

PK—a welcomed relief

By Linda-sky Emerson

Enough was enough. Enough of the kids' seasonal colds and allergies. Enough struggle with my husband's digestive problems, weight gain and sinusitis. And I had enough of my chronic fatigue and sleepless nights. It all came to a head on our twelfth wedding anniversary and a change was inevitable.

Tom and I ritually went to dinner to celebrate with heavy hearts. It wasn't that our marriage was falling apart; it was that we were discouraged with the family health problems which were costly and had not been resolved despite our visits to numerous specialists over the past five years. We both had lost confidence in the traditional Western drug treatment approach which gave no lasting relief for anyone of us. Then, as we both picked up our menus, an old acquaintance of mine from college entered the restaurant with her husband. They both looked great. Not great. They were glowing.

We invited them to join us. It turns out that they had just gotten back from a full day of some Ayurveda panchakarma (PK) treatments. I had read about Ayurveda years ago but overlooked the practicality of it for my family. Apparently, Marion and George both had had serious health issues that lingered even after intense allopathic therapies which, unfortunately, left them with unwanted side effects. They were very eager to share their experiences.

A radical ancient idea for a new conservative family—Marion put the napkin in her lap and leaned forward. "We never thought that we would find relief from an ancient system of medicine. But my niece, who is studying alternative medicine, actually convinced us to consult with an ayurvedic physician (vaidya)." I chuckled

because in college Marion was the most conservative thinker in our sorority.

George, a landscape architect, chimed in with a big smile: "Everything we read about Ayurveda and the panchakarma treatments made sense. And after the treatments, I was very impressed with the immediate results." Marion reached into her purse and pulled out the Ayurveda brochure. What started out as a heavy hearted anniversary celebration became a coming-together of old and new with hope for a healthier future for our family.

Making connections and reading the signs, –two days later Tom and I found ourselves consulting with an Ayurveda physician. My first impression was that the staff was very sincere. The vaidya welcomed us into his consultation room and by simply taking our pulse – with his three fingers – told us everything about our physical, mental and emotional condition. Tom's mouth dropped open. I just sighed with relief.

More interestingly, the vaidya identified the source from which our conditions developed. From that moment Tom and I knew Ayurveda was the right direction. The vaidya not only thoroughly educated us that day but made specific panchakarma recommendations for both of us. Since everyone in the family affects everyone else, he encouraged us to bring the kids in for an evaluation over the weekend, which we did.

The beauty of my panchakarma experience—It was only AMAZING. The first treatment was a warm oil full body massage (Abhyanga). The oil was prepared specifically for my body type. Its purpose is to move out impurities that had accumulated over the years in my soft tissue. As the two women technicians worked symmetrically, focusing on either side of my body, I began to feel invigorated.

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Next came, Shirodhara, a heated herbalized oil that was gently poured onto my forehead. As the oil slowly flowed, such a profound relaxation came over me that I lost all track of time. According to the vaidya, this treatment calms the entire body through the central nervous system by increasing the coherence of brain functioning. It's true. With the relaxation came a radiating harmony from head to toe.

Then, the most luxurious treatment was Pizichilli. Warm herbalized oil was poured all over my body by a technician, while another massaged me to further balance my nervous system. It was during this treatment that my body seemed weightless. I was floating in relief.

The finale for me was the Emotional Balancing Marma therapy. With the gentle application of aromatic oils at specific points on my skin, a refreshing breath passed through my body. I felt as though my chest was expanding, and my heart was rejoicing with the renewed feeling of love.

Since the PK treatments, I sleep like a baby and each day I feel more physically and emotionally energetic. Like George, I never thought that the effects could be so immediate.

Balancing Tom and the kids – Seeing the dramatic change in me, Tom eagerly followed. Unlike my prescribed three days of PK, Tom required more. His PK included four different treatments which addressed his specific imbalances.

Massages were given, to help Tom's weight reduction and to improve circulation, and also to restore muscle tone. Two male technicians first gave him a full body massage, Udvartana, with a flour and herbal paste. This mixture breaks down body fat, then, a gentle application of oil is applied as a finishing touch. Next, oils specific to Tom's body type were prepared for a deep vigorous massage (Vishesh abhyanga), which dislodged impurities in his muscle tissue.

Swedana, a steam treatment, was his favorite. With his body swathed in sheets, he bathed in herbalized steam to open up circulation channels so that the impurities could pass out through the skin. Meanwhile, a technician applied cool compresses to Tom's face and head to keep him comfortable.

After Tom's Nasya treatment, his whole facial expression had changed. He looked younger. The vaidya explained that besides cleansing the nasal and sinus passages, and nourishing the immune system, it enlivens all five senses and brain functioning. There are several steps involved: head and face herbalized oil massage, herbalized vapor facial and inhaled herbalized drops.

Tom is a man of few words, but after the treatments, he couldn't stop talking about how great he felt. As for our kids, all under age 12, the vaidya suggested a modified Swedana and a customized home Nasya. In addition, seasonal diet changes were prescribed to boost their immune systems. Since we followed the recommendations, we haven't seen a runny nose or heard one sneeze.

The value of living a richer life—It's simple. I came to understand that all Ayurveda modalities are for anyone who wants to come closer to living a balanced life. Panchakarma provides a systematic procedure that allows the natural tendencies of the body to eliminate physical and emotional toxins. At the same time, it enlivens the body's own healing intelligence. Tom and I now recognize the importance of maintaining balance and of preventing imbalance with seasonal PK purifying and pacifying rejuvenation therapies.

We connected with Marion and George again and met them for dinner to celebrate our renewed health and to show-off the glowing results.

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