

## **Healing Expectations**

By Erica Fargione, Herbalist

Many people come to herbal medicines because they do not want to use pharmaceutical drugs when their bodies need attention. Wanting to use natural medicines such as herbs can be seen as a replacement for pharmaceuticals but in a lot of ways these two options are very different. After many years of allopathic medicine we have lost the understanding of how our bodies heal naturally. We have been treating our bodies as unintelligent machines. Any symptom that we do not like equals ill health and is cause for alarm. This picture works really well for the treatments we receive with allopathic medicine, drugs and surgery. We force the body to act in one way or we remove the organs that are malfunctioning. This picture does not fit well when we choose a treatment such as herbal medicine. We have to retrain the way we think about healing when we are supporting our own bodies healing process with herbs. See, the fact is that a lot of times our own bodies' healing process is not always nice and pleasant. We do not always feel better when we take the herbs. The herbs awaken our bodies to pay attention to problems. A lot of times starting the healing process opens a can of worms.

It is natural for our bodies to move through sickness. With the common cold we start out with a runny or stuffy nose, feel tired, get a small fever then feel miserable, and get more infections. The sickness escalates and then we start becoming alarmed. We don't want to feel this way. What can I take to get rid of it? Could this get out of control? I don't want a fever. I don't want to sleep. I want to do what I was doing before I got sick. Why did this happen to me? Then we search for something to annihilate this virus that has attacked us. But in reality the symptoms that feel so miserable are from the bodies healing process. The runny and stuffy nose is flushing out infection, our bodies feel tired so that we can get the rest we need to fight the virus, and the fever goes up to make our bodies inhospitable to the virus as well as to cause us to sweat and clean out infection through our skin. Most of the time these symptoms are not cause for alarm, but a sign of health. This is why natural medicine practitioners say doctors treat symptoms. The pharmaceuticals will get rid of the runny nose and congestion by blocking mucous production and will stop the fever. You may feel better right away but you are not treating the cause of the illness. If you used herbs instead of the pharmaceuticals you most likely would not get the same fast relief. You might feel a bit better but a lot of times you may feel even worse as your body is supported in its healing process. The healing process is even stronger and it happens harder and quicker. You may feel the worst you have ever felt for a day or two but the problem is swiftly dealt with and you are back on your feet. When it is all said and done your body is stronger than it was before the illness.

It is important to understand and learn about the natural healing process. Our bodies are very intelligent and any support we give to our bodies pays off in the long run. For the last 10 years there has been a huge renaissance in the use of herbal medicine. There are companies out there that are selling fad herbs and claiming miracles. Take Echinacea for example. Many people take it at the onset of illness because they do not want to get sick. This is using herbs just like pharmaceutical drugs. We are still running away from dealing with our own bodies healing process. Using Echinacea in this way will eventually lead to a very weak immune system. Echinacea is a stimulant to the immune system, which should be used when the immune system is very weak and needs stimulating. If your body responds to a virus and begins the natural healing process, your immune system is not weak, thus it does not need a stimulant. We have to learn how to support our bodies instead of fighting and controlling them, stimulating and depressing them. This takes a lot of trust and care. The miracle of healing is not always painless. We are lucky to have many options for our health but we should be aware of the outcomes we want from our treatments. Sometimes our expectations for what health should feel like do not fit with reality.