

TUNE INTO THE healing power OF YOUR EMOTIONS

Sometimes a nagging physical ache is a symptom of a deeper emotional problem, says healer Georgia Coleridge, who learned the hard way when her own body rebelled



They say that the truth can be as plain as the nose on your face. But when my nose tried to tell me something important, I just wasn't listening.

I woke up one morning to find it totally blocked. My throat was dry from sleeping with my mouth open, and my sinuses were sore. Hot lemon and honey didn't cure it, nor did the nice lady at Boots, nor my wonderful GP. Nor could the ear, nose and throat specialist who prescribed three months of extra-strong, scary, steroid drops. After six months I was still breathing like a Dalek.

By the time I consulted an acupuncturist called Wendy Mandy, I was pretty desperate. When I told her my symptoms, she leaned over and

asked gravely, "Tell me, who's been getting up your nose? Who's been annoying and upsetting you?" Suddenly I knew exactly who: work colleagues who had been throwing their weight around. They were senior to me in the office food chain so I couldn't complain. As I told her about them, I sobbed. And suddenly, mysteriously, my nose was properly unblocked. Just like that.

Since then, I have become a healer myself, and I am always alert to my clients' body "language". Phrases such as, "I'm sick of it, he's a pain in the neck, I've got a weight on my shoulders, a gut feeling, she's getting under my skin, I'm broken hearted, it makes my blood boil," or "I'm tired to the bone," are usually indicators that their body has an important message.

One of my clients, Anna, discovered that ignoring her body led to years of misery. "I picked up a Christmas card addressed to my boyfriend from one of

his colleagues," she told me. "The message was jokey, but when I read it, my body suddenly went icy cold and I started shaking. My immediate instinct was that they were having an affair, but my rational brain told me to stop being so silly. I had met her several times; she was just a friend."

"Our relationship limped on for another three years. He became more and more elusive but I just couldn't bring myself to ask him if he was cheating on me. For three weeks, I kept waking up with blood in my mouth and a sore tongue. Finally I got it. My body was saying – stop biting your tongue, you have to have this conversation – and my instincts were spot on. He admitted he'd been sleeping with Christmas-card woman, and several more. We split up immediately and what a relief it was."

Bodies are like tuning forks. Especially for mothers – your instinct kicks in when your baby is unwell or unhappy. Your heart can even ache when your teenager gets dumped.

A friend, Nicole, knew that something was wrong long before her baby was even born. At five months pregnant, her instinct was so strong she convinced her obstetrician to give her scans and blood tests, but he found nothing. When Jonathan was born, he cried a lot, but further tests were clear and she was advised that he was just a noisy baby. At six months, refusing to give up, she took him to specialist after specialist, but no one knew why he was still screaming. Finally one doctor agreed to test his kidney function. It turned out Jonathan had one shrivelled kidney, which had been causing the most excruciating pain even in utero and which had to be removed. She is convinced that he somehow transferred this knowledge to her even before he was born. (Fast forward – he is now a happy, energetic 13-year-old, managing well on just one kidney.)

But mothers aren't the only ones with strong instincts. It's not uncommon

Bodies are like tuning forks – your instinct kicks in when your child is ill

to tune into the people close to you. Before they've said a word, you might know whether your partner has had a good or terrible day at work. You may also be able to tell what kind of a day you are going to have at work, from the atmosphere in the office when you walk in. But we can even soak up energy clues from complete strangers, and the more stressed they are, the worse it is. This is one of the main reasons why it is so tiring battling through crowds of shoppers in the sales, or travelling on packed public transport. Sometimes by the end of the week, we are like dustbins – full of old feelings, other peoples' and our own. No wonder our bodies can occasionally feel overwhelmed and heavy.

I am convinced that so much female angst about losing weight is really about wanting to feel lighter-hearted, light on our feet, less weighed down

with cares and worries. But we must not blame our bodies. Instead we need to be kind to them and work out what they are trying to tell us.

It might help to think of your body less like a substandard employee, and more like a beloved child or pet. If your daughter was distressed you wouldn't ignore or punish her. You would try and find out what you could do to help.

It can take courage to listen to your own body. It has certainly taken me a long time to stop ignoring mine. If I think back to my childhood when my parents were getting divorced, I got bad stomach-aches, and the way not to feel them was to retreat into the safe area above my neck.

My head could do the fun stuff – read books, watch television, talk to friends – but my digestion suffered for years until I had the courage to tackle all those old childhood feelings directly. Now aged 49, I have never felt healthier, and I usually know what my body is trying to tell me pretty quickly. **w&h**

Listen to your body

Eat happy

If you sometimes overeat (or eat the wrong things) go deeper and try to understand what your tummy is trying to tell you. Does it feel hollow and empty because something is making it anxious? Or is it just trying to tell you that you are really tired and need to look after yourself better with good nourishing food?

Speak up

If your throat is often sore, the answer could be physical: perhaps you are picking up every bug that's going around because you aren't looking after your immune system properly. But there might be an emotional quotient in there too: what's stopping you from speaking up at home or at work?

Move ... more!

I avoided exercise for years, but not giving your body exercise is as cruel as never walking your dog. My answer was to walk with a neighbour, because I couldn't bear

to let a friend down. I also do Skype yoga, at home in my pyjamas (again no excuse when my teacher's lovely smiley face pops up on my laptop at 8am – Ingrid Ballard ingridbdaniele@gmail.com)

Meditate

This doesn't need to be formal or complicated. Just try breathing in and out for five minutes in the bath with the door locked. When you can quieten the thousand chattering monkeys in your head, your body has a better chance to tell you what it needs.

Get professional help

If I can't soothe an aching muscle, calm the butterflies in my stomach or work out what's giving me a pain in the neck, I book an appointment with another healer. Sometimes they can see clearly what I can't.

+ Georgia Coleridge runs a healing clinic in West London. For details see georgiacoleridgehealing.com

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