

Health Care with a Spiritual Base

By Jerry Epstein '57

JEWISH MYSTICISM, known generically as kabbalah—meaning to receive—is an indelible part of Jewish life dating back more than 4,000 years to Abraham's encounter with God. This revelation was passed down through the generations until it took root in the visionary world of the prophets, beginning with Moses.

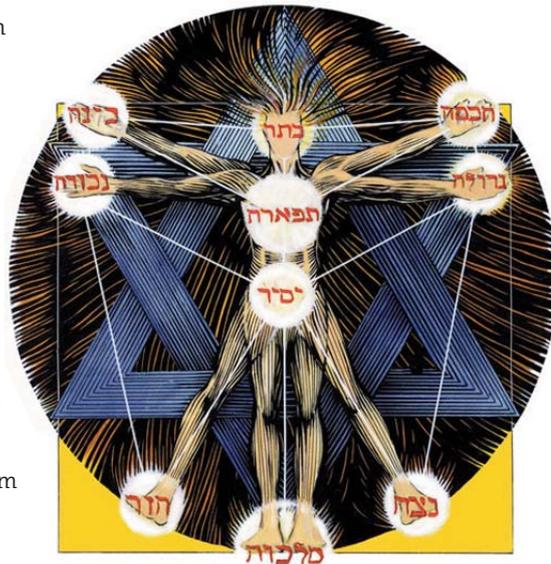
In biblical times, the prophets received these visions and conveyed them to the people as directives for everyday living and as a system for healing. The kabbalah's methods and techniques of imagery were taught in schools in Israel called Sons of the Prophets. As Jews moved outside the Holy Land, the kabbalah migrated with them to other parts of the world. Since then, kabbalah's mystical tradition has intrigued spiritual seekers from a variety of religious faiths.

I was a traditionally trained physician, psychiatrist and psychoanalyst when I encountered the kabbalah and dedicated myself to using it as a therapeutic method. My revelation occurred in 1974 in Jerusalem, where I met my spiritual teacher, Colette Aboulker-Muscat, the daughter of a famous neurosurgeon. She taught me about this new use of the mind for healing, and I decided to apprentice with her. I did so for nine years.

The kabbalah opened a new door for me as a health-care provider, and I became a medical kabbalist. My clinical practice became infused with this ancient model of healing that offered a spiritual way of caring for human suffering and a new perspective on illness that was not addressed by the Greek-based educational system of my medical training.

In my training center in New York City, my aim is to teach patients and students to take responsibility for their health and give them the tools to do so. I do so by dispensing mental-imagery prescriptions to eradicate

physical and emotional difficulties. Mental imagery is the mind thinking in pictures; it is a topical application of the visionary path of the prophets.



In my latest book, *Kabbalah For Inner Peace: Imagery and Insights to Guide You through Your Day*, I provide a practical guide for managing everyday challenges and difficulties, from muscle spasms to money troubles to sleeping difficulties. Following are some helpful imagery exercises from the book that you can apply to difficulties you face in your daily life:

Money Worries and Concerns

Close your eyes and feel yourself being in connection with the energy of the universe. A beam of white light appears, confirming that connection (you may sense it or even feel it if you can't see it). As the light comes closer, see (or sense or feel) within it a stream of money flowing over and around you, bestowing on you what you need. Open your eyes.

Another money-related imagery: Close your eyes. See a money tree growing in your

backyard. The fruit are dollar bills in denominations of \$5, \$10 and \$20. Know what you need to address your current concerns—without being greedy. In your mind, go outside to the tree carrying a bag made of natural fiber and fill it by picking the “fruit” from the tree. Stop when you have enough. Open your eyes.

Pain

Close your eyes. See the pain as a black rock with many jagged edges. Have a sanding machine or sandpaper with you. Sand the jagged edges until they become round and blunted and you know that the pain is gone. Open your eyes. Repeat this imagery exercise should the pain return.

Anxiety

Close your eyes. See the net of anxiety wrapped tightly around you. Remove the net using any means you can (this is imagination, and anything can happen). As the net is removed, anxiety disappears. Breathe easily. Open your eyes. Do this exercise whenever you feel gripped by anxiety.

Note that closing your eyes when you start the imagery exercises helps you focus inwardly and blots out external distractions. You can do these exercises two times a day (upon arising and before sleep) for up to 30 seconds each time, for a cycle of 21 days. Take a seven-day break, and resume another cycle if you wish.

You can find more about other facets of kabbalah and additional imagery exercises on my Web site at www.drjerryepstein.org.

Jerry Epstein '57 majored in biology at Dickinson and earned an M.D. at New York Medical College. He maintains a private practice in New York City and is an assistant clinical professor of psychiatry at Mount Sinai Medical Center. Epstein is director of The American Institute for Mental Imagery, a postgraduate training center for health-care practitioners, has authored six books and holds classes and workshops in imagery, dreams and Kabbalah.