

Reverse Therapy for Health



By Dr John Eaton PhD



REVERSE THERAPY

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REVERSE THERAPY

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REVERSE THERAPY

Introduction

Reverse Therapy is part of the new, worldwide, movement towards therapies that work with Bodymind. It is a Bodymind healing process which reverses symptoms by understanding why Bodymind needs to create them in the first place. When we have understood those reasons we are in a position to make new lifestyle choices and take action to remove Bodymind's need to produce symptoms.

The principles and techniques of Reverse Therapy were developed by me between 1996 and 2002 and continue to improve and evolve as I write. It is based on the latest discoveries in neuroscience which have (mostly) been taking place in the United States over the past 20 years or so. Some of these discoveries include:

- The link between emotions and health
- The connections between the brain, the endocrine system, the immune system and the nervous system
- How the Body uses cellular memories to store information about emotional threats
- How Bodymind creates emotions using hormones, nerve signals and neuropeptides
- The function and purpose of emotions in promoting health
- The causes of non-specific illnesses

Reverse Therapy is essentially a simple process in which people learn to listen to their Bodymind and understand the deeper reasons why Bodymind needs to produce symptoms. This process of enlightenment goes side-by-side with dropping the many wrong and confused ideas people have been given about illness, recovery and health.

One important theme of this book – in fact it is a key to understanding Reverse Therapy – is that we must learn to discard the over-emphasis on 'Headmind' in our culture and instead pay more attention to 'Bodymind', the emotive, protective function which works through glandular changes in the body to flag up distress. The real solution to the conditions mentioned above, as well as many others, lies in realising that they are neither mental nor viral in origin but ways in which Bodymind seeks to communicate to us about threatening situations and to encourage us to resolve them. When we do this the essential conditions for returning health are restored.

Finally, a word about the cover illustration. Engraved by William Blake, the great English poet and artist in 1795, it depicts the scientist, Sir Isaac Newton. Often regarded as a hero by the scientific establishment, Blake shows him as a beautiful but obsessional figure. His body pulsates with muscular energy and yet it seems strangely constricted. His gaze is entirely upon his sextant and the angles it traces on the parchment on the floor. For Blake this showed how Newton had essentially become entrapped by Headmind and its pursuit of thought for its own sake. Intellectual reasoning had become an end in itself, subtly distorting the world in terms of rules and laws. As Blake once wrote:

May God us keep

From Single vision & Newton's Sleep!

This single vision blinds Newton from the power of his own body and the emotions it produces to encourage him to connect to Nature rather than mathematics. As a result he is oblivious to the living coral rock on which he sits, bursting with life and colour, and proclaiming the glory of all living forms.

Reverse Therapy issues from a similar perspective to that of William Blake's, who also wrote, in his book, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, three propositions relating to Bodymind.

1 Man has no Body distinct from his Soul; for that call'd Body is a portion of Soul discern'd by the five Senses, the chief inlets of Soul in this age.

2 Energy is the only life, and is from the Body; and Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy.

3 Energy is Eternal Delight.

For this reason we consider William Blake one of the grandfathers of Reverse Therapy.

Chapter 1

About Bodymind

How Bodymind works

Every human being possesses two core intelligences: Headmind and Bodymind. Headmind – or intellectual intelligence - is the one that we value the most in Western culture but, in fact, Bodymind is far more subtle and powerful. Giving priority to Bodymind in our lives is not only the way to maintain health but also the path to wisdom and self-fulfillment.

Bodymind is the intelligence of the body, working through the Brain, the Nervous System, the Glands, the cells and the Immune system. Its primary function is to ensure the safety of the individual and to maximize health and happiness.

There are a variety of ways in which Bodymind works towards this and here just a few:

- Renewing cells and tissues
- Converting food into energy
- Refreshing the system with oxygen
- Repairing damage to bones, skin and the organs
- Harmonizing the different body functions
- Guarding against infection
- Using emotions to guide the person towards action
- Can use symptoms of certain kinds to let the person know she is in danger when emotions are not being resolved.

In each case we can see Bodymind working towards our survival. In the case of the last two functions, Bodymind is protecting us in a different way. It is using emotions and then (as a last resort) certain kinds of symptom to communicate to us that we are risk of harm from the environment. The wisdom of Bodymind consists in picking up information about situations going on out there and then sending emotional signals through to us to tell us what to do about them.

The centre of Bodymind resides in the Limbic system, a set of structures in the middle of the skull also known as the emotional brain. These structures include the Hippocampus (stores cellular memories about past emotional experiences), the Thalamus (processes information from the senses) the Amygdala (the Alarm centre), and the Hypothalamus (the body's master controller, which orchestrates the production of emotions and symptoms as well as regulating temperature, sleep, water retention and reproduction).

One important function carried out by the emotional brain is to provide a kind of 'emotional radar' in which information about the environment is matched to a cellular memory, triggering an emotional opinion about what is happening, which then leads to production of an emotion in order to encourage, warn, guide and protect the individual.

For example, someone shouts at you. Before you are conscious of the fact the Thalamus has already registered that there is red face moving towards you, the voice is loud, and your personal space is being invaded. Immediately the Amygdala presses the alarm button on the nervous system and you are instantly aroused for action. Meanwhile, the Hippocampus matches information from the Thalamus against past experiences of teachers/parents shouting at you and sends a signal to the Hypothalamus to co-ordinate a fear response (or an anger response, or both). Bodymind then waits for you to take protective action and prepare for self-assertion.

Through the Limbic system and the Hypothalamus, Bodymind can influence the glands, the immune system, the autonomic nervous system, the skin, muscles, gut, heart, circulation and breathing. In this way we can notice the intimate connection between emotions and physical state. And, by inference, between emotional health and physical health.

Bodymind and the emotions

Bodymind uses emotions in order to ensure both short-term and long-term survival. In the short term emotions like anger and fear are sent in order to guide, warn and protect. In the long-term Bodymind is also interested in promoting emotions like joy (linked to endorphin release) whenever it sees us leading a balanced life with daily

opportunities for personal fulfillment. It has long been established that, by and large, healthy people are happy people. And happy people do things for themselves and others that provide emotional reward.

Let us look in detail at the different emotions Bodymind uses to promote short-term survival:

Fear. Bodymind wants us to take steps to reduce vulnerability. This might involve getting help, finding out the true facts about the situation, reducing challenges down to smaller steps, and then taking small steps towards overcoming the challenge. It is important to realize that Bodymind *never* wants us to run away from the situation. This is a Headmind response based on worry and predictions of disaster.

Anger. Bodymind wants us to assert our rights against a person or a group who are acting in a disrespectful way towards us. This can involve speaking up constructively, organizing opposition, getting together with others who share our concerns. Bodymind does not wish us to blow up in rage (this does not resolve the situation).

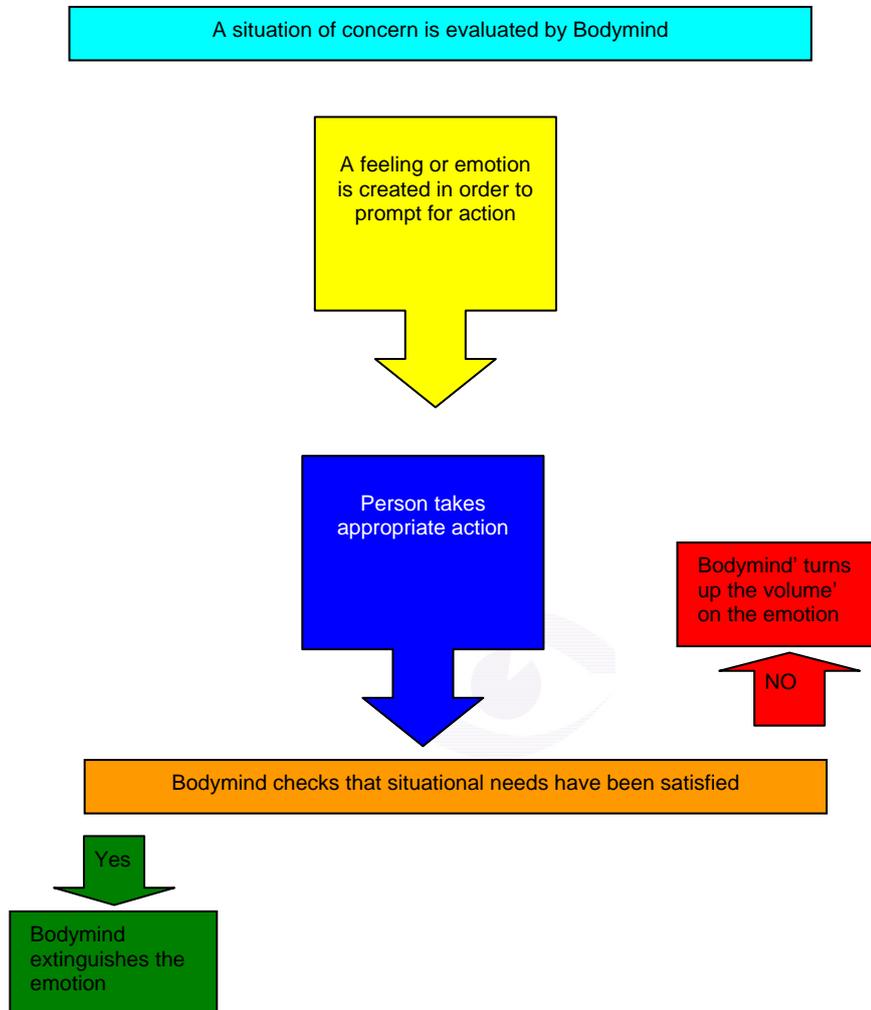
Sadness. Bodymind is alerting us to the fact that we have lost something, or someone, which was of deep importance to our equilibrium. Bodymind is prompting us to fill the gap created by drawing closer to other people and getting comfort from them, before moving on to find a new equilibrium. Bodymind does not want us to go through a 'grief' process in which we get stuck in the past. This is shown by the fact that few people want their loved ones to suffer after they have passed over. Rather, Bodymind wishes to honour, through our actions, what the dead person meant to us.

Disgust. Bodymind wishes us to distance ourselves from a threat – or better still, eliminate it altogether. Notice that this is the only emotional state which involves removing ourselves from danger.

And here are two closely linked emotions which have to do with long-term survival:

Excitement. Bodymind is confirming to us that the activity we are moving towards is of great value to us and wants to encourage us to do so with urgency.

Joy. Bodymind is confirming that we are doing things (or engaging in relationships) that are absolutely right for us. Bodymind is also urging us to share our pleasure and satisfaction with other people, so as to deepen our relationship with them. Sharing reinforces the emotion of joy.



All emotions have a natural action cycle starting from the moment when Bodymind first notices that we are in trouble to completion of the actions it wants us to take in order to restore equilibrium. This is illustrated in the diagram above.

How does Bodymind monitor situations and create the associated emotion? There are several mechanisms for this:

- Processes sensory information (much of it outside conscious awareness)
- Stores information about emotional experiences from the past using cellular memories
- Super-fast activation of the glands and other message-stations

- Emotions synthesised through the autonomic nervous system

Processing sensory information. This is mostly performed by the Thalamus area inside the Limbic system. Coded information about sights, sounds, touch, smells and even tastes are forwarded to the Hippocampus, the Hypothalamus and also to the thinking centres for further evaluation by Headmind. Usually, this process is so fast that we are unaware of it until we receive an emotional signal.

Cellular memories. Inside the Limbic system (emotional brain) is the Hippocampus. It stores information about all past significant emotional experiences. As situations arise the Hippocampus checks the incoming sensory information and triggers an emotional release linked to that particular experience.

Activation of message stations. Bodymind largely uses the Hypothalamus to trigger emotions (and some symptoms too). The Hypothalamus is the Master Controller of Bodymind and can influence every organ, every gland and every cell in the body. It creates emotions in three main ways:

- Through the glands
- Through the vagus nerve (which links directly to the Nervous system)
- Through neuro-peptides (small protein chains) which activate the cells in a variety of ways.

Every cell in the body is in fact 'primed' to either create the emotion, respond to the emotion, or pass information on about the situation to other cells. In this way Bodymind ensures a super-fast response to just about anything that can happen to us.

However, our primary experience of emotions comes through the Autonomic Nervous system. This is really a network of nerve fibres that run from the brain down to the solar plexus, and out to the gut, muscles and lungs. We feel an emotion when changes are created in one or more of these areas. Thus someone may know she is sad when she sighs, the muscles in the back relax, and there is tightness in the stomach. But we each feel specific emotions in different ways according to the patterns created by our personal Bodymind.

Bodymind communicates to us every day of our lives. It continually acts like our guardian angel, alerting us to when we have a problem, sending an emotional signal and encouraging us to act in a way that preserves our own interests, and the interests of those close to us.

Let us take some more examples from everyday life, this time focusing specifically on emotions and symptoms. Bear in mind when looking at each example that Bodymind is creating changes in the glands, nervous system and cells to communicate to us in every case.

Emotions

- Anger (frustration). A friend calls and accuses you (wrongly) of criticizing him behind his back. You try to explain but he repeatedly interrupts you, his voice getting louder and louder. You experience an opening of the lungs, a rising feeling of force coming up through the chest and tension in the jaw. Your Body is encouraging you not to put up with any more abuse and tell your friend that he must either speak to you respectfully or you will put the phone down and speak him when he has calmed down.
- Joy. You finally receive that long-awaited (and deserved) promotion. Your muscles relax, you feel lighter, and a warm feeling settles in your stomach. Your body is reinforcing your achievements and encouraging you to share them with people who love you.
- Fear. Out of the blue the Inland Revenue sends you a tax bill for several thousand pounds. You don't have the money to pay it. You get dizzy, your hands shake and you feel nauseous. Your body is confirming that you are unsafe, and signaling that you urgently need to check the facts (is the bill wrong?) talk to people who can help, get financial help and advice and take steps to deal with the danger.
- Sadness. Your daughter, with whom you are very close, tells you that she is leaving home and going on a trip around the world with her friends in her gap year. Your breathing gets faster, your diaphragm heaves, and tears start to flow.

Your Body is alerting you to your loss and to your need for comfort from your daughter. It may also be encouraging you to fill the gap that has been created in your life by drawing closer to others while she is away. And – of course – to stay in touch with her while she is on her journey.

- Surprise. You are walking down the street and someone taps you on the back. You experience a mild shock along your spine, you jump slightly and your mouth opens. Your body is getting you to slow down, be careful, check out the situation and establish who it is that is communicating with you.
- Boredom. You have spent all day by yourself working on the computer, watching day-time television, or just pottering about. You feel restless, 'flat' and yawn a lot. Your body is alerting you to the fact that you are low on stimulation and need to get out of the house and be with other people (or, at least, something very different!). Boredom is also a sign that your Body needs an opportunity to create more endorphins (the body's feel-good chemicals, which it produces after enjoyable activities and which it needs to keep the system in good repair).
- Disgust. You learn that someone you trusted has lied to you and stolen money from your bank account. Your nose wrinkles, your hands feel sweaty and you also feel sick. Your body is urging you to distance yourself from this person and take steps to protect yourself.

Notice that emotions always deal with situations that occur either in the present moment, or which are just about to happen. At that point Bodymind is looking either for the person to express emotions (and their associated needs) in words, or to take action of some kind.

You, the reader, may be thinking that emotions can be about the past but that is based on a misunderstanding. If you recall something that happened in the past and experience the emotions linked to that event, your body is really using its store of cellular memories to remind you of your emotional needs so that you can be better prepared to satisfy them in *the present*. For example, if you remember a car crash and the fear you underwent at the time, Bodymind is actually using the emotional cue to remind you of the need to protect yourself the next time you drive your car.

When Bodymind notices that we are not acting on emotions linked to threat, in *the present moment*, or not doing enough to create emotions linked to excitement and joy, it may need to create an alarm reaction in order to warn us to pay more attention to our emotional needs.

Once Bodymind has created an emotion that emotion does not go away until we do something about it. The chemistry of the emotions continues to affect the glands, cells and nervous system until action is taken to conclude them. If action is not taken, a build up of energy takes place and, if a threshold is reached, Bodymind, starts to put the whole organism on red alert, also creating symptoms to emphasize the need for urgent action on the emotions.

Let us look at some examples.

Symptoms

- You have been spending way too much time looking after other people: listening to their woes, solving their problems, and going out of your way to do things they want you to do. Your body initially sent you a fear signal to let you know that you were in danger of being overwhelmed with responsibilities. But your Headmind ignored that because acting on the emotion would be 'selfish'. Now your body creates a symptom of fatigue to let you know that you urgently need to take more time out for yourself.
- You have for too long put up with selfish, inconsiderate, cruel behavior from your partner. Your body originally sent you emotions of frustration to tell you that it was time to be honest with her and lay down some new rules. Your Headmind rationalized this away by saying that she was just going 'through a bad patch' and, anyway, if you said anything it would mean the end of the relationship (instead of the start of a new beginning!). Eventually, your body presses the alarm button and you feel anxious: shaky, panicky and breathless. Your body is pushing you to take that first step now.
- It's been a long day. You got up early to drive your son to school, got caught in a traffic jam on the way into work and spent the rest of the day trying to catch

up with a mounting work-load. At the last moment your boss also asked you to stay behind for a meeting with an irate customer. You finally get home feeling agitated with a splitting headache. Your Headmind tells you to ignore it because it's time to do the cooking. But when you open the larder you realize your partner has eaten the last of the pasta you made the day before. Now you erupt in rage as those pent-up frustrations come spilling out.

As a rule, when we ignore our emotions, Bodymind progresses from vague feelings of unease, to more clearly defined, and longer-lasting, emotions, to mild symptoms of illness and then on to chronic symptoms. Thus the symptoms get 'louder and louder'. This problem is actually created by wrong work of Headmind.



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Chapter 2

About Headmind

What Headmind is

The first thing to realize about Headmind is that it does not belong to us. We think of our thoughts and assumptions, and even our imagination, as personal – as something we 'do'. In fact all we ever do is regurgitate the beliefs, assumptions, images and rules we inherited from other people. This Headmind is the result of conditioning – the training we received from our parents, teachers and from society.

Like Bodymind, the main purpose of Headmind is survival. But it seeks to protect us in a different way from Bodymind. Where Bodymind uses emotions and, sometimes, symptoms, to urge us towards actions that preserve balance, safety, closeness to others, and satisfying activities, Headmind uses thoughts and rules.

Again these thoughts and rules are not our own but were acquired from someone else. This may seem a strange assertion to make – surely our thoughts are our own? But a little reflection will show that this is not true.

Firstly, thoughts depend on language and words – we cannot have a thought unless it is phrased in words – or names - used originally by other people (although we can use rules to create new thoughts which are a combination of other thoughts).

Secondly, thoughts are based on assumptions. Beliefs about who we are, what we (and others) should be doing, what is right, what is wrong, what good and what bad. There are also assumptions about work, families, friends and the way things ought to work. None of these assumptions are our own, but ideas that we learned as we went along.

Thirdly, thoughts are based on expectations. Expectations relating to the kind of person we should be. Demands that we conform to a certain right way of living. Predictions about what will happen to us if we don't do things the 'right' way.

Fourthly, thoughts are based on images and interpretations. Images of things that

have happened (memories), things that are happening now (perceptions) and things that might happen (imagination). But these images, in turn, would not make sense without the words and rules we use to make sense of them. In other words, no matter what the image, we still have to interpret what it means. And that means falling back on the ideas about things we took over from others.

To be sure, Headmind is very useful. It is the tool through which we take decisions, make plans and put things into words. It can also enable us to see beyond our immediate experience to a better way of life. When Headmind is doing its job properly it:

- Pays attention to Bodymind
- Puts emotions into words
- Helps us notice what is actually going on
- Sets limits to what we can and can't do
- Distinguishes between fact and fiction
- Makes decisions and plans for action
- Finds the right way of giving advice
- Says 'no' to unrealistic demands
- Looks for new solutions to old problems
- 'Goes with the flow' and adapts as situations and people change
- Sees the humour in life
- Throws out unhelpful assumptions
- Changes the rules
- Looks for new opportunities to build a happier life

In this way Headmind keeps us on track towards doing what is best for other and also for ourselves. It is the vital link between Bodymind emotions and taking action on the best way of satisfying them.

Turning to the brain we find that Headmind, like Bodymind, is located in a number of different brain centres. Here are two of the most important:

The cerebral cortex. This is the 'crust' that covers the surface of the brain. This is the powerhouse of Bodymind, as is shown by the fact that the cerebral cortex is largest in human beings. The cerebral cortex is the place where working memory is located (so that you remember what you were doing a moment before), where perception is

created (so that you are conscious of what is happening to you), and where you can exercise control over your hands, fingers, arms and legs. The prefrontal part of the cortex (just above your eyes) is where the thinking gets done: making up the rules, reflecting, analysing, deciding and planning.

The temporal lobes are on either side of the head, just above the ears. They do the work of recognising sounds and speech, assessing information from the eyes, storing facts (not emotions) about experiences, and using language.

The factor that all these brain centres have in common is that they process and interpret information. And this is Headmind's job. It is there to decide, on the basis of the available information, on the best course of action which most furthers your interests. The degree to which it does this well or badly, depends, in turn, on how *well connected it is to Bodymind*. If it has become the place where we live, (like Isaac Newton) instead of the place we go to when we need to solve an emotionally important problem, then Headmind becomes overpowering. We end up living a life of disconnected fantasy and worry (disaster movies), always living in the past or wondering about the future. Never attending to the needs of the moment or living by our own emotional truth. Forever disconnected from the glory of the moment, and the universe around us.

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How Headmind can make us ill - and keep us that way

The mechanism through which Headmind *makes* us ill is by blocking emotional expression. The mechanism through which it *keeps* us ill is through worry. Let us examine these mechanisms in more detail.

Headmind – when it becomes overpowering – becomes an end in itself. We live in a universe of thought, worry, analysis and fantasy. Terrified of emotional power, Headmind disconnects from it. It blocks emotional expression because it thinks that expressing emotions is 'bad', 'selfish', 'weak', or 'childish'. In fact Headmind can become so effective at blocking emotions that, over time, some people can become entirely disconnected from them, ceasing to notice when the Body is producing them.

Headmind seeks to dominate Bodymind because it fears that we may be rejected as

misfits if we follow our own emotional truth. That is to say: rejected by our partners, our employers, our friends, our children, our parents – even by people we have only just met. In fact emotions don't work like that. They are there to improve our relationships with others – to make them more honest, more open, more reliable, more trustworthy and more loving. But Headmind remembers only bad experiences from the past in which older people misused emotion and flew into a rage, sulked, got depressed, became anxious, hysterical, or self-pitying. Having decided that acting on emotions equates to one of these states, Headmind blocks expression by interrupting, depressing or explaining away emotions.

More insidiously, Headmind can distort emotional expression by:

- Assuming that emotions are unreal and thoughts are the only true reality
- Applying rigid rules which deny permission for emotions
- Thinking we must be 'selfish' if we focus on our own needs
- Blaming others for our 'bad' emotions ('if it wasn't for you...')
- Abusing food, drugs and alcohol instead of attending to our emotional needs
- Becoming driven, or obsessional about single issues instead of balancing them with other activities
- Sitting on our emotions for so long that we become anxious and depressed, at which point Headmind thinks 'see – I told you emotions were bad'
- Remaining victims instead of taking responsibility and speaking up for ourselves
- Getting lost in the past ('if only.....') and becoming depressed
- Worrying about the future ('I won't be able to cope...') and getting anxious

Headmind is driven by demand – the demand to be better, richer, more caring, wiser, happier, more lovable, funnier, or more successful. It is impatient, perfectionistic and harsh. It works through an inner voice which is never satisfied – always demanding more than we can give. It wants always to be in the right, even when it is better for us to admit that we are wrong and learn from our mistakes. It abhors anything that is not 'black or white', 'good or bad', 'right or wrong' and ignores what cannot be predicted or controlled. It especially distrusts emotions because it considers them 'irrational' even though emotions have a powerful logic of their own – a logic that is far deeper than conscious reason.

Headmind blocks action on the emotions in three major ways: interrupting, de-

pressing and explaining them away. Let's look at examples of all three of these processes in action:

- Interrupting. We get into conversation with someone who seems plausible and charming but inwardly we experience a feeling of unease. This is our Bodymind telling us, using its finely attuned store of emotional memories that the person is not to be trusted. But Headmind interrupts this feeling and directs us to be polite, sociable and friendly. The result is we 'blank out' the emotions we actually have and are no longer aware of them.
- De-pressing. We are stuck in a dead-end job or a relationship that is going nowhere. We feel sad and alone. This is Bodymind warning us that we need to take action to re-ignite our relationship with the employer or the partnership, or move on. But Headmind denies this emotion because it fears taking a risk. So we 'de-press' our scary emotions and lose the capacity to feel and, with it, our passion for life. Instead of relating to the emotion of sadness we have suppressed it, although it still remains in the Bodymind system, waiting to be expressed and understood.
- Explaining away. A child is rude, abusive or inconsiderate. Inwardly we feel angry or frustrated. But Headmind thinks we are not being a 'good parent' if we express that emotion and triggers off a process in which we reason: 'she's having a hard time at school' or 'he's going through that adolescent phase' or even 'they're good children really'.

The main reason Headmind does this is because it tries to enforce the rules of Society. From the moment we are born the adults around us (whose own Headmind rules were installed in them) start teaching us how to be good boys and girls. Then later on, the children we play with teach us the rules of the pecking order. And after that we are disciplined to be obedient, hard-working, attentive school-children. And after *that* what still awaits us are what we are taught by the Justice system, Employers, Marital partners, and – eventually – even our own children take part in molding us to become good parents.

None of this is wrong, of course. Without social rules and some kind of self-discipline our lives would be very messy indeed. For one thing other people could become very

unpredictable! In some ways this would not be a bad thing but in other ways it could get a little inconvenient. Relationships and jobs, decisions and agreements, timetables and deadlines might become more chaotic than we could handle (although that, too, is a Headmind judgment...).

But left to its own devices Headmind can turn life into a boring, deadening routine in which nothing new or challenging ever happened. This is one reason why young children, who are much more attuned to Bodymind that we are, become bored easily – their natural curiosity resists sameness.

If we listen too much to Headmind then we lose the balance between what is right for us personally, and what is right for others. At that point we become over-concerned with 'doing things right' instead of looking harder at whether we are doing the right thing. A good example of this relates to people become who become ill in very stressful jobs. Stuck in the tunnel-vision of Headmind they become pre-occupied with security, making money, or pleasing their employers. Since they have little time left over for relationships or leisure their families suffer as much as they do. Life has become Work and its emotional point has been lost.

Later on we will detail how this wrong work of Headmind leads first to a state of 'disease' and then later on to illness.

Getting Headmind to work properly

The first step is to recognize the extent to which we are being overpowered by Headmind. To do this we need to cultivate a shift in awareness.

There are several ways to establish whether we are dominated by Headmind. Some of these include:

- A restless, agitated, driven state of being
- Continually worrying about things
- Troubled by 'disaster movies' about things that could go wrong
- Living in the past, constantly going over old memories
- Fantasizing about the future (instead of making things happen)

- Worrying about what other people think and 'mind-reading' them
- Addicted to reading
- Spending way too much time thinking about the reasons why things happen

Once we accept that we are spending too much time in our heads we can start to become aware of the subtle feeling that comes with that. The most common feelings are restlessness, boredom, emptiness or a sense of always having to be in a hurry. As we notice these feelings, which are created by Headmind's interference with emotion, we can do something different.

In Reverse Therapy we teach people how to stay out of Headmind and stay in the Body. These are simple techniques anyone can do. Here is one of them:

- Sit comfortably
- Be aware of the pressure of your bottom on the seat and the feel of the seat supporting your body
- Really sense what is happening to your feet. Be aware of the pressure of your feet on the floor, the feel of the feet inside your shoes, the temperature of your feet, the shape your feet make on the floor.
- Be aware of the way the muscles in your calves adjust to keep your feet balance on the floor.
- Focus ALL your attention on the sensations in your feet, to the exclusion of thought.
- Now turn your attention back to the pressure of your bottom on the seat and the feel of the chair supporting you
- At this point you may notice that you are a lot more grounded in your body, aware of being part of this living, breathing organism at rest in the present moment.

Practicing this three times a day for a few minutes has a few benefits. It makes it easier to stay out of the Head, helps us become grounded in Bodymind, making us more sensitive to our feelings, emotions and moods - and more willing to be guided by them.

The next step is to *keep busy*. Headmind negativity thrives on idleness. The more time we have on our hands the more opportunities Headmind has for doing wrong

work. Another way to put this is that problems expand according to the amount of attention paid to them. That is why we have a saying in Reverse Therapy that goes: *'if you have time to worry you are not busy enough.'*

We ask clients to draw up an activity list containing the following items:

- Activities they enjoy but which need planning (example: a trip to the swimming pool)
- Activities they can do instantly (example: call a friend)
- Endorphin-raisers (example: dancing to some music)
- Activities that raise confidence (example: learning to play an instrument)
- Longer-term activities that focus on fulfillment (example: taking a college course)

Each and every day the client selects a mix of activities that provide them with variety, stimulation and fun. We are careful to ensure that the activities selected are balance between doing things with others and doing things by oneself, activities outside the home as well as some indoors. Since all of us have responsibilities there will be chores we have to do. We get the client to break up chores with instant activities from time to time in order to maintain variety.

If Headmind worries and 'disaster movies' are unusually persistent we remind the client about all the many times Headmind has in fact got its predictions wrong. There was a US survey many years ago which investigated worry. In the survey people were asked to describe the things they were worried about and write them down (this is important because, often, people forget what they are worried about). A few weeks later the respondents were followed up and asked how far their worries had come true. Over 80% of them reported that the things they were worried about had not, in fact, happened. A further 12% reported that some of their worries had happened but not nearly to the extent they had feared. This left only 8% of worries which were based on reality. And, as I often point out, if we focused our energies on working on that 8% instead of wasting time on the others, we will easily overcome those challenges.

Here are some common scenarios in which Headmind usually manages to get things wrong.

Riding a bike. We may have found learning to ride a bicycle painful as well as difficult. Headmind notices our friends effortlessly gliding along while we struggle to stay in the saddle. What is more, every time we try to ride a few wobbly yards we fall off and get yet another bruise. Headmind tells we will never learn and we ought to just give up. I may even have run a few disaster-movies by us to show what would be the 'inevitable' result of getting back on again. But Headmind (for nearly all of us) got that totally wrong. Because we followed our innate need to overcome challenges and do something that would bring us joy, as well as time with our friends, we persevered. A few weeks later we were riding confidently.

Exams. Another example many people can relate to is the way Headmind usually gets it wrong about exams. When we were teenagers and prepared for them Headmind would usually keep up a constant whine about how we were going to fail, wouldn't be able to cope with the exam, would freeze, forget, pass out. How, even if we did pass, our grades would be crap. This would usually be followed by another disaster movie detailing the years of failure and poverty that lay ahead of us after we had received the exam results. Yet, with some exceptions, we passed most of our exams. Maybe our grades were not as good as they could have been, but, in most cases, were better than Headmind expected.

Love's ending. Finally, there is the concerto Headmind plays whenever a relationship ends. We are told that we will never get over it, that the loved one can never be replaced, that we are doomed to years of loneliness, that we will never find anyone else, etc, etc, etc. Yet in most cases we do get over it, move on and find someone new. And, frequently, the new relationship is better than the old one!

Headmind on its own does not make us intelligent. When we see that we have to be emotionally smart before we can be intelligent, that we have to be passionate about what we do as well as emotionally honest. Only then we can get Headmind working properly. And only then can we become who we truly are.

The more examples we are able to come up with the more we see through Headmind and the tricks it plays on us. The more we do that the less likely we are to listen to its negativity. Then we can get on with training Headmind to work for us rather than

against us. Like fire, Headmind is a good servant but a bad master.



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Chapter Three

About dis-ease

What is 'dis-ease'?

When Headmind becomes rigid, controlling and demanding, it separates from Bodymind and the two no longer work together in harmony. This state we refer to as 'dis-ease', a state of acute discomfort, inner tension, internal conflict and blocked emotion, which can feel like one is sitting on top of a pressure-cooker. It is this state of dis-ease which can, if left unattended, lead to illness.

In the state of 'dis-ease', we are no longer at ease with ourselves. We no longer feel comfortable with our work, our home-life or our relationships with other people. Initially the state of dis-ease comes with uncomfortable feelings or mild distress as Bodymind gently draws our attention to the fact that we are out of balance. Deep down, we may know that something is wrong with our lives but may not be able to put our finger on the problem or, if we do have an idea what it is, we may not know how to put things right.

In the early stages of dis-ease the answer to the problem may be quite simple. It could involve a heart-to-heart talk with a partner, changing the schedule at work, or spending more time on things that are truly important to us. But if problems mount the state of dis-ease becomes more noticeable as Bodymind 'talks' to us more and more urgently. At this point we may become tense and anxious, worried and sleepless, more and more aware that we are becoming over-burdened. We may feel that we never have enough time to do all the things we think we have to do. At this point we may be out of touch with our deepest needs and may even lose the ability to read our own emotions. As the state of dis-ease grows, Headmind becomes increasingly split from Bodymind and stops doing its proper job of putting Bodymind orders into action – identifying solutions, making decisions and taking steps to put things right.

In healthy conditions Bodymind, working through the Hypothalamus sustains balance and ensures that we can swiftly adapt to changing circumstances. For example, energy is provided in the morning so that we can get going on the day's tasks but as

night draws on, energy production dwindles as the Hypothalamus prepares us for rest and sleep. In the same way Bodymind can turn up the activity of the immune system if we are under physical threat, in order to protect us against wounds. Immunity is turned down again as the threat passes because Bodymind has other uses for the immune system as well as protection against wounds.

The Hypothalamus creates a variety of set-points to ensure that the organism is working at best possible capacity. There are set-points for the immune system, hunger, thirst, pain, blood pressure, heart rate, digestion, temperature, breathing function, energy regulation and sleep. In the state of 'dis-ease' (see below) the onset of the Alarm stage creates extra work for the Hypothalamus, it loses the ability to keep the organism working smoothly and the set-points are thrown into chaos. Symptoms of various kinds are the result.

If emotions are blocked and the system remains dangerously overloaded, Bodymind then creates urgent signals from the Emotional Brain to do something about it. The Hypothalamus then sets in motion the General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) discovered originally by Hans Selye in his work on the stress response in the 1930s. In general this progresses through three stages:

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The Alarm stage which Bodymind puts the organism on 'red alert'; while at the same time creating low-level symptoms to alert the individual to the fact that they are emotionally over-loaded.

The Crisis stage, in which Bodymind intensifies the alarm reaction and turns up the volume on the symptoms. The Hypothalamus sees to it that the body works harder and harder in order to deal with the threat and send warning signals to the individual. More and more resources are being used up and the Hypothalamus is now struggling to keep up its balancing act and maintain the set-points. By now, changes in the body-clock, over-work of the Sympathetic Nervous System, and destabilisation of the Immune system create non-specific symptoms such as fatigue, gut problems, headaches and recurrent infections. If the individual still does not act and instead tries to fight the symptoms the Stalemate stage takes over.

The Stalemate stage, in which the Crisis stage has gone on so long that the Adrenal glands have become exhausted, the Immune system is compromised and symptoms

have become chronic. The Hypothalamus becomes more and more overactive in an increasingly desperate attempt to keep the body going in impossible conditions. The delicate feedback mechanisms between the Hypothalamus and the body functions break down as the organism begins to falter. Unfortunately, if this problem continues for too long, some chronic symptoms may become irreversible.

Overwork of the Hypothalamus produces non-specific illnesses such as Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, Fibromyalgia and Irritable Bowel syndrome. In such cases *new* symptoms are being created, partly as a result of the GAS reaction, partly because Bodymind is using symptoms to get our urgent attention to something.

In other cases, overwork of the Hypothalamus will *exaggerate* the symptoms of some other condition such as Migraine, Colitis, Arthritis, Neuralgia or Eczema. Reverse Therapy may not be able to remove such symptoms entirely but it can remove additional symptoms created by the crisis reaction.

How Headmind keeps people ill



The main point is that Headmind keeps people ill by running 'disaster-movies' based on its perception that the symptoms are baffling, dangerous, upsetting and here to stay.

When the reason for the symptoms (the GAS reaction, Bodymind's need to use them as warning signals) is not understood, Headmind can develop an 'illness mind-set' which keeps the person in the symptomatic state.

One reason for this is the wrong advice people are often given about their condition by medical consultants. For example, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome sufferers may be told to 'lie down and rest' as often as possible. Migraine sufferers may be advised they should just try and 'live with it'. Those with Irritable Bowel Syndrome may be informed that the real problem is 'stress' (without being told what it is or what to do about it). This creates confusion, worry and distress. And, that, in turn leaves to Headmind concluding that the symptoms are pathological.

At this point, Headmind performs a sort of conjuring trick. Having successfully denied

the emotional basis of the problem, it then argues that the 'illness' is a mysterious infliction created by the accursed body which must now be carefully handled. Trying to 'manage' the symptoms often involves:

- Going 'sick'
- Giving up social activities
- Searching for medical cures
- Resting up at home
- Worrying about symptoms
- Cutting down on exercise
- Giving up leisure activities

With some illnesses (such as viral infections, broken bones, certain types of cancer, etc) these strategies can make sense and can aid recovery. But in conditions which have been created by 'dis-ease' they are counter-productive. Bodymind is looking for challenges to be overcome – which is not going to happen if the person stays off work and stays indoors. Remember that Bodymind will continue to 'turn up the volume' on symptoms as it notices that the underlying emotional needs have been left unresolved. By now it is also noticing that prolonged inactivity has created very few opportunities for satisfaction and it will be unable to produce endorphins. In the final chapter of this book I describe the role of endorphins both maintaining health and recovering from illness. Let us merely note, for now, that a sedentary, withdrawn lifestyle will be low on emotions of excitement and joy, and high on emotions of frustration and boredom. And Bodymind may use symptoms to indicate that it is time we did more activities to promote the former and reduce the latter.

Because Headmind is in a state of chronic worry and despair it blocks activities of this kind, on the assumption that any kind of effort will worsen to symptoms or at any rate will make no difference to the symptoms. In this way it creates a curious kind of 'illness loop'.

What happens is this. As Headmind tries to make sense of what is going on it notices that the person's situation is becoming increasingly chaotic. Because it is still in denial about Bodymind's reasons for creating them it does not understand the symptoms, which, makes them increasingly disastrous so far as Headmind is concerned. The person may be exhausted or in pain; digestion and sleep may be awry, mobility

severely impaired. What is worse, the symptoms appear to come and go mysteriously without warning. This makes them unpredictable and disruptive. So Headmind clamps down on activities in the hope that reducing those will also make the symptoms more bearable. In fact all that happens is that Bodymind increases the symptoms because their point has been missed.

At this point Headmind is still more confused. Since it is often acting on the advice of other peoples' Headminds (medical consultants, for example) to 'rest', it restricts activities still further. By now the person may have given up work or gone on sick leave, withdraw from relationships, and cut down on enjoyable leisure. Yet still the symptoms remain!

By now Headmind has started to collect 'disaster-movies' about the illness. There might be a movie which recalls the time when symptoms got worse when returning to work (probably because Bodymind was flagging up the need to change the way the person handled unfair demands), or when the person went out with his partner (!), or when the person 'tried' to do something they enjoyed.

This last point is worth dwelling on because it is quite subtle and gives rise to a lot of confusion. Say we have Fibromyalgia symptoms and decide (because nothing else seems to work) to go swimming. While we are at the pool we notice that we do feel a little better so we then stay in the pool for 2 hours. After a while Bodymind gets bored with this and turns the symptoms up again to signal that it is time to be getting on with something else. Headmind then concludes: 'I knew it! Swimming is definitely a no-no! We then get out of the pool and go shopping, Again the symptoms reduce and we may even notice that they are not there at all while we are out browsing through the shops. But when return home the symptoms come on again probably because Bodymind is not looking forward to situations waiting for us at home and which we haven't done anything about yet. Headmind then creates another disaster-movie which discourages us from swimming *or* shopping. And so the symptoms escalate still more. By this point Headmind is decided that there is little we can do but give up altogether.

It is an important part of the Reverse Therapy process to get the person to realise how Headmind is keeping them ill and to teach them how to reverse that.

Chapter Four

About Reverse Therapy

Reverse Therapy principles

The basic principles are these:

- Reverse therapy reverses attitudes
- Reverse Therapists are facilitators
- Dis-ease is the precondition for non-specific illness
- 'Hard on Headmind, soft on Bodymind'
- Recovery depends on re-connecting to Bodymind
- Symptoms call for action and expression
- Reverse Therapists are translators
- Reverse Therapists are also coaches

Reverse Therapy reverses attitudes. We reverse the 'common-sense' view that Headmind, or intellectual reasoning, is superior to Bodymind. Instead we see Bodymind as more intelligent, more subtle, and more powerful and a far better guide to who we are than Headmind could ever be. We reverse attitudes to the symptom. Instead of seeing symptoms as necessarily 'bad' we see them as useful signals that something is fundamentally wrong with the client's way of being. We also do not agree that getting rid of symptoms (at least no straight away) is a good thing. That is rather like a driver seeing a warning light come on in the car and deciding to rip out the light instead of fixing the problem! Instead we try to understand Bodymind's need to produce symptoms in the first place. We also reverse Headmind attitudes to non-specific illness. As a rule it tries to manage symptoms by giving up activity, where we see Bodymind calling for activities of a different kind from the ones that got people unwell.

Reverse Therapists are facilitators. Reverse Therapy is an educational process and not a 'therapy' in the traditional sense. In it we teach clients how to get well using the Reverse Therapy process. We then support them in their work on self-healing. Reverse Therapy is not a 'cure' but a method through which self-healing can be achieved. Although the Reverse Therapy method is simple to apply it can be hard work.

Dis-ease is the precondition for non-specific illness. Many clients tell us that understanding the cause of the symptoms was the first step in their recovery because knowing the cause also tells you what the solution is. The cause lies in the split between Headmind and Bodymind, leading first to symptoms and then, as Headmind, remains in denial, escalating them. The first step to overcoming dis-ease is to get Headmind to recognize and act on what Bodymind is trying to indicate.

'Hard on Headmind, soft on Bodymind'. We get people to see that it was wrong work of Headmind that first got them ill and now keeps them ill. That most of the contents of Headmind - particularly its demand for us to be something we are not – is the result of conditioning. That this conditioning prevents them from connecting to and working with Bodymind. That Headmind only contributes to a very small part of what it means to be intelligent. By contrast we are passionate about Bodymind – its protective function, its emotional subtlety, its powerful intelligence, and its call for personal authenticity. We repeatedly take the side of Bodymind; helping the client to see that symptoms are the only means it has left towards guiding, warning and protecting the self.

Recovery depends on re-connecting to Bodymind. Thinking about Bodymind is not enough. It is essential to sense and feel the way Bodymind communicates to us through emotions, feelings, moods and symptoms. We teach the client a variety of ways to stay connected to personal Bodymind so that they can take ownership for it themselves. When they do that they are better positioned to intuit what Bodymind wants them to do whenever it feels the need to switch on the symptoms. This is one important reason why Reverse Therapy is a self-healing process.

Symptoms call for action and expression. What this means is that symptoms carry specific messages, encouraging the person to act on emotional needs, resolve difficulties, and rebuild a life based on joy, excitement, love and personal fulfillment. This requires practicing the (sometimes difficult) art of putting feelings and needs into words, clearly, in a way that other people can find acceptable. Symptom-message also call for actions of various kinds to be taken in order to achieve satisfaction.

Reverse Therapists are translators. One of the core skills in which all Reverse Therapists are trained is the ability to sense for themselves what is going on, at an emotional level, within the client's Bodymind. Intuiting what it is Bodymind is trying to

'say' through the symptoms. And then translating those intuitions into a symptom-message that the client can clearly understand.

Reverse Therapists are also coaches. Because we recognize that Bodymind is calling for actions of various kinds we use coaching skills to help the client identify, and make plans for, the best way of putting them into practice. We do this in a supportive way, usually helping the client to take small steps at first, gradually building up confidence before deciding on the kind of things they want to be doing with their lives as they move towards recovery.

What we teach clients

Reverse Therapy is an educational process. To that end there are a number of key points we teach people to understand so that they can get on the path of recovery. Here are some (although not all) of the things we teach.

- The difference between Bodymind and Headmind
- What causes the symptoms
- How Headmind keeps people ill
- That symptoms convey vital messages
- Bodymind is protective and encouraging
- The need for emotional expression and action
- How endorphins promote recovery

We speak quite a lot about the Emotional Brain, the Hypothalamus and the 'Crisis reaction'. We describe how the Hypothalamus overworks the Adrenal glands, which then trigger changes in the immune system, the nervous system, and then, so on, to the muscles, gut, skin, nerves, circulation. These changes create the experience of symptoms. By teaching clients the facts about what is happening inside their bodies we dispel their fear of symptoms and raise confidence in their ability to get well again.

We show that symptoms are not necessarily evidence of 'illness'. In the initial stages, at least, they are signs that the individual is undergoing environmental pressures resulting in an imbalance between their emotional needs and the demands placed on them. Symptoms result from Bodymind activities that transfer information back and

forwards between the Hypothalamus and the glands, the Nervous system, the Immune system, the muscles, skin and gut. These are really changes in particular types of energy within the organism which we experience negatively only as long as we fail to understand that Bodymind is using this kind of communication as a last resort.

Understanding Bodymind. Bodymind is primarily concerned with protection and is also there to encourage the person to abide by their own emotional truth, become authentic, and find ways to fulfill their best potential. Bodymind communicates not through ideas, thoughts and words but through emotions, feelings and moods. It creates emotions to encourage the person to:

- Reduce vulnerability
- Assert her rights
- Seek comfort
- Move closer to people
- Care for others
- Do more of what satisfies
- Protect self and others
- Exchange love and affection
- Diminish threats
- Stay out of Headmind worries



Why symptoms are created. Bodymind uses first emotions, and then, as the Crisis stage gets under way, symptoms, to deliver its felt opinion about problems, prepare us for action, and indicate what those actions should be. Its primary purpose is self-protection and the restoration of balance. It seeks to guide us towards the best possible state of adaptation to the environment. Once these purposes have been achieved it very naturally turns down the activities of the Hypothalamus and symptoms can then clear up.

Self-healing comes about through concluding emotional needs. Since Bodymind only uses symptoms as a last resort to tell us that our emotional needs are not being met, it follows that concluding those same needs will enable Bodymind to switch off the symptoms. Emotional needs come in many forms but all are based on being truly honest with ourselves about times when we need help; times when we need to speak

up; times when we need to let go; times when we need to take time out for ourselves; times when we need to do more to restore variety and enjoyment to our daily routine.

Realigning Headmind with Bodymind is vital to health. Since 'dis-ease' comes about because Headmind is split from Bodymind, it follows that bringing the two back into harmony with each other is an important part of the recovery process. Headmind tries to block emotions with rules that say that expressing them is 'bad', 'selfish' or 'impossible'. When Headmind is aligned with Bodymind it instead looks for ways to express emotions in ways that are practical, honest and reasonable.

Connecting to Bodymind

To help our clients become more connected to Bodymind on a consistent, daily basis we:

- Identify examples of times when Bodymind was 'speaking' to them
- Help them to distinguish between times when Bodymind is at work and when Headmind is acting
- Teach them to 'stay in Bodymind'

Information on all these points was given in earlier chapters. However, here is another example of a sensate focusing technique we teach clients to use. If you like, you can do this for yourself, selecting a quiet place, on your own, to follow the instructions:

- Sit in a comfortable chair, in a room where you will not be disturbed
- Relax for a few moments and take a deep breath
- Turn your attention to the movement of your chest and shoulders as you breathe in and out
- Don't interfere with the breathing pattern – just notice it
- Be aware of how easily and powerfully your Body keeps you breathing
- Be aware of the air passing in and out of your nostrils
- Now become aware of the time it takes for your Body to breathe out compared

with the time it takes for your Body to breathe in

- Identify the slight space between the in-breath and the out-breath in which your Body pauses before moving in/out again
- Go 'into' that space between the breaths, right into the middle of your Body
- Hold your attention in that space for a minute or two

At this point you should notice a shift in awareness such that you feel you are more grounded, or 'centred' in the Body. Headmind will also be relatively clear of thoughts. Continue in this state for a couple of minutes.

This is an exercise that can be practiced as often as you like. It is particularly good to use it when symptoms increase. This will enable you to get a better feel for what Bodymind is trying to tell you about the situation you are in, free from the distractions and worries of Headmind.

As clients grow into a deeper awareness of Bodymind they begin to become more attuned to the 'message of the symptom' – uncovering which is another key focus of Reverse Therapy.



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Working with symptom messages

As we saw before, Bodymind is continually using symptoms in order to draw an attention to an imbalance in our lives and the need to remedy that through the honest expression of emotion and by taking new kinds of action.

In general, there are around 9 core messages that Bodymind uses through the emotions – particularly Fear, Anger and Sadness. The ones that apply to each individual will vary according to Headmind conditioning, current Life challenges and the relationships he or she has with other people. Additionally, different groups of messages will vary according to the experiences we have had, and the experiences we have still to learn about.

The core emotional messages we have so far identified include:

- *'Balance the time you spend looking after other peoples' needs with the time*

spent looking after your own'.

- *'Practice expressing ALL your emotions honestly'*
- *'Take small steps to restore your confidence in scary situations'*
- *'Regularly ask for help and support from other people'*
- *'Practice saying 'NO' to unfair demands'*
- *'Each day – add new activities that bring you balance, variety and enjoyment'*
- *'Overcome burdens from the past by focusing on the steps you can take today to move on to something better'*
- *'Find new ways to express frustration and anger constructively'*
- *'Nurture yourself by making time to plan and do things you enjoy'*

Notice that all these messages refer to things all of us can do every day, whether we are ill or not. Working with them on a daily basis is also the way to exercise preventative care – so that your Body may need never to send you symptoms! They are therefore the keys through which we maintain both emotional and physical health. As such we place great importance on helping our clients identify those which most apply to themselves, and then mentoring them through the steps needed apply them in everyday life.

One or more of these those key messages will apply to the individual client and it is our job to help them identify which ones they are. This we decide by taking a careful case-history and investigating moments in which symptoms originally appeared, as well as more recent ones in which symptoms intensified. We also have the client check out for themselves the emotional meaning of the symptoms by practicing sensate focusing as they recall symptomatic moments. Reverse Therapy tends to go much better when clients get this for themselves rather than being told.

This step is, perhaps, the most crucial and is linked to symptom enlightenment. If the

client can 'get' that worsening symptoms are there to encourage them to try something different they are, at that point, very close to the cure. To Headmind this can seem nonsensical – how can a fatigue symptom, for example, be encouraging me to do more rather than less? Or how can a headache – or pain in the joints – be telling me to step up my efforts to find something enjoyable to do? Or how would Immune system over-activity (swollen glands, sore throat, feverishness, etc) be a sign that I need to start talking about my emotional needs? And yet all this is actually the case. Recognizing this means dropping old Headmind stuff as well as attention to Bodymind.

Rebuilding a healthy life-style

There are two main paths to recovery so far as Reverse Therapy is concerned. One is to abide by, and practice, the actions called for by the symptom-message. The other is to work every day on activities that provide balance, variety and enjoyment.

Bodymind doesn't just want us to be in tune with, and ready to activate, our emotional needs. It also desires us to live as full, active and enjoyable lives as we possibly can. If one word could sum this state up then it would be 'wholeness'. In fact this is the original, Old English meaning of 'healthy' – to be whole, sound and well. Bodymind is not just concerned with our survival but also with our achieving the maximum of satisfaction.

This is still truer when we have lots of responsibilities. Child care, work, financial obligations, running a home, parental care, paying taxes, supporting friends, household chores, dealing with difficult people, maintaining a car (or using unreliable public transport) – these are just a few of the burdens most of us have to face. As a rule, Bodymind is fairly tough and resilient. It can keep us going long beyond a safe limit for short periods of time. But if we go on shouldering too many burdens for too long, without balancing them with activities that cultivate the emotions, then we are heading for a state of dis-ease.

A life filled only with burdens leads to a loss of wholeness. We gradually find ourselves worn down by the treadmill and, before long, Bodymind would start to send uncomfortable emotions (fear frustration, resentment and anger, or perhaps a vague feeling of unease that tells us that our lives are not working as they should).

Regaining wholeness means we have to put more effort into creating a balance between the things we do because we have to do them and things we do just for the hell of it. Often this can mean getting the balance right between what we do for others and the time we create for ourselves (this can also include doing things we love to do along with our friends, partners and families).

One of the side effects of illness is that people frequently withdraw from activities they used to enjoy. Instead they settle down to a wearying, boring and frustrating life in which they don't actually do very much. This is understandable given that many live in a Headmind state of confusion, despair and hopelessness. This has much to do with the fact that, until the advent of Reverse Therapy, many sufferers did not understand what was wrong with them.

Once our clients have understood the physiological basis of their condition and have lost their fear of the symptoms, and begun to take steps to act on their symptom-message, then they can go on to restore the necessary variety and enjoyment which is the other key to full emotional health. Often this step goes side by side with a gradual return to normal life.

At this stage we often draw up a list of activities which we call 'the Goals of Health' using the following questions:

- *'What activities did you used to enjoy that you don't do now?'*
- *'What activities do you still enjoy?'*
- *'What activities haven't you tried yet that you might enjoy?'*
- *What activities give you a natural high?*

Based on the answers to these questions, we help the client compile a list of things to do on a daily basis. In the case of the answers to the last question, this may involve enquiring about new courses and classes, or finding out more about how to get involved in new activities. It may also involve making plans for a holiday or a short trip, or a visit to a friend. Sometimes, in the case of physical activities that appear on

the list, the amount of time spent on them may need to be rationed. This is *not* because Bodymind is trying to stop people doing things through symptoms but because stamina is often poor after a long illness and the individual can tire easily. Stamina will, however, quickly build up once a daily regime of enjoyable activities is followed.

Because we recognize that rest may be the opposite of what Bodymind wants us to do when it creates symptoms, and, because also, resting during the day may disturb the sleep cycle, we encourage clients to engage in restful activities rather than just lying down. Interspersing energetic activities (in small doses, because stamina may be low) with quiet, soothing activities is the best way forward.

Here is an example of two lists compiled by a client who recovered from Chronic Fatigue Syndrome recently with the aid of Reverse Therapy. Notice that the first list is filled with activities, old and new, that might need some preparation while the second list is filled with activities she can do straight away.

Planned list

- Swimming
- Gardening
- Shopping with her daughter
- Visiting friends
- Making clothes
- Painting
- Going to the cinema
- Light reading
- Going out for dinner
- Pilates group
- Walking the dog
- Having a massage

Instant list

- Listening to music
- Dancing



- Singing
- Chocolate (small amounts!)
- Having a bath
- Calling a friend
- Self-massage
- Walking
- Pilates exercises
- Watching something funny

The Instant list is in fact filled with activities likely to raise endorphin levels and it is now time to discuss these in relation to recovery from illness and maintaining health. Bodymind produces at least 20 different kinds of endorphin, which are stored mainly in the Hypothalamus. They are neuro-peptides (small protein chains) which are released through the spinal cord and the circulation of the blood. Endorphins are the body's natural opiates and can be over twenty times stronger than pain-killing tablets bought from a pharmacist.



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Endorphins play a vital role in recovery and have a number of different functions essential to health:

- Promoting calm
- Creating a natural 'high'
- Improves mood
- Reducing pain
- Slowing down the ageing process
- Enhancing immune system function
- Reducing blood pressure
- Counteracts high adrenalin levels associated with anxiety
- Helps to reduce symptoms as Bodymind notices person is taking action on the need for more (not less) emotional satisfaction
- Demonstrates to Headmind that symptom reduction – and recovery - is achievable

Well known activities that tend to boost endorphin levels include eating chocolate (!!), sunbathing, massage, meditation, yoga, dancing, movement (e.g. Tai Chi), singing, listening to music, breathing exercises, and running, cycling and swimming.

One reason why play is so important is that taking time out just to have fun also raises endorphins. Smiling, laughing and being silly with friends are pleasurable for their own sake. So is time spent fooling around, playing games and charades, as many children know. Headmind often doesn't see the point of play, seeing it as aimless and 'silly'. But it is precisely because there is no point that Bodymind loves it. Without Headmind's urgency to be working or 'getting on' with things we have the space to come back to ourselves.

Some forms of complementary therapy are also linked to endorphin release and include acupuncture, massage (including shiatsu), chiropractic, hydrotherapy and colonic irrigation. Steam baths and saunas are also effective. Provided the client clearly understands that the reason for having these treatments is not to wish away the symptoms but to engage in activities that make them unnecessary, we encourage them.

It has also been shown that couples who are in a close, loving relationship are more likely to have elevated endorphin rates than people who are not. In fact, one important reason couples stay together and remain faithful is precisely because they give each other a regular 'fix' of endorphins. In Reverse Therapy we encourage clients to do as many things linked to endorphin release as they can manage each and every day, as well as spending time with people they love.

Finally, endorphins are energizers. Athletes who experience an endorphin rush while running report that they acquire a second wind and, where before they may have been exhausted or in pain, now they are able to produce another burst of speed. The same occurs with people in recovery. The more they do this kind of thing the more they find they can do. And so begins a virtuous cycle of increased activity, improved emotions, rising confidence, renewed activity and so on.

As recovery gathers pace symptoms die away and people regain their confidence. At this point they may be doing as much, if not more, activity as they were doing before they became symptomatic.

Preparing for your first session

If you are thinking of coming for Reverse Therapy there are a number of things you can do to prepare for your first session. The main work we do in a first session is:

- Explain the difference between Bodymind and Headmind
- Describe how Headmind creates and maintains a state of dis-ease
- How an overload of emotions (and unresolved problems linked to them) leads to a crisis reaction from Bodymind
- Explain how symptoms are created (or exaggerated) by the crisis reaction
- Show how Bodymind uses symptoms to draw attention to the need to express and act on emotions – including the need for more joy in life
- Investigate moments in which symptoms appeared or intensified in order to establish the 'symptom-message'
- Identify some things the client could be doing in order to act on the message

Reading this book will have helped you prepare for your first session. You can also read the testimonials, newspaper articles and pages on Reverse Therapy and Bodymind. Many clients report that they find the Testimonials page, in particular, inspirational.

REVERSE THERAPY

Using this book, reconsider your ideas about 'illness'. Learn to see that your symptoms, however distressing they may appear, have a valuable part to play in your life. They are produced by *your* Bodymind in order to teach you something important. Acknowledging this will make it easier for your Reverse Therapist to work with you on understanding your symptom-message.

It can also be useful to take the Bodymind Awareness Test, which is reproduced in Appendix 1 at the end of this book. That will enable you to spot any weak areas in your intelligent use of Bodymind that it might be useful for you to work on.

Next, consider the history of your symptoms and address the following questions:

- When was the very first appearance (or significant worsening) of the symptoms?
- What important challenges were you dealing with at that time?

- What emotions can you recall from that time? What do you feel your Bodymind would have liked you to do about them?
- What else might your Body have been trying to encourage you to do at that time?
- What emotions were you *not* having at that time that you would have expected to see? For example, if you were being swamped with unfair demands from other people and you were *not* angry it may well be that Headmind was blocking the anger and your Bodymind needed you to reconnect to it so that you could begin to express it in constructive ways
- How much time were you devoting to social activities, leisure and doing things you enjoyed? Might your Body have felt that you were spending too little time on these things, and too much time attending to chores?
- If you have ever had days when symptoms disappeared or reduced significantly, what was happening at that time? Be careful to note whether any of the following applied to you:
 - - Speaking up honestly to other people?
 - Taking more time out for you?
 - Doing things that improved confidence?
 - Asking for support from others
 - Doing more of what you enjoyed?
- Do you notice 'bad' days when symptoms worsen? Again, what situations is Bodymind trying to warn you about on those days?

(Note: if symptoms are pretty much on the same level day after day this is most likely due to the fact that Bodymind is trying to encourage you to move out of the old 'illness mind-set' and to start engaging in a more varied, active and enjoyable life-style, taking small steps each day towards doing so)

- Practice doing one, or both, of the sensate focusing activities described in this book. Or, if you already practice an awareness discipline, such as Tai Chi or Aikido, then increase the amount of time you spend following it. Try to get a feel for your Body's need to warn, guide and protect you through the symptoms. Become aware of your emotions and needs at difficult times, as symptoms increased. What is your felt sense of what your Body wanted you to do at such times?

- Now consider what wellness means to you. If it means simply going back to the routine that existed before you developed symptoms, you may need to reconsider. Your recovery will ultimately depend on your adoption of a lifestyle that supports wholeness. This may mean balancing work with leisure; creating more time to do your own thing; being more emotionally honest with other people; saying 'no' to pressures; and, above all, following activities that bring you inner peace, love, growth and personal fulfillment. Finally, it means being true to yourself and your deepest needs and emotions.
- What do you truly love to do? What is it that most expresses the real you? The answers don't have to be 'big' answers. The real you might yearn to spend quiet times with your family, get back to gardening, or share a meal with your friends. Of course, the answers might also mean taking a new course of study, moving to a different part of the country, or changing jobs. Whatever the answers are, finding out what it is that makes your heart sing will be an important part of your recovery.
- If, having read this book, you are still not convinced you can recover, then look harder at the negative effect Headmind may be having on you. It may be that Headmind is filled with hopelessness and despair as a result of the experiences you have gone through. Notice how Headmind may be keeping you trapped in a cycle of negativity, hopelessness, worry and 'disaster-movies'. Start to do small things to break out of the cycle, focusing on things you enjoy or activities that provide a sense of achievement and improve your confidence.
- Look at the list of instant activities that are linked to raised endorphin levels, or identify those you associate with a natural high. Make your own list and do at least three of these a day, Note the results.

Appendix One

The Bodymind Awareness Test

Please answer each question honestly, stating whether you AGREE or DISAGREE whether each statement is true about you

- 1 Most people say it is easy to tell how I am feeling AGREE DISAGREE
- 2 When I am upset, I often don't know why AGREE DISAGREE
- 3 I can usually sense what emotions other people are having AGREE DISAGREE
- 4 I find it difficult to put my feelings into words AGREE DISAGREE
- 5 I prefer to analyse problems rather than work out how I feel about them AGREE DISAGREE
- 6 I find it easy to tell whether I am angry, scared or just upset AGREE DISAGREE
- 7 I find it helps to know how I feel about things before making decisions AGREE DISAGREE
- 8 I often notice weird sensations in my body and don't know why AGREE DISAGREE
- 9 I find it difficult to reveal my innermost feelings to others AGREE DISAGREE
- 10 I can adapt my approach according to the mood of the other person AGREE DISAGREE
- 11 It is essential to be in touch with your emotions AGREE DISAGREE
- 12 I very, very rarely cry AGREE DISAGREE
- 13 I often find myself helping others put their feelings into words AGREE DISAGREE
- 14 I find it very difficult to 'read' other peoples' feelings and intentions AGREE DISAGREE
- 15 I quickly speak up about how I am feeling AGREE DISAGREE
- 16 I sometimes 'blow up' with rage without warning AGREE DISAGREE
- 17 It is OK to show others that you are scared AGREE DISAGREE
- 18 I would much rather keep things light-hearted than talk about emotions AGREE DISAGREE
- 19 I can feel close to someone even when nothing is being said AGREE DISAGREE
- 20 I find it easy to put my intuitions about people into words AGREE DISAGREE

Scoring

This test measures your skills in 5 different areas of Bodymind Awareness:

Noticing Emotions
Expressing Emotions
Translating Emotions into Words
Empathizing with other People
Freedom from Headmind Inhibitions

Score each skill as follows

Noticing Emotion

Questions 2, 6, 8, 16

Score 1 point if you DISAGREED with Statement 2
Score 1 point if you AGREED with Statement 6
Score 1 point if you DISAGREED with Statement 8
Score 1 point if you DISAGREED with Statement 16

Expressing Emotion

Questions 1, 9, 12, 17

Score 1 point if you AGREED with Statement 1
Score 1 point if you DISAGREED with Statement 9
Score 1 point if you DISAGREED with Statement 12
Score 1 point if you AGREED with Statement 17

Translating Emotions into Words

Questions 4, 13, 15, 20

Score 1 point if you DISAGREED with Statement 4
Score 1 point if you AGREED with Statement 13
Score 1 point if you AGREED with Statement 15
Score 1 point if you AGREED with statement 20

Empathizing with Other People

Questions 3, 10, 14, 19

Score 1 point if you AGREED with Statement 3
Score 1 point if you AGREED with Statement 10
Score 1 point if you DISAGREED with Statement 14
Score 1 point if you AGREED with Statement 19

Freedom from Headmind Inhibitions

Questions 5, 7, 11, 18

Score 1 point if you DISAGREED with Statement 5

Score 1 point if you AGREED with Statement 7

Score 1 point if you AGREED with Statement 11

Score 1 point if you DISAGREED with Statement 18

Results

A General Score of more than 9, provided you have scored at least ONE point in each section, indicates a GOOD Bodymind Awareness level

A General Score of more than 14, indicates an EXCELLENT level of Bodymind Awareness

Sections with 0 or only 1 point indicate that work is required in order to develop that particular skill. Reverse Therapy can assist with this.



REVERSE THERAPY

Appendix Two

Further Reading

- William Blake. *Songs of Innocence and Experience, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, and The Everlasting Gospel* (numerous editions)
- William Bloom. *The Endorphin Effect*. 2001.
- Don Colbert. *Deadly Emotions*. 2003.
- Antonio Damasio. *The Feeling of What Happens*. 1999.
- Henry Dreher. *Mind-Body Unity*. 2003.
- Ken Dychtwald. *Bodymind*. 1977.
- John Eaton. *M.E., Chronic Fatigue Syndrome & Fibromyalgia – The Reverse Therapy Approach*. 2006.
- Dina Glouberman. *The Joy of Burnout*. 2003.
- Daniel Goleman. *Emotional Intelligence*. 1996.
- Joseph LeDoux. *The Emotional Brain*. 1999.
- Paul Martin. *The Sickening Mind*. 1997.
- Candace Pert. *Molecules of Emotion*. 1997.
- Ernest Rossi. *The Psychobiology of Mind-Body Healing*. 1986.
- Ernest Rossi. *The Symptom Path to Enlightenment*. 1996.
- John E. Sarno. *The Mindbody Prescription*. 1998.
- John E. Sarno. *The Divided Mind*. 2006.
- Hans Selye. *The Stress of Life*. 1978.
- Esther Sternberg & Philip Gold. *The Mind-Body Interaction in Disease*. (Scientific American – Special Issue). 1997.
- Liz Tucker. *When You Want to Say Yes But Your Body Says No*. 2003.

Finding a Reverse Therapist and making an appointment

Our Website address is: www.reverse-therapy.com

Our Reverse Therapy blog is on: <http://reversetherapy.wordpress.com/>

You can find a therapist by going to the following web page

http://www.reverse-therapy.com/Find_a_Therapist/

Or you can email us on info@reverse-therapy.com

Or you can write to us at:

Reverse Therapy

The Old Bakery

4 Church Street

Kintbury

Berkshire RG17 9TR



Or you can leave a message on the answerphone service:

REVERSE THERAPY

0870 626 0100