

### Healing Hip, Joint, and Knee Pain

by Kate S. O'Shea

North Atlantic Books, P.O. Box 12327, Berkeley, California 94712 USA

1998, softcover, \$14.95, 154 pp.

Orthopedic joint pain and disability affects a majority of our older population: arthritis, osteoporosis, hip dysfunction, knee problems, etc. The disability and pain suffered for years sometimes, often leads to depression and alienation from the body part that is causing the discomfort. The author of *Healing Hip, Joint, and Knee Pain* presents a body-mind approach that integrates the new research in this field to add a much-needed adjunct to drugs and surgery, for the orthopedic patient.

The author's intention in writing this book was to help the orthopedic patient to "go beyond the conventionally accepted level of recovery," and learn to give their bodies the time and attention to healing that our medical system does not encourage. Living in a busy world can make us feel that taking time to heal is unimportant or a sign of weakness. Nothing could be further from the truth as this book makes clear. People with disabling joint problems experience a lot of pain, and suppressing that pain with stronger and stronger drugs, does not lead to healing.

Orthopedic psychology is an evolving field dedicated to "the study of consciousness as it expresses, and is expressed by the condition and functioning of the skeletal system and its related structures." If you doubt your ability to improve your own condition, relying on pills and doctors to "fix" you, this book will teach you how to greatly improve your overall "balance," and ameliorate the pain level without drugs. More than that, it will introduce you to your body in a new way – emphasizing receptivity, patience, sensitivity to your body's signs of distress, and most importantly, the nurturing and attention – love, if you will – of your physical self.

Ms. O'Shea's own experience of having four orthopedic surgeries by the age of thirteen, to correct a congenital hip disorder was the beginning of a long journey to self-recovery. After being introduced to bodywork, she went on to investigate the connections between body and mind, and has been a Bodywork professional for 15 years now. Her techniques to engage the mind and emotions in the healing process have proven very successful in working with orthopedic patients.

A common result of surgery is for the patient to withdraw from their body, the source of pain and trauma, or to deny it. It is this separation that makes healing difficult, if not impossible. The author says "Moving back into your body mentally and emotionally after surgery or trauma is critical for complete healing...and requires increasing your bodymind awareness."

The chapter headings are intriguing: A Question of Balance: a discussion of mind-body research and the need to balance the technology and drugs of conventional medicine with appropriate "soft" care, using bodywork and meditation; Moving Back Into Your Body: you must be "present" to heal completely; Love and Acceptance: the author considers the "heart of health"; Supporting Yourself: your inner architecture, describing how the skeleton works; The Bermuda Triangle: pain, fear, and depression; Listening to the River: keys to self-awareness; Self in Motion: a set of tools for comfortable movement; Keeping Your Balance: An approach to maintenance; and Nourishment: spiritual "soul" food.

The chapter on pain, fear and depression is central to this book; fear and depression, in response to pain, accompany most orthopedic problems and these are rarely addressed by the patient's physician. Learning facts about anatomy and physiology helps the patient to appreciate the body's innate wisdom and systems of self-repair, and how techniques of stress reduction such as meditation

enhance the healing process. Ms. O'Shea gives clear explanations of how our bodies react to pain and fear, and how the practice of *awareness* and *nurturing attention* to the body greatly reduces pain and stress.

The author uses the Rosen Method of bodywork, which is based on the principle that *relaxation is the gateway to awareness*. Listening to the body with your hands, listening to your inner dialog, breathing techniques, and meditation and imagery, are all used to enhance the awareness, and compassion for oneself. The illustrated exercises and client histories make this book easy to read and understand.

I was very impressed with *Healing Hip, Joint, and Knee Pain*. The growing weight of mindbody research is apparent in the many recently published books incorporating this "old/new" knowledge, and Ms. O'Shea's book shows how it can be applied specifically to greatly improve recovery from orthopedic trauma and surgery. I would like to see this book recommended to every orthopedic patient after surgery, and it could undoubtedly enhance the quality of life for anyone suffering from orthopedic pain and disability.