

The MIND BODY Connector

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MIND BODY MEDICINE HAS HEART!

WHEN ELLEN, a Boston-area attorney, was diagnosed with heart disease after experiencing chest pain, her first reaction was “Are you kidding me?” Wallace exercised “like a maniac” and hadn’t eaten red meat in years, but the stresses of a fast-paced job had apparently caught up with her.

A friend suggested that she look into the Benson-Henry Institute (BHI) Cardiac Wellness Program at MGH West, in addition to the stenting and medications her cardiologist had prescribed.

Ellen is a self-confessed “Patient with no patience, but I learned a ton, and it really has made a difference. Everybody has stress. You can learn to handle it, and it will lead to changes in your body.”

Director's Welcome

Welcome to the inaugural issue of *The Mind Body Connector*. We are excited to share with you some of the activities and aspirations of our world-class Benson-Henry Institute for Mind Body Medicine at Massachusetts General Hospital (BHI).

The BHI serves as a bridge between clinical medicine and public health. Most of the risk factors for our nation's major chronic diseases are behavioral and stress-related. The BHI gives people tools they can use easily and at little or no expense, to modify these risk factors by buffering against the ravages of stress through elicitation of the relaxation response and by enhancing the innate resiliency we all have inside us.

The BHI Cardiac Wellness Program superbly demonstrates this approach. You will read the firsthand accounts of two individuals who experienced significant heart health benefits after participating in the program.

Meanwhile, our ever-curious BHI researchers are exploring the physiological underpinnings – right down to the genetic level – of these impressive mind body medicine effects.

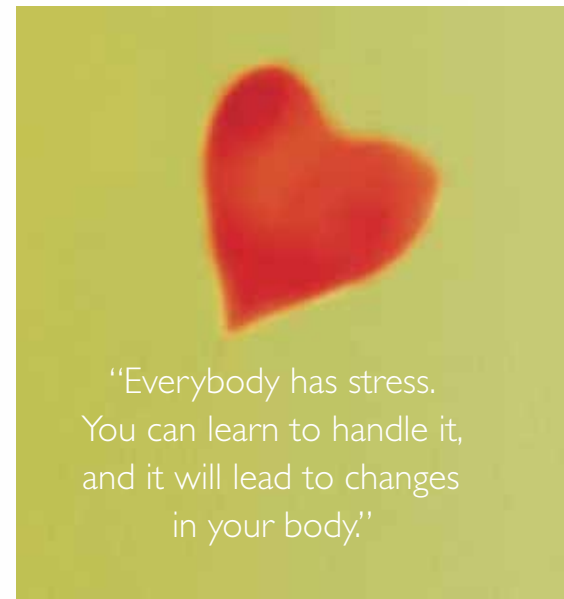
You'll also learn how our important Education Initiative makes a tremendous difference in the lives of Boston teenagers as they learn to cope with the stresses of adolescence.

Director Emeritus Herbert Benson, MD, shares his thoughts about the passion that became his life's work; we're especially pleased to announce the publication of his latest book. And we've included details of upcoming programs and talks by Dr. Benson and other BHI clinicians.

There is an incredible breadth of activity here. We are grateful for your interest and support, and we welcome your thoughts and comments.

Gregory L. Fricchione, MD

Director of the Benson-Henry Institute for Mind Body Medicine
Associate Chief of the Department of Psychiatry
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My cholesterol is way down, and I'm getting off some of my medications. I now eat more, and more variety ... I don't feel deprived, and I've lost 13 pounds! And my ability to manage my stress, even in my new fast-paced job with long hours behind the wheel, is amazing.”

Aggie Casey, RN, MS, has heard many stories like Ellen's in the twenty years she's directed the Cardiac Wellness Program. “Our state-of-the-art program includes on-site supervised exercise, individual nutrition counseling, and a comprehensive
(Continued on page 2)

An Interview with Herbert Benson, MD

HERBERT BENSON, MD, is director emeritus of the Benson-Henry Institute for Mind Body Medicine (BHI). A cardiologist, he is the author or co-author of nearly 200 scientific publications and more than 12 books. He is a graduate of Wesleyan University and Harvard Medical School.

What has most surprised you in the more than 40 years you have studied and advocated for the Relaxation Response? I took for granted, early in my life, that the mind affected the body. At Harvard Medical School I was surprised, disappointed, almost incredulous that my colleagues didn't see this linkage. I've spent 40 years using the very latest technologies available to prove and support the mind body link, now culminating in the genomic work showing that they are inseparable. Descartes was wrong: the mind does affect the body. There is a societal bias markedly favoring drugs and surgery. They *have* to be integrated with mind body approaches.

Fast-forward 40 years. What does the BHI look like? Mind body medicine will be playing an important role in schools. For people with illnesses, it will be built into our society as an accepted component of prevention.

What most excites you about coming to work each day? That I'm still productively working and that I've lived long enough to see mind body medicine accepted and used as a feature at one of the premier hospitals of the world. It's wonderful to be surrounded by such outstanding colleagues and leadership, and to be able to treat patients with scientifically proven mind body interventions. [CR](#)



— MIND BODY MEDICINE HAS HEART!

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stress management program incorporating cognitive behavior modification and instruction in relaxation techniques. You need to integrate all three components to get the maximum cardiac benefit. We also give participants a book and CD's so they can continue to integrate what they learn in class into their lifestyle at home and at work," Ms. Casey says.

The U.S. Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services recently studied the BHI Cardiac Wellness Program and found a statistically significant reduction in cardiovascular hospitalizations and a dramatic decrease in mortality over the course of its three-year review. A 2009 paper that was published in the *Journal of Cardiopulmonary Rehabilitation and Prevention* reported striking improvements in blood pressure, lipids, weight, and frequency of symptoms in men and women who had participated in the BHI Program.

The Cardiac Wellness Program has also helped individuals who are at risk for heart disease, as well as those who already have a diagnosis. Cheryl, who works in a medical office, suffered from intermittent chest pain and severe panic attacks. She approached

her first visit to the Program with some trepidation. "I was intimidated at first, but all of the practitioners are just great ... so non-judgmental. They never criticize you if you have trouble, or if you only have ten minutes [to practice relaxation techniques at home]! I really put my heart and soul into it, and am really encouraged. I've learned to focus on something other than my own problems ... no more 'woe is me.' I'm weaning off all of my meds, and I feel like I have a road map to deal with every life circumstance."

The BHI Cardiac Wellness Program is covered by most insurance plans and is offered mornings, afternoons, and evenings. For more information or to schedule an appointment, call (781) 487-6100 or visit www.massgeneral.org/bhi. [CR](#)

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RESEARCH BRIEFS FROM THE BENSON-HENRY INSTITUTE

THE BENSON-HENRY INSTITUTE is an international leader in conducting rigorous, well-controlled studies to explore the psychological, physiological, neural and genetic effects of eliciting the Relaxation Response in various clinical settings. A sample of research currently underway:

- Can the Relaxation Response help adults with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)? The study uses functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), a technique that allows researchers to see changes in the brains of ADHD patients who practice meditation for six weeks, versus those who don't.
- Women undergoing breast biopsies – and then waiting for the results – often experience a decrease in functioning. If the Relaxation Response is incorporated into their clinical program, can it improve overall well-being?
- Does the Relaxation Response reduce aggression and hyperactivity in autistic children? A paper describing the results of this study will be published in the *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*.
- What is the effect of integrating mind/body medicine techniques into the management of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and inflammatory bowel disease (IBD)? Researchers are looking for changes in gene expression in IBS/IBD patients who learn and practice the Relaxation Response.
- Can the relaxation response help overweight adults to lose weight and keep it off? This study demonstrated that the BHI approach aids in achieving and maintaining weight loss.

These exciting studies are supported by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institutes of Health, and other funders. Patients and the community are invited to participate in innovative research at the BHI. More information can be found at <http://www.massgeneral.org/research/clinicaltrials.aspx>. 

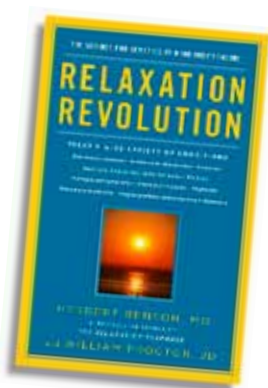
“RELAXATION REVOLUTION” NOW AVAILABLE IN PAPERBACK

Relaxation Revolution: The Science and Genetics of Mind Body Healing, by Herbert Benson, MD – the #1 best-selling author of *The Relaxation Response* – and William Proctor, JD, is now available in paperback from Scribner.

Whether you suffer from arthritis or angina, hypertension or headaches, Benson and Proctor describe how mind body techniques can be applied to treat an ever-expanding number of medical conditions.

The book incorporates the latest scientific findings from the Benson-Henry Institute for Mind Body Medicine at Massachusetts General Hospital, including studies that show conclusively that the mind can influence the body down to the genetic level. Research reveals that we have the ability to self-heal, prevent life-threatening conditions, and supplement established drug and surgical procedures with mind body techniques.

Kindle and Apple iBook editions are also available. 



Creative Strategies to Battle Student Stress

“These techniques have helped me whenever I’m faced with a challenge or frustrating situation, and I have become more relaxed and free of mind on an everyday basis.”

– Student enrolled in the Benson-Henry Institute for Mind Body Medicine (BHI) Education Initiative (E.I.)

THE E.I. LAUNCHED in 1989 when BHI leadership became concerned about the relentless stress in students’ academic and personal lives. From the anxieties of test-taking and college admissions to pressure from peers and parents to the realities of life in an urban school, stress and its detrimental health effects know no age limits. E.I. participants consistently achieve higher grade-point averages, better attendance, increased self-esteem, and less aggressive behavior.

Along with its many national projects, the E.I. is now an active, sought-after partner of the MGH Center for Community Health Improvement, teaching healthy coping skills to Boston high-schoolers and providing information on mind body medicine to students who are considering a career in the health professions, including the MGH Bicentennial Scholars pictured above.



“Getting the Extra Edge” and “Maximize your Potential,” two of the most popular E.I. offerings, guide students in techniques to pinpoint the triggers of their stress and regain control of their emotions. “For example,” says Marilyn Wilcher, senior director and E.I. founder, “we teach them how to stop and slowly count to 10 when they are feeling particularly stressed, like before an exam. We also use imagery such as going to a special place to feel calmer and more in control. We ask them to focus on the good things that have happened to them rather than the negative. Just smiling can change your whole mindset!”

To learn more about the Education Initiative, please visit www.massgeneral.org/bhie.

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WAYS TO GIVE

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COMING UP!

Future Benson-Henry Institute Talks

Ann Webster, PhD, staff health psychologist and director of the mind body program for cancer at the BHI, will speak on Sept. 17, 2011 at a Harvard Medical School Department of Continuing Education conference on "Integrating Palliative Care into Clinical Practice" at the Royal Sonesta Hotel, Cambridge, Mass. Visit www.hms.harvard.edu/pallcare/papcinfo.htm for more information.

Herbert Benson, MD, director emeritus of the BHI, will discuss "A Mindful Midlife: Understanding the Mind-Body Connection" on Sept. 24, 2011 at the North American Menopause Society Annual Meeting in Washington, DC. Visit www.menopause.org for more information.

Leslee Kagan, MS, NP, director of women's health at the BHI, will present a poster on "Improving Resilience among Infertile Women: A Pilot Study" at the American Society of Reproductive Medicine annual conference, Oct. 15-19, 2011 in Orlando, FL. Visit www.asrm.org for more information.

Future Benson-Henry Institute Programs

Getting the Extra Edge will be offered on Aug. 3, 10, and 17 at MGH West in Waltham, MA; and Aug 9, 16, and 23 in Boston. Teens will learn research-validated stress management techniques that maximize their learning potential and personal resiliency. For more information, call Marilyn Wilcher at 617-643-6035 or mwilcher@partners.org.

Stress Reduction Sessions are offered, free and open to the public, at noon in Massachusetts General Hospital's Haber Auditorium on Aug. 2, 8, 17, 25 and 30; and Sept. 7, 12, 20 and 29.

The Mind Body Program for Health and Fertility begins on Monday, July 25, 2011. The group meets weekly from 5:30 – 7 pm for nine weeks in Boston. The program has helped hundreds of women and couples through the difficulties of infertility. Visit www.massgeneral.org/bhi/services/program_listing.aspx

Cardiac Wellness Program – Basic and "graduate" programs are offered on an ongoing basis at MGH West in Waltham, MA. Learn to reduce stress, improve physical fitness and lose weight in this integrated lifestyle modification program. For more information, call **Lauren Lortie at 781-487-6100**.

New programs are added often. For a complete program listing visit www.massgeneral.org/bhi/services/program_listing.aspx