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## HEALING OUTSIDE THE BOX

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Many of us don't realize how much of a role environment, emotional state and spirituality play in our current health status. Understanding these connections can be especially helpful during the peak of cold and flu season. To fully grasp this "cause-and-effect," it's a good idea to have a larger perspective on the following contributing factors to illness.

**Your Emotions:** The late psychologist Abraham Maslow, Ph.D., said that, aside from basic survival and safety needs, we possess an innate drive to belong, develop self-esteem and actualize our authentic selves. While it might seem that exposure to more people is an invitation for illness, a study found the exact opposite: According to the researchers, people with one to three social "roles," such as parent, child and friend, are more than four times as likely to get sick than those with six or more social roles. This may stem from the relationship between your immune system and the self-esteem you get from your interactions with others. The more positive social interactions you experience, the greater your self-esteem and the more you enhance your immune function.

**Your Spirituality:** Spirituality can be broadly defined as the things you hold important and sacred, and the relationships you form with others and with the world around you. Boundary setting is one of the most important aspects of spirituality; it is especially important if you want to create a meaningful and fulfilling life. The boundaries you set are codes of conduct relating to how you behave toward yourselves and others. For example, how you eat, work, exercise and live all reflect your individual boundaries. All of these actions have a profound effect on your health and sense of well-being.

**Your Bodily Environment:** Your body has both an internal and external environment of which you need to be mindful. Externally, the amount of noise, stress, pollution, weather and amount of exertion/work you do affects your health directly through your nervous and immune systems. Your body's chemical environment, for example, allows — or prevents — germs from finding a friendly home in your bloodstream. It is important to make the connection between how you craft your internal environment and what you eat and drink, how much you sleep, and what types of thoughts you have (positive or negative) each day.

There is no single cause of any health condition. Colds and the flu virus are multidimensional, because we, as human beings, are multidimensional. By understanding and applying the emotional, spiritual and environmental cause-and-effects of colds and the flu, you can keep them from affecting your life.

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