

# Three Degrees of Care

Jon Burras



Health is a dynamic process that is forever changing. We are never stagnant. Our bodies are constantly changing within this range of health. Being well or being sick is not just a black or white issue. There are varying degrees of health and of sickness. Most of the time, one does not suddenly become ill. Illness and disease are often a multi-layer event in our lives.

Developing a philosophy of health and a treatment protocol for sickness is as varied as there are languages and cultures. Each culture has developed its own ideas as to the nature of disease and has developed its own philosophy as to treatment. Some treatments are more effective than are others. Within our present Western medical system we can identify three major branches of medicine: trauma care, crisis care, and wellness (or sometimes referred to as health care). It is through these three levels of treatment we can see how our health is addressed.

## Trauma Care

Trauma occurs when a large amount of energy enters into the body in a short period of time. This happens during a car crash, fall, or sudden collision. The faster the car is traveling the more the trauma, or the more energy absorbed by the body. The higher one falls from the more trauma is absorbed by the body. A skier colliding with another skier might experience slight trauma. But a skier colliding with a stationary tree could have dire results. This is because much of the energy from the speed of the skier becomes absorbed within the skier's body upon impact.

Trauma is based on a simple principle outlined by Albert Einstein:  **$E=MV^2$** : **Energy equals Mass times velocity squared.** Thus, a pillow full of feathers traveling at 40 miles per hour will have minimal impact if it hits you. But a car, weighing 2000 lbs., traveling at 40 miles per hour, will cause much more trauma because the body will absorb more energy.

Trauma is about the absorption of energy. Tissue and organ damage result through trauma. Bones are crushed and organs perforated. The more the trauma the more the injury to the body.

In trauma care, the body is mechanistically kept alive with aggressive treatment. The heart, lungs and fluid systems are stabilized. Trauma care is designed to treat the symptoms of trauma. Very little is done to help reduce the large amount of energy absorbed by the body. Emotions and nurturing are neglected in the haste to keep the body's machine alive. Death of a patient is perceived as a failure for the trauma staff. Trauma centers are set up in hospitals to keep the body alive and stabilize the body, (with fluids and drugs). Western medicine has developed some of the best trauma centers and training in the world. It is through trauma care that we are kept alive when our body requires aggressive intervention.

## **Crisis Care**

Crisis is not necessarily about absorption of energy. Crisis is about a threat. In this case we are talking about a threat to one's health or life. A health crisis could be food poisoning or being bitten by a deadly snake. Cutting one's finger badly with a knife could also be a health crisis as a significant loss of blood *could* ultimately lead to death. Severe flu symptoms, pneumonia, or catching malaria are other examples of a health crisis. Radiation exposure, inhaling toxic gases, or severe burns are also signs of a health crisis.

A health crisis is treated by intervention. There is a threat to one's health. Finding the source of the crisis becomes important. There is detective work involved in monitoring symptoms.

In crisis care, just like in trauma care, the body is treated mechanistically. The body machine is broken or is functioning poorly. If an artery is leaking then it needs to be sewed up. An invading organism needs to be eliminated, by either an outside agent or by the body's own immune system. A burn needs to be cooled. Surgery and drugs are common tools used in a health crisis.

Health crisis care involves active intervention and supporting the body's own immune system to heal from within. Finding the source of conflict, (i.e. bacteria from spoiled food), and attempting to eliminate it becomes the goal of crisis care.

Crisis Care involves scientific and chemical analysis. Very little emphasis is placed on lifestyle, nutrition, or emotional consequences. In Crisis Care symptoms are scrutinized and eliminated. Many times, while focusing on removing the symptoms of a health crisis, the underlying cause is overlooked. Crisis care involves only treating the symptoms. In crisis care pain is perceived as an enemy that must be eliminated, instead of listening to the message that the pain has to say.

Hospitals are the battle zone for crisis care. Emergency rooms, surgery rooms, and intensive care units are the places where crisis care is found. Western medicine has a marvelous assortment of tricks and training designed to treat the symptoms of crisis care. If eliminating pain is the goal then crisis care is what you may seek.

## **Wellness Care**

Wellness or health care attempts to maintain maximum health and vitality over the long haul. Trauma Care and Crisis Care attempt to make changes after you are already sick. You enter into the Trauma Care system or the Health Crisis system only after you become sick or overwhelmed. Wellness or Health Care are different. Wellness care is attempting to prevent any disease from happening in the first place.

Wellness is a broad category. Health is a part of wellness. Also included, as a part of wellness might be emotional health, stress awareness, and physical mobility. Wellness is all of these. Wellness is creating a beneficial environment to maintain the health and vitality of the whole person. Such things as exercise, yoga, massage, or relaxation techniques might be tools to be utilized during wellness care. Wellness care attempts to search out the source of the imbalance, not just treat the symptoms. While utilizing scientific methodology at times other non-scientific techniques are quite common. Finding the root cause of illness becomes the cornerstone of wellness care.

For instance, during Wellness care, a professional psychotherapist might be employed to understand how a patients' repressed anger at his mother may be leading to the cause of his migraine headaches. Wellness care attempts to integrate many levels of a person's life to find the root cause. The fact that a person has learned to breathe shallowly may be the reason for his indigestion or heart condition. Learning to take deep breaths then becomes a way to start looking at the root cause of the illness.

Wellness care becomes a lifestyle and an attempt to minimize having to enter into the trauma or the crisis care systems. Wellness is about prevention. Trauma and crisis care deal with the results of poor wellness or health care. The goal of wellness care is to allow the innate wisdom of the body to care for itself. Wellness care involves following the laws of nature. Rest when you are tired. Move your body frequently. Express emotions that want to be expressed.

Doctors and hospitals do not deliver health care. Health and wellness care are found in your daily activities, your movement and thoughts, how you breathe, and your ability to relax. Wellness is a lifestyle that is your own personal prescription. When was the last time that your doctor gave you a sixty-minute massage or spent more than 15 minutes with you? When was the last time a nurse or hospital taught you about your emotions? Doctors and hospitals do not necessarily deliver health care. Health care is found from within yourself.

When you practice wellness care it is less likely that you will have a health crisis.

## **Commentary**

In this country, we have excellent trauma care and superb crisis care. Unfortunately we are way behind in our understanding of wellness care. We have a system more aptly named a “Disease Care System”. We have very little actual “health care”. We only get noticed when we enter into crisis care or trauma care. In other words, we only get attention after we are showing symptoms of illness.

Many more people each year continue to look for alternative solutions for their health challenges. Frustration sets in many times because they come knocking on the doors of our current medical system, which is rooted in trauma care and crisis care. They are bewildered that the people whom they trusted so much for their health maintenance lack the ability to help them. They do realize that the system that we have in place is very inefficient at maintaining wellness or health care.

If you are in a car accident or fall off a ladder then go to a hospital or your doctor. If you have trouble breathing because you just inhaled a toxic substance than go to an emergency room. But if you want to practice Wellness Care then ask yourself what was

happening one week, one month, or 6 months, or 10 years before your symptoms began to emerge? This is Wellness Care!

*Jon Burras is a certified yoga therapist and certified Bodymind therapist. He is also a champion for the rights of self-empowerment and believes in letting nature be the strongest guide.*