



KARYN SHANKS MD

Heart, Hope, Healing

Body Wisdom: What Our Bodies Can Teach Us

BY KARYN SHANKS MD | MARCH 11, 2017



Is there something in your life that needs to change? To heal? Your body is probably telling you about it right now. We can learn to decipher our body's wisdom.

I've ignored my body's wisdom—the persistently aching shoulder reminding me to hug into myself (rather than extending out to others all the time), the gnawing discomfort in my gut telling me about that toxic person who needed a boot from my life, the overwhelm suggesting (screaming!) there was way too much on my plate. And I paid a much higher price—the price of suffering—for not listening...and heeding. My shoulder eventually needed surgery and extensive, painful rehab. That toxic person? Well, I was able to get her out of my life but at the cost of huge energy drain. The overwhelm? It still happens. But not nearly as often as it used to.

Eventually my body shut me down—it *made* me listen. In its great wisdom and kindness to me (as I later learned) my body shut me down in spite of myself, ignoring my resistance, teaching me a better way to live. As I awaken to the genius of my body, I heal. Life becomes

easier.

When we trust, listen, and take action when called, we catapult our healing.

Our bodies are All Wise and On Our Side.

Our bodies never lie.

Never. They. Never. Lie. Our bodies have no agenda other than to reflect back to us *exactly* what is going on inside us—anxiety, overwhelm, pain, fatigue, insomnia, frustration, fear—it’s all meaningful, it’s all true, it’s all guidance. It’s all for our healing.

Our bodies—our true compasses about the state of our lives. Our bodies are the repositories of all information we need to move toward healing, to becoming our most vibrant and alive.

Our body’s wisdom is pure and true. The genius thing to do is—receive the message in its pure state. What does that anxiety, overwhelm, pain, or fatigue have to say? Can you hear that answer before the stories get in the way of the truth? The worry, shame, or self-judgement that distorts the message?

Our bodies always move towards healing.

(...though not always curing.) The primary urge of all of all Nature—including each of us—is to move towards healing. This means our aches, pains, tiredness, and illnesses have a purpose. They always point to what’s out of balance. They are the signs and guideposts that lead us to the answers we need. All we have to do is listen. The answers may be easy and obvious. Or we may need to seek wise counsel. But nothing uncomfortable should be thought of as “just the way things are.” Or “it’s just a normal part of aging.”

Our bodies are conduits for our emotional wisdom.

Our emotions flow within and through our bodies. Bringing us their wisdom about how we feel, what we are experiencing, and where the answers lie. They may not always tell us what we want to hear, but their wisdom is always true and clear. If we’re mad, watch out—our boundaries are being breached, our truth is being challenged. If we’re fearful and anxious, there may be a clear threat to remove ourselves from. We may need to reframe how we *perceive* our anxiety—perhaps we’re highly sensitive and intuitive and need to claim the power of that.

Listen up. Our emotions will persist and escalate to get our attention.

Our bodies are intuitive.

Our bodies respond with precision to the truth and will tell us all about it in their quiet (or not so quiet) ways. The energy drain we feel with that toxic person is a sign. The anger that rises up when we're with that manipulative friend is telling us the absolute truth. The inspiration and love we feel in the presence of someone who loves us can be believed.

Our bodies respond to our care and attention.

And will always let us know when we're doing it just right. There is no truer indicator (no test, no prognosticator) of our state of health than our own bodies' energy and wellbeing. Not feeling it yet? Call in your reinforcements-there's more to learn.

We can practice reading the wisdom of our bodies (and get better at it over time).

- Cultivate self-awareness: keep a journal (hold nothing back), meditate, do a body scan (slowly breathe and check-in from head to toe).
- Take time out from the busyness and distractions of your day: go for a walk, mow the lawn...
- Tune-in to the sensations of the body. Note them. Pay attention.
- Let your body tether you to the present moment. Being present helps us become more awake and aware.
- Listen to that still quiet voice inside-what does it say? It may be very quiet...listen carefully and write it down (those illusive messages can disappear so fast-just like dreams).

Our body's messages call for our attention and action.

- Never discard an emotion that keeps popping up. It is not random. Take note, write it down, discuss it with a trusted advisor. This is your wisdom.
- Never ignore a persistently uncomfortable sensation in the body-even if it's vague or common. The lingering fatigue, achy joints, upset gut, annoying headaches-they are all signs of imbalance-they are asking for your attention.

Our bodies are All Wise and On Our Side.

Resources:

Karyn Shanks, MD. [*Healing 101: My Ten Rules for Starting a Meditation Practice.*](#)

Karyn Shanks, MD. [*Five Ways to Harness Your Intuition.*](#)

Karyn Shanks, MD. [*Find Your Strength in the Midst of Fear.*](#)

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Karyn Shanks, MD, is a physician who lives and practices in Iowa City. Her work is inspired by the science of Functional Medicine, body-mind principles, and wisdom gleaned from the transformational journeys of thousands of clients over her twenty-five-year career. Her work honors each individual and the power of their stories, their inner wisdom, and innate healing potential. She believes that the bones of healing are in what we do for ourselves. She is the author of *Liftoff*, a manual of energy recovery and healing through essential self-care practices.

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