

In Memoriam:

John Diamond, MD

August 9, 1934 – April 25, 2021

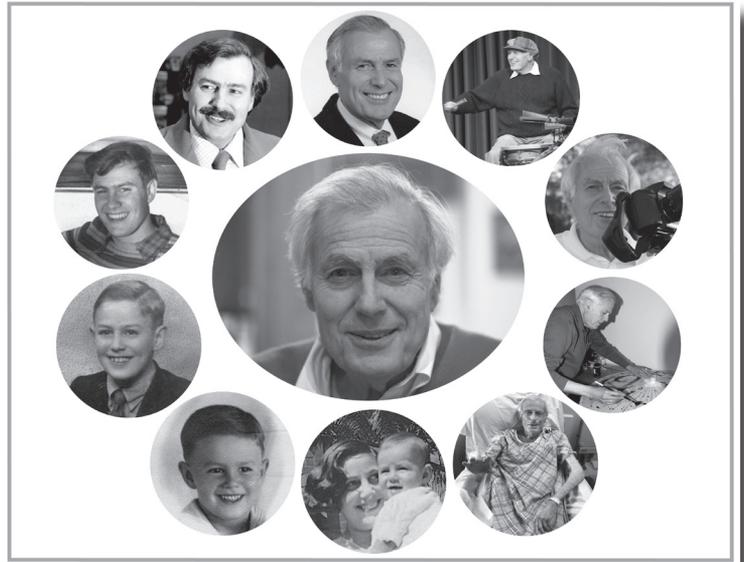
For almost half a century John Diamond, MD, who passed away in April at the age of 86, was a pioneer in the field of holistic medicine. The best-selling author of thirty-five books, his approach to healing is brilliant and original, an inspirational blend of the medical, cultural, and spiritual; and it offers a veritable cornucopia to anyone seriously interested in healthy living and healing.

Diamond was born in Sydney, Australia, in 1934 and began his career in psychiatry, graduating from Sydney University Medical School in 1957, winning the psychiatry prize, and receiving his diploma in psychological medicine in 1962 from Melbourne University. He was a Fellow of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatry, a Foundation Member of the Royal College of Psychiatrists (UK), a Diplomate of the International Board of Applied Kinesiology, and a Fellow and past President of the International Academy of Preventive Medicine (USA). He was also an honorary board member of the Price-Pottenger Nutrition Foundation and their Japanese sister organization the Koushika Foundation. He held numerous senior clinical and university teaching appointments in clinical psychiatry, the basic sciences and the humanities, and lectured extensively throughout the world.

Throughout the 1960s Diamond worked in private practice in Melbourne, and as a psychiatrist for various organizations, including the Victorian Department of Mental Hygiene, the Repatriation Department in the State of Victoria, the German consulate, and the Royal Australian Air Force. A career highlight at this time was a series of groundbreaking interviews he did with an Australian politician called Jim Cairns, later to be Deputy Prime Minister. The interviews, set up by Monash University in Melbourne, were designed to explore the psychological motivations of politicians and are regarded as highly innovative and revealing.

In 1971 he moved to the US, which was to be his base for the rest of his life, apart from a four-year residence in the UK in the 1990s. In America, he initially worked as a psychiatrist for the Legal Aid Society, an adolescent drug-abuse program at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York, and at Beth Israel hospital. Throughout his career as a psychiatrist, he was always proud that unlike many of his colleagues, he never had a suicide or even a suicide attempt from any of his patients. This was because he spent so much time and care with them.

However, in 1974, growing increasingly disenchanted with the confines of mainstream medicine, he became actively involved



in alternative medicine. The catalyst, according to Diamond, was reading Lyall Watson's book *Supernature*, which had recently been published, and which was given to him by a doctor friend. As he handed him the book, the friend said "This book will change your life" – and it certainly did. A door opened, and Diamond's career dramatically transformed as he enthusiastically embraced a holistic approach, studying at first with Warren Levin, MD, who became a life-long friend.

Diamond set up an innovative holistic private practice in New York, using an approach that effortlessly combined complementary and mainstream medicine, the humanities, applied kinesiology, acupuncture, creativity and the arts, and spirituality. Part of his genius was his ability to draw on a vast array of resources, which he effortlessly navigated to suit the needs of a patient or a particular situation. He was able to do this because he saw each modality as part of a unified whole. In an age of specialisms, his mind was exceptionally holistic.

During his long career Diamond created a powerful body of work that is unique in successfully fusing the physical, psychological and spiritual aspects of healing into an integrated whole. Beginning in the 1970s and continuing right up until his passing, he actively explored a vast array of different modalities, embracing fields as diverse as acupuncture, Alexander Technique, chakras, color therapy, cranial-sacral therapy, creativity, crystals, herbs, dentistry, homeopathy, kinesiology, meditation, nutrition, and osteopathy. With all these, and many more, he managed not only to grasp their essence but to incorporate them seamlessly into his own system. The result is an approach to health and healing that is unrivalled in its scope, depth and holistic outlook, and places him far ahead of his time.

The essence of his work is the concept of what Diamond termed Life Energy. Life Energy is the innate healing force in all living things, what Hippocrates called the *Vis Medicatrix Naturae*, the healing power of nature, and the equivalent of *Qi* in Chinese medicine (and, of course, so many other traditional systems have had parallel concepts: the Egyptians, *Ka*; the Hindus, *Prana*; the Hawaiians, *mana*; and so on). Life Energy enters our body with



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the breath, flows through the acupuncture system and vitalizes the organs and tissues, and Diamond saw it as the fundamental driving force behind all health. When it is low, we are stressed and prone to illness, and when it is high, we are unstressed and healthy. And when it is at its highest, we feel truly loved and are able to fully embrace our lives. The only true healing comes by raising our Life Energy, and he therefore placed it at the center of his system.

Dr. Diamond's understanding of the importance of Life Energy dated back many years. Newly qualified as a doctor, he began work in the neurosurgery department of a large hospital. In the ward, there were two young men who had both been seriously injured in motorcycle accidents. They acquired the same hospital infection at the same time and both were treated with the same course of antibiotics. And yet within a week, one was cured and the other was dead. When Diamond asked his supervisor the reason, he was simply told that some patients have it and some don't – but couldn't tell him what the *it* was. Diamond observed that the patient who survived fully embraced life, while the other just turned his face to the wall. He realized that this *it*, seemed to be more important than anything else and later named it Life Energy, which formed the bedrock of his distinctive approach to health and treatment.

One of Diamond's key insights about a person's Life Energy was that it is constantly affected by everything they encounter in their life. Every facial expression, every thought we have, every piece of music we listen to, the food we eat, the supplements we take, every color we perceive and every shape, in fact, any interaction with our environment in any way. It all has its effect – however subtly and unconsciously – upon us. Each stimulus will either raise or lower our Life Energy.

Being aware of the effects of these stimuli is an important first step in being able to control them and thus to optimize one's Life Energy. This was the basis of Diamond's best-selling *Your Body Doesn't Lie* from 1979. For example, he showed how even a tiny amount of refined sugar placed on the tongue will lower a person's Life Energy. An equally small portion of raw, unrefined honey, on the other hand, will not.¹ In the course of his career he researched the effects of literally hundreds of thousands of such factors on Life Energy. A major discovery Diamond presented in *Your Body Doesn't Lie* is the importance of the thymus gland. At that time, the standard teaching was that the thymus gland had no function at all in the adult, a delusion fostered by the fact that during autopsy the thymus was usually found to be quite small and atrophied. Diamond argued that the thymus gland was affected by stress, was extremely important in regulating the immune system, and monitored and regulated energy flow in the meridian system. For this he was widely ridiculed by mainstream medicine. It was as a result of his suggestion to Royal Lee that Standard Process produced a thymus supplement. His latest wish was to talk with his colleagues about the Life Energy problems with supplements and how certain excipients often harm the healing aspect of the main ingredients.

Coming out of Diamond's research on Life Energy was work that was equally important: his discovery of the link between the acupuncture meridians and the emotions. Diamond spent

nearly fifty years researching this link, delineating the major positive and negative emotions associated with each acupuncture meridian. In doing this, he effectively established the foundation for psychosomatic medicine – the acupuncture system as the communicating link between the emotions and the organs and muscles. Every disease, every bodily imbalance, every muscle problem – and even every gesture – will have an emotional component which can be accurately determined by its mediation through the meridian system. This approach opened many new lines of treatment, shows the role the unconscious plays in disease (both mental and physical), and was the basis for his classic book, *Life Energy: Using the Meridians to Unlock the Hidden Power of Your Emotions*.² That book was also groundbreaking in that it seems to be the first time that these basic emotions had been accurately defined (while there is some mention of them in the early Chinese acupuncture writings, they are not systematically defined, nor are they precisely translated to be readily applicable for our culture). Diamond showed that dictionary definitions of emotions are confusing, and often referenced in terms of one another. For example “sad” is defined as “unhappy,” and vice versa: however, neither entry will actually define the state. The clue to their underlying meaning was to be found in the etymology of the words. Diamond had been involved in etymology at that time for nearly thirty years and was able to use his experience in the field to define the emotions exactly, distinguish clearly between them, and relate them specifically to each of the acupuncture meridians.

Diamond named his work with the meridians and the emotions *The Acupuncture Emotional System* (AES). Over time Diamond further developed the AES, finding precise emotional states, both positive and negative, relating not just generally to a meridian, but to a specific point on that meridian. He discovered over two hundred such states, which he called *syndromes*. The AES as a whole offers a new, comprehensive map of human psychology and the emotions and their relationship to the meridian system. No less significantly it amounts to a precisely delineated model of how the health of the mind affects that of the body, and vice versa.

One of Diamond's most distinctive traits as a healer was to nurture the positive in a patient wherever possible. He argued that orthodox medicine focuses too much on what is wrong with a patient, at the expense of what is right: a person's strengths are so often the thing that really gives them the motivation for truly embracing life and achieving full health. With everyone who came to him, he encouraged the activity which could most help their Life Energy, sometimes with near miraculous results.

Many years ago, a man in his forties consulted with Diamond. He had once been a dentist but was now very sick with advanced ALS and on disability for life. He had a pronounced foot drop, lived alone, drank, smoked, and spent his time just watching TV. In terms of conventional medicine, he was told that there was little that could be done for him, and a large prestigious hospital gave him just six months to live. Diamond only had a day to try and help him. What was he to do? He had known and worked with many dentists and knew that so many of them are at heart frustrated sculptors – they love to make bridges and appliances out of gold and silver and porcelain. In his office Diamond had him do some modeling with plasticine, and he became greatly enthused by it, making many exquisite little animals while singing the entire time. His Life Energy was transformed, and suddenly he had a reason to live. When he shook hands upon leaving, Diamond knew a change

had occurred in this man and hoped he would continue to heal.

The man returned home and enrolled in a pottery class. He called Diamond about six months later: his foot drop and all symptoms had disappeared, and he was feeling fine. He had stopped smoking and drinking, and later he married. In short, his life turned around. A few years later he contacted Diamond again to say his symptoms had returned. When Diamond asked him if he was still doing the pottery, the man said he had given it up. So, Diamond encouraged him to take it up again, and the symptoms again disappeared. This man dedicated himself to going around the US talking to ALS patients and how they could help themselves. He lived on into his late seventies, every year writing a card to thank Diamond.

This story also illustrates a central part of Diamond's approach: his use of the healing power of human creativity. There was surely no medical doctor who used that power with his patients more consistently and with greater effect. In a passage in his book *Facets of a Diamond* – perhaps the best introduction to his approach to healing – he tells us why. He regarded creativity as “The Power within [the patient] that alone can cure him. This is his innate ability to make, at every moment, the best choice for health and love and life... Every act of Creativity actuates the will to be well and enhances the Life Energy.”³

One of the areas of creativity he explored the most was music. Diamond deeply loved music and intuited its therapeutic power: “Of all the physical modalities, music most activates the Life Energy and uplifts the soul. Only pure love can do more,” he wrote at the beginning of his groundbreaking four-volume *Life Energy in Music* series.⁴ As a young doctor, he experienced the healing power of music first-hand. Working in the back wards of a mental hospital in Melbourne with seemingly incurable, long-term patients, he arranged for a piano to be donated – and the results were remarkable. A woman with schizophrenia who had been in the hospital for many years, seemingly quite uneducated, found her way to the instrument and began playing. Diamond realized to his surprise – no-one had any idea that she could even play – that it was a part of a Beethoven sonata, played very slowly. Over the next few days she played all thirty-two of Beethoven's sonatas from memory. And then she went home and never came back.⁵ This happened with other patients as well, with Diamond getting more releases from the “incurable” patients than the other doctors from the “good” patients.

Inspired by many similar experiences, Diamond began systematically investigating music in all its aspects: which styles, which performers, which composers, which instruments, which acoustics would raise the Life Energy and which would not. This research into music is a revelation, delineating in unprecedented detail its therapeutic power.

As well as music, he also was deeply involved in investigating the Life Energy of other art forms, among them painting, photography, drama, literature, and poetry. He used his research in his clinical work with his patients, and he wrote books about his findings – *Art for Healing: Guided Painting Then and Now*⁶ and *Beyond the Obvious: Photography for Healing*⁷ are two examples – and presented many seminars on different aspects of creativity. More important, Diamond actually himself did these things himself. He was deeply involved in developing an approach to therapeutic photography which he termed Life Energy Photography – and painting, Life Energy Art, which resulted in works made with the explicit intention of raising the Life Energy of the viewer. He

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created innumerable such images in both media, especially in the last twenty years of his life, exhibiting internationally, and setting up a permanent gallery devoted to his work, the Life Energy Art Gallery in Mount Kisco, New York.

As should be clear by now, Diamond's output was prodigious. The thirty-five books that were published in his lifetime cover a remarkable range, each in its way highlighting a different aspect of his work, and between them offering a glimpse of the totality of his vision. He also wrote literally thousands of papers, a sampling of which are available on his website, and he recorded innumerable seminars given to students and professional practitioners, which are now starting to be released publicly for the first time. His writings and seminars show a brilliant, endlessly creative mind constantly trying out new ideas and exploring old ones in ever greater depth.

One of the most inspiring features of Diamond's work as a whole is its spiritual dimension. This was a natural part of his approach, because true healing, he argued, was a synergy between body, mind, and spirit. For him, spirituality began with the love of the mother, which he called *Matrophilia*, noting that it is “the most basic, the deepest feeling within each of us since our own beginning.”⁸ He regarded the maternal relationship to be at the very essence of health and Life Energy, and believed that our life's suffering was ultimately caused by the fact that, often unconsciously, we do not feel fully loved by her. The true purpose of healing was directly or indirectly to reconnect us with that love, which always exists at a deep level. In later years, his spirituality broadened and became more overt. He increasingly researched the existence of a Spirit World, and at his death was working on a book on the subject, *A Doctor in Two Worlds: The Guided Life of a Healer*, scheduled for publication in 2022.

Diamond was an exceptional personality: a powerful communicator, deeply compassionate and humanitarian in his outlook, open-minded and open-hearted, a brilliant therapist, gifted with a fount of ideas and insights that poured forth in abundance throughout his whole life. Despite all this, he was remarkably modest, which is perhaps one of the reasons his work is not as widely known as it should be. One of his favorite affirmations was: “I enthusiastically, passionately, wholeheartedly and gratefully Embrace all of my life.” That was indeed how he lived, and if there is anyone to whom the overworked word “genius” could be meaningfully applied, it was surely he.

For more on John Diamond's life and work, visit www.DrJohnDiamond.com.

References

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