

People Need to Feel Heard and Understood

My research with cancer concluded that people lived longer because they felt listened to, cared for, and supported. I also discovered that the role of social support, communication and listening had been given decided support from psychologist, Dr. James Lynch. His more than thirty years of research demonstrated that people's cardiovascular and neuromuscular systems are directly affected by their communication.

Blood pressure rises (within 30 seconds) almost always 10-50% when people begin to speak. This is true for all people, healthy and unhealthy (except for schizophrenics). Blood pressure surges are greater while talking than when walking on a treadmill at maximal capacity! However, blood pressure drops rapidly when listening to others in a non-defensive way. This held true for deaf mutes using sign language, also. Their blood pressure increased just like all others, suggesting that it is not talking per se, but the act of communicating that's vital.

The key here is that when people feel heard and understood, their bodies respond in a far healthier way than when the conversation is not "heartfelt". When people speak without "heart", without any real feelings of connection to another, the cardiovascular data are very clear: They are at much higher risk for heart disease and premature death. Dr. Lynch believes that love and felt dialogue are essential for good health. His research concluded that people will search (unconsciously), to the point of physical exhaustion (death), to feel loved and understood.

Excerpted from *Why Love Heals* by Dean Shrock, Ph.D.