

# DEEP

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# IMMUNITY

## *Understanding Your Body's Immune System*

Second Edition

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To Sarah, Erin, Clara and Gladys—  
my teachers, my inspiration and my support.

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Anthony Godfrey  
Toronto, Canada,  
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## Contents

Chapter One • Page 7  
*An Introduction to Deep Immunity*



Chapter Two • Page 18  
*How the Immune System Works*



Chapter Three • Page 33  
*The Compromised Immune System*



Chapter Four • Page 49  
*Regaining Balance*



Chapter Five • Page 63  
*The Role of Herbal or Botanical Preparations  
in Immune Enhancement*



Chapter Six • Page 76  
*Immune Related Conditions in My Clinical Practice  
as a Naturopathic Doctor*



Chapter Seven • Page 89  
*The Seasons of the Year & the Seasons of Life:  
Advice from a Practitioner*



In Conclusion • Page 102



## □ Chapter One □

# *An Introduction to Deep Immunity*

### The Nature of Immunity

Right relationships are the basis of immunity. It's about balance—balance within ourselves, with our environment, and with the whole universe. It's not about isolation, about making ourselves invulnerable to attack. Rather, it is a matter of living in harmony with everything around us. As we express our true selves in relationship to the world around us, we help create harmony rather than warfare. In cooperation with the created order around us, we enter into communion with our world. The key to communion, this harmony of being, is that each one of us in the great chain of being lives true to his nature—that is, with integrity.

These relationships work best when each of us remains focused on expressing his own deepest identity as a created being and does so in the knowledge that his existence is not an accident, but that every thing has a rightful place in the universe. With this self-awareness comes respect for the other creatures in the environment and out of this grows a harmonious synergy of life.

But this is not a perfect world, or, more specifically, we humans are not perfect. There is much disharmony. In recent times, the expression of identity and the definition of boundaries have become more aggressive, responding to *attack* with *counter-attack*. The modern language of immunity is militaristic: it speaks of immunity to *attack* by micro-organisms, about mounting a *defense* or a *counter-attack*. While it is almost impossible—even in this book—to avoid using this language, it does not capture the real power of immunity. The

real power of immunity comes from being true to ourselves—each of us to our own identity. As we express ourselves with integrity, we enter into a respectful, co-operative, and harmonious relationship with all the inhabitants of the world around us.

### ***Learning to Listen***

Good health is one of the most highly valued of life's attributes, but for most of us it is elusive. The symptoms of ill-health are a language that the body, the mind, and the spirit speak to us to indicate that something in our life is out of balance. When we desire to live in integrity and in harmony with ourselves and our environment, we learn to interpret the language of ill-health. Small symptoms, maybe just an awareness that something is not quite right, attract our attention and help us to recognize the disharmony within ourselves. With this recognition, we can respond in a positive way to restore the balance. As we begin to trust our response to the symptoms of ill-health, we feel a growing sense of confidence and actually begin to feel alive in a way we could not before. Instead of reacting in fear and in uncertainty, resigning ourselves to the condition of ill-health, we can follow the path to wellness and wholeness of being.

Fear isolates. When we feel isolated, we lose our sense of self and our sense of relatedness to the world around us. No longer knowing our place in the world, we experience a loss of equilibrium. There's no need to fear ill-health. Ill-health is an indication that we are out of balance—that we are not living true to ourselves and are also out of harmony with our environment and the creatures in it. If we react to ill-health in fear, then we depress our immune response, but if our response is to acknowledge that we are part of a greater whole and that our symptoms indicate that we are out of harmony with ourselves and that greater whole, then our immune system becomes stronger and we begin to return to health.

Occasionally we meet a person who has lost the will to live. This situation is dire because we know that immunity and the ability to restore health depend on a positive use of one's will. A person can only lose the will to live when he has lost his sense of identity. If he rediscovers the sense of self, then he reclaims his will, the will

to live fully and even to live happily a death that is inevitable. Life is an expression of our ability to respond, to be responsive, responsible—not in the sense of being a good person fulfilling all of our commitments, but inwardly always holding in our hearts the vision of what we believe we can become and those things that we believe it is our gift to be a part of, to foster, and to bring into being.

### *The Meaning of Self and Non-Self*

Self and non-self—these are distinctions we can make between that which is a part of me or that which I am and that which lies beyond or outside of me. These terms speak not simply about our physical being, but, in a more complete sense, about our totality as a physical and psycho-spiritual being. We must each determine this difference between self and non-self.

This determination of self and non-self will allow us to come into possession of our true self and all that we are. When we come to this self-possession and can express our sense of self clearly and with integrity, others will be apt to perceive this expression of self in a vivid and immediate, almost palpable, way. This has been described as a “presence” of the person or the manifestation of a person’s spiritual identity. The more self-possessed we are and the more connected we are to our identity, the greater will be this perceived presence. This is merely an indication that we have taken our proper place in the world around us, enabling ourselves to build the best immune system possible. This knowledge of self and its expression manifests a perfect immunity—I know who I am and who I am not, what I am and what I am not.

Thus we can create better relationships, because, when others see who we are and that we are secure and at peace in our existence, they also feel secure and are inspired to look to their own deeper needs, issues, and identity. This happens in all relationships, not just with our fellow human beings, but with all of creation.

### *Determining Physical Boundaries*

Let us look now at immunity on the physical level. Awareness of ourselves and of our environment is the first criterion for good

immunity. How does our body know what is happening to it and when it might be compromised? Our bodies are vigilant. People who are very unaware of their bodies often get more seriously sick than those who are vigilant, or their symptoms become more advanced before they seek help. Vigilance does not mean worrying, being a hypochondriac or constantly going for check-ups—it means being aware of subtle disturbances to our peace and the sense of wellbeing that we should feel. What should follow next is an appropriate response—a slight course correction, if you like, to bring us back into balance.

Our skin is our major interface with the outside world. It can tell us if we are getting too cold or too hot, or whether we are wet and likely to get chilled and catch a cold as a result of the wind blowing on us. An appropriate response is to wrap up warmly or remove some clothes, to dry off, or protect ourselves from the wind and perhaps have a warm drink or warm soup. Such actions are common sense. They are the first use of immune sense.

### ***Establishing Psycho-Spiritual Boundaries***

Immunity, based upon the awareness of our own self identity, is important on another level. All of us at times are aware that we are under psychological or spiritual attack—that someone is projecting negativity at us. In arguments we can feel the angry words tearing into us or feel the penetration of hatred or jealousy or envy from another's eyes. Conversely, just as people can penetrate our personal space with their consciousness and deposit negative energy there, they can also, if we allow them, gain entry and steal a part of our energy or our consciousness. I am sure many of us have experienced this too, that some people leave us feeling uncharacteristically depleted, exhausted or emotional—perhaps sad, guilty or lacking in self-esteem.

How then do we protect ourselves from these influences? This is a matter of immunity also. In fact, through a strong sense of self, the boundaries of our consciousness are strengthened. We become more aware of negativity approaching us and can refuse entry to it more successfully. If there has been some violation or if we feel the

negativity still sticking to us, we can re-establish the boundaries of self and reclaim our peace.

In fact, psychological and spiritual violations of any kind are contrary to the basic laws of the universe. That we disobey these laws is a fundamental reason why we perceive immunity in militaristic terms. Once we strive to live true to our self-identity, in self-possession and with respect for all creation, our concept of immunity changes.

So, which works best? The fortress approach, where we cut ourselves off from the outside world and respond to attack with merciless counter-attack? Or the harmonious approach based on improved self-awareness and a fuller expression of identity and mutual respect? While some might say that ideally the harmonious approach would work best and might be willing to give it a try, I suspect that in practice most people still support the fortress approach. I hope to show in this short book that the strongest, most enduring and, thus, most successful immunity is built on co-operation and mutual respect. I will also show that as long as we perpetuate the fortress approach, our immune problems will multiply.

Joy is a word we don't hear much, but joy is what we begin to feel as we develop true immunity. It comes from being in a right relationship with everything in the world and beyond, from living a life fully expressive of our truest, deepest nature. It is a loving and respectful relationship that creates joy within us and around us.

## **The Purpose of this Book**

Appreciation of the miraculous working of your immune system can only serve to empower you. It will give you both a greater understanding of the mechanisms of immunity and a greater ability to utilize, strengthen, balance, and direct it. Modern science is only beginning to understand how the immune system works. The detail and complexity seem endless. As one branch of science, the reductionist branch, probes deeper and deeper into smaller and smaller fragments of the mechanism, another branch, that of quantum

physics, looks outward. Contemporary science and medicine have discovered that in many ways we determine our own reality, and that, in fact, we are capable of determining our very selves in every instant and that what we hold as our deepest beliefs about ourselves and our relationship to the rest of the universe determines, in a very real way, how we feel, how well we function and, as a result of this, how our immune system works.

In this book I will share an introductory understanding of both these viewpoints—one the reductionist, Cartesian or Newtonian view, the other a post-Einsteinian one. The latter blends vividly with the experiences of mystics and other deeply aware and self-aware people. In case you are not familiar with these more recent developments in our understanding, I will provide a bibliography of suggested reading at the end of the book.

I am writing this book from my perspective as a naturopathic doctor. Naturopathic doctors hold five principles which guide their practice of medicine and their relationship with their clients. The first principle, “First Do No Harm,” which we share with medical doctors, is attributed to Hippocrates, one of the founding fathers of modern medicine. This is followed by the second principle, “Find and Treat The Cause.” In order to discover the cause of a person’s ill-health, a cause which may originate at the physical level, but usually has emotional, mental, and spiritual components as well, we must come to know the whole person.

“Treat the Whole Person” is the third of our principles, meaning that we must take into account that the symptoms the person is experiencing may have their origin at a deeper level. Physical symptoms may be related to emotions, to mental stress or be a result of negative beliefs or attitudes which diminish rather than build the person up. If there is an openness, then it is important to treat the person at these deeper levels.

The process of healing is most successful when it is assisted and guided by nature. The healing power of nature—in Latin, the *Vis Medicatrix Naturae*—is a power which lies within us and all of creation. Our fourth principle is to “Employ the Healing Power

of Nature.” This power is found in sunshine, fresh air, pure water, earth, and the plants that grow on the earth. It can facilitate healing and move us in that direction by reminding us what it feels like to be well. I will discuss all these factors in detail below in my role as a conveyor of our fifth principle: “Doctor as Teacher.”

The following sections provide an overview of the material to be discussed in this book.

### ***The Physiological Components of the Immune System***

Antibodies are the proteins that the body creates to neutralize foreign substances that compromise the health of the body. Antibodies are produced by cells called B-lymphocytes and are one of our main defences against micro-organisms. Unfortunately, we can mistakenly make antibodies to substances that are not, in and of themselves, harmful, such as cat dander, ragweed pollen, peanuts or shellfish. We will discuss antibodies as part of what is called *humoral immunity*.

Cells contribute to immunity in other ways as well. Several classes of cells can attract, consume (phagocytose), and destroy bacteria, other micro-organisms, cancer cells, and unwanted debris in the body. This is called *cellular immunity*.

Lastly, there are several classes of chemical components released by cells in an immune response which facilitate cell mobilization, cell production, antibody production, and cell movement and which potentiate the effectiveness of antibodies in their efforts to protect us.

### ***Causes of a Compromised Immune System***

The immune system has certain essential requirements during its development in infancy and childhood, which, if not met, gives us a rocky start. We humans have evolved in co-existence with the other creatures of the earth, most importantly, micro-organisms. In order to create a balanced co-operative relationship with the many species of bacteria, fungi, and other organisms that live in us and on us, we need a proper introduction to them. There are trillions of

micro-organisms in each of us, and we need them as much as they need us. If we don't start our lives in a consistent environment, with healthy parents and a normal vaginal birth followed by breast-feeding, problems can arise.

The effort to separate or isolate ourselves from the environment in which these organisms live backfires. It is an example of how ignoring or trying to modify the laws of nature, within which we evolved, results in separation from the healing power of nature. Under such unnatural circumstances, the developing infant immune system can become overwhelmed. Even though it is not easy for many of us to provide a natural start for our children, it is reassuring to know that it is usually possible to correct these early problems. To get the best results, however, we must come back into harmony with nature, not move further away from her.

### ***Restoring the Immune System***

Nurturing ourselves and one another is the fastest way to recover our health and balance our immunity. Nurturing means supplying healing help, nourishment, care, concern, and listening. Listening is a vital part of nurturing. In order to contribute to healing, we must listen for signs of distress, listen to the emotions, to body language, to unspoken evidence of pain, damage, hurt, trauma—all the factors which create imbalance in us or another person. Through listening, we learn how to approach the situation in truth with a positive mental attitude and can provide elements of nurturing, be it food, a cool bath, or a herbal remedy. Thus balance begins to be restored.

The act of listening and responding compassionately and appropriately not only helps a person to come back into balance, but it gives them strength. That strength comes because of our intent to listen without judgment, to respond with compassion. The strength does not come from us, but rather it flows through us. We facilitate healing by trying to come into harmony with the laws of healing and by seeking to be agents of healing by holding unconditional love for the person in need—be they ourselves or another.

### ***Rebuilding and Maintaining an Effective Immune System***

If we are well-balanced, our immunity will be strong, and we will be able to detect the beginnings of imbalance. Until we become attuned to self-balance, we may not notice anything wrong until something really serious gets our attention—a crushing headache, the inability to breathe, a pain which makes us double over—any of a whole range of physical symptoms. We should also realize we are far out of balance if we are overly emotional—fearful, anxious, vengeful, uncontrollably angry, self-destructive, or, as mentioned, resigned to self-deprecating judgement, losing ourselves and our way spiritually. With practice, however, our vigilance will pay off, and we will detect the slightest disturbance to our inner or outer balance. This developing self-awareness and our increasing sensitivity to our environment allow us to enter into a co-operative relationship, working with any unbalancing factor, whether from within or without.

Let us start with an example of inner imbalance. If we feel fear and are able to acknowledge it, we can then ask help from another to alleviate that fear, drawing on or accessing the courage that another can hold for us. In time we realize that courage also lies within us and we can learn to access it ourselves. The ability to manage our fear is already a part of our identity, and we will discuss how to make such inner transitions later.

If our imbalance is caused by an outer factor, our symptoms, if carefully observed, will lead us to a remedy. We are cold—but why? Maybe it is cold where we are, or, then again, perhaps our energy is low because we haven't eaten recently or are overtired. Maybe our circulation needs help. Appropriate actions and appropriate herbal remedies can restore balance and good health.

### ***The Unique Contribution of Herbal Remedies***

*Specific Medication* is the title of a book written in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century by an Eclectic Physician by the name of John Scudder. He was a leading light in herbalism's golden era and enjoyed great success because he realized that each medicinally useful plant carried

specific qualities. These qualities included their physical nature, their chemical constituents, but went far beyond chemistry to address, by their essence or energetic qualities, the deeper imbalances within the person. Homeopathy, a branch of holistic medicine that developed early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, uses only the energetic properties of plants and other substances to support healing, and Scudder was able to tie the two together—the physical and the energetic. His ability to match a healing herb to the needs of an individual and his evaluations of the specific healing qualities of plants have stood the test of time.

Traditional Chinese medical doctors also understood this balance of the physical and the energetic and developed sensitive diagnostic methods to determine which specific plants should be utilized in order to restore harmonious functioning. Although most of this work was done before the era of modern scientific investigation, their intuitive understanding of the healing qualities of plants is being borne out by modern research.

### ***Finding the Best Herbal Immune Product***

No two people are alike. No two cases of a disease are alike. Even in two people with the same diagnosis, disease does not develop, nor will it progress, in the same way. This means the physician must treat each person as a unique case. We must each look at ourselves in the same way. We have the freedom and the responsibility to choose the specific path of healing which seems to suit our own situation best. In order to do this, we may need the help of a skilled diagnostician and a skilled herbalist. If we are encouraged to cooperate fully in the history-taking—the listening—and feel good about the diagnosis and the plan of treatment, then we should arrive at the most appropriate approach for our unique situation.

The skilled herbalist will then combine the appropriate herbs to make your first remedy. As you begin to recover, this remedy may be modified or other remedies added, to support you on your healing journey.

Quality herbs are essential to this process. You may find a skilled

diagnostician, a brilliant compounder, but if the herbs themselves lack vitality or have been poorly stored and perhaps damaged by mold, radiation or contamination, their full potential to heal will not be available to you.

### ***When the Immune System Is Most in Need of Support***

Stress of any kind will weaken our immune systems. Stress, or more correctly, the nature of our response to challenges which tend to disturb or unbalance us, can come in many forms. Some of us, for example, are susceptible to the challenges of extreme weather conditions. For others, the responsibilities of being a parent, a teacher, a nurse or a doctor, where people are dependent on you and draw on you, may be very stressful. For yet others, life itself and the attempt to make good decisions can cause anxiety and worry, which in turn cause an increase in adrenaline levels, a physiological response which we know depresses the immune system.

Physical challenges such as weather, lack of sleep, inadequate nutrition, lack of exercise and limited access to the healing power of the natural environment will create a need for immune support.

To some extent, we can offset these physical effects by connecting to our inner sense of self and rebuilding our presence from within, thereby becoming recollected and strengthening our self-possession. Psycho-spiritual attacks can bring us down if we are not able to protect ourselves, but the most devastating influence of all is negative self-talk. When we allow ourselves to embrace negative beliefs about ourselves, when we fall into despair and lack of self-esteem and become resigned to these judgements about ourselves—in other words, when we lose our identity—that is when our immune system is most in need of support.