

The Paradoxes of Healing by Lissa Rankin

Adapted from Let's Not Polarize Into The Science Camp and the Anti-Science Camp, by Lissa Rankin, MD.

Sometimes we get sick, and conventional medicine can cure us lickety-split. And thank God for those cures and for the doctors who deliver them. I was once one of those doctors, and it felt so satisfying when one of those medical cures could ease the suffering of someone in distress. But if you practice medicine long enough, you wind up treating lots of patients with illnesses conventional medicine simply doesn't know how to adequately treat. Sure, we can keep some diseases at bay with daily medication or intervene surgically to improve symptoms that may come back. But there are also millions of people with mystery illnesses, who elude diagnosis and respond to none of our treatments, often getting worse instead of getting better.

Doctors tend to throw up their hands with these folks because doctors don't like feeling helpless, powerless, useless, ineffective, or wrong. It tends to activate all their core childhood wounds, and they may act out those wounds on the patients, rather than expressing the empathy, compassion, and nurturing that helps suffering patients heal.

Whenever inquiries stray in the direction of phenomena that scientists can't explain or understand, people tend to split into two polarized camps — the rational, skeptical, debunking-of-all-things paranormal, materialist scientist camp and the gung ho "woo woo" "science can't keep up with us" New Age spirituality and anti-science camp.

There are good and bad actors in science and there are good and bad actors in spiritual circles, alternative medicine, Indigenous shamanism, and energy healing. There are miracles on both sides and there are traumatizing ethics breaches and corruption on both sides. Conventional medicine can perform medical wonders — and, until Covid, it was also the #3 cause of death in this country. Natural healing is wonderful but it was also natural to die at forty and have a huge infant mortality rate until relatively recently in human history. We'd be wise to neither idealize nor demonize anyone on either side of this divide. There are gifts and burdens on both sides, which is why if we truly desire optimal health, we may have to walk back and forth between the two camps to sample the right medicines at the right time, and to weave them together into a very personalized, individual healing brew.

In both camps, there are people with integrity and people without it, because at the end of the day, like it or not, we're all human, even the doctors, even the gurus, even the people who can cure cancer with their hands. And humans are traumatized, vulnerable,

tribal creatures who do brilliant and creative things and also do their best to destroy each other. To glorify anyone or categorically write anyone off as a monster will not serve you if your goal is to get healthy.

As former New Age teacher-turned scientist, Karla McLaren writes about her attempt to find balanced middle ground to validate New Age teachings scientifically: “Let me tell you now (if you don’t already know) that the skeptical community and the New Age community are like oil and water. They don’t mix. As I thought back to those tedious, one-sided library books that I had discarded as unimportant, I realized that they contained either full-on New Age faith, or full-on skeptical dismissal, with no middle ground whatsoever. Those tiresome books separated the world into two warring camps of believers and skeptics, with each camp slyly or not so slyly maligning the intelligence, the character, and the worth of the members of the other camp.

Let me state clearly that my work — and my new book, Sacred Medicine — fall into neither camp. As a voraciously curious radical empiricist who is also a mystic, I do my best (at the expense of belonging, mind you, because people in both camps tend to bond over having contempt for the other side) to travel the bridge between the camps and appreciate the points of view both camps offer. But I don’t believe we need to choose sides. Doing so could actually hurt you.

So it is with an open heart and a generous intention that I invite you to consider that we don’t have to choose between objective conventional science, reason, evidence-based data, and logic and less mainstream and more subjective intuition, emotional intelligence, somatic ways of knowing, and energetic, spiritual, or trauma healing methods that might make you miracle-prone when conventional medicine fails to cure you. These two camps can meet in the middle and amplify each other, rather than splitting into skeptics and mystics who fight for dominance regarding who’s right and who’s wrong. If your goal is an optimal health outcome, why would you want to ignore any of the world’s many medicines? Unless you care more about being right than about getting better, why would you limit yourself? What if the possibilities are limitless when we open ourselves to a weaving of the world’s medicines, based on our four Whole Health Intelligences- mental intelligence (of course!) but also intuitive intelligence, somatic intelligence, and emotional intelligence?

In Sacred Medicine, I unpack these paradoxes of healing and also how to develop and learn to trust your four Whole Health Intelligences — not just your mental intelligence, but also your emotional intelligence, intuitive intelligence, and somatic intelligence.

Consider these paradoxes:

You can heal yourself AND you can’t do it alone.

Keep an open mind AND don’t be so open your brains fall out.

Trust your intuition AND follow the science and apply critical thinking.

Believe in magic and miracles AND avoid indulging in magical thinking and denial.

Your disease is not your fault AND your healing journey is your responsibility.

Follow spiritual guidance AND never be too certain you've got the direct line to God.

Your thoughts influence reality AND your thoughts cannot control reality.

I stand firmly between the two camps.

Sacred Medicine: A Doctor's Quest to Unravel the Mysteries of Healing from Lissa Rankin on Vimeo.

For more inspiration, join this Saturday's Awakin Call with Lissa Rankin. More details and RSVP info [here](#).