

Cardiologist Discovers the Spiritual Heart

By Bruno Cortis, M.D.

The Moment of Truth

I first became interested in the spiritual aspects of the heart through my experiences as a cardiologist. Strangely, it was at a low point in my life, a moment when my work no longer felt fulfilling. At that time, my life seemed to be dedicated to waiting at the hospital for the next cardiac victim. I was tired of seeing young people die of heart attacks. I was tired of seeing the faces of spouses and children whose loved ones never came home from the emergency room. I was tired of seeing chests split open for surgery, or learning that someone else had been brought in dead on arrival. I was tired of dealing with the human body as a collection of parts disconnected from the essence of the person.

In short, I had come to realize that what people needed was to not get sick in the first place. My interest shifted from disease to health - from patients to people and my objective evolved into becoming a teacher of health, and, specifically, someone who teaches people how to take care of their heart.

Sadly, in our society, people usually learn this lesson from disease, if they are lucky enough to survive. In the case of heart attacks, the lesson is sometimes too late, because one person out of three does not survive. The current statistic for heart attack deaths in the United States is 1,400 a day. The total number of deaths each day in the U.S. because of cardiovascular disease is 2,600.

It's a little like the plague - almost a million people a year die of cardiovascular disease - but we are so accustomed to it that even the media ignores it. In the past, it was thought that heart disease was for men only. Now we have discovered that women also develop heart disease - in fact, 250,000 women die of it every year. Heart disease has become the number one cause of death in men as in women. It is an equal opportunity killer.

For these reasons, I created a conference room in my office for my patients and their families. We would meet periodically, show slides on how to control risk factors such as hypertension, high cholesterol, diabetes, stress, and smoking. For a while, I even called a psychologist and a dietician to give classes. The patients wanted even more. I began to speak of the pain I felt as a physician when somebody in the hospital was not doing well; I shared my tears with families when somebody died.

Opening My Heart Produced Miracles

When I opened my heart, a miracle happened: The patients began to share of themselves, not the same way they talk to the physicians in the examining room - they manifested themselves as persons. Their smiles and their happiness became my smile and my happiness. We hugged each other; we discovered the incredible beauty of being supportive. As we conducted these conversations, my interest in the spirituality of the heart increased and I began to examine the content of my own heart. I was accustomed to praying, or meditating, but looking into the content of my heart was really very revealing.

What a joy it is to just close your eyes and let your heart talk. Most of the time, we relate to each other by asking questions and expressing thoughts, opinions, and judgments. Judgments rule our lives. How different it is when you let the voice of your heart be heard. It is then that you have the clear ability to communicate. It is a communion of feelings and emotions. You discover your values. You discover there, within your heart the strength to make decisions that can change your life.

My heart told me the values I cherished were not respected in the land where I was born. My heart that told me to move to the United States and begin a new life. When I left my parents, my friends, my brothers and sisters, everything I accomplished in thirty years, to start a new life here, it was my heart telling me, "Go. Create the life that you want. Be the person you would like to become. Find new people to love."

Talk to Your Heart

I discovered that one of my greatest joys was self-expression. I began to ask people, "Do you ever talk to your heart?" Many just said no; they prayed instead. But, some said yes. Some of my patients had learned on their own to communicate with their spiritual heart.

I remember Mary, a middle-aged woman who had been to the emergency room numerous times with an irregular heartbeat. One day, she decided to talk to her heart. "I don't want to go to the hospital any more," she told her heart. "I don't want to be stuck in a room and have to pay all those hospital bills. I don't want to be away from my family and I don't want this to keep happening."

Suddenly, her heartbeat became regular again. Mary discovered for herself that just by communicating with her heart, she solved the problem. On the way to the hospital she felt the difference. What a phenomenal experience! I began to tell people this story. I encouraged them to communicate with their heart, express their gratitude.

One day, I opened the Bible in search of the words that could express my mission. It was a coincidence but the words I read were, "Take care of the heartbroken." This is what I mean to do with my life. In 1995, I wrote a book called Heart and Soul. In that book, I wrote a chapter on the spiritual heart, "Your Faith and Your Heart." That one chapter has taken my life in a new direction, and led me to write my new book entitled, The Spiritual Heart.

We all need peace, love, and a meaningful life. A pathway to fulfill this dream is to open your spiritual heart, living in your heart. You can do this through meditation, using your heart's innate intelligence, communicating with your heart, and seeing through the eyes of your heart. This helps and heals your heart as you discover your spiritual nature. Ultimately, your spiritual heart changes your life and allows you a new freedom.