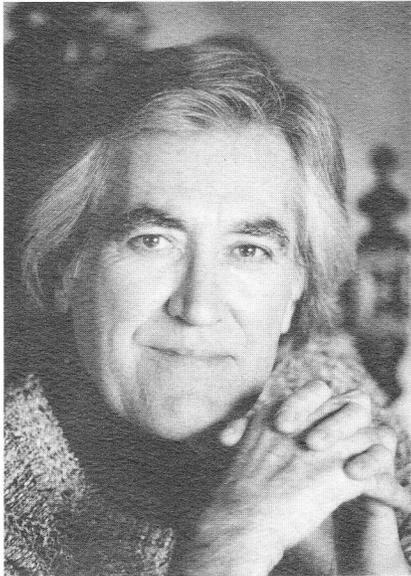


## The Power of Prayer



DR. LARRY DOSSEY

Nobel neurophysiologist Sir John Eccles has proposed that the human brain is exquisitely sensitive to thought. As he put it, the mind exerts continual "cognitive caresses" on the millions of neurons that make up the brain. Might the brain's sensitivity to thought make it more likely to respond to not only our inner thoughts, but to the mental efforts of other persons such as healers, who might be at a distance?

It is difficult to use living brain tissue experimentally as a distant target for thought. We must obtain brain tissue surgically via biopsy, which involves risk. It is far easier to use other body tissue, such as various types of blood cells.

Certain blood cells have a lot in common with brain tissue. For example, many white blood cells contain identical receptor sites for neurotransmitter molecules that exist also in the brain, and they manufacture some of these

substances as well. So if mind "cognitively caresses" brain tissue, might it similarly affect blood cells that are functionally similar?

Dr. William G. Braud of the Mind Science Foundation in San Antonio, Texas, put this question to the test. He wanted to know: 1. whether or not ordinary people can mentally protect red blood cells from serious, stressful influences; 2. whether this could be done at a distance; and 3. whether this effect is "selfish"—that is, whether the mentally protective effect works better on a subject's own red blood cells, or whether it equally protects the cells of others.

In Braud's experiment thirty-two subjects—seventeen females and fifteen males, ranging in age from twenty-three to fifty-three years—mentally attempted to keep red blood cells (RBCs) from dissolving when they were placed in test tubes containing a dilute solution in a distant room.

This is stressful for RBCs; they gradually swell and burst, leaking their hemoglobin into the solution. This process, known as hemolysis, can be measured with extreme accuracy with a device known as a spectrophotometer.

Approximately half of Braud's subjects were instructed to try mentally to protect their *own* blood cells, while half were assigned to protect blood cells of *another* person. It is important to note that the subjects were "blind"—that is, they did not know if the blood came from

their own body or from someone else.

During each session the subjects were placed in a quiet, comfortable room in one part of the building, and the target, the tubes of blood, was placed in a distant room in the same building. A session consisted of two control or rest periods of fifteen minutes each and two fifteen-minute "protect" periods. As an aid to visualization and intention, they looked at a color slide projection of healthy, intact RBCs. During the control periods, subjects closed

their eyes and thought about matters not connected with the experiment.

The technician performing the hemolysis measurements on the RBCs in the distant room was also "blind"—ignorant as to whether the blood originated from the subject or someone else, and ignorant also as to whether a control or a "protect" session was in progress.

Braud reached two important conclusions. First, the subjects could influence the rate of hemolysis of the distant RBCs to a degree unexplainable by chance. Second, the source of the blood was not significant in the group *as a whole*. However, when *individual* performances were examined, the five most skillful subjects in the entire experiment were those trying to influence their own blood.

*...the mind exerts continual "cognitive caresses" on the millions of neurons that make up the brain.*



**Yoga Research Society**  
 341 Fitzwater Street  
 Philadelphia, PA 19147

Non-Profit Organization  
 U.S. Postage  
 PAID  
 Philadelphia, PA  
 Permit No. 2935

*"Science without religion is lame,  
 religion without science is blind."*

**Albert Einstein**



Printed on Recycled Paper

***The Power of Prayer, continued***

This study suggests that healing thoughts can function at a distance, and that they are *on the whole* unselfish. They seem to occur regardless of whether they are directed to one's self or to another. But although the *overall* effect seems unselfish when large groups of people are studied, there also appear to be individuals who are not typical of the entire group, people whose healing thoughts may be more potent for themselves than for others.

What makes the difference? Braud suggests that the mental strategies that each individual employs may be important. In his study some people used images in which the RBCs were visualized in a very realistic manner. Other people used mental images involving objects similar but not identical to the RBCs, but which possessed qualities that a strong, protected cell might possess.

Braud also suggests that personality differences among subjects may affect the results. Some personality types might feel more comfortable with a highly specific and graphic form of imagery, some with an indirect or nonspecific mental strategy.

excerpted from **HEALING WORDS**  
 by Larry Dossey, M.D., HarperCollins  
 Publishers. New York, New York

**THE  
 POWER  
 OF  
 PRAYER  
 AND  
 PRACTICE  
 OF  
 MEDICINE**

YOGA RESEARCH SOCIETY  
 presents a workshop with

**LARRY DOSSEY M.D.**

SUNDAY, APRIL 24, 1994  
 11 am to 4 pm  
 Hahnemann University

**\$35 (\$45 at the door)**

For Mastercard / Visa orders call (215) 592-9642. Tickets are also available at:

**Garland of Letters Bookstore**  
 527 South Street, Philadelphia, PA  
 (215) 923-5946

**Turning Point Bookstore**  
 30 West State Street, Media, PA  
 (215) 566-9474

**Starlight Journey**  
 423 Old York Road, Jenkintown, PA  
 (215) 576-6675

**Sage International Foods**  
 617 E. Passyunk Avenue, Phila., PA  
 (215) 627-2811