

Health and Illness

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Version 1.1 (posted on 24 September 2019)

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I've noticed over the years that many gifted psychics and intuitives tend to be physically ill. This is not altogether surprising, since the same factors in astrology that indicate heightened emotional sensitivity (Neptune, 12th house, Moon, etc.) also reveal a vulnerability to illness. Intuitives or other highly sensitive people (HSPs) tend to be more "porous" than regular people; their antennae extend further, and their boundaries are not as clear or firm. They're not good at shutting things out, which may be part of their receptivity to realms that are less accessible to folks in the middle of the bell curve. In addition, some of the more gifted intuitives I know seem to be distinctly less self-centered than standard human animals. This manifests sometimes as a kind of spiritual self-transcendence, but just as often as an inability to live in the "real world" and take care of themselves. So perhaps some psychics are more prone to infection or simply have a more difficult time maintaining the integrity of their physical bodies.

The same apparent lack of vibrant health often applies to hospital workers and other institutional caregivers — nurses, psychiatric aides, social workers, etc. — especially those in positions of ongoing, moment-to-moment care of seriously ill patients. The percentage of these lower-level workers who are either overweight or physically debilitated in some other way seems striking to me. Of course, now that obesity is pandemic in America, my perceptions might be skewed.

The "glamour" professions in healing — doctors and "first responder" rescue workers — do not apply here, however. Western allopathic doctors are stereotypically somewhat removed from empathy with their patients. This may be because the rigors of their professional training amount to pre-selection from a different demographic of the population, namely, those who are personally ambitious, status-oriented, science-based, left-brained, competitive, and tremendously disciplined. Type-A personalities.

I recall back in the 1980s, shortly after the Life Extension craze hit, seeing an interview with the authors of one of the books that extolled the virtues of chemical enhancement to retard the aging process. The two scientists, whom I believe were in their 40s at the time and were also an intimate couple, had been taking a cocktail of supplements every day for years. They looked like they were in their 20s. Trouble was, they spoke and acted like they were in their 20s also. My impression in watching the interview was that, for their chronological age, these were two of the most vain and immature people I had ever seen. What

was the point of vital physical health if it meant remaining in a state of perpetual, arrested adolescence?

In that decade, I knew many people who were training in holistic health or already practicing — chiropractors, acupuncturists, massage therapists, etc. A small number of these folks were absolutely rabid about longevity. Because of all the great things they were learning about health and the disciplined care with which they approached their own wellbeing, they were sure they'd live to be 110. Some of them even boasted to me about it. Now, less than 40 years later, a large percentage of those people have succumbed to serious, chronic illness, and a smaller percentage are already dead. As far as I can tell, the proportions are about standard for typical illness and mortality rates based on age within the overall population. Apparently some of us were, like Ponce de León, searching for the mythical Fountain of Youth, with similarly disappointing results. And so it goes.

As indicators of longevity, good health and ill health are not nearly as straightforward as we might assume. Yes, large group studies do imply that vibrant health is linked to more satisfying if not necessarily longer life, and that ill health may contribute to an earlier demise. By contrast, however, we've all heard about the vital, healthy runner who dropped dead at 40, or conversely, the old crone who drank a pint of bourbon and smoked two packs of cigarettes every day and lived to 100. Science calls such stories "anecdotal data" and discounts them. The definition of an *anecdote* is "a short account of an interesting or humorous incident." In cosmic terms, then, we are all anecdotes. We may become statistics along the way, but we remain anecdotes forever.

Some people wonder if astrology can unravel the mysteries of health and illness for a given individual. Do natal charts reveal specific medical vulnerabilities and predispositions? Maybe, but not to me. I am not a medical practitioner, and I state on my web site that two specific areas are out of bounds in my work with clients: medical and financial advice. Oh sure, I know the basic textbook correspondences in natal interpretation around money and health, but I simply don't feel sufficiently authoritative with either subject to offer counsel.

That's not to suggest that I never talk about health with any clients. I do, but in a very particular way that's more philosophical than diagnostic. Some natal charts have no strong or obvious indications about health one way or another. Are those people likely to escape illness or accident? No. Damn near everyone breaks down over time, one way or another. Loss of vitality and function is an inevitable part of the aging process. For these people — whose charts are effectively neutral about health — getting sick is an ordinary part of human life in bodies. The implication I draw from that is that such people should do all they can to get well and stay well, but that's about as far as they need to take things.

The other category is natal charts that contain significant indicators of health-related experiences and issues — meaning chronic or debilitating conditions. Are these people likely to be ill more often and more seriously than those in the

neutral group? Probably, but not always. What I infer from their charts, however, is that health and illness are more meaningful as experiences in their life-journeys. Staying well or getting sick are not just random occurrences and shouldn't be dealt with as such. Instead, experiencing illness, pain, loss of function or freedom, etc. (in short, the entire range of physical, emotional, and psychological experiences associated with ill health) are part of that person's spiritual journey through life, especially through coming up with working answers to very human questions: Why did this happen? How did it occur? What does it mean? And how shall I deal with it?

It's as if the person needs to have the experience of illness to better understand what life means. I don't usually offer a specific metaphysical reason for this condition, such as past life karma, since I don't subscribe to any particular beliefs about life's mysteries. The closest I can get to a "reason" for my approach is to suggest that, in some of our lives, personal illness may be a spur to the development of greater empathy and compassion for the suffering that seems to be inextricably woven into life's fabric.

For some people, life is a continual challenge. Winning is important. For others, understanding is as important as prevailing. I'm not talking about surrender, here, but acceptance. Charts are really quite good at distinguishing those very different approaches to life.

Also, I note another specific possibility in charts with significant health concerns, one that I have seen in actual lives time and time again. If the chart indicates that illness and the suffering that goes with it are important dimensions of the life-journey, one way to fulfill that requirement is to become a care-giver. Perhaps it doesn't matter much who is sick or suffering, as long as the experience can be felt and understood. I wouldn't suggest that this alternative is a way to avoid getting sick — I doubt that any such easy insurance policies or get-out-of-jail-free cards exist — but I do feel that it's a meaningful and positive option.

If you have such a chart — I do — then perhaps service to others (6th house) or even transcendence through selfless devotion (12th house) are viable paths. Such approaches may not prevent illness in your own body or psyche, but they can be of inestimable help in making your life more meaningful.

Am I certain that this is an "accurate" or "correct" way to interpret charts? No, it's just what feels best to me. This is astrology as art, not science, and as meaning rather than fact.

All of which brings us full circle, back to where I began this commentary.