug her and tell her that everything was going to be all right, but I didn't because I knew I'd get in trouble if I did. As medical students, we were taught to be 'distant' and 'objective.' What did that really mean? I thought it was cruel and heartless. But who was I to challenge the instructions of my professors? As much as I wanted to help Melissa, I didn't know what to do or say to this suffering soul. I was totally inept at comforting her. I deeply wanted to relieve her pain, but I choked when I tried. The words just didn't come. I could sense her emptiness, her pain, and her way of making peace with her situationif that's what it can be called to confront the inevitable. After our conversation, I rushed to find my supervising resident. 'She seems depressed,' I said to my advisor. 'Can depression cause melanoma?' 'No,' he replied emphatically, shaking his head as though insulted by my question. 'There are only seven psychosomatic diseases. These are ulcers, hypertension, rheumatoid arthritis, hyperthyroidism, neurodermatitis, asthma, and ulcerative colitis.'(1) Well, I am not buying that

theory, I thought, at least not based on what I've just observed. A kaleidoscope of other emotionally affected patients I'd met ran through my mind. That's simply not true. In my heart I knew better. I couldn't think of one patient I'd seen who wasn't emotionally distressed in some form or fashion, and it seemed a very good question to ask: Which had come first, the illness or the emotion? Could there perhaps be a dynamic interaction between the two? Right then, at the very beginning of my career, I asked a question that would ultimately become a guiding light in my investigation of the superhealing phenomenon. Since then, I have read thousands of studies that support the idea of a dynamic interaction between illness and emotion. Medical Research Has Proven the Phenomenon of Unity Perhaps you are skeptical of the claim that the mind and the spirit can positively or adversely influence the body or that the body can influence the mind and the spirit. Well, I've got tons of evidence. Did you know that having fake brain surgery heals patients with Parkinson's disease just as well as real surgery does?(2) Or how about the following: More heart attacks occur on Monday morning than at any other time of the week.(3) Forgiving people you resent lowers your risk of having a second heart attack.(4) Blood sugar levels in diabetics can be reduced through meditation.(5) Optimists are healthier than pessimists.(6) Optimism and other uplifting emotional states can prevent the development of chronic diseases.(7) Helping a stranger improves your immune system and overall health.(8) The simple act of writing about an emotional issue can improve your health.(9) Group support can increase longevity among severely ill cancer patients.(10) Your mind can reverse the aging process.(11) Listening to soothing music can help your body to heal.(12) Tai chi and yoga lower the blood pressure.(13) Each of these remarkable benefits was revealed by a recent medical study. All can be attributed to the body's phenomenal ability to heal itself through various biochemical pathways modulated by our thoughts, feelings, and emotions. As we begin to participate consciously in engaging these dimensions of our being, we begin superhealing, which begins to move us in the direction of optimal health. What Is Optimal Health and Well-Being? For centuries, being healthy meant surviving long enough to reproduce. During the twentieth century, the common conception of health evolved beyond the view that health is the absence of detectable signs of physical or psychological disease to include prevention as a goal. Today, our definition of wellness is becoming even broader and more encompassing. Society is beginning to see that optimal health really is a state of well-being and vitality wherein we are able to express our physical, emotional, intellectual, creative, and spiritual capacities as individuals in a manner that is harmonious with others, with Earth and all her creatures, and with all of life. Health is not an end point. It is a dynamic process involving the entire body; it enables us to fulfill our life purpose, to live fully and abundantly. It is a process that involves our bodies, our minds, and our spirits. Health cannot be achieved through treating physical symptoms while ignoring the underlying psychological and emotional issues that are now understood to cause illness. To achieve a balanced state of health in an ongoing manner and develop an effective treatment plan for anything that ails you, you must be inclusive and take physical, emotional, and -psychological factors into consideration. Like wellness, disease is a dynamic process involving the entire body, even if only one organ system is seemingly affected. You don't have to be sick to be unhealthy. Because health includes your mental and spiritual well-being, you can be considered unhealthy if you are physically intact while emotionally imbalanced or devoid of a meaningful relationship with your spirit. Research has shown that hostility is a risk factor for heart disease and that loneliness contributes to the development of several diseases. Becoming healthy again after an ailment or an injury depends in part on your willingness to accept responsibility for healing the disease or condition and to make a commitment to explore aspects of your experience that defy and interfere with personal wholeness. You must take care of your body, mind, and spirit. Optimal health and well-beingthe highest possible level of vitality and resilience and the strongest immunityis not achieved by treating only the physical symptoms while ignoring the underlying psychological and emotional issues that cause illness. There is a crucial relationship among the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of our being that each of us must embrace if we wish to significantly enhance our quality of life. Although the healthcare industry has failed, thus far, to cohesively shift the medical paradigm from treatment to effective prevention, there is no doubt that the latest research acknowledges that the vast majority of chronic diseasesincluding heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and high blood pressurecan be prevented.(1)Franz Alexander, *Psychosomatic Medicine: Its Principles and Applications* (New York: Norton, 1950), 102, 122, 133, 146, 165, 171, 201. 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