



Reconnecting Health And Holiness

Imagine using your mind to heal your body. This fascinating healing technique, called mental or guided imagery, was the lifework of **Dr. Jerry Epstein** ob”m, a prominent psychiatrist. He wrote five books, such as *Healing Visualizations: Creating Health through Imagery*, a reference book of healing exercises for various physical and emotional imbalances. His wife **Rachel** was by his side, editing his books and writings. She continues her husband’s work as a health imagery coach, teaching his method and directing the American Institute for Mental Imagery in NYC. Additionally, she co-authored *Reversing the Trauma of War*, a collection of imagery for PTSD, trauma and stress.

Rachel shares, “I grew on the Upper East Side of Manhattan in an Observant home and come from a family of doctors. My father and sister ob”m were both psychiatrists, one brother is a nephrologist and the other is a dentist. Since I was always very connected to nature I studied environmental conservation. But afterwards I became an acupuncturist in order to heal people too.

“Like imagery, Chinese medicine attracted me because it is holistic, taking the whole person - mind, spirit and body - into consideration. It views physical illness within the larger context of a person’s life. The focus isn’t only on treating the symptoms, but primarily on finding the source. Ailments appear as warning

signs that we must restore harmony and balance to our lifestyles. For example, asthma is triggered not only by allergens, but by feeling constricted and ‘allergic’ to a person or situation in your life.

“The vital force that flows through all of nature, giving life to the body, is described in Chinese medicine as qi, which is pronounced as chi. This refers to the life-force that Hashem blows into every living thing in order to sustain its existence.”

Revitalizing Our Divine Light

“My husband was brought up Conservative but always had a deep feeling for Hashem and for Judaism,” Rachel says. “He sought to discover the deeper spiritual meanings, the pnimiyus, behind the mitzvos. This opened my eyes to the beauty of Judaism, which invigorated my connection with Hashem.

“After the Yom Kippur War my husband spent time in Israel. He met **Colette Abouk-er-Muscat** ob”m, an Algerian woman who became his teacher and mentor. In 1995 she was awarded ‘Yekirat Yerushalayim,’ one who is ‘beloved of Yerushalayim,’ for her life’s work. Her healing techniques were derived from Kabbala and focus on visualization as a means to connect to Elokus, the invisible reality energizing all of creation, in order to become ‘vessels of light.’”

Rachel explains, “Everything that happens above, in the upper worlds, is all essentially coming from you, and is a reflection of your inner reality. Spiritual growth releases blockages of the flow of divine energy into this world and into ourselves. Through our imagination we can ascend to different dimensions of realities, revitalizing our divine ‘light,’ which brings healing. Since I had a background in holistic medicine these principles made sense to me.

“My husband was, at first, skeptical of Colette’s approach of curing ailments through imagery. But he remembered the practice of free association used in psychoanalysis. Patients are invited to let their thoughts wander and relate whatever words and images come to mind. These images, that tell us about our inner subjective lives, can be used to free ourselves from unhealthy tendencies.

“Colette paid attention to dreams as well. Dreams are our night images that reflect unresolved conflicts and can reveal to us answers to our difficulties.”

Techniques that access the unconscious mind are consistent with what I read in the writings of Harav Yitzchak Ginsburgh (Wonders #106). He writes that one important principle in the Baal Shem Tov’s teachings is that “the rectification of the soul cannot remain only in the intellectual and conscious level of a person, but must also penetrate the unconscious layers.”

The Power of Visualization

“I teach people to use their minds effectively,” Rachel shares. “Instead of dwelling in the past, which can lead to depression, or in the future, which doesn’t exist, we can make it a habit to visualize positive images in our mind.

Imagining peaceful scenes not only reduces stress and stimulates relaxation, but also provides us with information about what is going on inside of us.

“The particular way in which each person imagines a scene is revelatory. For example, someone may visualize a garden as perfectly manicured flower beds, while another person might imagine it as a meadow of wildflowers, and someone else might primarily see a mass of concrete. These individual differences reflect what each of them is going through. Through imagery we can also correct our inner images,

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which in turn influence our feelings, physical bodies and social experiences.

“The self-awareness gained from mental imagery techniques is transformative. People become empowered to live more harmonious lives, standing up for their values and staying true to who they really are.”

She adds, “I try to instill emuna and bitachon in people that they can and will restore



their health. As a health imagery coach I'm just the 'enzyme' that gets the process going by giving tools that enable them to tap into their inner insight and resources."

I, personally, have been using visualizations as a primary coping mechanism since the onset of the war. Whenever there has been news of an atrocity committed to Am Yisrael, ch"v, I meditate on an image of a stream of clear blue water flowing down from the heavens and washing away every last trace of evil from this world.

Rachel says emphatically, "Visualize what you want to happen, and you will make it happen." Her words remind me of what the Rebbe MH"M wrote on his 54th birthday: "From the time that I was a child attending cheder, and even before, there began to take form in my mind a picture of the future redemption."

Get to Know Your Neshama

There's passion in her voice as Rachel shares her message, "Hashem instructs Avraham Avinu 'Lech-le-cha,' which is translated as 'go forth.' But it is not calling Avraham Avinu to get going on his path, it's also a call to 'go to yourself,' to your hidden essence.

"Hashem gives this instruction to each one of us too. We must turn inwards to get to know our true self, our neshama, with its tremendous potential. This requires separating ourselves from the conditioning of the herd mentality that has hardwired us to imitate others and neglect our individuality. Avraham Avinu had to cross the river in order to break away from the idol-worshipping community and carve his own path in serving Hashem.

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Rachel's website is Reheals.com

Disclaimer: As with all medical questions, one must – as per the Rebbe's instructions – consult with a *rofeh yedid*, a physician who is a friend and with a practicing *rav* when relevant ■