



mindset

BY DAVID STEWART, PHD

thinking outside the box

Integrating Eastern approaches to healing with Western medical practices is the first step in a transformation that will challenge some of our most basic assumptions. You are more likely today than you were just a few years ago to have had some experience with alternative health practices such as herbal supplements, meditation, or acupuncture. As more people see the value of an integrated approach to medicine, we should expect to see a greater openness to considering approaches that fall outside the Western medical model.

I am excited about what the future holds. It seems to me that we are just starting to explore outside the limits of our Western mindset. For example, most doctors in the West view the mind as a by-product of brain activity. Many Eastern approaches to healing do not share this view. For example, acupuncture works with energy fields and meridians that are not observed or explained by Western medical science. Can you imagine a science that includes and explains the observations and discoveries of both East and West?

Psychic phenomena or "psi" are good examples of experiences that cannot be explained by the view that the mind is simply the product of the physical brain. Psi refers to a wide range of controversial phenomena that include ESP ("mind reading"), psychokinesis ("mind over matter"), psychic healing and dreams of the future. Parapsychology, the study of psi phenomena, is regarded by most contemporary Western scientists as a false discipline, full of quacks and fakirs. Yet, hundreds of valid experiments have been conducted on psi phenomena.

Due to the criticisms that skeptics have leveled, the legitimate parapsychologists have had to develop scientific procedures even more rigorous than those used in other fields. When the results do not fit into the traditional paradigm, even when no fault can be found

with experimental procedures, the most close-minded skeptics conclude that the evidence is fabricated and the research fraudulent. One contemporary Western scientist went so far as to say that he would not believe the results even if they were true.

It is natural to resist information that is at variance with our understanding of how the world works. Yet there is considerable evidence that some psi phenomena are real. In one examination of 78 studies of psi phenomena published between 1964 and 1993, the reviewer found the overall effects to be highly positive, with odds against chance of 10 million to 1.

One example is a 1993 study by the U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command (INSCOM). White blood cells from the mouth of a volunteer were placed in a test tube in a different room from where the volunteer was seated. The volunteer was then shown a video with violent content. Researchers discovered that when the volunteer was watching scenes of fighting or killing, his blood cells in the test tube showed signs of extreme excitation. They found the same results even when the donor and his cells were separated by up to 50 miles and up to two days after the cells were removed from his mouth. How do we make sense of data like these that completely blow our preconceived notions of how our bodies react and process stimulation? Interestingly, these results mirror those in quantum physics that demonstrate connections between atomic particles across time and space that defy what we have come to think of as the laws of nature.

Explaining results such as these will require thinking "outside the box" of the Western scientific paradigm. We may be in a time similar to when people rejected the notion that the world was round, ignoring the data because the idea of a round earth was impossible to comprehend. What further discoveries lie before us? We do live in interesting times. *h&h*

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