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Heart, Hope, Healing

What Makes Healing So Hard?

BY KARYN SHANKS MD | JUNE 24, 2020



My whole life's work is dedicated to helping people heal and *live* their full potential.

We've talked before about the new science of epigenetics upending the old cultural narrative that our genes are our destiny and we have no personal control over our outcomes.

Epigenetics, the science of *directable* gene-environment-lifestyle interaction—of directable human potential—gives us a whole new narrative that we get to control our outcomes:

- Human potential is *self-directable*.
- We can heal.
- Each one of us can direct this healing to our own advantage.
- We can foundationally change our bodies—all aspects of structure and function.
- We can create resilience (strength, energy, and adaptability to successfully meet life's challenges) no matter where we start from.
- We can *reverse* most chronic diseases.

- We are never sitting ducks—we can change our experience and what happens to us.
- We are, in very large part, in control of our destinies—not our genes, not our ancestors' experiences, not our old worn out stories.
- We are never victims of our circumstance.

So, what keeps us stuck in the old story of being sitting ducks?

Suddenly we're offered a reprieve from a science that said we're fixed by a new science that says we have all kinds of personal control. And responsibility. And freedom.

But in spite of this revolutionary science that literally overturned a huge aspect of our understanding about human biology and personal autonomy, we stick to the old way of thinking. Instead of talking about the powerful role we all have in our genetic potential—in our *human* potential—we still think and behave as if we're stuck with what we have with no possibility of recourse or personal control.

What's with that?

Some cultural narratives—like genetic determinism—become so huge, have so much influence over how we understand ourselves, and have driven so much innovation (and profit), that they become hard to change even in the face of ground-breaking changes in what we know.

The Medical-Industrial Complex of the Western World

The medical-industrial complex of conventional western medicine is built upon the notion that our genes create our destiny of chronic disease.

The hospitals, clinics, technologies, drugs, and 3rd party payors of conventional western medicine were created and are sustained by the imperative that it “fix,” “control,” and provide urgent life-saving care to the millions and millions of people who are “helpless” victims to chronic disease.

Now consider this: What would happen if everyone suddenly learned that their genes were not their destiny? That they could play key active roles in preventing and reversing—at root-

cause sustainable levels—all chronic disease? What would happen to the medical-industrial complex if that became our cultural reality?

What is the incentive for the medical-industrial complex of western medicine to subscribe to the 21st century science of human potential that shows unequivocally how we can heal, direct that healing to our own advantage, create powerful internal resilience to prevent disease, and thrive on our own, without the need to be fixed and kept alive?

And how are we to “hear” the new narrative when the “experts” of the medical-industrial complex we’ve placed our faith in our whole lives tell us something different through their actions and what they say and don’t say?

Self-Agency Ain’t Easy

But now we know all about the new science of Human Potential that has upended the old science of genetic determinism. We know our genes are not our destiny. We know there is a way to live and take care of ourselves that supports our positive aspirations to thrive and reach our full potential. Now more than ever we have the science, the knowledge, the tools, and the guidance to do this. To take back control of our lives.

It’s all good news, right?

And so, inspired by our new knowledge, we change our thinking and our understanding of ourselves and what we can do to improve our outcomes, right?

Except for one key thing:

We’re human with human brains. And we create stories from survival impulses. And one of the great challenges to our brain’s perception of survival? Change. Especially Big Change. So, we dig in our heels and resist.

It can’t be true. It’s been this way my whole life. I don’t know what to do. Shit, what’s going to happen to me now?

If most of us were perfectly honest, we’d admit to other truths we hold that compete with our potential for unbridled freedom and autonomy.

- We have to claim responsibility for ourselves.
- We have to work hard at it every day.
- We have to stand up tall in the face of scrutiny and criticism.

- We have to give up old habits that are unhealthy, but we love.
- We have to feel all the uncomfortable feelings that arise when we change.
- We have to grieve our losses.
- We have to give up our excuses.
- We have to slow down time.
- We have to learn to love ourselves.
- We have to take care of our planet.

See, growth can be painful and hard.

Self-care, especially at the level we are called to, now that we know we can change our genetic expression, change all our outcomes, prevent and reverse chronic disease, and create deep healing and resilience through our own actions is painful and hard. Reclaiming our agency and autonomy takes energy, paying attention, learning, action, and calling our power back from the experts we've asked to fix us.

It's especially hard for those of us actively shifting paradigms. We're transitioning from a dependent, subordinate relationship with our doctors to one of personal control, that leads to the desire for a different relationship with our healthcare providers. One that is more of a partnership. Where we *both* bring our unique expertise to the table. Where our expectations have changed for what we will receive and how we will be treated. And transparency.

We're upending the diagnosis—some of the most tenacious stories of all of western medicine.

Whew! Where do we freaking start?

We know this. We breathe, soften, stay curious, and feel. We tap into our strong center. We get to work on baby steps: starting with "yes."

Slowly, with our showing up and practice, we create our new narrative. We claim our potential. We heal.

Resources

Karyn Shanks MD. [Born to Heal: Our Call for a New Healing Paradigm](#). 2020.

Karyn Shanks MD. [How to Claim Healing As Your Own](#). 2020.

Karyn Shanks MD. [Heal: A Nine-Stage Roadmap to Recover Energy, Reverse Chronic Illness, and Claim the Potential of a Vibrant New You](#). 2019.

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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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