

# SHEN<sup>®</sup> THERAPY:

## *The Role of Emotions in your Health and Recovery*

by Russell Fox, CSI

Having just walked into the mall, Julie became immediately aware of the onset of what by this time had become an all too common spiral of sensations: increased perspiration, an accelerating heart rate, shortness of breath, gripping of the abdominal muscles, impending explosive diarrhea, and a crushing feeling of terror. Unfortunately, in recent months these unexpected attacks had been increasing in both frequency and severity. Something had to be done, but what?

Overwhelming anxiety and/or panic attacks are a living nightmare. Although most of us do not regularly have to deal with this experience, the very existence of anxiety/panic attacks brings up important questions that directly affect us all:

1. Why are emotions actually *felt* in our bodies?
2. Why do we all feel the same emotions in the same specific body areas?
3. What is it that allows painful, often deeply repressed emotions to be converted into troubling and, at times, crippling psychological and physical dysfunctions?

For those who only know the traditional medical and psychological models, these are actually quite difficult questions to answer. There just doesn't seem to be a brain-body mechanism that would account for the site-specific somatic (physical) reactions we all have to specific emotions. Yet, there must be some previously undetected system that could explain why people from all cultures and historical periods sense their emotions in the same specific regions of the torso.

For example, anyone who has ever experienced a deep sense of loss can accurately point to the mid-chest area of the heart as the place where sadness and grief are felt. Likewise, almost everyone has felt the sickening grip of guilt and shame in his or her lower abdomen. Anger and fear are always centered in "the pit of the stomach," near the solar plexus.

Because these difficult emotions are painful, and because we learn that it is not socially appropriate to express them, we usually repress them. However, repressing them does not make them go away. They remain inside affecting everything we do. At some point, many of us come to realize that these deeply repressed, long-term troubling emotions are controlling all our social behaviors. Held long enough, these unresolved emotions contribute to depression, chemical dependency, anxiety, codependency, sleep disorders and phobias.

Physically, we know that our bodies "act up" when we become emotionally upset. Our stomachs often refuse to function properly, our hearts may be in pain, we may have unexplained constipation, or lose normal sexual interest and function.

Emotions become trapped in our bodies by a process called the "Auto-Contractile Pain Response" - the body's natural response to involuntarily contract around sites of pain. When these contractions are held for long periods, they eventually begin depriving the affected tissues of much needed cellular nutrients, as well as interrupting the normal elimination of toxic metabolic waste. In this way, painful emotions can gradually convert into such disruptive physio-emotional disorders as digestive and bowel irregularities, debilitating migraines, elevated premenstrual



**There is no need to run outside  
For better seeing,  
Nor to peer from a window.  
Rather, abide  
At the center of your being ...  
Search your heart and see -  
The way to do is to be.**

- Lao Tse

distress, ulcers, non-biological chronic back pain, and psychogenic sexual dysfunction, just to name a few.

Rather than a long-term administering of drugs that only mask the symptoms of these physio-emotional disorders, what is needed is a non-invasive therapy which works to release these troubling held emotions, thereby accessing the deeper beneficial and life-affirming emotions of confidence, joy and love which are so necessary for satisfying productive human functioning.

The brightest hope and most encouraging development in recent years has been the emergence of "SHEN Physio-Emotional Release Therapy," a new concept for the hands-on treatment of emotionally rooted disorders. The name SHEN is an acronym for Specific Human Emotional Nexus, a reference to the site specific qualities of felt human emotions referred to earlier.

When the pressureless touch procedures comprising SHEN are applied to the body, the involuntary contractions that surround sites of either physical or emotional pain are dissolved. Their damaging effects on the local body regions also end as the glands and organs in that region become free to function normally. Dramatic reductions in chronic pain and the other primary symptoms often occur quite rapidly.

In the mid-1970's Richard R. Pavek, a physicist, engineer and the developer of SHEN Therapy, found himself in a loosely styled workshop on "subtle

energies." What that actually meant, he had no idea, but he was willing to find out. At one point, the participants were instructed to "run energy" through a partner to see if they could balance the temperature in different parts of the body. Pavek did not expect much to happen, but shortly after placing his hands across the abdomen of his partner, he saw her begin to sob, and then noticed her pelvis go into contractions. Pavek relates, *"At the same time, my arms and hands got extremely hot as sweat broke out on my forehead and the hair on my arms began to stand up. When the episode ended, the woman said, 'I feel like I just gave birth to myself.' Over the next few days of the workshop, it became clear that something about her had changed. An emotional weight seemed to have lifted, and her life had become dramatically different."*

Since most of Pavek's training had been in chemistry, electronics and aeronautics, he viewed the phenomenon as having something to do with fields in physics, rather than anything associated with metaphysics or magic. He decided to follow the principles that apply to all other field systems in physics, such as the formative currents of weather systems, water currents and magnetism. Once SHEN's hands-on procedures were determined, he began an investigation into the dynamics of emotion. SHEN Physio-Emotional Release Therapy is the combined result of his research.

During more than two decades of development, SHEN techniques have been thoroughly tested in a number of hospitals, clinics, chemical dependency treatment centers, chronic pain units and mental health facilities. Without exception, SHEN has been found to be a valid and powerful treatment method for a wide variety of emotionally rooted disorders.

While SHEN is a new development and does not derive from older methods, there are several medically-oriented antecedents as far back as ancient Egypt. Notable among recent ones are Polarity Therapy, developed earlier in the 20th century by Randolph Stone, D.C., D.D., and Therapeutic Touch, developed more recently by Dolores Kreiger, Ph.D., RN. While there are major differences between

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SHEN and these two disciplines in theory, approach and application, each recognizes the reality of the human biofield, and relies on the utilization of this field for therapeutic results. The flow of the biofield is often referred to by the Chinese term Qi (pronounced: "chee").

SHEN sessions last about an hour, during which you lie fully clothed on an elevated cradle while the practitioner gently lays his/her hands on your body in a series of specific placements designed to break the contractions that trap the painful emotions and disrupt your body's functioning. You may feel tingles, warmth or other body sensations, but generally, there is no pain associated with SHEN.

You will relax deeply. You may even fall asleep. It is common for clients to enter a meditation-like state of awareness where problems are seen differently. Often SHEN sessions liberate beneficial emotions that have not been experienced in years, as well as uncovering previously hidden pivotal memories.

Is SHEN medical, psychiatric or psychological treatment? "No" to each, nor does it replace or interfere with such treatments. The practice of medicine deals with biological disorders, psychiatry deals with mental disorders, and psychology deals with behavioral disorders. SHEN is used to release debilitating emotions from the body, allowing us to feel and be governed by the emotions of confidence, joy and love.

And what about poor Julie whom we left at the mall in the grip of a debilitating anxiety/panic attack? On her first visit, we discussed the situations which seemed to trigger her attacks, and the specific sensations and manifestations she experienced during them. We determined that specific work in the areas of the solar plexus and the abdomen were indicated.

She quickly fell asleep at the beginning of the session, during which

her feet and legs jerked. These are common reactions indicating the release of old, painful emotions. This was also accompanied by some intestinal rumblings and few quick contractions of the abdominal muscles.

In Julie's case, she reported having no memories come up during her sessions, but was astounded by the profound sense of relaxation felt during and following her next five SHEN sessions. To date, fourteen years later, there have been no re-occurrences of her once debilitating anxiety attacks.

SHEN is an intensive, short-term process. The number of sessions needed depends upon the client's current physio-emotional state and his/her goals. SHEN practitioners do not foster dependence. Their aim is to have their clients function normally and independently, without constant help or support.

A number of Certified SHEN Therapists and Supervised SHEN Interns offer SHEN as a stand alone therapy, while other health professionals have incorporated SHEN techniques into their practice.

SHEN Personal Empowerment Intensives are held frequently in various parts of the U.S., Canada and Europe. These seven-day personal growth and discovery intensives are also the first vital training step for those wishing to become certified as SHEN Therapists.

***Russell Fox**, Certified SHEN Instructor, has also trained in Therapeutic Massage, Polarity Therapy and Reiki. For more information and/or to schedule an appointment call 323/937-9307.*

## RESOURCES

### **The SHEN Center of Los Angeles**

Russell Fox, CSI, Director  
323/937-9307

### **SHEN Therapy Institute**

Richard R. Pavek, Founder & Director  
415/332-2593