

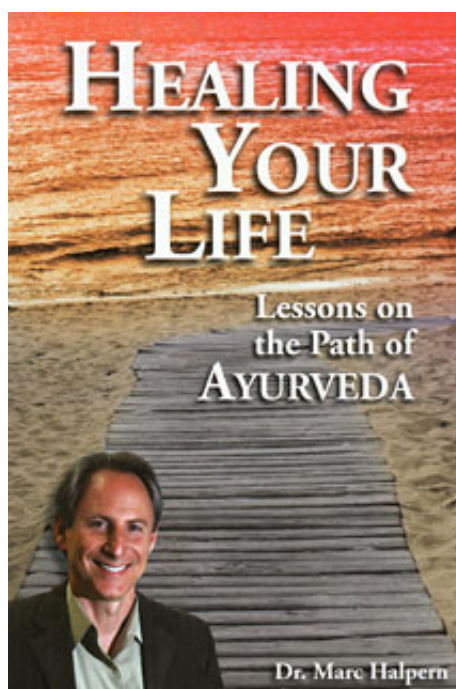
Marc Halpern Healing Your Life

Reading excerpt

[Healing Your Life](#)

of [Marc Halpern](#)

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LESSON 11: HEALING YOUR LIFE THROUGH VISION

Color and Beauty

We are not only what we eat and smell, we are also what we see. Through our eyes, we take in a tremendous amount of information that affects our minds and emotions. These in turn affect the physiology of our bodies. If what we take in through our sense of vision is not harmonious, we will experience some level of stress and that creates disease.

Post traumatic stress disorder is an example of what can happen when the impressions taken in through the sense of vision are very disharmonious. While soldiers often come home from war with a variety of health disorders (headaches, neurological dysfunctions, etc) resulting from the things they've seen, similar symptoms are found in individuals who witness murders, rapes and other forms of violence. Disturbing images, even those that are natural, cause similar harm. Those who witness tragedies, such as fires and floods, are often left deeply scarred. Another milder example of what we see making us sick is the nausea that many people experience when seeing something disagreeable. Visual stress is very profound and affects us deeply.

If, on the other hand, we experience beautiful, peaceful impressions through our sense of vision, our minds will be more peaceful and our bodies healthier. Every impression alters the physiology of the body. Visual images, such as those of mountains, clouds, rivers and oceans, bring calm and balance to the nervous system and support healthy physiology. In such an environment, the mind is clearer and troubles seem to disappear. When used properly, visual impressions can be a tool used to support the healing process.

While the dramatic events that we witness have an obvious, profound and often immediate effect upon us, those that we see on a daily basis affect us more gradually but can be just as profound in the long term. Most of the visual impressions that we take in on a daily basis are those found in our home and at our work place. We take in the colors, we take in both the clutter and the empty spaces, we take in the images we see on the walls and we take in visual impressions of our co-workers. Though unconscious of their effect, we absorb them and they become a part of our consciousness. The impressions that we expose ourselves to on a daily basis may not be as dramatic as those witnessed on the battlefield but their impact penetrates us slowly and deeply. Like water that continuously drips onto a rock, those impressions slowly carve a groove in our consciousness. Depending upon what we look at on a daily basis, that

carving can be beautiful and peaceful or quite disturbing. It is the goal of Ayurveda to become conscious of the visual environment we expose ourselves to and to begin to structure it in a manner that is supportive to our well-being.

Movies and Television

When you go out to eat, are you interested in the quality of the food at the restaurant? Does it matter to you what they serve? Of course it does. If the food is not healthy, it will give you indigestion and it can make you sick. The same is true of your choices regarding what you visually expose yourself to. Of course, by this I mean movies and television.

One of my teachers used to tell me that the mind does not know the difference between what is real and what is imagined. This is mostly true. While the intellect often discerns the difference, the emotional aspect of our consciousness does not. A happy scene in a movie causes the brain to secrete chemicals that make you happy and relaxed (dopamine, serotonin, tryptophan, phenylethylamine, anandamide). An intense scene in a movie causes the brain and adrenal glands to secrete chemicals that make you tense (epinephrine and norepinephrine). The chemicals of tension, fear and anger stimulate the sympathetic nervous system. This is that part of the nervous system that controls the "fight or flight" response. Once it is activated, the neurochemicals that are secreted circulate through your body for several hours before being deactivated.

The fight or flight response is meant to allow the body to deal effectively with threats. When a real threat is perceived, the heart rate increases to allow more blood to flow to the muscles of the body in case you need to fight or run for your life. Additional chemicals are secreted in the body that cause it to become more alert. Vision improves, strength increases and the breath is easier. These changes do not just disappear after the threat is gone. They stay with you for quite some time. Overactivation of this system has been understood to be a contributing factor in all stress-related illnesses. These illnesses include everything from arthritis and headaches to heart attacks and strokes.

If the visual impression is strong, the mind will replay it again and again and this continues to trigger the fight or flight response. It is not easy to block out a tragedy that you have witnessed. Likewise, an impactful scene in a movie may be replayed over and over again in your mind and trigger the same feelings again and again. If the scene was intense, the fight or flight mechanism is activated each time and the body functions in a continuous state of sympathetic stress.

Ask yourself what you are taking into your mind and consciousness when you are watching television or a movie. Are you watching horror movies, suspense and action films? These are sure to activate your sympathetic nervous system. At times, they can be fun, isn't that why we watch them? A part of us likes the adrenaline rush of sympathetic stimulation. But, at other times, they can be disturbing. What is the value in watching a movie about child abduction? What

is the value of witnessing a murder? Violence in movies and on television is quite extensive and people lap it up just like white flour, sugar and deep-fried foods. It is a quick thrill, but with a price to our physical and mental health.

On the other hand, lighter films and comedies have been shown to have value in supporting the healing process. They encourage us to take life less seriously. Comedies also cause the brain to secrete chemicals. They could be called laughter chemicals. These chemicals relax the body and support the healing process. This was brought to the public eye in the popular book at the time by Norman Cousins called "Anatomy of an Illness".

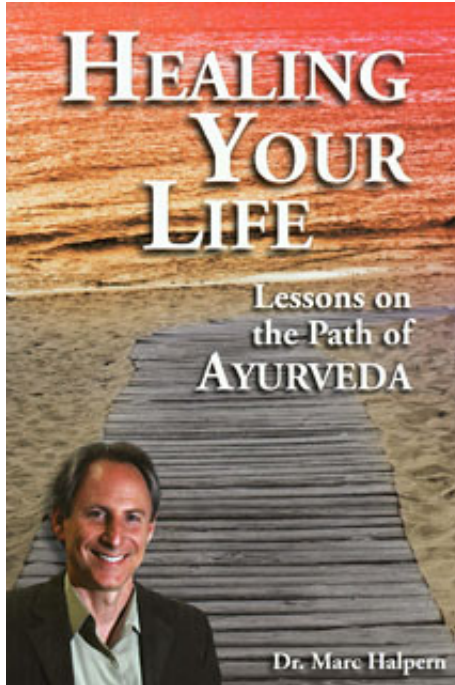
Next time you rent a movie, ask yourself this. If this movie were a food, what food would it be? Are you about to consume fast-food junk, cookies and ice-cream or a bowl of organic brown rice and vegetables? Sometimes you may like to have dessert, but it is not healthy if you take it too often. Movies and television are the same way. An occasional adrenaline rush is not a problem for most people, but if you are highly sensitive or if it becomes the bulk of your visual diet, you will cause yourself harm. Some of the most intense movies are like food poisoning. It's just not a good idea to consume them at all.

Color and Healing

Color is a vibrational energy that enters the eye and goes directly to the brain affecting us physically and emotionally. This can be easily observed. Do you feel more powerful or confident when you wear bright red clothing or ride in a bright red car? Red is powerful and can intimidate others. This is the idea behind the red power tie used in business by men and the red suit worn by women. And how do you feel when you wear black or drive a black car. Do you feel mysterious or on the edge of being dangerous? When you see someone dressed in black, are they easy to approach? Probably not, unless you are also powerful and supremely confident. The color black separates a person from their environment allowing in only the most powerful forces. Indeed, color affects us very deeply.

While the effect of color is easy to observe on the mind, color also affects the body. New-born babies experiencing jaundice (yellowing of the skin due to excess bilirubin in the blood) are routinely treated with blue lights. The color blue alters the physiology of the body, making it possible to break down excess bilirubin into a form that can be easily excreted from the body. In this case, the color blue saves the life of the child. The effects of color on the body are only partially understood, but there can be no doubt that every color impression has a physiological effect.

From an ayurvedic perspective, all color contains some of the fire element. The fire element provides the light or luster through which all color travels. However, each color also has its own unique combination of the five elements and thus has its own unique set of qualities. Understanding the qualities of color allows you to consciously use color to support your healing process.



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Lessons on the Path of Ayurveda

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