



## Therapeutic Indigestion

Last week two clients made excellent decisions about therapeutic care. I thought that I'd use those two examples as a springboard to a larger conversation about one of my pet peeves. [Of course, my pet peeves are usually an external representation of some internal aspect of myself that I don't like. In this case, it is my tendency to get carried away with what I call my "WD-40 Disease." If a little lubricant is good, then more must be better! To this day I still over-lubricate things and end up with a big mess to clean up. So, if a little exercise is good, then ... you get the idea.]

One client was bringing her daughter to see me. We were trying to orchestrate the timing and she said, "We'll be coming straight from her acupuncture appointment, but we should just be able to make it to your office." *Then she asked a great question, "Is that too much work for one day?"* My answer was "Yes. YES. Absolutely too much!"

The second client lives far away, but sees a chiropractor whose office is near my office. During the scheduling phase she said, "Oh, I could get some soft tissue work and an adjustment and then come to your office for a cranial session." Then she paused and said, "Is that a good idea?" My answer was very clear: "No, it's not a good idea!"

In both cases, I recommended that they pick one kind of work and let that be enough for one day. Obviously they thought that my work would be helpful. Clearly they also had received benefits from acupuncture and chiropractic. The issue here was not about which style of work would be most valuable. *My primary concern was about the volume of input into the client's system.*

### TOO MUCH MUCHNESS

*Every kind of therapeutic treatment inherently involves a high volume of input into the system on some level.* It doesn't matter whether it's on a physical level with massage or a vertebral adjustment, on a cognitive or emotional level with psychotherapy, or on an energetic level with some form of energy work. *During a treatment, the system is presented with new information and new options. This is a fundamental aspect of the healing process, regardless of modality.*

Let's compare this to consuming a big dinner. After I'm done eating, I'm full. The last thing I want to do is eat another large meal. After a satisfying feast, I also feel good – the 'Doug unit' is full and happy. However, if I were forced to immediately eat a second meal, then that happy feeling would be quickly replaced with discomfort. As I moved past 'satisfied' and into 'stuffed,' my body would communicate its displeasure by sending me pain, indigestion, and so forth. Not only would I not get pleasure from the second meal, but I would also lose some of the benefits of the first meal. The end result would be to send my system into overwhelm and distress. This is not the point of eating!

If we get two (or more!) sessions in short order, the same thing happens. The system cannot handle the sheer volume of input and can easily become overwhelmed and distressed. Faced with "too much muchness" we will be unable to 'digest' and integrate the benefits of the second session **or** the first session. Even worse, the ensuing systemic overwhelm often exacerbates the very symptoms that we were trying to resolve in the first place.

## TIME MATTERS

The practical solution is to take some time between eating large meals. And between therapeutic sessions. We are designed to digest and integrate our food. Ditto for healing work. One key ingredient in both digestion and integration is time. *It's essential to remember that the time component is dynamic and mutable. Different types of work will integrate at different speeds for different people.* Indeed, there is often a wide range of digestion speeds within the same person, depending on the energy levels, the amount of stress, the connection to internal resource, and many other factors. An energy session can integrate in 7 hours or 7 days or 7 weeks! The bottom line is that it takes as long as it takes in each instance.

Very often we get ourselves into trouble when we try to be efficient with our scheduling. Most of us are so busy that planning and efficiency can take precedence over good judgment. Over the years I've heard many variations of this theme: "Well, I've got the day off on Thursday. So, I'm going to get acupuncture first thing in the morning followed by a massage. Then I'm having lunch with a friend and I'd like to have a cranial session with you before seeing my psychotherapist in the late afternoon. Do you have time for me?" While it may make sense in the appointment book, in terms of an actual life, it is really quite insane. Any one of those treatments is plenty of input for one day or for several days. *Sadly, when these therapeutic investments are stacked like firewood, their benefits are largely wasted. In many instances they can even be detrimental.*

The good news is that a little understanding goes a long way. Once people comprehend the need for space and time in the healing process, they usually choose to change their behavior to avoid getting a case of 'therapeutic indigestion.'

Bon Apetit,

Doug

**P.S.** While this topic concerned multiple therapeutic treatments, the principle applies to most aspects of the human condition. There is a natural cycle to input and integration regardless of whether it is therapy, work, recreation, sexuality, exercise, etc. In general, if you add input on any level faster than you can integrate it, you'll experience some form of unpleasantness. There might be something to the concept of moderation after all! -- D

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