

Traditional Healing Approaches to Modern Psychiatric Disorders

Rosita Arvigo, DN

"It is folly to ignore the sacred in life or medicine, said Dr. Larry Dossey. "Skirting the sPiritual has had a shattering effect on every dimension of contemporary existence. "

Fortunately for everyone, modern medicine has begun to catch up with the healing wisdom of the Maya and other ancient cultures. Numerous studies have underlined the link between high blood pressure, arthritis, heart disease, asthma, bronchitis, and even cancer, and unresolved emotional stress and distress. At the same time, an array of studies in neuroscience explains how brain chemistry affects our mental and emotional states. Suddenly, as if it is something new, psychotherapists and medical doctors are once again being taught to consider the importance of the mind-body connection in disease treatment.

Centuries ago an ancient Thracian physician said much the same: "You ought not to attempt to cure eyes without head, or head without body, so you should not treat body without soul."

Like other Amerindian cultures, the Maya consider that psychological disorders are related to the concept of soul loss due to a variety of harsh emotional experiences. The Maya word for soul is *ch'ulel*. It is the vital energy force that pulsates rhythmically in and out of the body. The inward and outward flow of this energy needs to be harmonious and steady. "Not too much. Not too little," was what the old Maya shaman Don Elijio Panti used to say.

Maya healers have long been known as Pulse Doctors and Don Elijio could determine the state of a person's *ch'ulel* by feeling the beating and rhythm of the radial pulse. Maya prayers representing the focused

and concentrated loving *ch'ulel* of the healer are then said directly into the beating pulse of the patient in order to re-order the balance of *ch'ulel*. Besides prayer, the Maya healer also uses herbal baths, incense, rituals, and a strong sprinkling of faith and laughter into the healing mixture.

Psychological Disorders of the Maya

Susto

This best translates as fright or trauma and is universally experienced by each and everyone of us at some time in life. Susto is one of the manifestations of soul loss. It is believed that the soul or the *ch'ulel* is frightened out of the body by some traumatic event. Susto can happen to infants, children, or adults and has a plethora of causes.

Susto in infants can be caused by: loud noises, especially when sleeping, witnessing domestic violence, being dropped, sudden changes such as moving homes, spanking, violent potty training, sexual abuse and incest, and abandonment. These infants are suddenly cranky, difficult to calm down or put to sleep, slap at their caregivers, and cannot play. They may have sudden changes in stool that may be loose and green to watery. Indigestion and colic are to be expected as well as skin rashes and cradle cap.

Susto in children can be caused by: witnessing a frightening event of any kind, violent movies, domestic violence, drunkards in the household, abandonment, sexual abuse and incest, being in a car, bus, or plane accident, or nearly being in such an accident, loss of a loved one, fires, hurricanes, nightmares, and severe bullying by peers. Children with susto show a sudden disinterest in their previous hobbies, studies, and friends. They will not sleep or eat well. There may be constipation or diarrhea and bloating. Hair loss is a possibility and they take on a pale complexion with dull, stringy hair. They cry easily and cannot play happily.

Susto in adults can be caused by: accidents or nearly being in an accident, rape, incest, sexual abuse, domestic violence, witnessing a murder or violent death, violent movies, being mugged or robbed, sudden bad news, fires, explosions, tornadoes, hurricanes, war and its consequent events, bloodshed, sudden falls, etc. This results in sleep disturbances, indigestion, bad complexion, pale color, lack of interest in life, studies or their chosen profession. Fear will be their constant companion and they may be plagued by ghoulish nightmares.

Because the loss of *ch'ulel* affects the efficiency of the immune system, and the circulation, digestion, elimination, and nervous systems, we can say that just about any ailment can be attributed to susto, especially those that do not fit into any average medical model of symptomology. Patients are usually told that they have "some kind of heart disease," "some kind of leukemia" or are written off by their physicians as hysterical types and hypochondriacs.

Pesar

Pesar best translates as grief or loss. Again, like *susto*, this can and probably will happen to everyone at some time because we will all experience loss of some sort during a lifetime. *Pesar* is caused by loss of what is dear to us due to death, fire, natural disasters, a broken heart, or being fired from a job or losing a career position. Infants and children experience *pesar* when someone dear to them dies, a best friend or their own family moves away, loss of a favorite teacher or school, or weaning from the breast. Adults can have *pesar* due to loss of any kind. The most common symptom of *pesar* is a deep, mournful sigh that seems to come for no known reason and is rather constant. There may also be changes for the worse in personality, nightmares of abandonment, and a strong sense of hopelessness mixed with vague depression.

Tristessa

Tristessa is sadness or depression of the type that seems to linger for years, or has always been with the person for as long as they can remember. It seems that these people may have been unwanted as babies, unloved or abused in early life, or experienced a series of peer rejections at school. They cannot find their true path or passion in life, feel isolated, alienated, and that life has been unfair to them. They have trouble getting started in the morning, sleep too late, drink too much, abuse drugs and substances, and often have had decades of psychotherapy and used mood altering drugs to little or no avail.

Invidia

Invidia translates as envy or jealousy. This can be devastating to the object of another's envy, especially when it is ongoing and long term. The victims of envy feel that their present lifestyle must change in order for them to find happiness. They suddenly feel discontent with their spouse, job, home, and hobbies.

If the envy streams from companions at work, they convince themselves that they must change jobs to find contentment again. Arriving at work makes them feel depressed and anxious, and as they leave, these emotions are somewhat relieved. When envy comes from someone in the household or a neighbor, the person who is envied suddenly wants to move away. When they leave home, they start to feel much better and relieved of their emotional burdens.

Envy is insidious and has a thousand manifestations on the emotional, physical, and spiritual plane. Those suffering from envy are dejected, pale, and depressed and cannot say why. A fast-beating heart is common, with sudden palpitations that can be quite frightening and mimic heart conditions. Physical symptoms of envy include skin conditions, indigestion, lack of appetite, sleeplessness, nightmares, hearing voices, and an array of unexplained health problems. They will usually say, "I've been everywhere and no one can find out what is wrong with me."

Treatment of Psychological Disorders

The beauty of the Maya system for treating psychological disorders lies in its utter simplicity. While it can seem difficult to diagnose just which ailment a person has, it is not essential as the treatment will be the same for *susto*, *pesar*, *invidia* or *tristessa*. Here's how we do it.

PRAYER is first and foremost always. Included here are two prayers given to me by the Maya shaman, Don Elijio, with permission to print and share them with others.

In order to use prayer in healing one must have faith in a deity or a higher power. No one who thinks she or he works alone as a healer can heal the Maya way. Prayers are addressed to the deity of one's choice. For the Maya, this is the Nine Maya Spirits and the Great Holy God known to all of us. One may use any prayer of any faith as long as there is a spiritual connection to that deity or faith.

The Nine Maya Spirits are the Oversoul of the Maya people, much like Catholic saints and archangels. Their prayers are a comfortable combination of ancient Maya religious concepts and Christianity. Maya prayers are said nine times for each individual. Say three prayers into each radial pulse and three prayers over the forehead.

This is the prayer for all illnesses of the physical and emotional body:

In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, I am the one who prays to the Nine Maya Spirit with my prayer to help sick people. I ask God to help me and I also ask a favor of the Maya spirits that they help me. I believe in them, and I have faith with all my heart in their great power to help and to heal. Nine times I say my prayers. In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Prayer for Susto

In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, I am the one who prays for susto. I ask God to help me, and I ask the Nine Maya Spirits to help me too. I say these prayers nine times to release this susto from the flesh. I have

faith with all my heart that this prayer, these baths,

and incense will cure the susto OI _____ -

In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.

You may insert the name of your deity, whether it is] esus, Mohammed, Gaia, Buddha, or whoever. What matters is that you have faith and a relationship with that higher power through ritual, worship, love, and ceremony.

HERBAL BATHS are an integral part of Maya treatment for the list of psychological disorders. Maya herbal baths are done with a certain number of plants from one to nine different plant species. Some healers like the number three, others four, and some nine. They all work, and even just one plant, one flower, and sometimes one leaf or petal can be enough to bring about dramatic improvement with these disorders. Plants **MUST** be collected and gathered with prayer, care, and reverence, otherwise the treatment is nowhere near as powerful and life changing. The herb collector's prayer is simple:

I give thanks to the spirit of this plant and I have faith with all my heart that you will heal the sickness

OI _____. In the name of _____ -

. Amen.

Say this prayer constantly while collecting and while preparing the bath, which may be done by boiling the herbs in water for 5-10 minutes or simply by crushing the fresh plants into a bucket of water for five minutes or so until well mashed. Set this in the sun, if possible, for an hour, and then pour over the head and entire body while continuing to pray as you know best, while burning incense.

INCENSE may be copal, rosemary, sage, myrrh, frankincense, or cedar. Copal mixed with rosemary is certainly the incense of choice for the Maya, but the others also work well.

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Spiritual Bathing: Rituals and Traditions from Around the World

Rosita Arvigo, DN and Nadine Epstein

From baptisms to Mayan baths to waterfalls, tubs, and saunas, spiritual bathing is a deeply healing, connecting, and soul-fulfilling practice.

We know that it feels wonderful to soak in a warm bath or swim in the sea; that it is blissful to meditate upon the sound of river water rushing over rocks; or that the sight of sunlit drops bursting from a waterfall is magnificent. But how often do we think of these experiences as spiritual? Yet in ancient times, the spiritual essence of water evoked a sense of wonder, reminding people that they were threads in the divine web of life. Foremost in the great creation myths and traditions of nearly every culture is the recognition that water gave birth to humankind. It was seen as a divine, life-giving, healing, cleansing, renewing force. "Water symbolizes the whole of potentiality; it is *ons et origo*, the source of all possible existence," wrote Mircea Eliade, the late historian of comparative religion.

Water was the primordial element from which most of the ancients believed the earth was created: The Egyptian god Nun was the god of chaos and waters who created the earth. The Yoruba goddess Obatala created the world from a floating ball of water and Vishnu formed the earth while floating on a serpent in the cosmic seas. In Native American myths, Old Man, drifting on a raft, willed the earth into existence out of water.

The human affinity for water was also expressed through spiritual bathing, which drew men, women, children, and whole communities closer to the divine. Immersion symbolized rebirth, regeneration, and momentary death. Sprinkling, splashing, pouring, sweating, and even drinking were also important parts of such bathing.

Water rituals may be even more meaningful now as people struggle to find their own paths to, and relationships with, God. Our over-scheduled lives require as many ways as possible to regain a sense of interconnectedness and harmony, within and without. Spiritual bathing strengthens our tenuous connection with the natural world and its reflection of the divine. Baths not only ease our passage through the stresses of daily life, they also separate the extraordinary from the mundane, transport us to a holier place, and mark rites of passage. Spiritual bathing can open the door to one's own inner guidance, uplifting the soul to foster a more reverent, peaceful state of mind.

Although many rituals have religious roots, contemporary spiritual bathing transcends the particularity of a religious community, institution, or spiritual tradition by incorporating diverse ideals and practices. At the same time, it helps us to deepen our understanding of traditions in order to reshape rituals for modern times and create new ones. These rituals can be used as a private journey, or celebrated communally with friends and family at home, in the backyard, or by a sea, lake, river, spring, or pond.

Petals of roses, hollyhock, marigold, and hibiscus flowers swirl with basil, rue, and sage, creating patterns in the water that are achingly lovely. Caroline climbs into the tub as copal smoke billows from the incense holder. She feels disconnected from herself, from her husband, and from the divine. As she immerses herself, she prays for connection and clarity. Repeating her prayers and focusing her intentions, she soaks for 30 minutes while absorbing the changing patterns of petals and leaves into her soul, and gathering the rue buds up in her hands and breathing in their pungent fragrance. When she arises from the bath, she feels renewed and reconnected to the divinity within herself, and the divinity within the world.

Spiritual bathing is intertwined with healing practices throughout the world and can benefit even those who do not hold any particular religious or spiritual beliefs. A spiritual bath combines water - whether in liquid or vapor form - with prayer, and sometimes plants, stones, gems, honey, milk, or wine to wash away the negative effects of anger, fear, anxiety, grief, trauma, exhaustion, world-weariness, stress, and confusion. Whether you are brokenhearted or in transition, bathing can heal you if it incorporates two essential components: water and prayer.

Water is revered by Hindus, the Shinto, and the Inca, among others, for carrying the memory of sunlight, the phases of the moon, fresh air, mountains, and rocky beds within it, wherever it goes. Its spiritual energy can be transformative. This belief is central to the understanding of the effect of spiritual bathing on the human body.

In sacred traditions, water must be infused with prayer, chants, or medicine songs to achieve its full potential for transforming human energy. These elements may wash away the negative thoughts and emotions that may be at the root of human physical and emotional ailments, blocking spiritual clarity and connection. Water infused with prayer is believed to alleviate negative feelings. It refreshes, calms, and balances our energy, allowing it to arrive and leave at a constant rate.

Many cultures believe that water absorbs and accumulates the vibratory patterns of our words, healing thoughts, and intentions, like a sort of spiritual energystorage battery. And so, Native American spiritual healers chant rhythmically and shake rattles over water to enhance its healing properties. Mayan shamans place their hands above water and repeat their traditional prayers nine times to entice and consecrate the water in which their patients bathe; they also instruct their emotionally ill patients to pray fervently over a glass of water before drinking it. Roman Catholic priests make water holy by ritual blessings prayed over it, and making the sign of the cross above the vessel containing the water. Incan priests and priestesses prayed as they immersed their hands in water, which flowed through channels and into their temples to build up spiritual energy for ceremonial and domestic purposes.

Rituals

Every spiritual bathing tradition has its own philosophy, prayers, mythology, and rituals, as well as something unique to teach us about how humanity has lived and survived on our planet. Within this diversity we have found much commonality, making spiritual bathing a fascinating prism through which to view the world's religions. Here are a few rituals - both new and old - to try at home or at a nearby body of water.

Maya Spiritual Bath

One of the world's most ancient cultures, remnants of which still exist in Mexico and Central America, the Maya had many spiritual baths which they used to treat physical and spiritual ailments. Spiritual ailments might include *susto* (fear and anxiety), *tristeza* (sadness), *pesar* (grief), or *invidia* (envy.) This is a good bath to help relieve general anxiety, fear, troubling dreams, or sadness.

Collect the following plants while reciting a prayer of thanks to each of them:

9 sprigs rue, about 6 inches long

9 12-inch marigold stems with flowers 4 branches basil, about 12 inches long or:

4 stalks motherwort, about 12 inches long 9 branches sage, about 12 inches long

9 branches Saint-John's wort, about 12 inches long

Fill your largest pot with water. Place the plants in the water and squeeze them between your hands for 10 minutes. Pray and breathe deeply during this time for the full healing benefit. When the water has taken on color and aroma, set it aside for up to eight hours.

Draw water into your tub until it is half-full, at a temperature of your liking. Drink a half-cup of the herbal water, and pour the remainder into the tub.

You can strain the water if you wish, but it is lovely to bathe surrounded by floating flowers and leaves.

Soak for 30 minutes, relaxing and meditating on the purpose of the bath. Burn copal incense during this time. This is also a good time to pray.

If you have no bathtub, carry the pot of herbs into the shower. Sit on a stool or chair in the shower, and slowly pour the herbal water from a bowl over your body. You can add hot tap water to the pot of herbs for a warmer bath.

Summer Solstice Group Baptism

Most North and South American slaves were taken from West Africa, where river cults required ceremonies involving total immersion of the body. Even when Christianized, slaves held onto some of their African traditions, incorporating elements of the old ways into the new faith. The belief in ritual immersion for spiritual purification and renewal of purpose was one Africans shared with Christians.

On the night of the solstice, the group stays up all night praying, giving thanks, meditating, singing, and drumming. At 5 AM they meet at the seashore or riverbank. Each person kneels, then immerses him- or herself in the water, accompanied by further prayer, drumming, dancing, and general celebration.

The ceremony closes with a prayer circle at the water's edge, after which everyone returns to a home, church, or communal hall to share a feast.

Waterfall Bathing

Inspiring waterfalls hidden in remote mountain areas have been places of adoration and pilgrimage since earliest history in Asia. The water and mountain have a yin-yang relationship. To the Shinto, the waterfall is a deity, a *go-shintai*, or physical embodiment of a *kami*, or god. Monks, priests, shamans, and ascetics have long bathed at waterfalls for spiritual purification before entering mountain shrines or undertaking arduous tasks, and to replenish their healing and divining powers in the presence of the water god.

Choose a small, safe waterfall. Stand beneath the waterfall (be careful). Let the water spray over you. Pray or meditate.

Yom Kippur Bath

A reflective ritual bath that can be taken at the New Year as well. Prepare the ingredients for the bath in the afternoon.

Collect herbs with kindness: rue, lemon balm, rosemary, or other combinations of herbs work wonderfully.

Simmer the herbs in a big pot of water, making the house fragrant.

Strain (optional).

Pour off a cup for after dinner; drink as tea before sundown.

After dinner and services, fill a tub with water. Put on sacred music - Hebrew, Yiddish, Ladino or other.

Light incense and place lighted candles around the bath.

Carry the warm (no longer hot) herb water to the tub.

Climb into tub, and using a wooden or clay bowl, pour bowlfuls of herb water over yourself (or have someone else do the pouring), while saying your favorite prayers.

Soak in tub for at least 20 minutes.

Think about the year: what you would like to be forgiven for, how you can make amends.

Sing and chant. It's amazing how lovely our voices sound when we chant near and above water in an enclosed space like a bathroom.

Celtic Water Divination

Springs and wells where water rises up from the earth were revered by the Celts as portals to the Otherworld, the womb of the earth. Celebrated by the people and their priests, the Druids, and later by Christians as well as modern-day followers of the Druid way, holy wells are still popular pilgrimage destinations. But you don't need to travel to practice this ritual.

At dusk or night, find any still, dark water - a pond, tidal pool, or even water in a dark bowl or cauldron - and settle into a comfortable position.

Gaze into the water's depths for five to 15 minutes, or longer if possible. Unfocus your eyes, relax your mind, and allow thoughts to drift in and out of your awareness, without concentrating on any particular image or ideas. Be open to any message arising from your meditation.

Sumerian New Moon Bath

Sumerians knew that the phases of the moon can affect all natural bodies, including water, plants, and human emotions. Moon cycle changes are a good time for a ritual of renewal or initiation. The new moon phase is a time of symbolic rebirth. So, when you need to start a new project, welcome a new phase of life, or celebrate a major change for the better, try a new moon bath.

As the full moon begins to wane, it is time to meditate on the purpose of your new moon bath. Ask yourself what you would like to accomplish, or wish to manifest, in this coming transition. When you have your answer, write it down in a clear, concise sentence, and place the piece of paper on your altar or under your pillow.

When the night sky is completely dark, with no moon, or only a slight crescent, it is time to prepare your bath. Remember to prepare during the day by picking plants that grow near you, while reciting prayers of thanks. Plantain, hyssop, Saint-John's wort, marigold, and basil are good choices. Stew them into a tub of warm water.

Sometime that evening or late afternoon, step into the bath, or if you decide to dip and pour, repeat your intention of renewal nine times, just as you wrote it down. Meditate and try to keep your mind focused on this outcome during the bath. Give thanks for its fruition as if it were already a reality.

Life Change Ritual at the Sea

Adapted from rituals common to many cultures, this is a good one for difficult times of change or transition, or trouble letting go of someone or something from the past.

Wear old clothes over a bathing suit, including at least one item that symbolizes your "old" life, and go to the sea. Dip your body into the sea seven times (wearing the old clothes), while saying with each dip,

"I now break all links with (appropriate phrase)." Remove the old clothes, and throw them away into a bin at the beach. Walk away, and don't look back.

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about your experiences o/spiritual bathing at [www. spiritualbathing. com](http://www.spiritualbathing.com).

Spiritual Bathing: Rituals and Traditions from Around the World - Rosita Arvigo, DN and Nadine Epstein

An Integrative Approach to Reproductive Health Care for Women and Men

Rosita Arvigo, DN

The Vital Life Force (*Vix Medicatrix Naturae*) circulates through our body using five channels of flow: the arteries, the veins, the lymphatic system, the nerves, and the Chi. The integrated flow of these forces is called "homeostasis," or balance within. Our human system is created to be self-regulating, self-healing, and self-repairing. However, this active state of health is dependent upon the unobstructed, unrestricted flow of the Vital Life Force through these five essential channels. When these channels are blocked, the result is pain, disease, and malfunction.

Special Note: Resistance and blockage of the flow of fluid and energy in and out of the pelvic region is the primary cause of the long list of symptoms of the displaced uterus or the congested, swollen prostate.

Female Reproductive Health

The female pelvis is a powerhouse of energy transformation -- the very throne of creation through which universal creative energy patterns course and flow. This depends on balance within the system. A displaced uterus causes distortion, disrupting our state of homeostasis.

The uterus is slung in the lower pelvic cavity by many ligaments, thus it can shift out of its normal anatomical position. This can cause abnormal pressure, restricting the flow of fluid in arteries, veins, lymph, nerve, and Chi. This restriction of vital fluids and Chi can be the cause of most of our female ailments, ranging from irregular periods to infertility and cancer of the reproductive organs. If the ligaments become weak, flaccid, or oxygen starved, they cannot hold the uterus in position. The uterus may become displaced and exert abnormal pressure on any of the five channels of flow. This will adversely affect the uterus, the fallopian tubes, the ovaries,

the intestines, the vagina, the uterine ligaments, and all surrounding connective tissue. A cycle of pathology is created. It is possible to return the uterus to its rightful location using the simple, external, and ancient massage techniques of Maya Abdominal Massage.

Common Female Reproductive Symptoms

Painful periods
Late, early, or irregular periods

Dark, thick blood at onset and/or at end of menstruation

Abnormal uterine bleeding and heavy blood clots

during menstruation

Headache or migraine with menstruation Dizziness with menstruation

Failure to ovulate regularly and anovulation Painful ovulation

Uterine fibroids, uterine polyps Endometriosis, endometritis PMS/depression prior to menses Uterine infections

Bladder infections or cystitis Vaginitis

Chronic miscarriages Premature deliveries Weak newborn infants False pregnancies

Difficult pregnancy or delivery Infertility

Painful intercourse Lack of sexual desire Constipation Difficult menopause

Dry vagina with or without menopause

Female Reproductive Health - the Maya Way

Rosita Arvigo, DN

Women's health care, the Maya way, is rich in traditional healing, incorporating Maya abdominal massage, herbal remedies, vaginal steam or (ba'joes), emotional and spiritual healing. Don Elijio Panti, one of the last traditional healer/shamans from Belize, believed that a woman's uterus was her center. He said, "If a woman's uterus is out of balance, so is she." *Ch'ulel* emanates from the uterus which is the seat of creation.

The Arvigo Techniques of Maya Abdominal Massage

The uterus is slung in the lower pelvic cavity by many ligaments, thus it can shift out of its normal anatomical position. This can cause abnormal pressure, restricting the flow of fluid in arteries, veins, lymph, nerves and Chi.

This restriction of vital fluids and Chi often can be the cause of our female ailments, ranging from irregular periods to infertility to cancer of the reproductive organs. If the ligaments become weak, flaccid or oxygen starved, they cannot hold the uterus in position. The uterus may become displaced and exert abnormal pressure on any of the five channels of flow. This will adversely affect the uterus, the fallopian tubes, the ovaries, the intestines, the vagina, the uterine ligaments, and all surrounding connective tissue.

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Female Reproductive Health - the Maya way - Rosita Arvigo, DN

Common Female Reproductive Symptoms Painful periods

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Bladder infections or cystitis

Chronic miscarriages

False pregnancies

Infertility

Painful intercourse Constipation Difficult menopause

Cancer of the vagina, cervix, uterus, fallopian

tubes, lower bowel or bladder Late, early, or irregular periods Painful ovulation

Dizziness with menstruation Pelvic infections Endometriosis, endometritis Uterine infections

Vaginitis

Premature deliveries, weak newborn infants Difficult pregnancy or delivery

Lack of sexual desire

Ovarian and breast cysts

Dry vagina with or without menopause

Causes of the Displaced Uterus

Repeated pregnancies close together with difficult deliveries.

Bad professional care during pregnancy, delivery, and postpartum

Carrying heavy burdens just before or during menstruation and too soon after childbirth.

Walking barefoot on cold floors and/or wet

grass.

Wearing high heeled. shoes Running on cement surfaces.

Injury to the sacrum or tailbone from a fall, a severe blow or car accident.

Chronic constipation.

Poor alignment of pelvic bones with the spinal column.

Chronic spasms around the low back and sacrum.

Carrying young children on the hip for prolonged periods of time.

Modern Life

Emotional armoring from rape, sexual abuse, or incest at any time in your life.

Aging and the pull of gravity on ligaments.

A career in high impact dancing, aerobics or sports.

Recommendations for Female Reproductive Health Care Maya Abdominal Massage

This external massage provides support and corrects the numerous symptoms as noted above. Please consult the web site: www.arvigomassage.com for a practitioner near you and a complete training schedule.

Herbal Therapies

Every herbalist has his/her formulations to support female reproductive health care for the cycles of a woman's life. Herbal remedies, when used in conjunction with Maya Abdominal Massage, nourish the well being of this system. Remember, the *herbs have no hands!!*

Diet

Whole foods, nuts, grains, greens, etc. Eliminate processed foods, contaminated meats. Meats, dairy, eggs if consumed need to be in small amounts and organic. A vegetarian diet is best!

Exercise

Yoga, stretching, belly dancing, movement!

Rain Forest Remedies Female Tonic

This is a formula that, in part, I learned from my mentor of a decade, Don Elijio Panti. There are six different herbs in the formula, four of which were in Don Elijio's original formula that he devised from information he learned from his teacher in the 1930's in Belize. This formula is used to address the numerous symptoms of the displaced uterus with excellent results.

Contents:

Colpachi Bark (*Croton guatemalensis*) Used in Central America to support many female symptoms, best used to help flush old uterine fluids from the

walls of the uterus.

Man Vine (*Agonandra racemosa*) Antispasmodic, relaxes involuntary muscles.

Billy Webb Bark (*Sweetia panamensis*)

Bitter bark, used for uterine cleansing, works with colpachi bark

Skunk Root (*Chiococca alba*) Diverse herb, used by Mayas, "the thinking herb," heals ulcerations of mucous membranes, strengthens the uterus.

Wild Yam (*Dioscorea spp*) The basis of birth control pill and cortisone, active principle is diosgenin, precursor to hormones estrogen and progesterone. Assists in balancing hormone levels.

Ginger Root (*Zingiber officinales*) Traditionally used by Maya women to bring warmth to the uterus, improving circulation to and out of the pelvis, acts as an anti-inflammatory agent, an antioxidant and to support digestion.

Side effects: Increase in menstrual fluids for 2-3 cycles, adult use only.

Contraindications: Pregnancy or extreme fatigue.

Vaginal Steam Baths

Bajos (ba-hoes), as they are called in Spanish, are a respected treatment for women used by Maya midwives and healers. They cleanse the pelvis with aromatic herbs, good for chronic and supportive care of the reproductive organs. Herbs commonly used are leaves of rosemary, motherwort, oregano, lavender, red clover, yarrow, calendula, etc. Do not use essential oils!!

Emotional and Spiritual Healing

Like other Amerindian cultures, the Maya consider that psychological disorders are related to the concept of a variety of harsh emotional experiences. The Maya word for soul is *ch'ulel*. It is the vital energy force that pulsates rhythmically in and out of the body. The inward and outward flow of this energy needs to be harmonious and steady. "Not too much. Not too little," was what the old Maya shaman Don Elijio Panti used to say. Besides prayer, the Maya healer also uses herbal baths, incense, rituals and a strong sprinkling of faith and laughter into the healing mixture.

Healing of any form cannot happen effectively without including emotional and spiritual healing. I would encourage you to attend my four day spiritual healing retreat which provides an in depth exploration of this topic.

The female pelvis is a powerhouse of energy transformation - the very throne of creation through which universal creative energy patterns course and flow. This depends on balance within the system. - physical, emotional and spiritual.

Osteopenia: A Reversible Risk Factor for Osteoporosis

Mary Bove, ND, AHG

Osteopenia is a pre-osteoporosis state, which reflects a reduction in bone density and an increased risk for osteoporosis. Bone density is considered normal when bone mineral density (BMD) is within one standard deviation (SD) of the young adult reference mean, measured by a dual energy x-ray absorptiometry (DXA) scan. Osteopenia is characterized by a BMD of more than one SD below the young adult mean but less than 2.5 SD below the young adult mean, while osteoporosis is characterized by a BMD of 2.5 SD or higher. It is thought that about ten million American men and women have osteopenia, which is a reversible risk factor.

Ideally, intervention should be started when bone density is in the lower range of normal, before it falls into the range of osteoporosis. Bone is a dynamic living tissue that requires regular stimulation from weightbearing exercise and plenty of high-quality nutrients for healthy bone growth and remodeling. Bone is comprised of inorganic minerals and non-mineral protein collagen matrix. The integrity of the protein matrix reflects bone strength. The mineralization of the matrix and the rate of bone turnover reflect bone mass. The average human being reaches maximum bone mass around age 35 and begins to lose bone mass between the ages of 40 to 50. Bone loss involves the entire skeleton, and the spine, hips, and ribs are at highest risk.

Personal risk factors for osteoporosis include being a woman, a thin body type, being Caucasian, no mineral supplementation, caffeine consumption, inadequate essential fatty acids, diet low in vegetables and high in animal protein, cigarette smoking, and no regular exercise.

Goals for reversing osteopenia may include lifestyle changes, dietary changes, and high-quality nutritional supplementation to preserve mineral mass, prevent further loss of bone matrix, and encourage bone mineralization for repair to remodel damaged bone, and increase bone density.

Top of the list in lifestyle changes is to establish a regular weight-bearing exercise program, which is easy to integrate into one's life without adding more stress. An example might be a combination of a 15-minute brisk walk at lunch time, 1-2 minutes of jumping rope to music each morning, and a yoga class on Saturdays.

Dietary goals should include eliminating foods that increase excretion of calcium from the body, such as caffeine in the form of coffee, chocolate, and soft drinks, refined carbohydrates, and sugars. Balance the high animal protein intake with more vegetable proteins from legumes, nuts, whole grains, and seeds. Increase fruits and vegetables, organic when possible, to at least nine servings daily to provide vitamin K (which activates osteocalcin, a protein that anchors calcium into the collagen matrix), along with magnesium, zinc, potassium, and fibers, which aid in absorption and assimilation of minerals from the diet. Leafy greens and broccoli in particular provide a high amount of vitamin K and another important bone nutrient, folic acid, so they should be included daily in the diet. Using lemon in water will improve digestive pH and increase mineral absorption when taken with meals.

High-quality supplementation for bone support goes beyond calcium. While calcium plays an important role in bone health, adequate amounts of magnesium are needed for normal calcium metabolism by the bone.

A Walk Through "Granny's Garden" The Medicinal Trail at Ix Chel Farm, Belize, Central America

Rosita Arvigo, DN

This interactive slide show presentation features a tour of medicinal plants seen in their native habitat on the Ix Chel Medicine Trail in Belize. Common and not so common uses, and clinical applications of these herbal allies are discussed.

Marigold *Tagetes erecta*

Your common garden variety of marigold holds many secrets for your kitchen medicine cabinet such as treating baby colic and herbal baths for the aged, tired and restless. Just about everyone's favorite healing herb from the garden. We use the flower heads for infant colic as a tea that is also good for fevers, flatulence and headaches. It is most respected for its aid in spiritual healing as a bath and tea for those with fright, envy, grief or nervousness to the extreme.

Oregano *Lippia graveolens*

A woman's best friend when used as a vaginal steam bath for uterine cleansing. As a hot tea it is good for coughs and upper respiratory infections. It will induce menstruation or aid with menstrual cramps. As a bath it is an excellent disinfectant and healer of wounds or burns.

Mistletoe *Phorandendron PiPeroides*

Used in hot herbal baths to address local swellings, pain and fever. Used as a warm bath of leaves and stems for swellings, bruises and sores, especially good for dog bites when mixed with fresh garlic and lemon juice as a poultice. For onset of asthma, a tea of the leaves is taken as hot as possible.

Red & Pink Hibiscus

Hibiscus rosa

This is an absolute favorite of midwives and granny healers to staunch post-partum hemorrhage, excessive menstruation, threatened miscarriage and as a bath for many skin conditions. The flowers are eaten as a way to build the blood in those who have anemia or low iron counts.

Jackass Bitters *Neurolaena lobata*

Jackass bitters is a famous tropical remedy for all manner of parasites both internal and external - it does not grow north of Mexico. It is such a fascinating plant that it will be included for its use as an anti-parasitic, anti-microbial, anti-fungal, anti-viral herb. As a bath it is numero uno for skin conditions- even diabetic ulcerations.

Red Roses *Rosa sinensis*

Learn the amazing traditional uses of roses for staunching excessive menstruation, for treating baby diaper rash and lots more.

Life Everlasting *Kalanchoe pinnata*

An aptly named planetary herb considered by healers to be a true panacea for physical and spiritual diseases. Known by hundreds of common names around the world which attests to its use for just about whatever ails a person. It can be taken as a tea for urinary tract infections, asthma, bronchitis, coughs, colds and as a bath for infected sores or boils.

A IVtzlk Through "Granny's Garden" - The Medicinal Trail at Ix Chel Farm, Belize, Central America - Rosita Arvigo, DN

Basil *Ocimum basilicum*

So common yet it has some amazing clinical applications for painful menses, indigestion and for treating nervousness in adults and children. Besides the common uses as a carminative and antispasmodic, it has numerous applications in spiritual healing of the Maya. It is a reliable remedy for sleeplessness in babies and children when taken as a warm herbal bath.

Rue *Ruta graveolens*

No doubt the most overlooked medicinal plant in America but thought of as the Herb of Grace in other parts of the world. Learn how to use it for a variety of ailments to treat body and soul.

Allspice *Pimenta dioica*

Young berries and leaves are an excellent tea used in midwifery during labor to aid efficient uterine contractions, as a tea for infantile colic and menstrual cramps. Even helps toothaches by applying a poultice of leaves or berries.

Aloe vera

A universally useful plant for burns and to prevent scarring. Also used for constipation and as a daily tonic in juice.

Amaranth *Amaranthus retroflexus*

A delicious, nutritious pot herb eaten in abundance, found in fields and gardens. It is also used to bathe skin conditions, especially measles to prevent scarring. The juice of young leaves is a specific remedy for the anemic, tired or depressed.

Corn *Zea mays*

Much more than a great food source, corn kernels, hair and husks are all prized by healers for all conditions of the urinary tract, to promote lymphatic cleansing and to nourish the weak, aged or ill.

Mexican Wormseed *Chenopodium ambrosioides*

A common plant of fields and byways, it is number one for treating intestinal parasites when taken daily for nine days with milk followed by a castor oil purge. Added to beans, it prevents flatulence.

Ginger *Zingiber officinale*

A stimulant herb for indigestion, colds, vomiting, muscle aches and pains and delayed labor. Numerous formulas exist for each one of these uses.

Lemon Grass *Cymbopogon citratus*

Also known as fever grass, grannies rely on it for fevers of infants and children as well as a good remedy for infertile women. The mashed root is added to almond oil and rubbed on sore muscles with good results.

Mexican Heather *Cuphea calophylla*

A new favorite of landscape artists and gardeners ";ho probably know little of its traditional use as a tea for infertile women, weak individuals and to build the blood.

Papaya *Carica papaya*

Papaya leaves, seeds and fruits are useful in traditional medicine. The mashed leaves make an excellent meat tenderizer. The fruits are a superior remedy for indigestion. The seeds are eaten as an anti-parasite remedy and the roots are combined with other herbs to treat gonorrhea.