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steppin' out



PHOTO BY LINDA KIEVER

editorial

Having a choice

Traditional healing methods offer help for those with chronic illnesses

by Ariel Waterwoman

Our feature looks at one of the many supplemental health options that people who are HIV positive or who have AIDS have access to. What has been called "alternative" medicine is actually establishing a foundation for people living with HIV, AIDS or cancer. The paradigm of instant death that has been associated with these serious health challenges is shifting—as a direct result of these alternatives.

Just Out will be presenting a number of articles in coming issues that look at the variety of health choices that are available in Oregon to people who are living with HIV, AIDS or cancer.

When I was in the hospital after my cancer surgery, and later in the follow-up care, Renée (friend and **Just Out** publisher) was shocked time and time again by how little support the medical doctors were able to offer me. She pointed out that it was only because of my background in alternative health practices that I was able to implement real solutions to living with an advanced stage of cancer. This is not to imply that the treatment I have received from my surgeon, the hospital or my oncologist has been sub-standard. Far from it. But that medical system has definite limitations when it comes to treating chronic ailments such as cancer or AIDS.

One of the reasons there are so many types of herbal treatments, acupuncture, visualization techniques, nutritional therapies, etc., is that human beings are individuals who respond differently to therapies. People are not born off of a production line. Each of us has a unique cellular signature.

While there are common biological functions that we all share, how our own body/mind/spirit functions is unique to each individual. There are few absolutes when looking at a healing process. Basically, we need to take in specific nutrients—air, water, food—and be able to eliminate waste products. This may seem simplistic, but it's an important piece that needs to be included in any health program. A breakdown in any of these areas is a breakdown in the fundamental health of an individual. Any treatment program that incorporates these basic elements will enhance the overall health of an individual.

In the workshops I used to teach around the country, I would bring these simple pieces of information into the picture. Taking time to breathe might mean yoga or meditation exercises. Drinking water should include drinking water that is filtered and distilled. Sensible eating information is readily available to most people, and it might include enhancing the whole grains, freshly cooked vegetables, fat-free proteins and fresh fruit in your diet. Elimination means more than the obvious waste products, it includes sweating and exhaling too.

There are an infinite number of ways to make these simple functions seem too complicated for people who just want to feel better. Fortunately, our bodies are created to function well regardless of our understanding of each intricate detail. The key to any healing program is that it address your needs, and that it's something you can integrate into your life.

The Institute for Traditional Medicine is a starting point for people who are HIV positive or who have AIDS. There are many others.

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