

## Discussion of Weekly Coaching Webinar Announcement

By Charles Gant, MD, PhD

*Our greatest fear is not that we are inadequate, but that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that frightens us.*

Williamson, Marianne (1996). *A Return to Love: Reflections on the Principles of A Course in Miracles*. New York: HarperCollins. (Quote often misattributed to Nelson Mandela)

When you seek healthcare, you are usually assessed by a professional and recommendations are provided. Your healthcare provider naturally assumes that you will follow their recommendations to the letter. You may even be grateful for the information, and ideally use your relationship with your practitioner as a coequal, *adult/adult* interaction, and taking responsibility for putting their recommendations into action. Like most practitioners, I can boast a 90+% rate of success for patients who persevere in this way. These are the patients we all fondly remember when asked how our clinical outcomes stack up.

Sometimes however, our patients do not follow our instructions. Any life change can be scary, and engaging in a healing process, however positive and self-enlightening, can be an extremely frightening prospect. *"It is our light, not our darkness, that frightens us"* (quote above). Out of fear, old rationalizations and justifications often surface which usually stem from childhood when we were forced to gag down pills, get shots and endure unpleasant attention from big people in white coats. For instance, a high percentage but almost always ignored cause of high blood pressure is nothing other than "white coat hypertension" – get rid of the doctor's office and the white coat and the blood pressure comes back to normal!

What is more self-defeating, is the emergence of an "inner child" voice, which generates all kinds of fearful resistance. A week never goes by without once of my patients suggesting that there are too many nutritional supplements to take (at most the food volume is equivalent to one banana a day), or that treatment is too expensive (cancer, rapid aging or serious medical and psychiatric problems are cheaper?), or that my practitioner only greedily prescribed supplements because they had cut a deal with the suppliers (I own no stock and make no over-rides on supplements, although I have many colleagues who do and I am OK with that). This inner voice *is* our scared child dreaming up justifications to not step up to the plate like an adult and give healing our best shot! I know, I have one too, which pops up every time my orthopedist recommends more surgery on my genetically damaged hips!

In psychodynamic terms, the ideal *adult/adult* interaction with our practitioner (discussed above) and based on mutual equality and respect, can deteriorate into a "Father-Knows-Best/Marcus Welby" *parent/child* transaction. If we don't follow our parent-professional's advice to the letter, our parental, healthcare professional proceeds to blame us, the child-patient, and starts calling us names like "non-compliant." We child/patients then get to dream up something to blame our practitioners about to justify our resistance, like the examples above.

As suggested in the quote above, it is our innate, spirituality-based and powerful intelligence, whatever you want to call it, that we are mostly afraid of, so instead of asserting our own initiative, we assume that our "professionals are smarter" and we then make them responsible for our solutions. This is the core problem with the current so-called "healthcare crisis." It's a parent-child blame game necessitating high malpractice costs which is doomed to fail. We professionals are all too willing to blindly assume the parent role and tell others how much we know and thus be respected for our fabulous knowledge. Patients in their child role and acting like children, want their cake and eat it too - to go on eating junk food, not exercising, resisting their "medicine" (or nutritional supplements), not sleeping well and living a high stress lifestyle, and make the parent responsible if they don't get well.

But even when our professionalism does empower our patients to discover their innate, spiritual potential to become well, that can nevertheless scare the living daylights out of anyone, and all kinds of resistance to getting well can emerge at some point in the healing process. Other typical excuses which frequently emerge, "there's too much happening at work, the insurance company is giving me a hard time, my spouse thinks it's stupid ..yadda yadda."

Let's cut to the chase and quickly find a way to end this self-limiting game. I don't have the time and energy to field ever excuse for why my patients believe they can't get well. Certainly, as a physician who has practiced integrative and functional medicine and psychotherapy at a rate of about a 1000 patients a year for three and a half decades, I have learned how to apply some powerful tools of healing. But what does this matter for patients who are too afraid to use them? So just take it from me that "*Our greatest fear is not that we are inadequate, but that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that frightens us,*" and when it comes to resistance and rationalizations, just recognize it as your inner child's fear speaking and simply move on.

| Let's assume that most of the answers to your problems are already within you, and that I, as your doctor, should be devoting a significant portion of my time towards consulting you for the answers, and providing you with an opportunity for you to come up with your own plan of healing which you feel is right for you. This approach is the core philosophy of a new and rapidly growing profession called *health coaching*, which essentially promotes the following dictum: *The less I am parentally directive about putting my treatments into place and applying my "great knowledge," and the more effective I am in empowering you to come up with your own personalized plan which you can be personally responsible for, the better.* This not to say that I will stop being a physician and providing treatment plans. I only want you to assume a co-equal role in the decision-making, which is the adult-adult interaction, and which I am sure that in your deep spirituality-based core you would probably prefer anyway.

So every Monday evening at 8 PM, starting on July 26<sup>th</sup> (my birthday – 60 years old - yippee!), I am going to take off my physicians hat for an hour or so, turn over a new leaf, and assume that you are wiser and more powerful than we could ever have imagined when it comes to what you need to do to improve your physical health and wellness. We will mostly discuss what you believe you are willing to commit to with your diet, supplements, fun/recreation, "unhealthy" habits (AKA addictions – its OK, everyone has them), sleep schedule, prayer/ meditation/ spirituality, weight, stress levels, exercise, relationships and just about any other topic you want to address. I will answer typical doctor-patient questions for the first 15 minutes or so about your health issues like a physician is expected to do. But after that I will put on the coaching hat and let you (plural) decide what is best for you. I will set the ball rolling with a few ground rules, facilitate the discussion, but after that, you set the rules for you, make your own goals in these areas, and see if you can stick to them. If you are not successful, that's perfectly OK, and you can set up some new goals for the next week and try that on for size. No blame games here, because we are all fallible human beings brazenly<sup>1</sup> striving for improvement despite being incapable of perfection.

I expect all of my patients to challenge themselves even if it results in just a minor lifestyle change, which first of all means showing up on a regular basis. Otherwise I will assume that you prefer a typical, "Father-Knows-Best/Marcus Welby," parent/child-acting professional, and you want to see me more often for costly appointments. This webinar is free, because like unconditional love, the greatest things in life don't cost money. You already know that you could commit to eating a little less of that ice cream, or exercise a little more, or whatever, because you have been contemplating these issues for a long time. All you ever needed was a little loving, coaching support to make it happen.

Come use this forum to find out how powerful and intelligent you are and always have been, but may not have discovered because those big people who forced healing on you in childhood forgot to mention how it is "*our light, not our darkness, that frightens us.*" Make the changes you have been contemplating for a long time. Hey, I'll even chip in a few of my own, because after all, a 60-year-old is no spring chicken. I look forward to welcoming you at our first coaching webinar on Monday, July 26 at 8pm.

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<sup>1</sup> Definition of **brazen** - marked by contemptuous boldness - a ~ disregard for the rules. How can I ever write anything in my long-winded, boring style and not have at least one footnote!