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A better person

Miraculous healing, spontaneous remission or self-healing?

When Bart* is told he has a particularly aggressive form of advanced bladder cancer and his prognosis is anything but rosy, he turns to coach and NLP trainer Wassili Zafiris in his search for healing. After all, the proposed regular treatment is so invasive and will have so much impact on the rest of his life, that he first wants to explore whether and what he himself can contribute to his healing. Wassili proposes a special and newly developed coaching program. What hardly anyone expects happens. Bart is declared clean. An insight into Wassili's impressive technique and Bart's accompanying story.

New developments have always interested me. I love to innovate and to learn about innovations, especially when they make human growth more effective. After having coached many thousands of clients for almost twenty-five years, you also know the limitations of a method. In all those years, I have counselled a group of clients with whom I was never completely satisfied with the results. There were recurring, long-standing issues. Issues for which people sometimes already had taken many training courses. Each time, they thought they finally found the solution, only to be disappointed again, and start over. Some issues are hard to change, as any seasoned NLP coach or therapist knows. But why is that so?

Depth

The answer to that question came to me in 2017, when I spoke with a neuroscientist at a conference. She told me about a whole new insight in how emotions arise. What she said, immediately resonated with me. Emotions are created according to how the brain generates predictions. After all, our brain is constantly predicting what is going to happen. I went home with a whole heap of neurological information and read everything I could find about this new discovery. Deep down, I felt that it was true and that this might be the missing link I had been looking for, for a long time. As I began to understand how our emotions are made in a neurological sense, I set myself the task of translating this biological knowledge into 'the conversation'. Over the past few years, I have been working to make clear what kind of questions I should ask to model the internal process as accurately as possible. And I began to get extraordinary results. In a short time, a depth emerged that I had not seen before with clients. Causes came to light that both the clients and I had not expected.

Sometimes, I saw people literally transform their issues right before my eyes, sometimes within a single conversation. And not cosmetically or slightly. No, the problem had disappeared emotionally.

New method

Impressed by my experiences, I decided to coach all my clients with my new method: RETeC or Relationship Emotion Therapy and Coaching. RETeC initially focuses on two processes: personal emotional regulation and relational emotional regulation. Why? It seems that it's precisely in interaction that our deepest feelings are touched, both positively, and negatively. Realizing that a huge number of people have relationship problems, I wanted to make a difference, especially with this group. And that's how I still feel. At the same time, something happened that I took note of. My clients and students began to report that they felt healthier, fitter and more relieved than ever before. I experienced the same myself, as I have also applied RETeC extensively to myself.

Self-healing

I rarely counseled seriously ill clients; usually, I referred them. But I did have an interest in healing, because I was struggling myself with a chronic problem and my ex-partner had a pre-stage of cancer. I kept investigating, and years ago I managed to heal myself from a quite weakened immune system. This was remarkable, because I had this since I was thirteen years old. The methods I developed were a breakthrough for myself, but also for my non-sick clients, as they also proved extremely effective to solve other kinds of problems. This inspired me to continue developing these techniques. When my ex-partner was found to have a preliminary stage of cancer, the oncologist said it would be make or break. I developed a number of new techniques that my ex started using very consistently. For example, the technique where you separate 'the disease' from the person or even the person from the body. A profound method, because we usually associate our physical body with 'I'. At the same time, we remained under the excellent guidance of the oncologist. Together, we decided not to intervene medically right away. Under his watchful eye, we continued with the mental methods. Nine months later, there was no trace of troubled cells to be found. My ex-partner did not need surgery. I taught these techniques only in a small group with an interest in NLP and healing/health methods. I also used them myself, but only with certain clients and intimates. Until Bart* contacted me.

Immune system

Bart was diagnosed with stage four bladder cancer. His story was intense. In the first meeting, I suggested that we would not work on healing, but on emotional regulation and that he definitely should keep consulting his doctors. In the back of my mind, I had already thought of techniques I believed in and wanted to do with him. But in this case, first I wanted to focus on something I knew would really help him: healthier emotional regulation. When that would improve, regardless of medical developments, he would at least feel better, be able to make better decisions and feel more confident. Bart agreed and we scheduled one-hour sessions for ten weeks. I advised Bart to do research on the immune system, with the aim of getting a clear picture of different ways the body tackles illness. This knowledge is useful in any visualization. For instance, after a few conversations, during a hypnotic induction, I had him visualize that a herd of cows was grazing in his body. This

endless grazing would go on day and night, the cows would eat every diseased cell that did not belong in his body.

Emotional deregulation

When you get such a dramatic diagnosis, you know that someone is experiencing a lot of emotions. That comes in handy, because with RETeC we accurately trace the origins of emotions. You then work directly with these origins, your bodily feelings. Not just any physical feelings, but organ feelings, visceral feelings. Feelings that turn out to be crucial for the emotional brain. This was also the case with Bart. Every week, new emotions surfaced, emotions we traced back to previous experiences. Each time, this resulted in a new feeling that led to a new prediction. With RETeC, you make sure feelings arise that are needed. The brain automatically starts generating predictions from these feelings. Predictions create our emotions, so new predictions create new emotions. Within a few weeks, I saw Bart improve and get a fresher look. Meanwhile, we started working on specific techniques to 'separate the disease from the self'. Hereby, you no longer identify yourself with the disease. We also used a technique I modelled on Taoist healing practitioners. This one lets you 'leave' the illness behind, so to speak. This creates the feeling that the illness is no longer part of the 'now'. Each time, these and other techniques had a profoundly positive effect, resulting in feelings that had completely changed. We always ended with a RETeC process to restore emotional deregulation. I now think that this is the most important thing in any coaching or therapeutic process. Because you are transforming subconscious physiological-emotional processes.

Untraceable

After seven weeks, Bart told me he suddenly needed to go to the toilet much less (with invasive bladder cancer, it's normal to urinate often). A few days later, he would go to the hospital for a check-up. The urologist did an endoscopy, with an incredible result for Bart. The tumor had shrunk fifty to seventy per cent in size. Exactly three weeks later, at the tenth coaching session, he told me that further examination showed that the cancer had almost completely disappeared. The last bit of tumor, only two millimeters in size, was surgically removed. After that, there was no trace of cancer to be found. Bart is now glowing with health. I still counsel him. New emotions regularly surface. With RETeC we transform them into healthier predictions. A common emotion with (serious) illness is fear that the disease will return. Bart experienced this a few times after his recovery, but was able to eliminate this fear, thanks to RETeC.

Transformed patterns

Since working with RETeC, I have been able to transform very deep patterns in at least ninety-five percent of my clients. These patterns had a lot of influence on the choices clients made in their lives; choices related to work, relationships or health, for example. The relief I see in my clients is significant. There's a big difference with results we used to get in the past. Feelings that determine someone's decisions now change so much, that clients sometimes take and make completely different decisions. And do so without effort, in a natural way, without the old feelings ever resurfacing.

Has this affected Bart's life choices? I think so. Not only because of this profound process, but also because RETeC affects the base of your life decisions, namely how you feel!

I advise every coach and therapist to learn how to work with RETeC directly on the emotional brain. You will learn how the emotional brain works and how to work on subconscious life-determining feelings in oneself and in relationships. As I now say to everyone: **this will change the way you think change works.**

Bart's story

"To be clear: with this story, I in no way want to suggest that you will be cured of cancer if you do what I did. With this disease, nobody gives any guarantees, so I don't do that either. I am an expert by experience, but that experience concerns only me. I wrote my story for inspiration. If it helps someone to make it through that hellish time just a little bit better, to me, that would be a wonderful result."

When I emailed Wassili and told him that I was being treated for stage four bladder cancer and needed help in the field of mental coaching, fortunately an appointment was quickly made. He did not start with the topic of healing, but talked about how to deal with feelings in case of illness and life-or-death situations. Wassili stressed that for the medical part of my treatment, I had to keep in contact with the doctors at the hospital. He would use a method he had developed himself, that allows you to trace the origins of emotions and then influence them. This method is called RETeC, short for Relationship Emotion Therapy and Coaching. He also wanted to use several other techniques, also largely developed by himself, aimed at stimulating physical healing. To me, the RETeC method in practice often came down to conversations with explanations by Wassili, and many questions about my feelings and expectations. Those feelings changed with each conversation, as a result of the questions and my answers. Unpleasant, negative emotions transformed into pleasant, positive feelings. With each session, with each change, a particular phrase, a spontaneous statement, emerged in the process. Each time, I was told to hold on to the new feeling and pronounce the corresponding phrase. One of those sentences 'I am becoming a better person' arose at one of the first sessions. In the end, I had a whole collection of short sentences that expressed the changes in my feelings.

Visualization

Wassili also helped me with visualizations. He asked me how I visualized cancer in my mind. I said I compared it to an unwilling staff who did not do their job properly, giving the tumor a chance. According to him, a good metaphor. He pointed out that many people see it as a battle, a fight, or even a war. But then, you engage in a battle with your own body, a battle you cannot win. The metaphor of an employer (my brain) and unwilling staff (an immune system that makes mistakes) was fine. Other comparisons are fine too, as long as they don't involve a fight with yourself.

I was given homework: find out how the body naturally attacks tumor cells and try to visualize that for yourself as simple as possible. The Internet soon made it clear how things work in the body.

Immediately, I started imagining how certain cells in my body detected and digested unwanted cancer cells. I also started saying corresponding words, that initially expressed accurately what my body was supposed to do. For example, I said aloud to myself: immune system, track down all the cancer cells in my body and destroy them! Track down the cancer cells in my bladder and eliminate them. And: track down the cancer cells in my prostate and make them disappear. Or words to that effect. I told this message to myself every day, for hours on end. Standing in front of the mirror at home, outside on the street or walking in the park. For hours and hours, every day. Soon, I had turned into that man who was constantly talking to himself. I didn't care what other people thought of that. I was on the most important mission of my life: to heal! And I was willing to do anything that could perhaps help with that.

Me versus not-me

In one of the sessions, I learned to distinguish between I and not-I. Simply put, my shoes and all my stuff, those are not-I. My body, my mind: I. My illness: not-I. At first, I found this distinction quite difficult to learn. After all, that disease was in my body. The cancer cells were my cells. But of course, you don't want such cells to be part of you at all. After a while, I managed to make a clear distinction between I and not-I. I succeeded after I forced myself to stop reasoning and arguing about things I had my doubts about, and instead accept that the method would work. Fortunately, I managed to do this. Distinguishing between I and not-I soon turned out to be much more important than I had thought.

Wassili told me about a time when he was visiting a Chinese hospital. He saw Taoist doctors chanting to a patient who had just had major surgery. He asked what they were chanting. They were telling the patient that he was already better, that he was already healed. Wassili used this for a technique that helped me leave the illness emotionally behind. First, I imagined myself as a sick person, my old self. Then, in my mind, I left that person behind. As I did this more often, I actually saw my sick self stand further and further behind me. Until, when I literally looked over my shoulder, in my mind there was nothing left to see but a dot on the horizon, a dot that eventually completely disappeared. Sometimes, this process released intense emotions. With tears in my eyes, I saw my sick self getting smaller and smaller, while my faith that I was really going to heal grew stronger and stronger.

A better person

I was asked how I saw my future self. Spontaneously, my answer was: I see a better person. I didn't mean a healthier person, but a better person as a human being. Someone who has learned from a serious illness and has changed in a positive way. Wassili did immediately see the double meaning and instructed me to repeat those words at home. At first, I told myself that I would become a better person, that I would be healed. After a while, I changed it into the message that I was a better person, that I was healed. Just as the previous messages, I kept saying this to myself every day, for hours on end. In addition, I wrote the phrases down on small notes and hung them all over my house; on every mirror and computer screen, in the kitchen, the bedroom, the bathroom, the living room, everywhere. Consequently, I perceived the message all the time when I was at home, consciously and subconsciously. One of the later versions: I am a better person. My brain heals my body and continues to heal me.

For a long time, the focus was on healing my body. But it became increasingly clear to me that mental healing was just as important. My mind, my soul had to get better too. I as a person had to get better. Because I am more than my body. I am more than my brain. From this perspective, healing is incomplete if it doesn't include body and soul. A matter of balance, the well-known 'a healthy mind in a healthy body.' While speaking with an acquaintance who did not yet know I was ill, I noticed that something else had spontaneously changed. Previously, I would simply say: I have cancer. This time, however, I said: I am being treated for cancer. To me, that was an important moment. I was no longer my disease; I was being treated for a disease. Those few words made a huge difference. It felt like the next big step towards being healed.

The power of repetition

Having worked as a copywriter for a marketing agency, I was professionally familiar with the power of repetition. Repeat the same message over and over again and sooner or later you will believe it's true. Keep the message simple and keep repeating it. And that's what I did consistently. I kept on repeating the messages, every day, whenever and wherever I could. Sometimes whispering, sometimes speaking, sometimes loudly saying it, sometimes shouting. Sometimes I didn't say the words but only thought them, while shopping or using public transport, or when I just didn't want to attract the attention of passers-by.

I remembered something about subconsciously perceiving things in your sleep and recorded the same message on my phone. At night, I played it in a loop, hardly audible. So, for most of the day and the night, I told myself that I would get better, or that I was already better.

Earlier, Wassili suggested another visualization. He told me good results had been achieved by Japanese colleagues. They advised clients to use the image of grazing cows, slowly but surely eating the tumor away as they grazed. That was an image I could relate to. My grandfather was a farmer, and even though I have lived in Amsterdam for most of my life, I love the countryside. I started visualizing a herd of cows and verbally instructed them to eat the tumor. To my surprise, the image took on a life of its own. As the weeks passed, more and more cows joined the herd, until I reached a point where my bladder was invisible in my mind, because it was completely covered by grazing cows. Eventually, cows were active all over my body. In my mind, the horizon behind my bladder had become a massive black-and-white wall of cows, non-stop grazing away tumor cells.

Changes

Back in the outside world. The preoperative immunotherapy was almost completed and I was scanned to assess the results. The tumor had not increased in size, but it had not decreased either. That was not enough to cancel the originally proposed surgery. I was terrified. Utterly, totally terrified. My urologist suggested to take a look inside my bladder with a camera. I think this was meant to let me see the necessity of the major surgery with my own eyes. Five days before the camera examination was to happen, I decided to adjust the message to myself.

The meeting with the urologist was due to take place on a Thursday. From Saturday, I started telling myself that I would be cured on Thursday. I repeated this message constantly, but now almost non-

stop throughout the day. At night, my phone played the message over and over again. During the day, I repeated the words in everything I did. Again, sometimes thinking the words, sometimes whispering them, sometimes speaking, sometimes shouting.

For many months, I woke up five, six times every night to pee. This time, when I woke up on Monday morning, I suddenly realized that something had changed. That night, I had to pee only twice. And it stayed that way! This had to be a very good sign. It had to mean that I was really healing! That Thursday at the hospital, this was confirmed. The urologist looked inside my bladder with a camera and told me it looked much, much better. The tumor had shrunk fifty to seventy percent!

Tears of happiness

The date for surgery approached. The hospital scanned me again, to accurately determine the location of the tumor, and to check for metastases. The result made me burst into tears. But this time, tears of happiness. The tumor had virtually disappeared!

I informed the hospital that I was cancelling the surgery. They didn't necessarily think that this was a good idea. Simply put: you can't get bladder cancer without a bladder. But I insisted, my bladder was not going to be removed. However, I did agree to a smaller operation, because the scan did indicate one small, suspicious spot in my bladder. That spot was surgically removed. The suspicion proved justified; the spot contained malignant cells. But it was only a few millimeters small. Nothing else suspicious was found.

I considered myself cured! The hospital did not agree. Perhaps there were invisible, unmeasurable microcells in the bladder wall. The proposed solution: twenty-five radiation treatments. With guaranteed side effects. I refused this treatment and told the hospital that I only wanted to consider treatments that cause permanent damage if it would be a matter of life or death.

At the time of this writing, it's one year later. I have had four hospital check-ups, and was declared healthy each time. No trace of cancer was found anywhere in my body! I'm still telling the messages to myself. The latest version of my mantra: I am a better person. My brain and my body are permanently healing me. Notes with that message still hang all over my house. I no longer repeat the words for hours on end. But I do repeat them regularly. As a reminder to my brain, my body, my immune system. A reminder to stay alert 24/7 and do their job: keeping me alive, keeping me healthy."

Would you like to know more about the impact of emotional regulation on healing or would you like to contact the author? You can reach Wassili Zafiris through his email address:

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* To protect his privacy, Bart's name is fictitious.

Postscript by Wassili

By now, two years have passed since Bart was first diagnosed with cancer. Recently, he sent me the following message: "Hi Wassili, got the results of the scan and other tests this morning. All is well!"