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Spirituality & Health

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with Zainab Salbi

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AWAKENING
OF A HEALER

+

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the Awakening *of a* Healer

“DON’T YOU WANT YOUR SON TO LIVE?” THE NURSE ASKED. YES, OF COURSE. AND THAT WAS WHY I FELT I HAD TO LEAVE . . .

I shuddered, staring absently at the thin stack of papers, the physician’s voice resonating in my head. I watched my fingers quiver as I reached for the documents—another consent form. I felt helpless. *Utterly helpless.* But I shook my head and refused to sign. A nurse’s protestations joined the physician’s, echoing authoritatively through the tight confines of the white-walled office. I squeezed shut my downcast eyes and felt a tear trickle down to my lips.

BY AMBER BODILY

It was in that instant that a voice pierced the defeated silence in my mind: a voice as calm as it was unnerving in its content. *I can’t do this. I just can’t.* Signing meant granting my approval for having my (then-)only son, my one-and-a-half-year-old baby, Calvin, placed on a new suite of drugs, steroids known to cause liver damage and even liver failure. The signature would allow Calvin’s medical team to continue, free of legal liability, in the non-negligible event of permanent hepatic injury. But the signature was much more: a maternal sanction to proceed along the same route that not only had failed to yield any improvement but—given the number of scary consent forms that I had already signed—had possibly made Calvin worse.

« *Birdcage*
Katie Daisy

Calvin's infancy had become an unending stream of doctor visits. At two weeks of age he exhibited signs of eczema—attributed at the time to heredity. Shortly after he turned one, a slew of other ailments followed: ear infections, bronchitis, severe asthma, and respiratory obstruction. My husband and I adhered religiously to the pediatricians' recommendations. But nothing seemed to help. Breathing treatments became alarmingly frequent and exasperatingly ineffective; albuterol failed to alleviate Calvin's asthmatic symptoms; antibiotics seemed to do little more than sap his energy. What was more, his legs became progressively bowed, his eyes and jaw grew to a near-constant swell, his nose never stopped running, and his throat was perpetually clogged with phlegm. My husband and I carried on with increasingly intensive pharmaceutical and medical regimens, spending ever more time driving to and from urgent care units and emergency rooms, all the while watching our son's health get weaker.

So when the doctor told us that our son now met the criteria for autism, we were at our wits' end. Nevertheless, it took all my strength to push away the consent form and get up to go.

"Don't you want your son to live?" the nurse asked. That was brutal.

I was stopped as other nurses gathered at the door. "We're sorry, ma'am, but we can't let you leave. We need to treat him."

Desperate, I concocted the only lie I could think of: that I would have to consult my husband. As I fled for the exit, a cascade of held-back tears flooded from my eyes. Only a mother, I thought, could possibly understand the liquid agony of feeling powerless to take care of her child.

TURNING TO "VOODOO"

Exhausted, I decided to visit my sister in Utah, unaware that my flight from stress would change my life forever. It began with her recommendation that I visit a "voodoo friend" who used foot massages as a means of reading and treating ailments. The practice, called foot zoning, is based on the work of a Norwegian physician in the 1950s, but it probably dates to the ancient Egyptians and maybe before then. Like acupressure, foot zoning involves physically targeting specific points across the foot. Unlike acupressure, the practice is said to allow the practitioner to evaluate physiological conditions spanning the entire body, from toxicity levels to unknown allergies to psychological vulnerabilities. The zoner observes the foot and interprets the "messages" it conveys through discoloration, texture, and tenderness, and these messages in turn allow the practitioner to provide dietary and herbal recommendations. At any other time in my life I would have scoffed, but at that particular juncture, I was receptive to anything. In any case, foot massages tend to be pleasant; and we could all enjoy a relaxing treat.

If we followed her suggestions carefully, we would allow his body to come back to normal, she claimed. Although pretty skeptical, I also felt a surge of hope.

I went first. At the time, I was struggling with my own respiratory issues as well as infertility, and I was surprised at the speed and accuracy with which the zoner was able to diagnose both while rubbing my feet. Her solutions were noninvasive and simple: dietary changes, oil applications, herbal recommendations, and dietary supplements. I had no idea if these things would help, but they seemed easy enough to try.

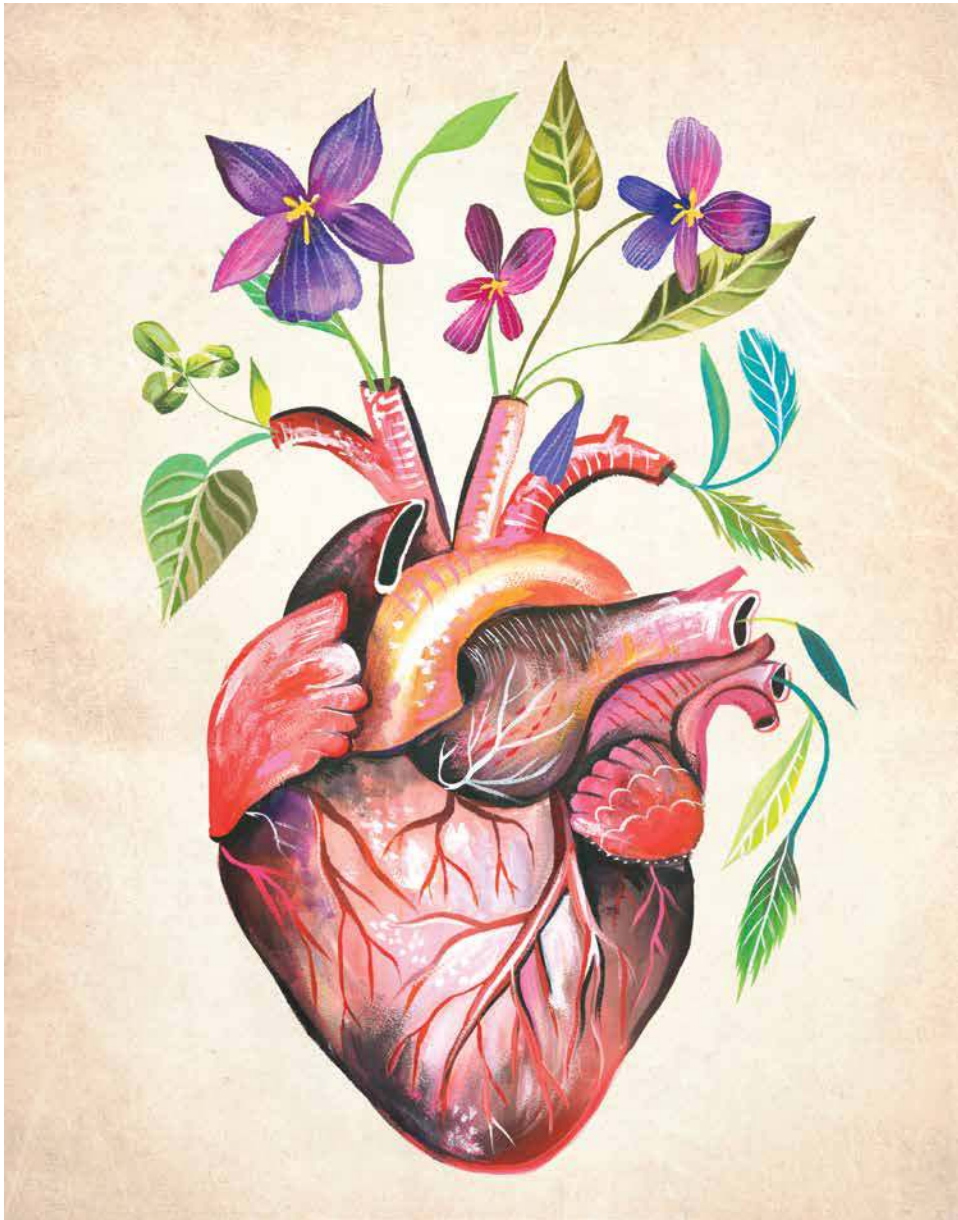
I had Calvin examined next. Within two minutes of zoning, she said, "Did you know that he's highly allergic to dairy?" I replied that I had long suspected the possibility but that the doctors told me this couldn't be the case, because he didn't have digestive problems. The zoner continued her evaluation, subsequently observing that while "I'm not a doctor and can't diagnose," I should have him "checked out for autism."


He's already been diagnosed, I thought. How did she know all this?

What really struck me was that the many highly trained medical experts we had seen had provided myriad remedies but had never pointed to a cause. Aside from a vague attribution to heredity, nobody seemed to know what connected the dots. The zoner gave me a list of things she thought were going on: from dairy allergy to clogged lymph to heavy metals settled in Calvin's brain. If we followed her suggestions carefully, we would allow his body to come back to normal, she claimed. Although pretty skeptical, I also felt a surge of hope.

The honeymoon phase ended abruptly, as the zoner detailed what I would have to do to help Calvin. To start, he would have to be taken off of any and all dairy and dairy-based products, as well as processed foods infused with red dyes. Sugars, chemical fillers, preservatives, and gluten would also need to be avoided, replaced with organic fruits, vegetables, probiotics, and gluten-free grains.

The recommendations amounted to an absolute overhaul of just about everything occupying space in my pantry and refrigerator. So I found myself, days later, splayed on my kitchen floor, back pressed against the worn cupboard,



Heart
Katie Daisy 

between two large, black garbage bags filled to bursting with every variety of impermissible food. What remained in the fridge was a handful of apples and some uncut carrots—the totality of what the zoner said my child could safely consume. I stifled sobs of self-pity. *Where do I start? How do I shop? Cook? Bake?* But I stopped, mid-sob, with a voice in my head.

“Don’t you want your son to live?”

Wasn’t this exactly what I had asked for?

So my supernaturally patient husband and I, along with our son, went dairy- and animal-free, wholly vegan, and on an organic diet comprising gluten-free, unprocessed grains, fresh and locally grown fruits, and vegetables—oh, so many

vegetables! I was baking, slicing, roasting, pureeing, blending: experimenting in every which way—and sometimes the result was great and sometimes it was just a mess. Tasty or not, I felt my energy return to near-grade-school levels. As a triathlete who had always considered herself a healthy eater to begin with, I was shocked at how much better I could feel on this plant-based, all-natural regiment.

Over the year that followed, Calvin was able to be taken off of all medications; his respiratory problems disappeared entirely, with no trace of the infections, bronchitis, and asthmatic attacks that had plagued his infancy. Pediatricians retracted his autism diagnosis, suggesting that he must have been misdiagnosed to begin with.

Meanwhile, I regained the sense of maternal strength that comes from knowing, unencumbered by fear and uncertainty, that *yes, I can* take care of my child. What was more, I was newly pregnant.

BECOMING A VOODOO-ER

We were on top of the world, but when my zoner suggested I become a practitioner, I just laughed. I had two thriving businesses. I just wanted to move on and be a mom and raise a happy family. What was more, miracles happen all the time. Modern medicine has made so many miracles common. And sometimes miracles happen even when modern medicine has given up hope. While I loved what I had learned and was dedicated to this healthier lifestyle since I knew it suited my little Calvin, I also knew that his healing had been a miracle in many ways.

Alas, the thrill of being pregnant gave way to 19 weeks of vomiting and a near-perpetual state of nausea. But physical discomfort paled in comparison to the news I received after an ultrasound: My baby's brain showed tumors and cysts,

the pregnancy would likely fail, and abortion was recommended. When we refused, the specialist predicted: "Your son will live anywhere between two hours and two weeks." Devastated, my husband and I picked out a burial plot.

So I went back to my zoner and redoubled my commitment to my newfound health practices. I subsisted only on the foods I was advised to take: fresh kale for vitamins, iron, and calcium; 6 TBSP of wheat germ oil for folic acid and healthy fats; raw pumpkin seeds for zinc and protein. I drank red raspberry for uterine health and nettle tea for iron, calcium, and minerals. Just as importantly, I spent generous time under the rising sunshine. It seemed extreme and even weird to everyone. But a voice echoed in my head: "*Don't you want your son to live?*" I was going to give this all I had.

Our second little boy did try to make an early appearance, with labor starting at 31 weeks. But I kept at it and was able to carry him full-term—in and out of labor for nine weeks!—with a healthy delivery at 40 weeks. What was more, one of the cysts and tumors detected in the first sonogram had

DON'T YOU WANT TO LIVE BETTER?

A FIRST STEP INTO FOOT ZONING

A major underlying issue with Calvin—one that many of us share—is lymph congestion. Consider any of the following symptoms: Do you have trouble losing weight, or feel overly mucousy, notice swelling (in your ankles, hands, and in the face as "eye puffies" or swollen jowls), or experience allergies or digestive problems? These are often signs of congested lymph. You may not pay attention to your lymphatic system but it's just as important as your circulatory system. While the blood brings nutrients to our cells, the lymph removes their waste. Think of your own home and how important it is to take out the trash!

Notice the tops of your feet—are they swollen? Even if you are of slim build, you might notice that you can't see the tendons and ligaments on the top of the feet. If you cannot, this is a sign that you have lymphatic congestion (the same is true if

you feel "pockets" of what seems like fat below your knees, in your abdomen, below the shoulder blades, and at the classic love handles). It's often not fat—it's lymph (again, think trash!) just sitting there. Getting your lymph moving well will help you lose weight, clear up your skin, give you a lot more energy, and let you feel healthy and vibrant.

TO ACTIVATE YOUR LYMPH FLOW

Massage your feet! Start from the top of your ankle down toward your toes, gently "moving" the lymph down toward the toes and then inward toward the space between your big toe and second toe (which is a major lymph exit).

Breathe! The circulatory system moves thanks to the heart. The lymph does not have such a muscle but breathing exercises can be tremendously beneficial.

Exercise! Everything from stretching to cardiovascular activity moves lymph.

Hydrate! Water is critical to help the lymph move along fluidly. Most of us are dehydrated. Add lemon to your water to provide essential electrolytes.

Clean up your diet! Congestive, lymph-producing foods include animal products such as meat, dairy, and egg but also gluten and processed foods (packaged, preserved, etc.). You will notice a huge impact by cutting these out for two months and going totally organic. You may literally "feel" your lymph moving better.

Go Green! Many chemicals in cleaning products, hygiene products, makeup, and laundry detergent are endocrine disruptors and considered toxic waste to the body. Help your body heal and cleanse itself by not adding to its detoxification work.

4 FOODS, 2 HERBS
& 2 TEAS FOR
OPTIMAL HEALTH

Foods: leafy greens, sweet potatoes, garlic, berries (especially wild blueberries)

Herbs: basil, rosemary

Teas: red raspberry leaf, nettle

We forget that symptoms are just an indication, a sign that something is amiss deep down.

disappeared! Elijah Forrest was born on September 2, 2009. Neurosurgeons wanted to perform surgery immediately to remove the remaining cysts. I refused. Within eight months, his cysts disappeared and to this day our little Forrest remains healthy.

Through all of this, I strengthened my conviction as a mother—the primal strength that comes from knowing I can take care of my children, just as mothers have done throughout time. I never had any intention of going into natural health or helping others with their health. But soon people started coming to me to help them with health problems, issues that they were not finding help for, and I soon felt I was doing it full-time. In addition to practicing FootZonology, I became an instructor, as well. My hope then and now is to help spread this knowledge so more people could heal and regain their lives the way my family had.

Do you or does someone you know struggle with health issues or symptoms? Too often, we treat only the symptom. We forget that symptoms are just an indication, a sign that something is amiss deep down. We also ignore the fact that countless animals treat themselves pharmacologically from an inner knowing that we share—even if we've become so “smart” that we don't pay attention to what our bodies try

to tell us. Traditional medical approaches have long understood that instead of taking a Band-Aid approach, we need to treat the underlying problem to heal the symptom. It is possible for you to understand the root cause of what is happening and—by treating that with the right kinds of foods, minerals, herbs, and activity—heal yourself.

Amber Bodily is a natural health practitioner, a FootZonologist and FootZonology instructor, a contributing health writer for MindBodyGreen and Fulfillment Daily, a master herbologist, and a certified aromatherapist. She is also a triathlete, and the mother of three boys. She lives in the San Francisco Bay Area, where she consults with clients in person and remotely. Her website is footzoning.com

Fresh Cut 
Katie Daisy

