

IS IT TIME TO FIRE YOUR DOCTOR?

*A complete guide to finding
the best physician for you &
your family*

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Naturopathic Doctor News & Review, LLC

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Scottsdale, AZ 85252

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Medical Assistance

You must not rely on the information in this book as an alternative to medical advice from your doctor or other professional healthcare provider. If you have any specific questions about any medical matter, you should consult your doctor or other professional healthcare provider.

If you think you may be suffering from any medical condition, you should seek immediate medical attention. You should never delay seeking medical advice, disregard medical advice or discontinue medical treatment because of information in this book.



REASONS TO SAY, "YOU'RE FIRED"

Fifteen years ago, I was young, single and had a quite lucrative career. I had the freedom to enjoy life, and the money as well. I was living the good life, though not without stress, and was working towards even bigger dreams. For me those dreams were of getting married, starting a family and setting off into the sunset to live



**“I didn’t want to take pain medication;
I wanted to heal the pain”**

happily ever after. I had my dreams. I had my health. Until one day, I didn’t.

I began to experience debilitating body pain, daily migraines, nausea, and chronic fatigue. I felt like a windup doll that needed winding. Despite the fatigue, I had a terrible time falling asleep and an even harder time staying asleep. I would become forgetful, and even anxious. Each time I went to my doctor he told me I had a “bug” and would prescribe antibiotics. I had to badger my doctor to look deeper, and he would just scratch his head and offer another prescription.

MY ROCK BOTTOM

I went from specialist to specialist who would only look respectively at his or her area of practice. The neurologist, for example, would attempt to treat my mi-

graines, which affected my vision and were accompanied by nausea and body pain. He explained that the headaches could in no way be related to my other symptoms. A GI specialist would attempt to treat my nausea, but said my body pain and headaches were not related. An endocrinologist looked at my hormones and told me I would probably never conceive, but couldn’t say why I was so out of balance or what I could do to fix it. Finally, a rheumatologist suggested a cocktail of pain medication, and that I should fill out the necessary forms for disability insurance.

Sometimes the pain was so bad, that I remember crawling across my bedroom floor to go to the bathroom. I looked at the prescriptions and just cried. I had a successful career as a realtor selling new construction, and I had to take a leave of absence from my job.

I made an appointment at a very large and very famous clinic that is known for its team approach to medicine. I was sure I would finally get the answers! But it was more of the same. Each specialist looked at their respective focus areas as if my body was a collection of disjointed parts (a brain, some ovaries, a thyroid) without looking at how they all worked together. They prescribed heart meds for my migraines, antidepressants for my pain, sleeping pills for my anxiety... None of this worked, and much of it I refused. I didn't want to take pain medication; I wanted to heal the pain. To take something to sleep, something else to wake up and something else to get through the day was not what I wanted my life to look like. Then my hair started falling out. So when I refused most of the band-aids they offered, their suggestion was that I needed a psychiatrist. If they couldn't help me, it must all be in my head.

I was distraught. No one was really looking at me, or listening to me.

I told my case manager and internist, "Okay, fine, I'll take some pain medication if you promise to look deeper and find what is the cause."

She looked at me wistfully and said, "You know, the pain medication won't help because it's in your head, not in your body."

I was incensed.

That did it. I got up silently and I left to find my own answers. I waited until I got to my car to cry.

Some days I threw up every time I ate. Some days the pain made me walk with a limp. Some days the migraines felt like a train going through my left eye, taking my vision with it. They were so frequent,

so crippling and so unexpected, that I could no longer even drive a car.

I was 25-years-old. This illness was affecting my job, my relationships, even my very future. I had dreams. Disability wasn't one of them.

I was resolved to take my health into my own hands.

WALKING THE NATURALPATH

My first visit to a naturopathic doctor was unlike anything I have ever experienced before. First, I was told that I wasn't crazy. That my symptoms were real, and that it couldn't be in my head because the mind and body are connected. My first visit lasted longer than an hour.

In addition to the regular health and family history, my naturopathic doctor asked me questions no other doctor had ever asked before:

Questions about my eating habits, exercise routines, places of work, any possible chemical exposures, use of pesticides, type of household and body care products, my relationships, my sleep patterns, my sources of stress... and more. In just that first visit, we had put together a plan to further discover the causative factors and remove the obstacles to cure.

This is where my healing began and I want to share this healing with you.

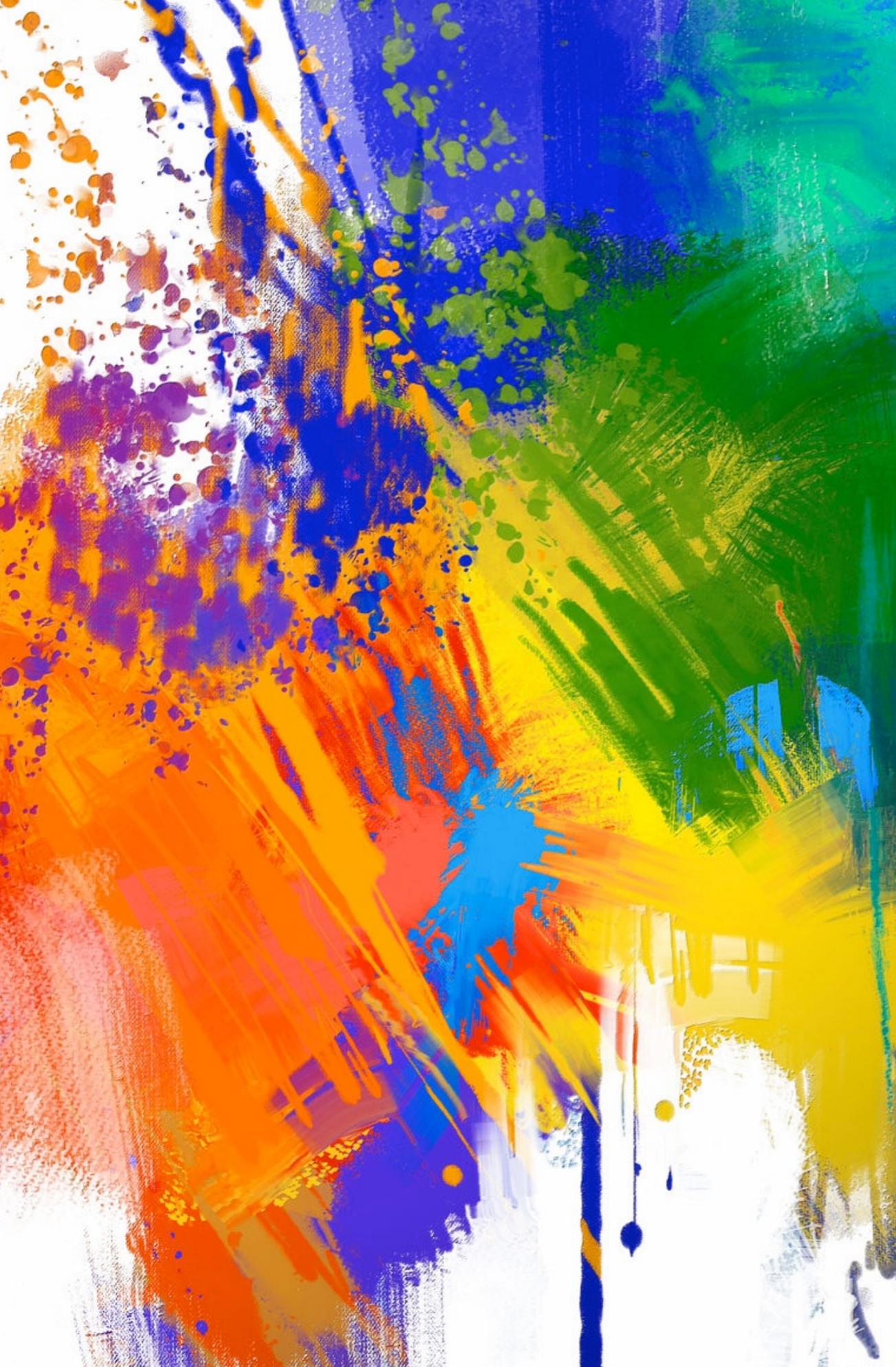


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Why not just any doc?

Your relationship with your doctor is one of the most important relationships you will have outside of your family. With your doctor you share personal history and intimate details of your most valuable possession: Your health. Your physician is a person you must trust implicitly, someone you have absolute faith in with regard to their knowledge and more importantly wisdom. What's the difference? A doctor is also a

detective. Your doctor can absorb all the book knowledge she wants from medical school, but you want a doctor who is able to weave together not only your symptomology but also the many facets of your personal and family history, your emotional strength and weaknesses, to understand your baselines and individual constitution. In a sense, there is no “normal” or “one size fits all” approach to medicine.



Much like finding a partner in life, it is imperative to develop trust and respect with your chosen doctor. This relationship is the basis to ensure an environment for self improvement and better health. Without good health, you cannot enjoy all of the many things life offers us to experience. Health really is the prime commodity of life. Health is wealth.

The word, “doctor” originates from the word docere which means to teach, or instruct. From here we base the naturopathic tenet Docere, also know as “Doctor as teacher”.

A doctor’s job is to teach you to take control of your health, to identify habits you need to change and help you create a map to implement them. A doctor should focus most of all on prevention, and when states of dis-ease occur, your doctor should look at you as a whole and individual person that is experiencing symptoms, rather than a person with disease X.

I’ll offer another example. When my father began having memory problems, we became concerned long before his doctor did. My father had unfortunately consumed a lot of artificial sweeteners in his life that are known to be neurotoxic. He also had some insulin resistance, which is known to contribute to dementia and Alzheimer’s, but his physician was only concerned with the big picture, whether or not he had full blown diabetes, which he did not. Consequently, adequate preventive measures were not taken. The diagnostic test to screen Alzheimer’s was a simple questionnaire, which my father passed, so the doctor did not heed our concerns of the memory loss. Yes, my father was able to answer who was president or what year it was, and so his doctor dismissed our concerns and asked us to watch and wait. I tried to intervene because in the waiting room,



my father asked me if he had any children besides me (he had 3 others, one of which was deceased). His doctor didn't express concern because those questions were not on the diagnostic questionnaire and was beyond the standard of care he provided.

Standard of care is defined as:

"A diagnostic and treatment process that a clinician should follow for a certain type of patient, illness, or clinical circumstance."

It acts as a how to guide for medicine, which predetermines the actions taken by your doctor when he is presented with your condition. Before seeing my naturopathic doctor, I was stuck in a model of symptom suppression, and give drug X for disease Y. In the case of my father, This particular doctor refused to let me participate in his care, and was not open to options outside of conventional allopathic medicine. Had I been in charge, this doctor would have been fired, immediately.

These examples illustrate my point that your doctor needs to know what is unique about your biology. Had my father's doctor looked beyond the 10 questions, and looked at, while he did not have full blown diabetes, his insulin resistance was contributing to his cognitive decline, his treatment plan may have differed, as well as the outcome.

"You are the customer. You get to hire, or fire, your doctor."



What Didn't Work for Me

When I was living with debilitating pain and fatigue, and desperate for help, visits to my doctor looked like this:

Arrive early...

Wait for 30 minutes..

Taken to exam room...

Wait another 10 minutes...

Nurse comes in and asks, "what's wrong"...

Wait another 10 minutes...

Doctor comes in, looks at notes...

Said something quickly into tape recorder...

Scribbled out an Rx...

Left...

Wait 10 minutes longer...

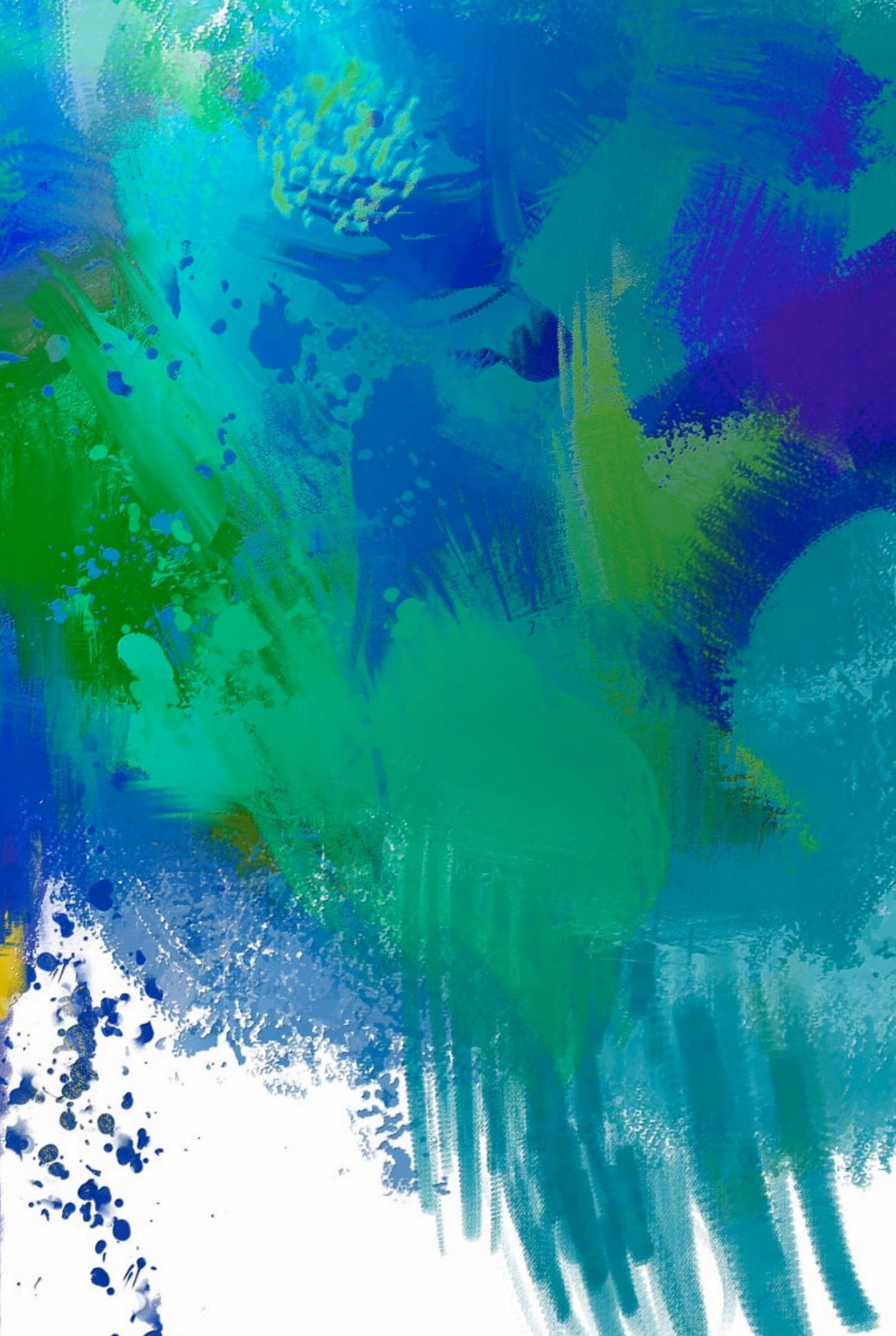
Nurse comes back in and escorts me to check out...

He certainly didn't teach me anything

I know it wasn't totally my doctor's fault. The insurance companies he was contracted with dictated a lot of what he could do from what tests he could or could not order to what diagnosis codes he had to write on the superbill to ensure reimbursement. Medical school is not cheap and because of the low reimbursement of insurance and HMO model, doctors need to see 4-6 patients per hour to pay their bills.

Doctor's schedule patients in 15-minute intervals, which usually boils down to 9 minutes of patient contact. But you don't need me to tell you this; you've been to the doctor.

My goal is for you to understand that it doesn't have to be that way. You are the client. You are the customer. You get to hire, or fire, your doctor. In the last 15 years as a patient of natural medicine, and as a co founder of a very successful naturopathic medicine practice, I have come to understand the doctor-patient relationship very intimately. As a publisher of naturopathic medicine for the past decade, I have come to know what to look for, and what to avoid, in choosing the right doctor for you and your family.



Behaviors and Qualities of a Good Doctor

In the course of choosing a physician, it is not only important to understand the scope of practice for the doctor but also the values, ethics, and applications of the medicine and modalities they choose to use in practice. These are the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual tools used to bring healing and preserve wellness.

In my healing journey, I was drawn to the healing power of nature and the principles of natural medicine and prevention. The six core tenets of the naturopathic profession are what I choose to live by, today. These tenets serve as a map for the treatment and prevention of disease.

It has been stated that health is the absence of disease, but maybe it is the other way around... Disease, itself, is the absence of health. It is the absence of good nutrition, a positive attitude, a restful night's sleep, clean air, clean water, etc. Sometimes, it is hard to understand these deficits in the vacuum of our daily lives.

We wake up to an alarm clock, skip breakfast, get the kids to school, get stuck in the congested morning smog, only to clock in 5 min late to work and have to bear a burden of all these stresses all before 9:05 AM...

When working with my naturopathic doctor, we explore what makes up my day, stressors and environmental causes of disease.

Treat the Whole Person (*Tolle Totum*)

Health and disease result from a complex of physical, mental, emotional, genetic, environmental, social, and other factors. Since total health also includes spiritual health, naturopathic physicians encourage individuals to pursue their personal spiritual development. Naturopathic medicine recognizes the harmonious functioning of all aspects of the individual as being essential to health. The multifactorial nature of health and disease requires a personalized and comprehensive approach to diagnosis and treatment.

You are a unique, complex individual comprised of an orchestra of trillions of cells that work in harmony to create the symphony of your very being. Add to that the trillions of microbes that live in and on your body to regulate immunity, digestion and other important functions. Looking further, you have a unique history, personality and emotional constitution that cannot be separated from the biology of who you are. Your beliefs, fears and thoughts shape who you are just as much as the foods you eat.

A naturopathic doctor friend of mine told me that when a man with prostate cancer walks into his office, there is usually a man attached to the prostate. Many patients in this situation feel that the doctor is only concerned with them clinically from the waist down, and doesn't take other symptoms into the equation. This highlights the importance of finding a doctor that looks at you as a whole person, or holistically.

A doctor who treats the whole person understands that that mind and body are connected. Rather than focusing on one particular system or symptom, they will understand:

- The role digestion has on immunity
- The role that environment has on genetic expression
- The role of sleep for hormone balance
- The role of exercise for healthy bone density
- The role of nutrition for preventing cancer
- The importance of identifying and removing chemicals and carcinogens in your kitchen, bathroom, bedroom, classroom, backyard and office
- The role of your emotions and stress on heart disease and immune function

A doctor who treats the whole person will consider your fears and stress level, and help you identify triggers.



Identify and Treats the Causes (*Tolle Causam*)

Illness does not occur without cause. Causes may originate in many areas and between the biological systems that make up human life. Underlying causes of illness and disease must be identified and removed before complete recovery can occur. Symptoms of disease can be expressions of the body's attempt to defend itself, to adapt and recover, to heal itself, or may be results of the causes of disease.

My naturopathic physician sought to treat the causes of disease, rather than to merely eliminate or suppress my symptoms.

Practice Prevention

The prevention of disease and the attainment of optimal health in patients are primary objectives of a good doctor. In practice, these objectives are accomplished through education and the promotion of healthy ways of living. Good physicians assess risk factors, heredity and susceptibility to disease, and make appropriate interventions in partnership with their patients to prevent illness. Naturopathic medicine especially asserts that one cannot be healthy in an unhealthy environment and is committed to the creation of a world in which humanity may thrive.



Research shows that more than 80% of chronic diseases are preventable, and this number is as high as 95% for some diseases. At the *NaturalPath* our motto is “Prevention is the best cure”. A good doctor will work with you identify risk factors for illness and devise a plan that is proactive instead of reactive. An effective doctor will do this by:

- Taking time to hear your entire history to identify risk factors that can promote chronic disease
- Suggest diagnostics based on what he or she deems appropriate and necessary, not based on a diagnosis code or what is dictated by an insurance company.
- Identifying risk factors influenced by your lifestyle, personal rhythms and habits
- Prescribe a diet not based on current fads but on your individual constitution

They will give you tools, exercises and resources to reduce stress when you can, and cope with stress when it can't be avoided. Some of these modalities include:

- Meditation
- Nutritional Support
- Physical exercise program
- Journaling exercises
- Herbs
- Supplements
- Laser therapy
- Resources such as books and websites
- Clinical hypnotherapy
- Tapping
- EMDR
- Counseling
- Biofeedback
- Hypnosis
- Homeopathy
- Acupuncture
- Aromatherapy
- Color therapy
- Hydrotherapy
- Massage

Inspires Hope

A good doctor inspires hope in a patient. Dr. Kelly Turner, in her bestselling book *Radical Remission*, tells the story of a patient who spontaneously healed from cancer. Her physician asked her not to tell anyone in the waiting room, so as not to give “false hope” to other patients. Turner goes on to say that it is only “false” hope if the stories are false. Healing does happen; no one can 100% accurately predict a patient’s journey or outcome.

The definition of hope is to desire with expectation of obtainment : to expect with confidence : trust. Hope, along with positive thinking, allows us to live in the now.

Asks, What You Eat for Breakfast

Less than 20% of doctors learn nutrition in medical school. What you eat, is very important information to a good doctor. Knowing the foods you eat regularly as well as foods that you avoid can help the conscientious doctor know what nutrients or minerals you may be deficient in. Whether your diet consists of organic or gmo, is processed or contains chemicals (flavors and dyes) contain stimulants (how much caffeine you consume regularly are so important you that a doctor simply cannot devise a precise treatment plan without it). If your doctor doesn’t ask these questions and make recommendations accordingly, you are at a disadvantage.

With the new science of epigenetics, we are learning that our mind is a powerful modulator of health. You’ve heard of Placebo and the Placebo effect. You may be less familiar with the Nocebo effect

Practices What They Preach

As superficial as this might sound, intuitively, you know this to be true. Would you get a haircut from someone with a bad haircut? You want to find a doctor that that practices what they preach. A physician is a teacher, a coach, and a mentor. If they seem unhealthy, overweight, out of shape or smell like cigarette smoke (this happened to me!) then they may not be the best choice. I know the saying goes “Those who can’t do, teach” but you don’t want this to apply to your choice of health care provider. You want a doctor you can be inspired and motivated by. Afterall, you are paying them for a service

Remember Who's Boss!

In a doctor patient relationship, you are the client and they are the provider. Another way to say this is you are the boss and they are the employee! You can fire your doctor at anytime just as you would an accountant or plumber. If you feel like your doctor is not providing you with the level of care you would expect from any other service provider, it's time to reassess. You are the manager of your own assets, and your health is your most important asset. Is your doctor a valuable contributor to your health? Do you feel your time with him or her is well spent? Do you walk away from appointments feeling in a better, more informed and empowered position than you were before? Would you lend your own reputation and personally recommend him to other people you care about? Sometimes in business we have to make difficult decisions, and this includes finding the best fit for your business, team, organization, or health!



7

REASONS TO SAY,
"YOU'RE FIRED"

1. Your doctor doesn't respect your time

My time is valuable, your time is valuable, the doctor's time is valuable. In the current healthcare model of HMOs and PPOs, some of us are forced to wait days to see our primary doctor and weeks or even months to get to see a specialist. We are expected to arrive early and if we miss an appointment, we are required to pay a 45 dollar rescheduling fee... Now, when a doctor is late our time is not compensated.

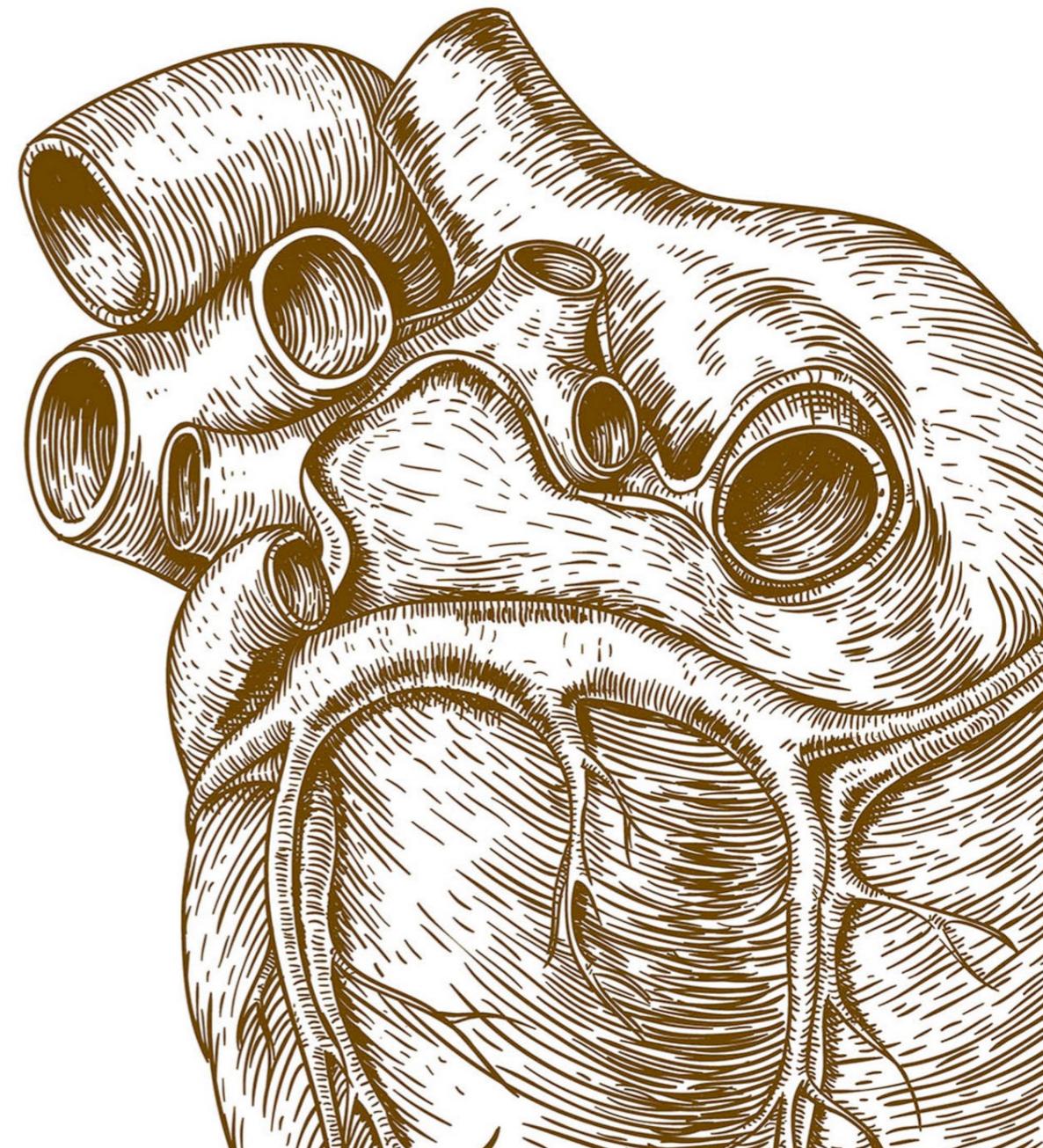
A good doctor and a good clinic is flexible with your time and properly schedule patient appointments, to avoid long wait times. We are all human and sometimes things can happen in practice that can cause delays throughout an entire day. We need to take a look at the frequency of these occurrences, as they may highlight a more systemic problem in scheduling policies.

2. Your doctor doesn't work well with your health team

A doctor is not the only person involved in your health team. When a doctor recommends changes to personal habit that can mitigate disease, we must look outside the doctor's office for support. When working with a doctor, it is important to find a doctor that supports collaboration. Your doctor should have an understanding of all the pharmaceuticals and supplements you take, understand how you stay active/inactive, and how even the use of alternative therapies can impact or react to one another.

3. Your doctor is rude or apathetic

Bedside manner can encourage or discourage the healing process. To have a physician tell you, "It's all in your head" can be traumatic, and takes away your power to get to the root of disease. I understand not all personality types will mesh; but in my personal healing journey, I was confronted with doctors that could not give me the support I needed. They were not compassionate, they



wouldn't take the time to discuss my fears or hopes for a future without chronic pain and fatigue. I was already oppressed from my physical condition, but to have that compounded with the feeling of going crazy, was overwhelming.

It's understandable that a physician seeing and treating so many patients, day-after-day, could be desensitized to this emotional turmoil, but a good doctor takes the time to understand your emotional and spiritual response to any given diagnosis.

Now it is important to state, that some individuals may prefer a physician that is very direct and matter-of-fact. Some people need decisive individuals to make that transition from disease to health.

They need a leader that can leave them feeling empowered and motivated. At its core the physician is responsible appropriately manage anxiety, fears and concerns of the patient, as well as set expectations to mitigate lingering stress from uncertainty.

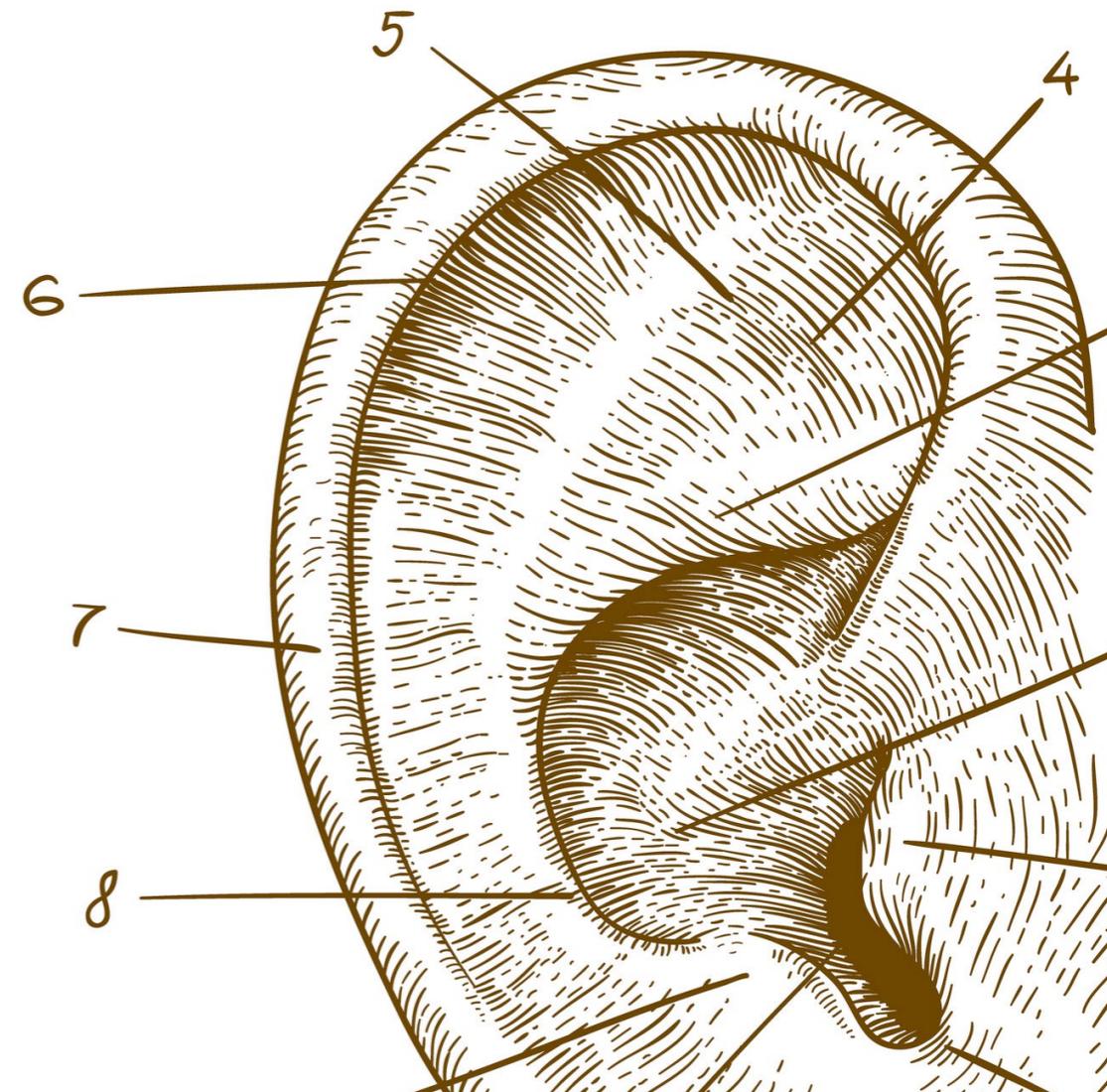
Stress releases hormones in the body to prepare us for a fight or flight reaction. It is meant to aid in our survival when faced with a life threatening event, such as diagnosis. Stress can lead to a compromised immune system, obesity, and other risk factors for chronic disease.

It is the physician's duty to his patient to remove the obstacle to heal, not plant new barriers.

4. Your doctor can't be reached

When faced with a diagnosis or undergoing treatment, we have stated collaboration and conversation are key. There is no repair manual for the human body nor any quick fixes. Treatments can also leave us with feelings of anxiety, stress, or just not ourselves. It is during these times we want to reach out and ensure everything is okay or is not.

A good doctor will allow a direct line of communication between his office and the patient. He/she will have procedure and staff in place to handle your concerns in an appropriate amount of time, so you are not left in the dark. Email, personal pagers (yes, doctors still use



these), nurse line, and skype provide nice touches to any clinic and ensure you will not be left hanging.

Now, this is not a place to squeeze in a free appointment, but to address medical concerns, possible interactions with medications, new or worsening symptoms that cannot wait for the next office visit.

5. Your doctor's staff is unprofessional

You are the company you keep. The doctor is not only a doctor, but also an entrepreneur and small business owner. They are the ones that dictate the office policies, hire staff and set the example for professional relationships between clients and staff. If the doctor is not a good leader, things will inevitably start falling through the cracks. Your medical records are not received by the requested parties, you aren't informed of a schedule change, or you get to listen to the relationship drama between the receptionist and her boyfriend while sitting in the waiting room. The physician's office is a place of healing and healing cannot happen in an environment of stress.

If you are concerned, give your physician a chance to rectify the situation with their staff and identify what may make you feel uncomfortable.

6. Your doctor doesn't let you ask questions or question his/her treatment plan

Does going to see your doctor bring you anxiety?

White coat hypertension is a very real condition, defined as:

“a syndrome whereby a patient's feeling of anxiety in a medical environment results in an abnormally high reading when their blood pressure is measured.”



Beyond the physiology response to being in the clinical setting, this anxiety can lead to an inability for some patient to advocate for their own health or even prohibit them from asking questions when they do not understand what's going on.

A good doctor will always support you in your path to health.

Returning to the principle of *Docere, Doctor as Teacher*, you need to be able to have a conversation about what is involved in your path to healing. You should always be able to ask the questions, what & why? Why are you prescribing, x ? What is this blood test for?

Always make it a point to write down and bring in at least 10 questions to maximum your time with your physician. This will open lines of communication and lead to a natural conversation to address specific concerns. If your doctor does not respond to your questions, it's time to find someone who will.

7. Your doctor is enabling you

It is our own charge to be the advocates for our own health. We can try our best to stay active, eat well, and live mindfully, but we must also be held accountable for our poor habits and work to find a better path to health. Lets use the example of a 50 something year old male suffering from acid reflux. His daily rituals begin with a trip to the local gas station with the purchase of a glazed donut and a large coffee. He sits at this desk all day, throws something in the microwave for lunch and by 2:30 starts feeling the pain in his chest. Concerned about the risk of a heart attack, he visits his local primary care doctor and is diagnosed with acid reflux. At this point two thing can happen, the doctor can provide a prescription or recommend the use of an over-the-counter Protein Pump Inhibitor

(PPI), which recent studies have shown to increase the risk of kidney failure and dementia, or can spend time with the patient to identify how his diet and lifestyle are contributing to his chest pain.

A good doctor would look beyond means of symptom suppression and work with the patient so he understands how his daily rituals and consumption of sugar, caffeine, BPAs in conjunction with low levels of physical active have spurred his bouts of acid reflux and make him susceptible to new diseases as he ages.

If the doctor simply chooses to put his/her patient on the PPI without consideration for the cause of the condition, the doctor is enabling his/her patient to continue poor habits.

