



Newspaper: **Woodford County Journal**

Date: **July 25, 1991**

Author: **Arlene Franks**

Photographer: **Arlene Franks**

## **County Woman Offers Holistic Health Approach to Clients**

Looking out at the ducks floating gently across Lake Eureka, Helen Cox, of rural Lowpoint, contemplates the misconceptions and controversy surrounding her work in the holistic health field.

"I don't mind people who are skeptical," she says. "I encourage them to ask questions."

Helen, a registered nurse, is the director of Options in Health and Education Center, Peoria Heights, which offers programs in integrative learning techniques and holistic health.

Simply put, holistic health is an integrative approach to health involving the physical, emotional and spiritual aspects of a person, according to Helen.

Most physical ailments, says Helen, also have emotional and spiritual components as well. Traditional medicine may treat the physical symptoms, but not deal with the underlying causes.

"All of us have beliefs and thoughts, which are limiting to ourselves and which we can be blind to until we are able to see them," says Helen.

These belief systems, when unexamined, lead to "reactive behaviors," or behaviors which we automatically display in a given situation which may not be healthy, she says.

For example, one of Helen's beliefs which led to reactive behavior is "life has to be hard work; work is virtue; value is determined by how much effort you put into something; miracles don't happen."

Now, Helen believes, "You don't have to work hard at everything you do-there's a balance."

Helen, who does not give medical treatment or diagnoses, sometimes uses guided imagery to help clients get at those underlying beliefs.

"Guided imagery, or meditation, helps to get at those underlying thoughts for some people," says Helen.

"Prayer is talking to God,' she says, "Guided imagery is God talking to you. It is a two-way communication. Often we forget the listening part, or we don't know how to."

In guided imagery, Helen and the client try to tap into the unconscious mind. For some clients, this triggers blocked memories of earlier traumas. If the client can get through the past traumas, Helen says, he or she can then deal with the root cause of the problem and then do "creative work" to establish health goals.

"We can't change facts of the past, even in guided imagery, but we can change perception of those facts," says Helen.



*Helen Cox of Washburn offers a different approach to health care using the principles of holistic medicine.*

For instance, if the perception is of stress, the recreation could be of healing and forgiveness, she says.

The client can get rid of such feelings as anger and resentment which lead to the reactive behavior.

The controversy over this method of healing stems from the perception that Helen and her colleagues lead clients away from traditional medicine.

Helen admits she came out of nursing school "angry." She saw patients come in over and over again for the same complaint, each time seemingly worse than before.

"Modern medicine does a great job of monitoring degeneration," she says. "What I want in holistic health is permanent healing."

Helen became interested in holistic health when she herself faced a health crisis several years ago. After her own healing, she began learning some of the techniques used in the field, such as iridology, reading a person's and eyes to determine problems in the body; and touch therapy, utilizing certain acupuncture points to release tension and even memory. There is a theory that memory is stored in the body and releasing tension in certain areas of the body can actually release blocked memories.

One Eureka client, who is an incest survivor, recognizes the validity of touch therapy in her work with Helen. Body work has been recognized for some time, by those who treat sexual abuse victims, as a way to release the pent up feelings associated with having been victimized, according to the client.

"Safe touch is so important when you've been touched inappropriately," says the client. "I feel really safe with her."

The client herself has experienced the recovery of significant memories which has helped her piece together, and work toward healing, her traumatic past, she says.

More recently, Helen has dealt with that initial anger she felt toward traditional medicine. Her husband, Ed, was involved in an accident and was taken to the emergency room.

Things have changed, since she was in nursing, she says, and the staff there were concerned about the whole person in the healing process. She says the staff was very attentive to her own needs as well.

"It was a beautiful experience, in a way, to see that and be more open and respectful" of traditional medicine, says Helen.

Helen is now trying to link up with other agencies in the area, including local hospitals, to pool resources and work in conjunction with one another.

One of her Eureka clients who came to Helen initially because of her difficult pregnancy with her second child, says she was able to tell her obstetrician and midwife everything she was doing with Helen and the three worked cooperatively together.

"My birth experience was very positive because I was prepared for it physically, emotionally and spiritually," says the client. "I know I was the one who prepared, but she was a real helper and guide to me in that process."

One Eureka colleague, a minister who also does pastoral counseling, affirms Helen's work and says it goes hand in hand with more traditional forms of healing.

"It is very appropriate to use those who are trained in medicine, but we still need to discover health within ourselves," he says. "No doctor can make us well if we're determined to be ill."

Her clients confirm that Helen helps them find healing for themselves. One says, "She helps you find the answers inside of you."

"By seeing Helen, I was responsible for my own health, rather than putting that responsibility on someone else," says another. "Helen doesn't tell you what to do. She gives you insights into a situation, some perspective you may or may not have thought about, but hadn't connected with the situation you're in."

Helen's use of such things as guided imagery, herb therapy and touch therapy call up, for many, images of new age philosophy as well as anti- and non-Christian tenets.

Helen, who recently joined a local church, sees a direct link between her work and her faith.

Through her work with clients, especially in the area of guided imagery, Helen says she is "renewing a beautiful relationship with Jesus."

In guided imagery, she asks clients to bring into the image, a higher source for them, whatever that source is. If they do not have one, she tells them, "Jesus is here with me. Would you like me to introduce you to him?"

"Some beautiful things have happened," she says, as a result of such an introduction.

She remembers making such a gesture to a man who was on the verge of a nervous crisis.

"I remember him crying when I told him Jesus was there," she says.

Her Eureka colleague sees Helen's work in healing as God-given. "I think she has special abilities in helping people envision that spirituality within themselves where the spirit of God dwells," he says.

"She does a lot of it intuitively through her own God-given gift which has come partly through her own struggle and pain," he says. "Instead of trying to avoid the pain, kill it or anesthetize it, she has moved through the pain to the presence of God."

Helen is following Christian tenants in her work, he says.

"Christian theology leads to the cross of Christ, which leads to the healing, reconciling and resurrecting power of God," he says, "It is not just a matter of getting physically better; it is making a connection to the kingdom."

Helen puts her work into a larger context, according to one client. When using a technique, which utilizes the unconscious, such as touch therapy, Helen will say, "I think there's a larger wisdom that knows what we need. We have to be tuned into it," according to the client.

"I think she wants to serve that [higher power]," says the client.

But when all is said and done, some people will continue to doubt the techniques used by Helen and her colleagues, and Helen knows that.

"It's not a method for everyone," says Helen. "If you can't accept or understand it, then perhaps it's not right for you. I can accept that."