

Self-Care is the Heart of All Health Care

By
James S. Gordon, M.D.

Presented to the

University of Florida
January 17, 2006

During the last thirty years, clinicians and patients have worked together to create a new synthesis of modern science and ancient wisdom, of western medicine and a variety of the world's other healing traditions. This synthesis has been called "holistic", "integrative" or "new" medicine. It includes an understanding of the biological and psychological uniqueness of each person; an understanding that we are all more than the sum of our biochemical, psychological, and sociological parts; an emphasis on healing partnerships and collaboration, rather than compliance; an integration of healing systems from other parts of the world, as well as those that have been neglected in our culture; a focus on the use of groups to support, deepen and enhance work with individuals; and the understanding that illness, as well as being painful and threatening is an opportunity for transformation for patients and for those who care for them.

What we call mind-body medicine is at the center of this new medicine. It reverses the priorities of conventional biomedical practice and puts at the center of all health care those approaches that health professionals can teach to their patients.

In this talk, we'll review some of the major principles of mind-body medicine, discuss several of the most significant studies on psychosocial influences on health and illness, and touch on the utility of mind-body therapies, including relaxation therapies, meditation, hypnosis and guided imagery. We'll then explore the ways that health professionals can integrate mind-body medicine into clinical practice, and some of the avenues for obtaining deeper insight into, and more training in, its various approaches. There will be one or two experiential exercises and time for discussion.

Course Objectives

At the end of this presentation, participants should:

- 1) Understand the central place of self-care, generally, and mind-body medicine, specifically, in programs of comprehensive care.
- 2) Appreciate the range of mind-body approaches and the importance of individualizing them.
- 3) Understand the importance of group support in enhancing the teaching and learning of mind-body approaches.