
Does Macrobiotics Heal Disease?

Beginning Series, Part 4

Julia Ferré

Many people will answer, “Yes—a resounding yes!” The proof is that macrobiotics has helped many people in reversing their disease. The following list is a sampling of those who attest to the power of macrobiotics.

George Ohsawa healed from tuberculosis. (*Essential Ohsawa* 1997, page 4.)

Anthony Sattilaro, M.D. healed from prostate cancer that had spread throughout his body. (*Unexpected Recoveries* by Tom Monte, 2005, pages 143-151.)

Sherry Rogers, M.D. healed from severe chemical sensitivities. (*The Cure is in the Kitchen*.)

Elaine Nussbaum healed from uterine cancer. (*Recovery from Cancer*, 2004)

Jean Charles Kohler healed from pancreatic cancer. (*Healing Miracles from Macrobiotics: A Diet for All Diseases*, 1979—out of print.)

Christina Pirello healed from leukemia. (*Cooking the Whole Foods Way*, 1997, pages 1 to 5.)

Mina Dobic healed from Stage IV Ovarian Cancer. (*My Beautiful Life*, 2007.)

Meg Wolfe healed from breast cancer that had spread to bones.



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(*Becoming Whole, The Story of My Complete Recovery from Breast Cancer*, 2006.)

David Briscoe healed from schizophrenia. (*A Personal Peace: Macrobiotic Reflections on Mental and Emotional Recovery*, 1989—out of print.)

Each of the above persons credits macrobiotics for its contribution to his or her health, no doubt about it.

Many other people, however, will

state emphatically, “No—a resounding no!” They believe macrobiotics does not cure; it is not a remedy or a cure-all. It is a tool, a way to rejuvenate, an application of ideas that help individuals become strong. This is where healing occurs. Healing happens from internal strength and power—some call it the immune system; some call it constitutional fortitude; some call it the grace of God.

Sherry Rogers, M.D. says, “Macrobiotics is not a diet to cure cancer. It is a diet, that along with other important lifestyle changes, enables some, but not all people to reach a state of wellness...I cannot heal or cure anything, nor can macrobiotics. These stories, (referring to case histories in her book, – J.F.) are in fact, solely a testimony to the uniqueness and perseverance of the human spirit and I thank these people again, with all my heart, for sharing their pain so that we might never lose hope regardless of the paths we choose to explore. (*The Cure is in the Kitchen*, page iv.)

Healing can be likened to training for a marathon, that is, a person must devote time to propel him- or herself forward to a goal. Just as an athlete must focus on his or her sport, so a person seeking healing must focus on a return to vibrant health. Both work on endurance, strength, adequate rest,

and appropriate nutrition. Both see the need to apply effort everyday. Both understand that he or she must do the work him- or herself.

An athlete learns about muscles, tone, performance; a student of healing learns about the immune system, detoxing, and progression of healing. An athlete learns about pacing and avoids overexertion; a student of healing learns to recognize when things aren't going as well as desired. Athletes have coaches; students of healing have health-care practitioners. Both require support of family and friends.

TOM'S SEVEN STEPS

Tom Monte is an experienced macrobiotic counselor and practitioner, having written many books himself and coauthored many others. In his book, *Unexpected Recoveries*, he addresses healing.

"Over the past twenty-five years, I have written about many hundreds of people who have conquered illnesses that were labeled 'life threatening' and even 'terminal' by medical doctors. Those who restore their health have much in common. Indeed, I have found that they follow a similar healing path, one that has at least seven steps. These seven steps might be understood as seven healing behaviors, each of which transforms a specific part of the person's life and, for many, leads eventually to the restoration of health. These seven steps are:

1. The person is shocked and humbled by the diagnosis of his or her disease. In that state of humility, the person develops a new relationship with himself or herself, one based on compassion, self-acceptance, and love.
2. The person takes responsibility for his or her recovery.
3. The person adopts a healing diet that is composed largely of plant foods.
4. The person has a strong support

system that includes loving, intimate relationships, social support groups, and a network of healers.

5. The person makes a commitment to life. That commitment is expressed in practical ways, especially by adhering to a healing diet and getting regular physical exercise.
6. The person develops faith, which is strengthened through regular prayer and meditation.
7. The person discovers a larger purpose for living that transcends his or her own survival.

"Each of these seven steps moves a person further along his or her heal-

"Macrobiotics...has potential to help people heal in body, mind, and spirit. However, it is important to recognize there is no no guarantee."

ing journey. While all of the people in this book have these seven steps in common, some emphasized one or two steps more than the other five or six. There are no hard-and-fast rules to the healing journey, only guidelines that point the way." (*Unexpected Recoveries*, pages vii to ix.)

DEEPER HEALING

Views on healing aren't limited to the physical. David Briscoe, who healed from mental problems, states in his book, "Healing the body must be the first step towards healing the mind." (*A Personal Peace*, page 58.) His book details his own recovery and offers many suggestions for physical healing in order to effect emotional

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healing. Physical health is the foundation for a clear mind, smooth feelings, and stable moods.

Yet, physical health need not be a requirement to inner peace. There are teachers who have passed away and left writings and teachings of great truths. Patricia Murray recalls of Patrick McCarty, renowned macrobiotic teacher and shiatsu practitioner: "Most treasured for me, reconnecting with you at the last two French Meadows camps, where you talked frankly of your health struggles, and told the funniest stories for the search in many countries, and the exploration of views of illness and it's cure so different from anything every heard of before in the United States. When someone asked if you thought your illness was cured, you said that you thought your spirit was cured, and that you prayed that the body would follow." (*Macrobiotics Today*, May June 2008, page 15.)

Another teacher, Murray Snyder who passed away in 1998, was a pioneer in the natural health movement and an influential macrobiotic counselor. Towards the end of his life he published many writings in *Macrobiotics Today* about healing, sickness, and gratitude. He wrote the poem on page 19.

THREE MAJOR INFLUENCES

Macrobiotics—as a tool—has po-

tential to help people heal in body, mind, and spirit. However, it is important to recognize there is no guarantee. Eating grains and vegetables does not mean that diseases automatically disappear and that a person can live a long life free from further distress. In fact, many people who practice macrobiotics a long time catch colds and deal with aches and pains. Daily living provides challenges from pathogens to emergencies and macrobiotic people are not exempt.

No article on healing would be complete without addressing the issues of death and specifically the deaths of people who have been macrobiotic a long time. Healing happens, yet not always in obvious ways. One of the hardest things to understand occurs when a person who has been macrobiotic a long time dies of disease, especially when someone else has used macrobiotics to heal from the same disease.

At the Foundation, there are phone calls all the time asking why so-and-so died, implying they did something wrong, or that macrobiotics doesn't work. These questions are among the hardest to answer. Death is not easy, and the seeming paradox raises further questions. "Why do people die? What is health? Can macrobiotics help people regain and maintain health?"

It is often difficult to analyze and understand the mysteries of life, much less to try to sort out the variables and complexities that are forever changing. Aside from the simple fact that it is impossible to know all the parameters that determine whether a person will be successful or not, there are three major influences that affect everyone.

1. Constitution. Heredity plays a factor. Strong genes provide internal strength and can help a person recover from disease. Likewise, genetic markers can predispose one towards weaknesses.
2. Condition. Environment plays

a factor. A child is born with a set of genes and the environment determines how these genes develop. Foods, illnesses, family situations, stresses, and other events shape a person's physical health and determine whether a person is vital or not. In addition, character traits form and determine how a person responds to stress, illness, and disease.

3. Pollution. Sherry Rogers, M.D. states, "We are the first generation to ever be exposed to such an unprecedented number of daily chemicals in our air, food, and water." (*Wellness Against*

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All Odds, page 49.) Consider the barrage of vaccines, medicines, additives to food, fluoridation, drugs given in pregnancy, x-rays, electromagnetic fields, tobacco smoke, and air pollution. Is it any wonder we are sick? Can the strength of macrobiotic food counter all the pollution?

LONG-TERM HEALING: 15 MAINTENANCE TIPS

Healing is not only the realm of those critically sick; it also concerns people throughout their life. In addition, a person who has healed from a critical stage also needs to maintain health for the long term.

Diet is crucial; no doubt about it, but it is only one among many impor-

tant points. Whether a person is healing from disease or seeking a health-supportive lifestyle, each of these factors contributes to the long-term effects of vitality. Points 1 to 9 address ways to strengthen the body; 10 to 13 are ways to help the mind; and 14 to 15 are ways to nourish the spirit. (See also the list in Verne Varona's article in this issue on pages 9-10.)

Tip 1. Diet. All of the macrobiotic books reviewed below suggest a diet for people healing from diseases consisting of whole foods high in complex carbohydrates, low in fat, and relying on plant sources for protein (predominantly). This diet can be a catalyst of change and there are countless case histories of people who have reversed disease due to this diet.

For a person interested in health-maintenance, diet serves a different purpose—that of providing sound nutrition, satisfaction, balance, and a way to keep healthy. Many macrobiotic cookbooks offer delicious recipes and advice about how to prepare meals for a health-maintenance diet; many were reviewed in the second installment of this series. (*Macrobiotics Today*, March/April 2008, pages 26-27.)

Some books and counselors describe different diets such as: "Healing Macrobiotic Diet," "Basic Macrobiotic Diet," and "Gourmet Macrobiotic Diet;" these various "diets" incorporate spices, animal foods, and higher quantities of oil, and are appropriate for people with various needs and preferences. For example, a low fat diet, while beneficial for someone healing from disease, may be inadequate for a person interested in maintaining long-term health. Keep this point in mind when reading books as a lot of advice is tailored for illness. Also bear in mind that nutritional information changes over time and some macrobiotic books are not current, especially in regards to fats and oils.

Tip 2. Water. For a person healing from disease, avoidance of inappropriate beverages such as coffee,

alcohol, and soda is imperative. For a person maintaining health, an adequate quantity of pure water ensures proper hydration. If you read advice in a macrobiotic book such as, "Don't drink," assume the information is outdated, or apply this advice to, "No alcohol, no coffee, and no beverages with high-fructose corn syrup." Our bodies are seventy-five percent water. Water equals life.

Tip 3. Exercise. Move your muscles! Walk around the block, do yoga, run, bike, go to the gym, swim, find something you enjoy doing and make a habit of it. Exercise increases heart strength, lung capacity, metabolism, and helps the body in many ways. Plus, it is fun. Persons healing from disease or bed-ridden should exercise in whatever way manageable.

Tip 4. Rest. Get enough sleep. Sleep enhances immunity.

Tip 5. Teeth. Take care of your teeth and gums. Oral health affects the whole body. Bacteria can accumulate in hidden pockets of the gums and circulate through the blood. Metal fillings can leach mercury. Loss of teeth affects mastication and appearance. Many teeth problems stem from years of poor diet and hygiene, usually predating macrobiotic practice. Luckily, there are wonderful tools such as irrigation systems, deep pocket applicators, and the old stand-by dental floss. Invest time in taking care of your teeth.

Tip 6. Supplements. For a person healing from disease, it may be necessary to supplement to correct imbalances or to offset any effect of medications. Ask your doctor or health care provider. For a person maintaining health, supplements can address imbalances. A whole foods diet provides adequate vitamins and minerals; however, pregnancy requires additional nutrition, and restricted diets such as veganism may require B₁₂. In addition, probiotics can be a boost to intestinal flora, and flax oil and fish oil capsules can provide extra Omega 3 fatty acids.

Tip 7. Chemicals. Be vigilant in avoiding chemicals, whether in food or in the environment. Chemicals are everywhere from foods raised with pesticides and herbicides to packaging materials, from air and water pollution to clothing manufacturing. Sherry Rogers, M.D. identifies many pollutants in her books, as does Hulda Clark in *A Cure for All Diseases*. Both recommend alternatives.

Tip 8. Cleanses. There are countless remedies to help cleanse the body—both internally and externally. There are ginger compresses, skin rubs, oil rubs, colon cleanses, kidney cleanses, liver cleanses, parasite cleanses, and others. Depending on the person and the state of health, choose more gentle external cleanses or internal deep cleanses. Kidney and liver cleanses are serious cleanses that can help the long-time macrobiotic person remove embedded toxins. Sherry Rogers, M.D. offers details in her books, as well as Hulda Clark. Hulda Clark links pollution and parasites, and while she is not a "macrobiotic" resource, her books offer another perspective on the causes of disease and are worth reading.

Tip 9. Home. Clean your home. Set up an environment with less allergens, use chemical-free products, and feng shui it if desired.

Tip 10. Stress. Stress is a sign of imbalance and is individual. For example, traveling can be stressful for some and relaxing for others. Do what you can to identify and reduce stress.

Tip 11. Relationships. Communication skills enhance all relationships from family to friends to coworkers. David Briscoe talks of ancestral healing in *A Personal Peace* as a way to heal on another level.

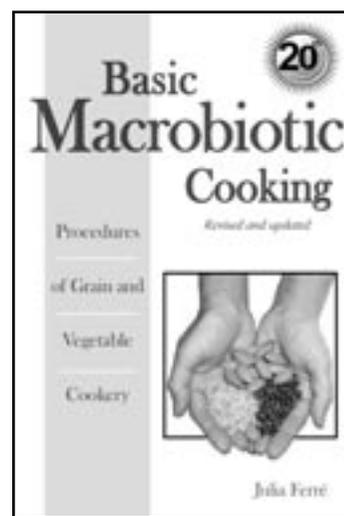
Tip 12. Creative outlets. Sing, dance, paint, write, compose, sew, cook, bake, garden, work with wood. Do something that brings you pleasure.

Tip 13. Study. Learn. Keep the mind alert, whether doing puzzles or studying yin and yang.

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Tip 14. Spiritual studies. Pray, go to a spiritual center, read holy books, meditate. Everyone can benefit from connecting to the divine, or the “bigger picture.”

Tip 15. Respect change. Avoid thinking there is only one way to cooking or exercising or to doing this or that. Life is big and full of potential. Be open to possibilities.

Books

The books reviewed for this series are all devoted to “healing.” Michio Kushi is world famous; his books offer a range of specific advice from diet to home remedies. Some of his books have recipes and personal stories. Other books in this list are detailed accounts of healing by the authors. Tom Monte and Lino Stanchich offer specific plans. John and Jan Belleme’s book has the word “heal” in its title.

Michio Kushi, *Macrobiotic Path to Total Health*, 2003. This book is a complete guide to preventing and relieving more than 200 chronic conditions and diseases. There are suggestions for specific diseases, home remedies, and medicinal foods and drinks. Includes recipes.

———, *Macrobiotic Approach to Cancer*, 1991. This book has 250,000 copies in print and discusses the prevention and controlling of cancer. Includes case histories.

———, *The Cancer Prevention Diet*, 1993. This book discusses cancer, its development, its relationship to diet and modern civilization, and natural prevention and relief methods. Includes an in-depth guide to 25 different cancers with specific dietary and home-care recommendations.

———, *Macrobiotic Way*, 3rd Edition, 2004. This book is considered an introductory book to the nutrition of macrobiotics. Includes 60 pages of recipes.

Michio and Aveline Kushi, *Macrobiotic Diet*, Revised. 1993. This is standard Kushi-style macrobiotics

with an emphasis on diet. Includes 100 pages of “the meaning of a macrobiotic diet;” 200 pages of “the content of a macrobiotic diet;” and 100 pages of “the effectiveness of a macrobiotic diet.”

All of these books recommend corn oil—a product not recommended by many nutritionists these days. In addition, these books are written for people who have disease and are in need of a low-fat diet.

Françoise Rivière, *#7 Diet*, 2005. This book is the companion book to Zen Macrobiotics, written by George Ohsawa. It discusses a ten-day diet used for fasting and cleansing. Includes specific instructions, teachings

“... nutritional information changes over time and some macrobiotic books are not current, especially in regards to fats and oils.”

of George Ohsawa, and some miraculous cures.

Tom Monte, *Unexpected Recoveries*, 2005. This book discusses healing physically, mentally, and spiritually. Chapters are organized around Seven Steps that emphasize integrating body, mind, social connections, and the need for understanding the bigger picture. Includes recipes and stories of people who have healed.

Lino Stanchich, *Power Eating Program*, 1989. You are how you eat. Lino presents a plan for how to stay healthy. Includes Lino’s personal story of surviving a concentration camp and his determination to stay alive.

Mina Dobic, *My Beautiful Life*, 2007. This book covers Mina’s journey from Stage IV ovarian cancer to a life free of cancer, paralleling her

journey from the former Yugoslavia to Los Angeles, California. Includes 30 pages of stories from others and Mina’s specific dietary and lifestyle plan.

Elaine Nussbaum, *Recovery from Cancer*, 2004. This book recounts Elaine’s personal struggle of overcoming the odds of healing from her cancer.

John and Jan Belleme, *Japanese Foods that Heal*, 2007. *The Miso Book*, 2004. These cookbooks are included in this review because “heal” is in the title of the first one. However, they are more than books devoted to disease reversal or merely cookbooks. *Japanese Foods that Heal* focuses on 18 foods such as shiitake and maitake mushrooms, umeboshi, tofu, and tea. *The Miso Book* delves into the subject of miso. Both books detail the history of the foods, traditional products, and how the foods enhance health. Both books are useful for anyone desiring information on incorporating healing and healthy foods and using these foods in delicious recipes. The Belleme’s cofounded American Miso Company and worked in Japan under the Onozoki Miso family.

Sherry Rogers, M.D. *The E. I. Syndrome; Tired or Toxic?; You Are What You Ate; The Cure is in the Kitchen; Macro Mellow; Wellness Against All Odds*. Sherry Rogers, M.D., is a medical doctor, lecturer, and writer. Personally, she overcame environmental and chemical sensitivities. Her books address how to heal from serious illness using macrobiotics.

Many books reviewed in other installments of this series also are devoted to healing. The next installment will feature topics beyond food.

Julia Ferré is author of Basic Macrobiotic Cooking: 20th Anniversary Edition and plans the menus at the French Meadows camp. Her new book, French Meadows Cookbook, is available from gomf@earthlink.net.