

Monica Cassani Author/Editor ~~ BEYOND MEDS: everything matters

The work and the website documents and shares many natural methods of self-care for finding and sustaining health in body, mind and spirit. This blog also deals with wider issues in the socio/political and spiritual realms as they pertain to mental health and human rights issues surrounding psychiatry.

My own experience as both (now – ex) patient and a mental health professional allows for some interesting and sometimes uncomfortable insights into the mental health system in the United States.

The blog and the content has evolved over time. The archives reflect that.

No two human beings are alike. This is perhaps the most foundational thing I've learned in this process. I've interacted with many 1000s of people now and that is what is so obvious to me and yet doesn't seem to be obvious to most people interested in mental health issues. We cannot have cookie cutter solutions. We need a mentality that opens up to the kaleidoscopic nature of reality. Not only is it impossible to prescribe the same solution to everyone ... it's also not possible to expect today's prescription for me to be tomorrow's prescription for me.

This is the fundamental reason that coercion in psychiatry (whether overt or covert) is so profoundly harmful too. People all have their own way to find. And we know this deep within ourselves. This is why even our own idiosyncratic experience is only that. To generalize it to others is arrogant and misguided and yet most people want to do this. Just as the psychiatrist didn't know what was right for me and many of the readers of Beyond Meds, I discovered that I too do not know what is right for anyone other than myself.

It has become clear to me that there are as many ways to live well and be healthy as there are human beings. I'm all about people finding their own way. If the reader resonates with what is shared here, then this blog is for them. If there is no resonance or a negative resonance they can go on their way. And the same goes for when I seek out information. Resonance in the body/mind/spirit is a form of guidance. I trust it. I'll trust yours as well. It's okay if the information on this website isn't helpful to you at the moment and if it is, well, then welcome.

When visiting the website: [Beyond Meds](#) It is recommended that one begin by browsing the drop-down navigation menus at the top of the page. The subjects vary from diet and nutrition to meditation to the politics of reform of the mental illness system.

Below I'm including a few key articles and some links that focus on the subject of healing and food:

first published May 11, 2013 at Mad in America

Everything Matters: a Memoir From Before, During and After Psychiatric Drugs

Before



19 years old, 1984

This photo was taken about 6 months before [my fall into psychiatry](#). I was 19 years old. I was an athlete. I swam, cycled, and ran most days and was training for a triathlon. That was a dream that never came to fruition. The psych meds can not only put weight on regardless of how you otherwise care for yourself, they also tend to make people feel gravely lethargic and vaguely sick all the time. I could not exercise as I had before. Could not. It doesn't matter how much [mental health professionals try to tell us that if we just exercised we'd be okay](#) in the face of neurotoxic drugs that cause weight gain, because the fact is the drugs impede that capacity. This is not widely appreciated or understood and people on psych meds are again traumatized and made to feel guilty for something that is truly outside of their control as long as they are taking these medications. [Exercise should be made a priority in the care of those who would be labeled with any psych diagnosis... everything should be done to avoid destroying people's vital energy with psych drugs](#). Exercise is absolutely imperative for good health — mental and physical. When we lose the capacity to exercise we lose the potential for good health. Period.

During



This photo was taken pretty much at the height of my drug cocktail. I had gained about 95 lbs from the healthy weight I was in the first photo. I want to be clear that I do not assume that all heavy people are unhealthy or unfit, but for me this change was indicative of my failing health and wellbeing. I had always been very active and athletic and the loss of that was devastating emotionally and physically both. I found it hard to walk much, let alone do anything more strenuous than that. I still loved going on easy walks in nature, as I do now and always have. I never stopped doing that. I think that's an indication that at my core I remained strong and untouched.

I was not well during these years. I felt flat and empty and like my life had no meaning. I slept a lot. I slept 12 hours a night in fact. I was heavily drugged and sometimes could not be roused. I also *felt* drugged and fuzzy headed. I did not express myself creatively as I do now and before I took drugs, too. I worked most of the time, but given I required 12 hours of sleep a night a full-time job was really far more than I could reasonably handle. Still, I did it for many years. I really don't know how. I was a social worker in mental health social services. [I learned a lot about the system.](#) I actually worked for fairly enlightened programs that maintained philosophies of harm-reduction and minimal coercion, but even in such settings a lot of coercion happened. It's simply endemic at this time, anywhere you go within social services. Sadly, it is how [professionals are trained to interact with clients and that's not even acknowledged or conscious for most people.](#)

After



After approximately two decades on psych meds I came off a six drug cocktail in about six years. This proved to be a gargantuan task. [I've written about that here.](#) This post is about the time spent healing since the withdrawal was completed over three years ago.

It should be noted that I have indeed lost most of the weight I put on, but the weight loss came as a result not of trying to lose weight, but instead learning to get healthy after the insult of iatrogenic illness. This is an important distinction since weight loss diets, per se, tend to be very unhealthy and most people don't keep the weight off because of that fact. All the changes I made to my diet were for my overall wellbeing. [The weight loss was secondary and happened as a result of learning to be healthy.](#) My diet is deeply nourishing, consisting of whole real foods with dense nutrition. I eat a lot of healthy fats and do not count calories or concern myself with portion size. By paying attention to my body's needs these things have fallen into place naturally.

The weight is really the most superficial aspect of the global and broad healing that has occurred in my life. It's also the only one visible to anyone other than myself and those closest to me and so I share it because it remains a rather astonishing contrast.

I see in retrospect that some core, vital part of me was always there during the drugged years, learning and remembering much that would help me in these years of coming off meds and now being med free. I no longer believe that I "lost" my life to drugs. I do think that it's tragic that I could not be more conscious during those years and that my body became toxic, polluted and chronically, painfully ill; and this is why I

help others learn to avoid what happened to me. Still, all my experience was not lost; in fact it was stored in my body to be processed when I got free of drugs. This is one of the many ways that [psych drugs are agents of trauma](#). Part of the healing process, for me, and clearly many others who've been on psych meds and come off, is one of working through layers and layers of trauma — that which was incurred prior to psych drug use as well as [that which is incurred as a result of psych drug use](#) and exposure to the dehumanizing psychiatric system. I have done this mostly through meditation and yoga. Trauma becomes embodied. [Embodied therapies are very important](#).

As many readers know, the process of [drug withdrawal made me much sicker](#) before I started to then regain well-being. [Protracted withdrawal syndromes and associated problems are much more common than most people realize](#).

I completed my withdrawal in February of 2010. I was one of thousands of [people who develop serious protracted withdrawal issues that lead to grave disability](#). Still, I have not had one moment of regret for having freed myself from these drugs because my mind is clear. I have a clarity of mind that is so beautiful I can cry if I spend time thinking about it. My clarity was stolen from me for almost half my life. I have it back and even while gravely impaired I have been grateful for that.

[My healing journey](#) has entailed learning about our deeply holistic natures as human beings. Everything matters. Our relationships with others and the planet, the food we eat, and the air we breath... how often we move our bodies and the thoughts we nurture in our minds and souls.

That is what understanding ourselves as holistic beings entails. Understanding our relationship to EVERYTHING in our environment and our bodies, what we're born with and how it's all connected. It's not some sort of new age hogwash. It's just plain and simple reality.

So, by that slow and painstaking, but ultimately joyous process of coming to understand how everything matters, I've been healing and bringing back well-being to this body/mind/spirit. At this point I am in many ways better than I've ever been in my life. I do still remain significantly limited in some practical ways... but at this point I'm sure the limitations are time-limited.

The ways I've healed myself are numerous and undeniable. [I've healed my endometriosis](#). I no longer have menstrual pain and I had very severe endometriosis since I was about 16 years old. I even had repeated surgeries that were never successful.

[I've healed severe, chronic and acute irritable bowel syndrome](#) (IBS). That too I had since I was about 16 years old. Many people who take psychiatric drugs have serious gut issues. Some of these gut issues predate psych drug use (mine did) but others are actually caused by the drugs (mine certainly got worse). In any case, healing my gut has helped all my well-being. As indicated above it's all related. You start healing one

thing and you'll end up healing everything.

I was pre-diabetic as a result of heavy use of neuroleptics. I now have blood-sugar levels that one doctor told me would be the envy of even the healthiest people! Sadly type-two diabetes is an epidemic today. [Those of us who take or have taken psych meds are high risk.](#) It's almost always reversible so it's [well worth learning to heal oneself.](#)

Psoriasis, a horrible skin condition, is virtually gone. It once covered my whole body and now I have only a couple of spots left.

My hair is much thicker and shinier than any other time in my whole life. I had incredibly thin and sparse hair. It's not luxurious even now, but the difference is amazing, striking, visible and palpable.

I've lost 75 lbs. (95 lbs as of a couple of years later) My body continues to changes in multiple (positive) ways daily. Seriously. I can feel and see it change, transform, heal. It's astonishing and lovely. It continues to communicate its needs and our partnership grows and prospers in love everyday. Our bodies are miracles, truly.

Lastly but perhaps most significantly for this particular article I've integrated and embraced my human nature, that first manifested in a way that got labeled "bipolar." [I "undiagnosed" myself a long time ago,](#) but since then I've come to more fully understand my experience. For me it was the lovely capacity to access and delve deep into not only my own psyche, but the consciousness of humanity itself. It's been a deeply rewarding journey to reclaim these parts of me that psychiatry almost always tragically misunderstands in the people it purports to help. It is this reclaiming that allows me to feel well even while I am still physically compromised.

I did all these things in part by having developed deep daily practices of yoga and meditation that essentially entail simply but profoundly listening to my experience. That includes learning to pay attention to my body's needs. [Psych drug withdrawal causes extreme and multiple sensitivities in some people.](#) I discovered I had [to change my diet to heal my gut and whole being.](#) Ultimately the practices of meditation and yoga and listening to the body in general, have allowed me to develop a deepening understanding of the human condition in general and the nature of our reality on this planet. This has, in turn, allowed me to release anger and blame and simply come to a deep gratitude for being alive and having had every experience that has brought me to this place without regard to whether they've been painful or pleasant. [I have learned to embrace that which I have been given.](#) Life is messy and painful and it's glorious, too.

I'm not fully functional still in that I cannot make plans or travel or even leave my house daily at will. It can on occasion be frustrating but not nearly as much as it once was. My spirit is well and my body continues to get better. I now walk almost daily (walking in the woods is generally so restorative that even if I can't go out in the world otherwise, I can do my nature walk) and [I also do yoga daily](#) which continues to be my most important means of physical rehab. Being that I was bedridden for two years it's

been a miracle of rejuvenation for me.

My husband left on a trip a few days ago for ten days. It's the first time he's been able to leave me in over 5 years since I've needed close to 24 hour care. I can manage on my own for 10 days. This is wonderful.

I am now able to run errands two or three times a week rather than once or twice a month. I can talk on the phone more often and am reconnecting with loved ones I couldn't talk to for years. I've also developed some of the most rewarding relationships of my life as a result of the work I've done while sick via the internet. I can also, now, on occasion, be social and spend time with trusted friends in person. My life is rich and full in spite of limitations. I don't judge the ups and downs so much anymore. This is my life. It's a meaningful and lovely life I'm living. I am eternally grateful to be med free.

See also:

[If I had remained med compliant](#)

[The anniversary_posts: the 5 years off psychiatric drugs documented](#)

Supplements and the highly-sensitive body

Below is a response I wrote to someone about supplements for the highly sensitive body. I've made some additional comments for this post as well. Many of us [who come off of psychiatric drugs](#) develop [hyper-sensitivities to many substances and foods](#). Many of us are highly sensitive to begin with as well. We don't all do very well with supplements and there is a big push to be on them from most alternative medicine practitioners and among the general population. Supplements are by no means always appropriate. We need to learn to trust our bodies in a big way when we encounter professionals of all stripes and know that it's okay to say no.

The response I made:

I don't mean that supplements are as hard on the body as pharma. You're right they are generally less neurotoxic. They are however marketed in a way that doesn't much care about the individual. The forces of capitalism would have you believe every product is just right for you (and those selling them often believe this is true it seems). A lot of alternative practitioners don't really know how to go a more whole food direction and simply trust the marketing of these products much like MDs trust pharma's marketing. Also many practitioners of all stripes have not encountered folks who are highly sensitive.

Supplements are often highly synthesized substances and the body quite often doesn't like them when we are highly sensitive. This is a generalization, of course, supplements exist on a spectrum and can be completely unprocessed whole foods on one end of the spectrum while completely synthesized and essentially pharmaceutical-like at the other end. On either end of the spectrum, however, when we are sensitive after coming off psych drugs even the relatively unprocessed supplements are often too much. I didn't tolerate most medicinal herbs for several years, though they've now many have become wonderful healing allies. Whole herbs are often encapsulated and then they are called supplements.

When we are dealing with harm reduction and healing ---
supplements of all kinds are sometimes just the right thing, no doubt.

I'm not anti-drug nor anti-supplement. I'm do-what-you-need to do to get to the next step. That is what I do and being non-dependent on non-food substances is my goal. It may be an elusive one but it suits me well. The path for me has involved both drugs and supplements at various times and that continues to be the case. (I rarely use any pharmaceuticals of any kind, but I never say never. In the last 3 years all I've used is a tylenol a few times because, oddly enough, tylenol lowers cortisol quite efficiently...[tylenol is actually a highly toxic pharmaceutical](#) so I do try to avoid them). We must develop our own discernment and in this society and culture that can be a challenging practice. Still I've found it's possible to build and learn.

At this point I prefer whole herbs...plants...that I make into teas most often. I consider herbs as part of the food kingdom. That they can be phenomenally medicinal is no different from quite a lot of very healthy foods in general. This again, is a preference -- not a hard and fast rule.

The [dysregulated state](#) of my [autonomic nervous system](#) has also required being prepared to change how I support my body daily...even hourly. I think this is probably the case with many of us who are dysregulated. The thing is we're conditioned to believe that medicine and/or supplements or even good food should be taken daily when healing when in fact our bodies demand much finer tuning. My only "protocol" is listening to my body. What I need can change daily and even hourly. Getting attached to any one supplement or drug doesn't work. And then if I don't attach I can see that a "reaction" to a

substance as simply my body saying "no, not now." It doesn't mean no, not ever again. As I heal I find many things come in and out of being therapeutic for my body/mind/spirit.

So, I have used and continue to use supplements in ways that are critically supportive of my process...I just don't tend to use them the way they're marketed. I might use something that is supposed to be used three times daily once a week for example...or once in a blue moon, as needed. Still that dose can be critically important because everything matters, but I've learned to listen to my body for directions.

At the end of the day it really doesn't matter what I do...we're all different. I share this not so that it might be copied exactly by others but instead to show that I'm not copying anyone else. This is my trip. I learned from others who were brave enough to forge ahead on their own, but the actual details of exactly what we do always differs. We all have to find out what works for us individually. That for me is the most important thing I've learned during this journey. We really do need to find our own ways...as hard as that is sometimes -- the journey has been an adventure for me as well.

MORE RELATED:

- [Food as medicine. Food sensitivities, too.](#)
- [Food sensitivities, histamine and mast cell activation syndrome](#)
- [Emotional "dysregulation" is plasticity](#)
- [Herbs heal the nervous system \(and soul\) in profound ways](#)
- [My growing herb list: healing with plants](#)

- [Multiple drug sensitivity \(the outcome of grossly over-prescribed medications\)](#)

Healing the body/mind with the willingness to feel

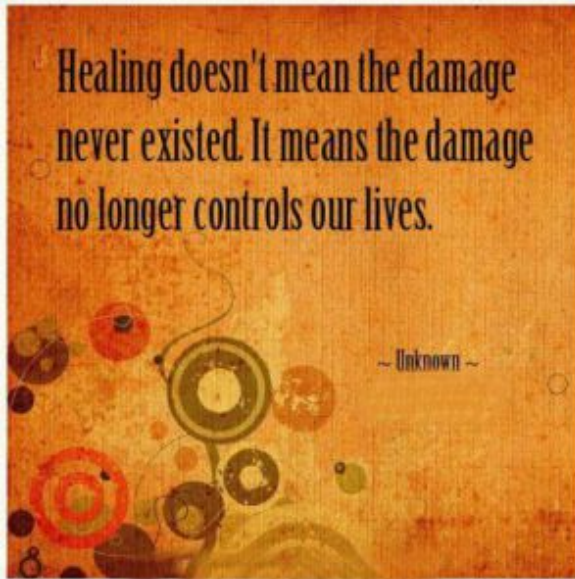
Beyond Meds 2015

As one opens up to the pain of the past one heals so that one can move into the future....

(Update Nov 2015) — It is through such methods of close attention to the body/mind/spirit that my healing has progressed at all. It is the foundation of everything I have learned during this healing process. I have, at this point, developed my own way of doing this stuff but I continue to learn by comparing notes with others who do similar work towards their own healing and awakening.

[Focusing](#) is one method of body oriented meditation. [Will Hall writes about it here](#). I was influenced early on by reading the book about it. Today, I came upon the below quote by Eugene Gendlin, the author of the book and thought I would share it here with some additional thoughts and links to related posts. Certainly this sort of meditative process is part of my own healing experience.

Many of us spend a life time avoiding our emotional pain and it does become more and more toxic as long as we keep it buried. It will literally make us ill, physically and mentally as Bessel van der Kolk talks about in the book, [The Body Keeps Score](#). The little quip, “What you resist, persists” has proven very true in my life. The only way out of that trap is to stop avoiding and learn in whatever way makes sense to us as individuals to feel once again and to embrace and absorb and therefore transform the pain of our lives. This is how I am healing.



What is split off, not felt, remains the same.

When it is felt, it changes. Most people don't know this. They think that by not permitting the feeling of their negative ways they make themselves good. On the contrary, that keeps these negatives static, the same from year to year. A few moments of feeling it in your body allows it to change. If there is in you something bad or sick or unsound, let in inwardly be, and breath. That's the only way it can evolve and change into the form it needs. – [Eugene Gendlin](#)

More: [Focusing: Felt Sense Meditation](#)

This seems to be a theme today as I just made some related comments in one of my chronic illness groups. Here are a few of those comments, edited just a wee bit for this site:

Coming back into the body has been critically important to me as well. I have a practice of deeply diving into the body sensations I have...even and most especially painful ones...not all the time (not in a masochistic fashion) but often...because my body speaks to me...somatic trauma release...it's full of information in my experience that allows for growth and healing both.

I've found several programs that are focused on this work that helped inform what became my own version of what I now do with my body. I'm happy to share those — different spiritual teachers teaching body oriented meditations...they were all very helpful to me. Really what they did was help me understand what I was already sort of doing and they gave me permission to trust what I was doing. They are not taught (mostly) by folks who've been seriously ill like most of us have been, but that didn't matter to me.

***NOTE:** [if you are in the throes of early and/or acute psychiatric drug withdrawal syndrome](#) spending much time in the pain of the body is truly impossible. For ideas of how to begin when the body is screaming with that sort of chaos perhaps this post will

help: [Life as a meditation: my contemplative adventure](#). The fact is when our body is in crisis we need to start with tiny, baby steps and let the body take it's time to heal too. Please be gentle with yourselves. The information in this post may be something you'd like to revisit in the future when you're ready for it.

See also:

- [You can't heal what you don't feel](#)
- [Feeling your way to nondual awakening...](#)
- [The life-liberating impact of feeling the feeling](#)

I will share the programs I mention above here since I've done previous posts on them:

- [Body-Centered Inquiry](#)
- [Inhabiting our bodies in meditation](#)
- ["I wrote a new story for my nervous system" — neurosculpting, neuroplasticity](#)

These too may be helpful:

- [Trauma, Fixation and Reactivity – \(Somatic Experience\)](#)
- [Trauma release exercises \(or tension release too\) — the body speaks](#)
- [Healing Somatic Meditation](#) (welcoming prayer)
- [Restoring the Body: Yoga, EMDR, and Treating Trauma](#)
- [Yoga for trauma: reclaiming your body](#)
- [The body keeps score](#) — scroll down for many posts on this important book

See also more: [Healing trauma links](#)

Heal with whole foods: transform body/mind/spirit. Heal drug damage too

Beyond Meds 2016

I continue to heal by diet. Diet heals the gut and soothes and heals the nervous system and all the organs slowly over time. In my mind herbs

and some few supplements from time to time as needed are included in dietary approaches. Most of my "supplements" however, at this point are whole foods or natural occurring substances like seaweeds, shilajit and other "super foods" (densely nutritious foods). I pretty much avoid that which is created in the laboratory in any way. That means next to no synthesized vitamins, amino acids etc. There have been some occasions where exceptions to this has been appropriate for some time but the more I learn the less I need to partake of such substances. I do continue to love herbs which I buy whole, dried, in bulk and make tea, tea, tea. I don't do well with tinctures and encapsulated herbs are often of very poor quality. Again, on occasion I may use those methods of ingesting herbs, but not as a habit. I do what is right for me at any given time and that is going to vary.

I'm sharing a book today. [**Healing With Whole Foods: Asian Traditions and Modern Nutrition.**](#) The reason I was drawn to this work is because Paul Pitchford understands my experience with food as psychedelic and about food "reactions" having correlates in the psyche. Reactions that remain biological and physiological realities that can even be deadly at times. They act like true allergies. Healing requires engaging body/mind and spirit all. I love that this is intrinsic to his work.

The fact is, again, [**we are profoundly holistic and everything matters.**](#) The chapter on emotional healing through food is what convinced me the author could be helpful. He calls the process of

healing "harmonization." I LOVE that. I've spoken to Paul on the phone twice and it was a joy to find someone who could instantaneously enter into my process and not even have a whole lot of direct experience with folks who've been injured by psych drugs. It was unnecessary because he understood something more foundational about how such injuries occur. He understands my body/mind/spirit.

Below is the excerpt that convinced me Paul Pitchford understood my process before I even spoke to him. I was not disappointed. As I often do, I am sharing what has worked for me. Indeed what is working for me right now. I do not ever make any assumptions about what will help others. We're all different and different modalities speak to us. Different modalities may also be appropriate at different times for different people.

Emotional/Psychological Discharges

Throughout the process of purification, the individual can be expected to have a number of healing reactions arising from the residues of past experiences. The cells of the body—in particular those of the brain and liver—are actively encoded with every emotional or mental issue that has not been resolved. After all, “everything characteristic of a human—size, shape and orderly development from infancy to death—is recorded by an arrangement of molecules and DNA.”⁶ This arrangement, on whatever level it is embodied, is always going to reflect the path of the person throughout life.

When a balanced diet and lifestyle are followed, the cells of the body relax and eventually normalize. As cell and tissue distortions are released, the repressed emotions that accompanied them are also released and begin to surface. In Biblical times, these releases were called “demons” and still could be, for the demons that plague us are our psychological projections generated by unresolved issues or ambivalence toward our unfolding paths.

Pitchford has a background in Chinese and Ayurvedic medicine. I found him to be not in the least bit impressed with the histamine intolerance framework and he's helping me more than any professional has been able to. Personally, I think that's because that frame remains entrenched in a largely allopathic system of care. So while the [histamine intolerance window](#) into my issues was very helpful and even critical when I found it, it's ceased to be the most important thing now. The big picture is bigger than [histamine and food sensitivities and mast cells](#) and it's really nice to work with someone who can hold those issues in a much bigger context and actually help me. **Diagnosis such as histamine intolerance, in**

my mind, are raising symptoms up to the level of diagnosis (not unlike psychiatric diagnosis, really) which can really make folks feel stuck. Anyway, he's the first professional from whom I can actually benefit from his direct suggestions and not instead get hurt. He really gets inside my process and hears me and understands like no one I've encountered. It's FUN to talk to him. Below is a bit more from the beginning of his book: [**Healing With Whole Foods: Asian Traditions and Modern Nutrition**](#)

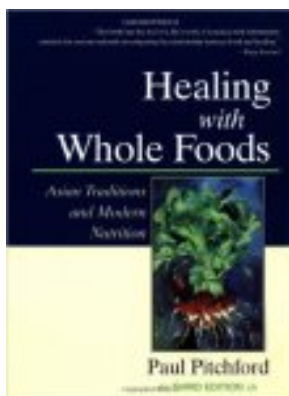
Inspiration for *Healing with Whole Foods* originated from the experiences of the author and several close associates who lived and studied the major dietary and herbal traditions of the West and the East. Among our clients, a subject of intense interest was dietary healing, particularly those practices that clear and energize the body so that the spirit can flourish.

In the late twentieth century, food finally began to be recognized in the West as an important healing force. For the first time in United States history, the Surgeon General acknowledged (in 1988) the value of a good diet, while simultaneously condemning typical American eating patterns. According to his statement, fully two-thirds of all deaths are directly affected by improper diet, and poor eating habits play a *large part* in the nation's most common killers—coronary heart disease, stroke, atherosclerosis, diabetes, and some cancers.

Holistic practitioners have always seen marked improvements when individuals make appropriate dietary changes. These changes are actually a revival of ancient principles, but only in recent years has this consciousness reached mainstream America, as evidenced by the above government recognition. What is needed now are not only higher quality foods and better basic diets, but a clearer picture of which of these foods are best for overcoming personal imbalances and for maximizing vitality in each individual.

In my healing and teaching work with several thousand students and clients over the last two decades, I have gradually uncovered a more accurate way to determine which foods belong in a wholesome diet. It is based on insights generated by the interplay of East Asian traditions and modern nutrition. Frequently food therapies are used with little or no result or, worse yet, undesired results. In other cases, results are positive.

The information in this book will help ensure better results. Healing with food is not haphazard. Food acts according to its various therapeutic properties, although its properties are often less specific and its actions less drastic than those of herbs or other medicines. Food also acts as a foundation medicine. It is sometimes slower to take effect, but more profoundly affects all systems of the body. If diet is used correctly for prevention and treatment, other medicines are required less, if at all.



- [Healing With Whole Foods: Asian Traditions and Modern Nutrition](#)

Eating wholesome whole real food is important for body/mind/spirit health and well-being. I've written a lot about my adventure with diet and healing here: [Nutrition and gut health, Mental health and diet](#)

And you can find more [Foodie posts and recipes here.](#)

More: [Diet and nutrition here](#)

- [What about supplements and the highly-sensitive body](#)
- [Advanced adventures in healing the gut: biofilm eradication](#)

My healing protocol detailed...

Beyond Meds 2014

Someone in one of my healing groups asked me the below question. I've been rapidly getting healthier and people are noticing.

Monica what do you think has been helping you the most to get better?

I didn't really know how to answer and made this response:

gosh...it's like a snowball effect so I don't know...my whole life is about [living well](#)...it's EVERYTHING. I trust my gut...and [it's like I'm given guidance now](#)...and I have

FAITH. it's just all coming together...Not sure how to answer...I might be able to answer better if you have a more specific question

Later I figured I'd answer by putting this post together for both her and my readers here on Beyond Meds. The bottom line is that everything I do is important. Yup, again, [Everything matters](#). It's impossible for me to determine exactly what is doing what! It all works together synergistically. It's all part of the holistic whole that is my life.

Below, in no particular order, are many of my daily practices which are always subject to change.

Yoga -- I practice daily at home anywhere from 5 minutes to an hour, sometimes that hour is broken up into several mini sessions. I listen to my body and do what it needs as it needs it. I take yoga classes in the community 1 to 3 times a week. I have found a studio that is highly respectful of my process and so I often leave classes before they are over. I set my mat up in the back near the exit and quietly leave when my nervous system has had enough. This is very important as yoga is powerful and getting better and healthy has required learning to very intently respond to the needs of my body. So, yes, you can even do too much yoga. More from Beyond Meds: [YOGA](#)

Diet -- my diet has been constantly evolving for many years now and it's been critical that I learn to experiment and listen to how that which I put in my body affects me. What is optimal for me can change daily. It's been vitally important that I be willing to make even radical changes at time. Those changes for me, however, came slowly and in baby steps at first. The more I got attuned to my body the more things became clear. But it's certainly involved many steep learning curves. I always recommend patience and the willingness to take baby steps when it comes to diet. Also my needs continue to evolve and change, so it's an adventure everyday. I've done several elimination diets over the years. Currently I don't eat gluten, dairy, soy, nightshades. I only eat sugar by way of whole fruits and veggies. And because of my [histamine issues](#) I have other somewhat odd limitations but they are evolving and as I heal become less and less of a burden. More from Beyond Meds: [Nutrition and gut health](#)

Epsom salt baths -- I can't say exactly why these are so great and healing and vital, but there are lots of ideas on the web as to why they're so fantastic. All I know is they were absolutely critical to my surviving for a good long while and I still find them to be an important part of self-care. More from Beyond Meds: [Healing bath: for anyone who hurts or simply needs to relax](#)

Ecstatic dance -- This is my latest addition to my movement disciplines. I love it so much I can't even tell you how important it is to me. I am generally so overwhelmed by joy when I go to my weekly dances that at some point or another I am in tears. Watching all the other human beings dance about me is one of the most beautiful things I've ever experienced. Everyone is profoundly beautiful when they are dancing

ecstatically. It's as simple as that. It doesn't matter what body type we have or what sort of clothing we are wearing. It's astonishing and healing to see other human beings let loose like this. And then to also join them. Indescribable. Insight and healing seems to just dump upon me while in movement. We lost something when we stopped the tribal dance. The good thing is it seems we can get it back. More from Beyond Meds: [Ecstatic Dance](#)

Meditation: I meditate daily. It varies how much because it's seamlessly integrated into my life at this point. I write about how that came about here: [Life as a meditation: my contemplative adventure](#). I also have several collections about meditation here: [Meditation is the practice of learning to pay attention. That is all](#). And for many inspirational quotes and thoughts from others as well, scroll down this list of posts: [Meditation](#)

Lately herbal teas have been helping me a lot. See: [I Actually Woke up This Morning Thinking I'd Arrived, I'm Well](#) -- I say in that article:

I'm learning plant medicine lately and herbs are seriously helping my healing along now. It's really revelatory and wonderful. I understand now why [shamans](#), etc., talk about plant spirits . . . it truly feels like an intelligence permeating my consciousness with its own . . . the merging of the different consciousnesses is a synergistic healing experience. [Being hypersensitive](#) is actually fun at these times . . . it's like I'm tripping all the time (mildly and in a good way) . . . and it's all tons of really good, informative data that aids healing and produces insights about life and living in general.

I would not have tolerated any of the herbs I'm using now [the first several years after getting off the drugs](#) . . . and in fact it's likely I would not have tolerated them six months ago either. Yes, one of the herb teas I've been drinking set me off pretty badly about six months ago.

Also to be clear, I feel everything I eat on an energetic level. That is how the hypersensitivity registers in part. So every food, drink I ingest there is an energetic correlate. Nature, exercise etc also affects me this way. The thing is it's all starting to make sense and not be so overwhelming and the herbs are helping in a huge and lovely way. ([read more here](#))

The teas that have been most helpful for my nervous system calming and healing have been: *Oatstraw, Red Clover, White Peony and Chamomile*. I have also been using Lemon Balm and Holy Basil in very small doses as needed. I drink tea, I don't take pills. This allows for very careful administration. Sometimes all I take is a tablespoon of the steeped tea. I have had some not so nice experiences as I learn what my body likes best. I react to some of the teas that most people find very mild. Please experiment with great caution if you are in psychiatric drug withdrawal. I, in fact, wouldn't recommend a lot of this in early withdrawal if you have severe symptoms. As I mention

above, it's clear to me I would not have tolerated most and maybe not any of what I'm doing with herbs just 6 months ago and for several years before that. [Hypersensitivity is normal among many of us](#) with psychiatric drug withdrawal syndromes. Be careful.

So far, I've learned the most from [Susun Weed](#)'s work. [She also has lots of information on the internet.](#)

I always use the internet liberally when I'm learning new things (google is your friend). So I've gotten bits and pieces of information in many places. Here is another book: [Plant Spirit Medicine: The Healing Power of Plants](#)

A few final things I do that are also important: I walk in the woods almost daily, [often barefoot](#). I swim in a salt water pool once or twice a week. I [follow my gut on a daily basis!](#) That means everything is always subject to change and that this list is by no means exhaustive.

Everyone who heals is going to have a different list of things they find helpful. Finding mine (and continuing to find it daily) has been an adventure that I now greatly appreciate.

Below are some posts that have additional tips on coping and healing in general. My habits are always changing.

- [Help for insomnia...](#)
- [Reframe your insomnia](#)
- [Internal Guidance](#)
- [Adventures in natural pain relief](#)
- **[Toolbox: coping with withdrawal syndrome & chronic illness...a collection of suggestions and links](#)**
- [Information and inspiration for the chronically ill](#)

If you're curious about what I'm healing here are a couple of posts that offer history. I was bedridden for a couple of years and home bound for several. Things are clearly

changing:

- [Monica's story: the aftermath of polypsychopharmacology](#)

and

- [Everything Matters: a Memoir From Before, During and After Psychiatric Drugs](#)