

The Mind, Body, and Soul Connection

In the classic science fiction movie, 2001: A Space Odyssey, an astronaut is hurled through space to an alien world. The enigmatic ending has the astronaut evolve into humankind's next phase of evolution, the Star Child. Resembling a fetus in the womb, the Star Child is more spirit or soul, and leaves the astronaut's body and travels back to Earth.

The director deliberately left the ending open to interpretation, but it is an example where science fiction agrees with religion.

Every major religion believes that the soul will depart the body upon death. Like the movie, a departing soul is the next stage of our evolution.

But, where is the soul located in the body?

Most of us would place the soul in the head or brain, since that is where most of our senses lie. Yet, one could argue that it is located in the heart. After all, that is where we seem to feel our emotions the most. It is the heart where we appear to sense both love and grief.

While the soul detaches from the body after death, it is bound to the body during life. But, what keeps the soul attached to the body? Why can't it leave the body before then? Many believe that the soul and body are connected, and effecting one will influence the other.

If we nourish our bodies with a good diet and exercise, and we sleep well and are healthy, we also generally feel better. Our attitude, outlook, disposition, and even self-esteem improve. Clearly, a nourished, healthy body affects our souls.

A damaged body over time will also affect our souls. Prolonged illnesses can negatively alter our personality over time. Even on a daily basis, when we are overly tired, in physical pain, or suffering from a cold or flu, we are often meaner, short tempered, or angry, because of our physical ailments.

Yet, the body is also distinct from the soul. Regardless how happy, fulfilled, or peaceful we may feel, we are still susceptible to physical ailments, which increase as we age.

Likewise, a damaged soul can influence our body. We can be in the finest shape of our lives, and feel energetic and refreshed. However,

anything that grieves our souls will also impact our physical well-being. Following the tragic death of a loved one, grief will negatively affect us physically. Sleep patterns, appetite, stamina, and possibly even blood pressure, heart problems, or pulse rate may all change.

Some patients turn to alternative medicines, seeking a cure through the mind-body connection. I know a lifelong smoker who went to a hypnotist for his smoking addiction. The hypnotist convinced his mind to cease smoking, and his body responded. Incredibly, without any changes to his body, he never smoked again. His body was addicted to smoking cigarettes, yet he was cured of his addiction through his soul.

And yet, the soul is equally distinct. Regardless of our body's condition, wonderful personal relationships filled with joy and love enrich our souls. Visit a loved one in a hospital or a nursing home, and watch their spirits rise despite their physical ailments. For many people, a deep belief in God also nurtures their soul.

There is a greater emphasis on the mind-body connection today in health care. Providers now understand that the soul and body nourish each other. Treat one and it can have a direct impact on the other.

Where are the mind and body connected? Why can't the soul just leave the body at any time? Unless we are transported to an alien world like the astronaut in the aforementioned movie, we will just have to wait for our own demise before we discover the answer to those questions. And perhaps, that is when our greatest journey will begin.

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