

THE MIND/BODY CONNECTION

By Dr. Derek Conte

We hear more and more all the time about this idea called the "mind/ body connection". What is this phenomenon? Is it real and if so, what does it mean? I hear the phrase bandied about by people with various interests ranging from alternative healing to nouveau religious disciplines and beyond, but I rarely, if ever, hear them talk specifically about what it is in a tangible way, in physiological terms.

The fact is though the mind/ body connection exists whether people can explain it or not and its basis lies firmly in human physiology. It is not mumbo-jumbo. Truly, the way we feel, emotionally or mentally, directly affects our brain chemistry and therefore our entire body chemistry. In fact, there is an entire field of research dedicated to it called *psychoneuroimmunology*.

Deep at the center of the brain are a series of structures that together comprise



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the *insula* or *limbic system* which are concerned with the survival of the organism (you). This area sends the powerful signals for hunger, thirst, lust, fear and aggression and forms long-term memories of traumatic experiences that allow you to learn from them. One can see how useful this very primitive part of the brain is. When we perceive either a threat or a pleasurable experience, limbic signals are sent to an area called the *hypothalamus* which releases a complex chemical cascade to the body to either put us at ease or to alarm us to battle stations.

When we are happy, vessels to our organs open up and tissues are fed, digestion is functioning well, the immune system is set to the "on" position and the heart rate and blood pressure are low. When we are upset, angry or afraid, quite the opposite happens and the body is focused on only one thing: SURVIVAL.

Sadly, this emergency state is "turned on" in our bodies *even when we have an unpleasant thought or memory* because the limbic system is very simple-minded. It just doesn't know the difference between a thought and a real, immediate threat, but the brain/ body chemistry is still in effect. Over long periods, a state of well-being or a state of fear, anger and resentment can influence your health and even life-expectancy.

Chiropractors are aware of this physiology and, with specific adjustments to the spine, help reduce the stressful state and help induce a more relaxed one as part of a larger program of spiritual-mental-physical well-being.

Dr. Derek Conte is co-founder of the new Chiropractic Specialists of Smyrna on Concord rd. and is available to speak to your group, free of charge. Questions? Call: 404-784-6008.