

---

# Strengthening Immunity

Bob Ligon

**I**mmune system strength is measured by the body's ability to maintain equilibrium of vital functions and to respond to extraordinary challenges to that equilibrium. There are several perspectives on what comprises the immune system. It can be viewed as a biochemical function of bacteria, antibodies, T-cells, mineral balance, or the strength and condition of vital organs such as poor digestion/elimination, leaky gut, and/or weak kidneys. Another perspective, the energetic view, considers the acquisition, incorporation, and elimination of mental, emotional, and spiritual energies. Here in Part I, I will focus on the physical practices regarding immune system strength. In Part II, I will address the mental, emotional and spiritual.

## **CIRCULATION IS THE THING**

The foundation of health and healing is circulation—the bearing of blood, nutrients, micronutrients, and energy (life force) to the cells and transporting the by-products of cell activity away from the cells for elimination. In the midst of that process the cell miraculously transforms



**BOB LIGON**

those nutrients and energy into “life,” that which animates and invigorates the cells, tissues, organs and creates our living body, our mental thoughts, and our spiritual being. On a relatively superficial level, think of a waiter bringing food to your table at a restaurant. You eat, and the bus person comes around later and takes away the dishes. Such is circulation.

## **DIET IS NECESSARY, BUT...**

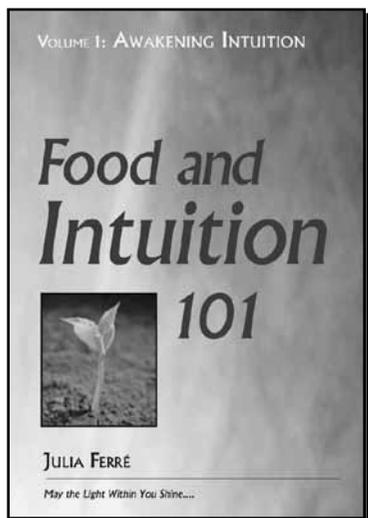
Supportive dietary practice is a necessary condition for strengthening the immune system, i.e., without supportive dietary practice the immune system can't remain strong long term. At the same time, a healthy diet is not sufficient to ensure a strong immune system. Other factors like mental rigidity, emotional stuck spots, and/or spiritual energy need to be addressed as well. For now though...What dietary practices help strengthen the immune system? I find that eliminating weakening foods and beverages will make the strongest impact on immune system strength, at least at first.

## **SUGAR**

To strengthen a weak immune system, reduce or eliminate all forms of sugar and simple and refined carbohydrates. By sugar here I mean virtually all kinds of sweeteners: refined sugar, brown sugar, raw sugar, corn syrup, molasses, honey, maple syrup, agave syrup, even organic evaporated cane juice. For very deficient immune systems even rice syrup, barley malt syrup, fruit and fruit juices, and

→ Using the tools in this book, you can change your life—based on your uniqueness and individual needs. Comprehensive guidelines help you determine healthy dietary choices, cultivate your unconscious, and facilitate your intuition.

## NEW BOOK



**\$17.95 plus \$3.00 shipping  
= \$20.95 (U.S.)**

→ There is no doubt in my mind that we are spiritual beings who live in physical bodies. Intuition is being in touch with this state. This book will help you understand that intuition is a valuable part of your life and strengthen your connection with it.

**George Ohsawa  
Macrobiotic Foundation**



**PO Box 3998  
Chico, CA 95927  
800-232-2372 or  
530-566-9765  
530-566-9768 fax**

**gomf@ohsawamacrobiotics.com**

amasake are best avoided/eliminated. Refined foods of almost every description, but especially refined baked flour products like breads and pastries must be eliminated. All alcoholic beverages are excluded too.

### DAIRY

Most dairy products are difficult for many people to fully metabolize and can be congesting. Congesting foods significantly contribute to physical constraint, particularly in the respiratory system and stress the immune system. People with frequent colds and kids with recurring ear infections often show marked improvement when they eliminate dairy products. Dairy products include milk, butter, cheese, cottage cheese, ice cream, kefir, yogurt and ghee (clarified butter). While some health conditions and constitutions may benefit from consuming yogurt and ghee, my experience is that for someone with a weak immune system even these celebrated dairy products can be congesting. Each individual can experiment and work with an experienced health counselor to determine if yogurt and ghee can be beneficial.

### FOODS THAT GO CRUNCH

We Americans enjoy a crispy crunchy texture. I have read articles stating that the food manufacturers calculate specific values of pounds of pressure per square inch that are used in making corn chips and potato chips so that when someone bites down on that chip it has just the right resistance, but not too much, to deliver that satisfying “crunch.” However, those dry, hard, crispy, and probably salty snacks take a heavy toll on the body’s reserves of fluids. The stomach must transform what we eat it into a soup texture. Dry, hard, crispy foods tax the body’s store of fluids, negatively impact that circulation I spoke of earlier and in turn weaken the equilibrium of the immune system. Even

rice cakes, corn thins, popcorn and other macrobiotic, and organic, natural crackers, chips, and crispy snacks are best avoided for the above reason.

### BREAD AND FLOUR PRODUCTS

My mother was an accomplished baker, part of her German heritage. There were always baked goods in the house when I was growing up, including homemade (yeasted) bread. I have always been fond of good bread. Good bread nowadays means a naturally leavened organic whole grain variety where the grain has been ground just prior to mixing the dough. While

---

---

*“I recommend avoiding  
all bread and baked flour  
products for someone  
with a weak immune  
system....”*

---

---

good bread is a nourishing food, I acknowledge that even good bread can place a strain on a weak immune system. Flour products can be congesting and compacting in the colon, contributing to constipation; and, the moisture leeching quality of flour products can strain the stomach. While I believe that good bread and whole grain flour products are healthy nourishing foods, I recommend avoiding all bread and baked flour products for someone with a weak immune system. However, whole grain noodles like soba are less stressful to most peoples’ immune systems.

### PROTEIN AND FATTY FOODS

Many animal products, even free-range, organic, grass-fed versions are

heavy and fatty and can cause congestion and constraint. The low fiber content of animal flesh and the sludging of the blood from fatty foods strain the immune system. If animal foods are desired, lean poultry and fish may be tolerated. The animal product exception is nourishing and tonifying bone stock soups (see sidebar). Oils, nuts, seeds, and avocado, even the organic variety, if eaten in excess can have a congesting effect and are best avoided. I usually suggest flax oil or a little olive oil as a non-congesting source of fat.

## **CAFFEINE: THE FALSE ENERGY**

Caffeine must be eliminated to strengthen the immune system for the long term. It is true that ingesting caffeine provides an energy lift, but it is with a price...always a front and a back. Caffeine is in coffee, black tea, sodas, and chocolate. Impact-wise, caffeine resembles a medicine more than a food. A medicine is narrowly focused, fast acting, and dramatic in effect. A medicine is appropriate to get through a crisis moment and avert the development of a more serious condition. Taken infrequently as a medicine, caffeine can be helpful. Used as a daily beverage it erodes immune system strength. Caffeine has the capability to convert stored reserve energy into active energy, hence the temporary boost of energy. However, caffeine leaves a deficit in its wake. Caffeine's affect is to make a withdrawal from your energy savings account without making a deposit. I'm often asked if green tea and dark chocolate are exceptions. I leave those choices up to the individual, but my feeling is that any caffeine depletes the immune system if taken frequently.

## **MACROBIOTICS TO THE RESCUE**

So what kind of dietary practice

# **Bone Stock Preparation**

Request organically raised beef or chicken bones at the meat counter of a natural food store. I use 2 pounds of bones in a 4-liter pressure cooker. Rinse chicken/beef bones, place in a pressure cooker and fill with water. Add four 3-inch pieces of wakame and two tablespoons rice vinegar. The wakame adds valuable minerals and the acidic rice vinegar pulls out the alkalizing minerals from the bones. Lock the lid on the pressure cooker and bring up to pressure. Cook for 4 hours over low heat. Remove from the heat. (Or boil chicken/beef bones in water for 4 hours; more water will be needed than pressure-cooking.)

When the pressure comes all the way down, open the cooker. Remove and discard the bones. Pour the stock into a large container and cover. Place stock in the refrigerator overnight. The fat will rise to the top and harden.

The next day, skim off the hardened fat from the top and discard. Everything below the fat layer is the mineral- and nutrient-rich soup stock. Ladle 1½ cups of the stock into a bowl for immediate use. Pour the remaining soup stock into small containers (reused 1-pound plastic miso containers work well) and place in the freezer for ready-made future soup stock.

### ***Soup Preparation***

Use any soup/stew recipe you like. Wash, chop, and sauté the vegetables. Stir in herbs/spices. Add chicken/beef soup stock, water (5 to 10 cups water per 1 cup stock; less for richer soup, more for thinner soup), precooked rice and cook for 10 minutes. If a creamy, thicker texture appeals to you, add an arrowroot/kuzu mixture and stir. Five minutes before serving add miso. Pour into soup bowls, garnish with parsley.

will strengthen the immune system? Macrobiotic dietary principles tailored to an individual's condition can be an effective dietary strategy for strengthening the immune system. We have heard or read the following many times, but even after 30-plus years I find that I need to be reminded too. Here goes:

### **Whole Grains/Complex Carbohydrates**

Brown rice, millet  
Baked squash and sweet potatoes  
Root vegetables—carrots, turnips, daikon, burdock

### **Vegetables**

Cauliflower, broccoli, sweet corn, green beans, peas, celery, etc.  
Leafy greens—kale and collards

### **Good Quality Fat**

Sesame oil  
Olive oil  
Flax oil

### **Good Quality Protein**

Beans  
Tempeh  
Fish  
Chicken

### **Sea Vegetables**

Wakame, kombu, arame, nori

### **Fermented Foods**

Takuan daikon and other pickles  
Sauerkraut  
Natto  
Miso, soy sauce, tamari



**Bob Ligon Lecturing at French Meadows**

Additional foods can be filled in by referring to any basic macrobiotic book such as *Essential Guide to Macrobiotics*. Some of the above foods will not be suitable for all conditions; other foods may need to be added. I stress that personalized application of macrobiotic dietary principles will likely get better results than “the” macrobiotic diet. To effectively apply macrobiotic dietary principles requires study, practice and experimentation. Guidance from an experienced counselor can be helpful at first.

Furthermore, foods should be of organic quality, meals should be at regular times and late-night eating (after 7 p.m.) and unconscious snacking must be minimized or eliminated.

## HYDRATION

The human body is mostly fluid (up to 75% of body weight) and assimilation and circulation of fluids is essential to immune system strength. Whatever fluid is ingested must be assimilable all the way to the cells. I find that fluids that contain some kind of mineral content provide effective hydration. One of the most effective

hydrating fluids is a good solid miso soup. I like the following recipe. I would add that I have found South River 1-year Chickpea Miso easy to assimilate.

## MISO SOUP

- 1 tsp toasted sesame oil
- ½ tsp grated ginger
- 1 scallion chopped
- 2 cups water
- 1 tsp (+ or -) miso

Sauté ginger, scallion in oil until fragrant. Add 1½ cups water, bring to near boil

Dissolve miso in ½ cup water, add, and simmer.

The following green drink is also good. Just mix together and enjoy:

## GREEN DRINK

- 1 Tbsp liquid chlorophyll
- ¼ cup aloe vera juice
- ¾ cup water

Other good hydrating beverages are: spring water with a dash of sea salt and/or lemon, and herbal teas especially mint and chamomile. The morning tea recipe in my previous

article on digestion is another good choice for hydration, but easy on the soy sauce (salty taste) so as not to stress the kidneys.

## OTHER LIFESTYLE FACTORS

As I said earlier, diet is necessary, but not sufficient to strengthen the immune system. Rest and rejuvenating sleep are also very important. In my work with patients, I find that insufficient rest/sleep is nearly the rule these days. Everyone is trying to cram more into a day than their system (immune system) can manage. Nowadays, people are chronically tired, exhausted, and depleted, a condition that seriously undermines the strength of the immune system. When we are under-rested, reserves have to be tapped to keep going. Depletion of reserves equates to weakening the immune system.

To facilitate circulation of energy and blood and thus strengthen the immune system, moderate exercise is helpful. A combination of light aerobic exercise like brisk walking and stretching/twisting exercises like yoga, Qi Gong or Tai Chi will support the immune system. A daily skin brushing or scrub with a towel soaked in ginger water will also stimulate circulation of blood and energy.

A twice-daily saline nasal rinse with a Neti Pot or a syringe bulb will keep the sinuses moist and clear of dust and other particles—a practice that is especially helpful during cold and flu season.

Moderation in sexual activity prevents weakening of the immune system. Too frequent ejaculation in men and pregnancies too close together are definitions of sexual excess in Chinese Medicine. The depleting level and frequency of these sexual functions varies, of course, with the individual.

Finally, in this first part devoted to primarily physical practices, I'll conclude with some suggestions on

strengthening the kidneys. Herman Aihara spoke often about the importance of maintaining kidney strength. In Chinese Medicine, the kidneys are thought to be the “battery pack” or “power station” for all the body’s energy needs. Many years of experience have demonstrated to me the importance of safeguarding the strength of the kidneys for the sake of immune system strength and overall health and vitality.

## STRENGTHEN THE KIDNEYS

- Regulate salt intake
  - Salt needs are individual
  - If something tastes salty it is too salty
  - If something tastes bland it is not salty enough
  - Cook salt into food, don’t add at the table
- Avoid dry hard, crispy (salty) snack foods—chips, crackers, popcorn, too much bread (Remember, stomach must turn all food into soup.)
- Walk—especially outdoors and uphill, walk barefoot on morning dew
- Breathe fresh air
- Do something to sweat—gardening, house cleaning, manual labor, aerobic exercise or sauna (far infrared)
- Warm salt baths
- Core strengthening/trunk rotating exercises—Pilates, yoga, Tai Chi, Qi Gong
- Massage (rub Tiger Balm into) the kidney source point on the sole of the foot (midway side to side and 1/3 down from toes to heel).
- Rest/nap in the late afternoon (3 to 5 p.m.)

- Avoid caffeine and sugar
- Apply ginger compress (or hot water bottle or heating pad) over mid/low back especially in late afternoon or evening. Before bed is a good time.

## AND BEYOND

Specific healthy dietary and physical practices are necessary to maintain a strong immune system and overall health; however, other energies that make up our whole being must be addressed as well for true healing, vital health, and a strong immune system.

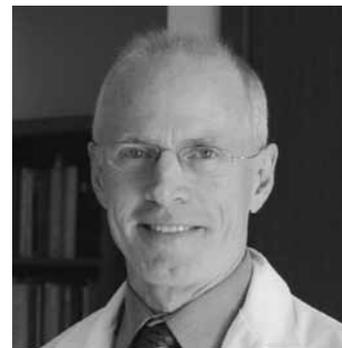
In Part II, I will discuss the energetic dimension, particularly, how mental, emotional, and spiritual attitudes impact health and the immune system.

---

*Bob Ligon worked at the George Ohsawa Macrobiotic Foundation and Vega Study Center from 1989 to 1993 and was an editor of Macrobiotics Today from 1992-2000 and is a lecturer and counselor at the annual French Meadows Macrobiotic Summer Camp. He studied acupuncture and herbology graduating from Pacific College of Oriental Medicine in San Diego in 1998. He integrates his knowledge of macrobiotics and Chinese Medicine in his diet, lifestyle counseling, and life coaching. Currently, Bob practices Traditional Chinese Medicine in Akron, Ohio and does counseling and life coaching by phone. He can be reached at 330-696-3385 for telephone appointments.*



## Counseling with Bob Ligon



by Skype/Phone

- *Dietary*
- *Life Transitions*
- *Spiritual Guidance*

**330-696-3385**

## COMBO SPECIAL SAVE 15%



Order both volumes of Julia Ferre’s *Food and Intuition 101* and save over 15 percent off the list price of \$17.95 each! Or, order at *Amazon.com* with free shipping.

**\$29.95 plus shipping**

**George Ohsawa Macrobiotic Foundation**



PO Box 3998  
Chico, CA 95927-3998  
530-566-9765  
gomf@earthlink.net

[www.ohsawamacrobiotics.com](http://www.ohsawamacrobiotics.com)

---

# Strengthening the Immune System, Part 2

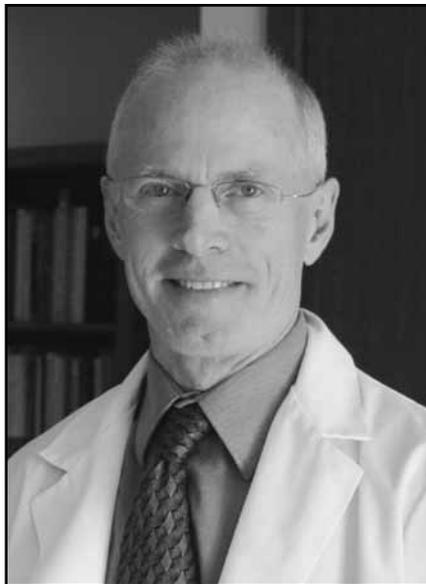
Bob Ligon

**A** strong immune system requires an integration of the physical and energetic dimensions of life.

In Part 1, the focus was primarily on diet and other physical practices regarding the immune system like strengthening the kidneys. Here in Part 2, the energetic dimension of strengthening the immune system—the mental, emotional and spiritual aspects of life will be the focus.

I'll begin with a quote from *Healing with Whole Foods, 3rd edition*, by Paul Pitchford:

“The single most important principle for strengthening immunity is an attitude of nonseparation in one's personal life...When separation is felt between people, it is often because of unresolved emotional issues. This can be changed through sincere forgiveness followed by unconditional gratitude for everything that happens and has happened. According to traditional Chinese physiology, getting rid of old resentments clears the liver of obstructions, which in turn permits the smooth and vigorous circulation of protective and other Qi energies. The cliché that we hurt only ourselves with anger is in fact a physiological truth. Once the work of resolving resentments is underway, the choices



**BOB LIGON**

for diet and lifestyle factors should fall into place. Without this work, one tends to eat and live in ways that support the old, unresolved patterns.” (p. 47)

## **CONSTRAINT AND FLOW**

In Part I, circulation was presented as the foundation of health and healing, i.e., the bearing of blood, nutrients, micronutrients, and energy (life force) to the cells and transporting the byproducts of cell activity away from

the cells for elimination. Smooth and unimpeded circulation strengthens the immune system. Here, circulation will be a central idea as well, only now it will be specifically applied to the circulation of energy (life force).

To understand the workings of the immune system from the perspective of energy circulation, I use the concept of constraint and flow. Constraint can be anything physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual that is moving too slowly or is completely blocked.

How is constraint experienced? If you try, or desire, to do, say, think, feel, be, go toward, move, change or express anything and you feel impeded, blocked, frustrated, diminished or depleted in any way, that is constraint. Energy constraint can come from mental rigidity and arrogance, emotional resentments and disappointments, and spiritual conflicts. Examples are, anger at some perceived injustice, holding grudges, insufficient emotional and/or physical affection, paralyzing fears, doubts, or worries, tightness with money, emotional clutter and confusion, and crisis of spiritual beliefs.

Many, if not all of us, have experienced these kinds of energy constraint. Such constraint prevents the free flow of energy and blood. In this way, con-

straint that has an energetic origin can eventually become physically depleting and lead to pain, organ dysfunction, and the 10,000 diseases, as the sages would say. Constraint takes us out of the harmonious flow of energy in body, mind, and/or spirit and weakens the immune system leading to inconvenient or uncomfortable results. If constructively interpreted, such experiences can be understood as an alert that we are out of balance—information, if acted upon, that can save us considerable suffering.

Conversely, flow is the free, harmonious, balanced transformation of energy and blood. In contrast to constraint, flow is characterized by change, transition, transformation, flexibility, adaptability, fluidity, forgiveness, and gratitude. Choosing options that provide flow in life energy enable growth, development, health, and mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing. A constant state of flow may not be possible in the physical

world but we can get better at it, experiencing it to a greater degree, more frequently, and for longer periods of time.

### **DECISION MAKING**

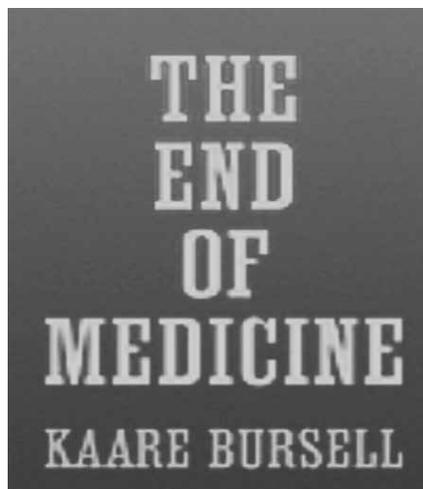
I will discuss the process of creating flow in more detail further on, but a word about decision making here is appropriate to understanding the role of constraint and flow with regard to energetic health.

We live in a relative world, a dualistic world. A concept of analysis like yin and yang is an example of our perception of dualism. All experience we encounter in the physical world is dualistic—a front and a back, an up and down, right and left, hot and cold. When making a decision, distill the complexity of choices down to an “A” or “B” choice—just two choices. If you reflect and think about “A” and “B” carefully, one of them will feel like constraint, one will feel like flow. The difference between “A” and “B”

may be very fine, but there will be a difference. Nothing in the relative world is exactly 50/50, just like yin and yang; there is always a preponderance of one or the other. So it is, that the preponderance of constraint and flow can be recognized between two choices. One option will have even the slightest edge of flow energy. Even, and especially, if the flow option flies in the face of practicality, acceptability, or ego desire, have the courage to follow the energetic truth that the flow option is the healthier choice. Much pain and suffering can be avoided.

### **PERSONAL TRUTH AND GEORGE OHSAWA**

I have observed that identifying the deeper truth and reality of a situation relieves energetic constraint and promotes flow. Indeed, the reluctance to acknowledge the truth of a matter is the most profound form of constraint. It literally chokes and even blocks the



**“A Macrobiotic Classic” – Michael Bauce; “Brilliant” – Christine DeRocher; “The Finest Book on Natural Healing I have read in 25 years of Chiropractic Practice” –JB Vaughan DC; “Learnt more in the first 20 pages than I have in two years of study” - student ; “I read your book very hungrily as your perception is so clear and rarely have I come across the understanding and intelligence that shines through in your writing. In that way, your book felt like a friend, a much needed friend, so thank you.-Penelope Bjorksten”; “The End of Medicine” is a beautiful book, in my opinion one of the more important books about macrobiotics written since Ohsawa” – Isobel Carr**

**Available at any online or regular bookstore or from  
<http://www.alchemycalpages.com>**

**Also I have available DVD's of talks I have given on Yin and Yang, Five Transformation Theory, Facial Diagnosis, Healing/Illness/Disease, Ginger Compress Demonstration. They are \$12 dollars each and run upward of 2 hrs For a complete list and discounts for a multiple order please e-mail me at [kaareb@mac.com](mailto:kaareb@mac.com)**

flow of energy and blood. Truth here is one's personal truth—what each of us knows in our heart to be true and right. It may not make sense to anyone else, but it doesn't have to, it is a truth that is personal and unique. I believe we ignore, deny, or deflect that truth at our peril. To deny one's truth is to constrain life force. And to knowingly constrain life force will give rise to the 10,000 diseases. This is the energetic view of health.

Furthermore, acknowledging personal truth is a way of communing with divine energy. When we connect with that divine energy we feel whole; we know our purpose in this life; we

---

*“Acknowledging personal truth is a way of communing with divine energy. When we connect with that divine energy we feel whole; we know our purpose in this life; we know we are on the path of our true destiny.”*

---

know we are on the path of our true destiny. Choices that align with this divine energy take the form of something we simply “can't not do.”

Framing a choice as something one “can't not do” is stronger than viewing a choice as something we “must do.” “Must do” implies some form of coercion or obligation—a choice we might resist, regret, and later attempt to change. “Can't not do” is utterly disarming and compelling. After much study, experience, and reflection, when we submit to the truth of a choice that we “can't not do,” our conscience is clear and our mind and spirit are free; and, all will come to good because that decision is derived from that which will always create

life—life force, divine energy. This is flow. A strong immune system is a facilitating side effect to this larger spiritual connection.

To my understanding, it is this kind of freedom that George Ohsawa was so intent on teaching to the world. Listening to Herman Aihara talk about his time with Ohsawa, what most impressed me was that Ohsawa taught people how to think, to develop good judgment. Ohsawa would lecture, pose questions to his students and would reward the response that came from individual original thinking. Even as Ohsawa taught the order of the universe, I imagine he charged his students to “See for your self.” To me, this is another way of talking about personal truth. See for yourself! What makes sense to you? What is it that you “can't not do” in life?

### **PERSONAL AND CLINICAL EXAMPLES**

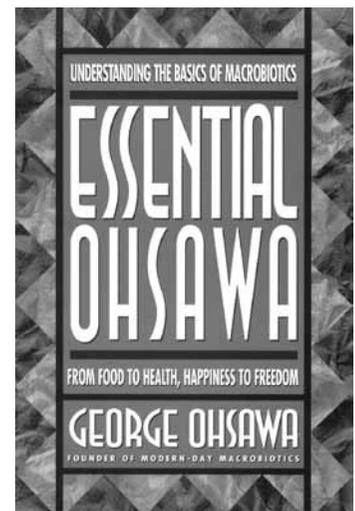
About 25 years ago when I was working at GOMF in California, I received a business proposition that would have required me to move to the Midwest. On the face of it, the proposition was appealing, but I had reservations. I continued to override those reservations as the constraint around the project mounted. A week before I was to move, I was surrounded by all my packed-up belongings in my apartment when I discovered that I was laying flat on my back on the living room floor. I couldn't move. Gravity (energy) was pinning me to the floor. And yet, I overrode that piece of information and continued with preparations to move. Three days later the engine in my car blew up. It would take three weeks to repair. Then, I finally got it. I called the person who made the offer and told him I couldn't come. Interestingly, when I finally “got it” I felt so light, relieved, like this had been the correct decision all along. It had just taken a little suffering to discover it.

Clinically, there are two examples of constraint that I often encounter.

**Discover what millions of men, women, and children around the world have found – the macrobiotic path to “Infinite freedom, absolute justice, and eternal happiness.”**

## **BEST SELLER**

**a must read**



**\$15.95 plus \$3.00 shipping  
= \$18.95**

**Essential Ohsawa is the most comprehensive look at Ohsawa's philosophy ever presented. In it, you will learn the essence of Ohsawa's teachings – the need for and methods of simple, natural eating and drinking; and the concepts of the Order of the Universe and yin and yang.**

**George Ohsawa  
Macrobiotic Foundation**



**PO Box 3998  
Chico, CA 95927  
800-232-2372 or  
530-566-9765  
530-566-9768 fax**

**[www.OhsawaMacrobiotics.com](http://www.OhsawaMacrobiotics.com)**

---

One is the reluctance to speak up. I see this tendency mostly in women. Migraine headaches, thyroid issues, and heart and respiratory problems are a few examples. This person continually stuffs her true feelings and thoughts creating a pressure cooker of resentment. Then one day, one of the above symptoms mysteriously and inexplicably appears.

Another example, exclusively in men, is prostate issues. I've worked with many cases of prostate symptoms or cancer over the years. In every case that I have encountered, the patient remarked on physical intimacy frustration. This is not to say that all men who experience intimacy frustration have prostate issues, but I have not seen a case of medically diagnosed prostate symptoms that did not have intimacy frustration as an accompanying experience.

## **ENGENDERING FLOW— STAGE 1**

I have identified three stages or processes that have been helpful in reducing the constraint and restoring the flow of energy—the flow of life and vitality. The first stage is recognition that constraint exists. This usually entails becoming aware of a long-practiced pattern of relating to the world. For example, I see many patients who report being harshly criticized as children, usually by a well meaning, but overbearing parent. Since virtually all children seek to gain approval from parents, enduring criticism and striving to please and remove that criticism becomes a motivation for many decisions and can set up a similar pattern in adult situations and relationships.

A patient, call her Jane, came in one day without any particular physical issue. Jane was actually quite healthy, fit, and athletic; however, emotionally she was a wreck. Her chief concern was that she was sad much of the time and prone to sudden bouts of weeping. Jane's partner had verbally abused her for a number of

years; specifically, that she was intellectually inferior because Jane only had a master's degree and her partner had a Ph.D. Eventually, both she and her partner destructively acted out and the relationship came to an end. Further investigation revealed that Jane had been involved in two other relationships with a similar outcome. The deeper truth that had eluded her was that she had been trained by her mother to be a pleaser when she was growing up and had not been given encouragement or praise as a teenager. Jane reported numerous instances from her childhood and adolescence when her mother had criticized her

---

---

*“I have identified three stages or processes that have been helpful in reducing the constraint and restoring the flow of energy—the flow of life and vitality.”*

---

---

with opinionated verbal abuse such as, “Wearing sporty clothes make you look plain, why don't you wear more attractive girl clothes.” As an adult then, Jane accepted verbally abusive behavior as normal, even as an expression of love. When she recognized that this pattern of verbal abuse was a constraint in her life, she was on her way to healing.

## **STAGE 2**

After a constraining pattern is recognized, the second stage is to garner the honesty to validate those perceptions. I have seen many people recognize a pattern of constraint only to trot out a sophisticated stream of rationales why the pattern can't or shouldn't be changed. Denial, deflec-

tion, defensiveness are the adversaries of honesty. Interestingly, I find that the more intelligent someone is, the more clever the denials and deflections. And truly, the only way to transcend such rationales is to unwaveringly focus on one's personal truth of a situation. Cleverness, denial, and illusion always and eventually yield to one's personal truth. I have come to understand that such truth, unique for each of us, is the direct connection to the divine that we all are capable of knowing. It is, in macrobiotic terms, the order of the universe.

Following the example above, when Jane honestly validated to herself that her partner's/mother's verbal abuse was opinion and not her own personal truth, she understood, for the first time, that her own personal truth was more important than her partner's/mother's opinion. This validation was an essential second stage in transforming constraint in to flow for Jane.

Now, we are ready to move on the third stage.

## **STAGE 3**

The third stage is likely the most difficult for most people, but also the most healing—always a front and a back. After recognition and honest validation of constraint, then it is time to take action. This is the time when one's longest held, deepest, and most upsetting fears will emerge. Those fears' job is essentially to prevent us from making change. We who are still in the physical world avoid change; we much prefer status quo. Change means we will have to give up something, but it also means that we get or create something new. Constant change in the universe is the one reality on which we can all agree. To change is to mirror the order of the universe, to align ourselves with Qi, prana, life force...that energy which only knows creation, always transforming, always moving, always growing, always evolving whether it is the workings of a single cell, our

consciousness, or the chemical transformations in a distant star.

Taking action means we must confront our fears and move through them. To allow fears to inhibit is to enable constraint. To push through fears guided by one's personal truth creates flow. Then we have the opportunity to reinvent ourselves with our own true, unique vision. Such change is beyond exhilarating. It is, in a spiritual sense, to know divine energy. In those moments of conscious true change we transcend the duality of the physical world and experience the oneness of all things—our personal energy streams unimpeded in consonance with Qi, prana, divine energy—the order of the universe.

In the example above, this meant that Jane had to speak up to opinionated criticism. It meant changing the dynamic of a primary relationship (partner, mother). It meant saying to her partner that she would no longer accept the opinion that she was somehow inferior and to her mother that, while she respected her views, her personal truth was different. Jane bravely faced the prospect of disapproval or withdrawal of love for the sake of living her personal truth. Indeed, she and her partner split up, but the relationship with her mother survived. As she reported these conversations, her face relaxed and she sat up straighter.

## ATTACHMENT AND WILL

I attribute the following thought to Buddhism, "Attachment is the source of all suffering." Which brings me to two final considerations. Taking action may mean that a long-standing situation will change. Anyone who has been in a long-term relationship knows how intertwined a relationship becomes and how daunting and fearful it is to change or dissolve that relationship; but, if that is where the truth of the matter takes you, then you can't not make the change. To knowingly continue to endure constraint may set the stage for the 10,000 diseases.

So when one takes action, one must exercise non-attachment. Release attachment to the consequences of your action. You must believe that action taken in truth and honesty will ultimately come to good because such change reflects and comes from the order of the universe and from the Qi, prana, divine energy that animates all life.

After all that has been said here, what everything turns on is the exercise of will; at some point we must make a decision and act. Change doesn't just happen; we must initiate it in our own unique vision, our personal truth. This requires clarity, courage, and force of will.

## TAKE HEART

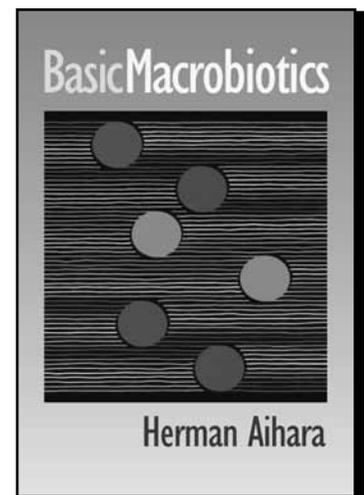
I'd be the first to admit that this is heavy stuff. But it only appears so because the action finally taken is redressing many years of accumulated constraint. As this process is integrated into how one relates to life and spirit, it becomes less disruptive and tumultuous. Integrating the energetic and physical dimensions of life is an effective way to strengthen the immune system and pave the way for health, wellbeing, and fulfillment.

---

*Bob Ligon worked at the George Ohsawa Macrobiotic Foundation and Vega Study Center from 1989 to 1993 and was an editor of Macrobiotics Today from 1992-2000 and is a lecturer and counselor at the annual French Meadows Macrobiotic Summer Camp. He studied acupuncture and herbology graduating from Pacific College of Oriental Medicine in San Diego in 1998. He integrates his knowledge of macrobiotics and Chinese Medicine in his diet, lifestyle counseling, and life coaching. Currently, Bob practices Traditional Chinese Medicine in Akron, Ohio and does counseling and life coaching by phone. He can be reached at 330-696-3385 for telephone appointments.*

**This book explains a macrobiotic diet and lifestyle from a nutritional perspective. The roles of protein, fat, carbohydrates, vitamins, and minerals are clearly presented in an easy-to-understand manner.**

## BACK IN PRINT



**\$17.95 plus \$2.50 shipping  
= \$20.45**

*Besides answering practical nutritional questions, Aihara discusses such issues as eating out, how to tell when you are balanced, the application of the principles of yin and yang to health, and the search for real meaning in life—the ultimate goal of macrobiotics.*

**George Ohsawa  
Macrobiotic Foundation**



**PO Box 3998  
Chico, CA 95927  
800-232-2372 or  
530-566-9765  
530-566-9768 fax**

**[www.OhsawaMacrobiotics.com](http://www.OhsawaMacrobiotics.com)**