

# THE HEALTH NUGGET



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BY RISE RAFFERTY

## Where the Mind Goes, the Body Will Follow

**T**houghts are powerful forces that forge character, stimulate words and actions, and charge our surrounding atmosphere with emotions. Thoughts generate from input such as genetic makeup, prior learning experience, memory, surrounding influences, sensory signals and stress.

Our thoughts can take us places. If we think something is possible, we will more likely try to achieve it. Pure, positive thoughts give physical and mental power to the thinker.

But thoughts are not just unspoken words, ideas, plans or concepts. They are transforming chemistry and mechanical energy. Every single thought we think is associated with tiny electrical nerve impulses and the release of minute amounts of chemicals between neurons.

Because the chemical nature of the thought process is highly influenced by sensory input, true and right thoughts do not always come naturally or first. While we typically think of words as expressing thoughts, thoughts may also follow our words. Emotions easily overlap thoughts as well, causing a ripple effect throughout the body. For instance, when we are stressed, depressed, angry, anxious, or feeling guilty, we are more prone to distorted thinking, misreading situations, and feeling bad—emotionally, mentally, and physically as well.

Thoughts and emotions, translated into biological and chemical signals, can trigger the development of a host of physical maladies. Studies have strongly correlated emotions with infections,

allergies, and autoimmune diseases. Emotions have even been directly and scientifically linked to cardiovascular disease.

“A Harvard Medical School study of 1,623 heart-attack survivors concluded that anger brought on by emotional conflicts doubled the risk of subsequent heart attacks compared to those who remained calm.”<sup>1</sup> A further study of “202 professional women found that tension between career and personal commitment to spouse, children, and friends was a factor associated with heart disease in women.”<sup>2</sup> According to a 1980 study conducted by Dr. Redford Williams and colleagues at Duke University, high scores on a 50-item hostility test correlated positively with the severity of coronary artery disease. Cynicism (distrust of the motives of others) was the main hostile attitude he isolated. Anger was the main emotion.

While no one likes to hear that their disease is all in the mind or stems from mental turmoil, we must accept the scientifically-proven reality that our mental and emotional functions may just as powerfully influence our health as does our environment, if not more. Dr. Candace Pert, a stress-research pioneer, expands our understanding of how intimately mind and body are connected: “In the beginning of my work, I matter-of-factly presumed that emotions were in the head or the brain. Now I would say they are really in the body.”<sup>3</sup> Emotions are experienced in the form of chemical reactions in the body and the brain—at both the organ (stomach, heart, etc.) and the cellular level.

Where the mind goes, the body will follow. If your mind is full of anxiety, fear, anger, depression or guilt, it is constantly stimulating stress responses, which open the door to disease. This does not all occur on a conscious level. “Your subconscious mind is likely the source of all psychosomatic illness.”<sup>4</sup>

How do thoughts and emotions turn into disease? Let’s briefly take a look at one way. *Neuropeptides* have been labeled by Dr. Pert as “bits of brain floating through the body.” These are only one of three types of powerful biochemicals in the body, categorized as *ligands*. But while neurotransmitters and steroids are the other types of ligands, 95 percent of all ligands are neuropeptides. These regulate almost all life processes on a cellular level. In other words, these “bits of brain” hold conversations with the cells of the body, including immune cells.

*Monocytes* are a certain class of immune cells that become phagocytic in the presence of an invader or enemy such as bacteria. This means that they literally engulf, neutralize and dispose of the intruding substance. Monocytes have tiny molecules on their surfaces called *neuroreceptors* that receive these neuropeptides and their information. All monocytes have these receptors. Neuropeptides fit into these receptors like keys that fit into molecular locks.

Amazingly these neuropeptides have been found to be mood specific. Our emotions affect the biochemical process that occurs between them and receptor sites. Their interpretation of our anger, fear, anxiety or depression will be sent to every immune cell of the body. Fear “triggers more than 1,400 known physical and chemical stress reactions and activates more than 30 different hormones and neurotransmitters.”<sup>5</sup> We could call neuropeptides “molecules of emotion”

because they move through the body in waves of information.

Science today has uncovered fascinating links between our minds and bodies. But see how one paragraph, written long ago, summarizes much of what science is discovering today. “The electric power of the brain, promoted by mental activity [that’s our thoughts and feelings] vitalizes the whole system [the mind-body connection] and is thus an invaluable aid in resisting disease [that is, if it’s positive mental activity]. . . . The power of the will and the importance of self-control, both in the preservation and in the recovery of health, the depressing and even ruinous effect of anger, discontent, selfishness, or impurity, and on the other hand, the marvelous life-giving power to be found in cheerfulness, unselfishness [and] gratitude, should also be shown.”<sup>6</sup>

“For as he thinks within himself, so he is.”<sup>7</sup>

Next month, we will look again into this theme.

<sup>1</sup> *Emotional Longevity*, Norman B. Anderson, PhD, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> *Deadly Emotions*, Don Colbert, MD, p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> *Mindwaves*, Taylor, Brewster & Nash, p. 29.

<sup>5</sup> *Deadly Emotions*, Don Colbert, MD, p. 13.

<sup>6</sup> *Education*, E.G. White, p. 197.

<sup>7</sup> Proverbs 23:7, Updated NASB.

