

December 2014

Greetings:

For those of you new to my practice, I send an annual letter to update you about the particulars of this year's winter schedule and any changes in my office policies. I often use this opportunity to discuss other relevant topics. To pursue my growth work, I make a firm commitment to spending a total of eight weeks a year out of the office usually between January and May. My absence for eight continuous weeks is difficult for both of us. Over the last several years, I have been dividing my time away into five weeks away, four weeks back in the office, and a final three weeks away. When I started practicing over twenty years ago, I was routinely out of town for eight weeks. I would not have been able to do this, as many of you know, without the help of Dr. Kass who kindly covered my practice while I was away. Due to family circumstances, in the last few years I have not been out of the area, except to attend medical conferences. Last year, I "covered" for myself during the three week break. I thought it went well. I have decided, barring a change in my family's winter plans, to try covering for myself during the entire eight weeks.

What does this mean? Please call me (**only**) at my office number (607) 754-3646 with any concerns, prescription refill requests, or if you are in need of an acute visit. In other words, I will be providing the same service that Dr. Kass did. As per usual, I will leave all pertinent information on my answering machine voice mail. January through May is not the best time to use the # key on the phone to skip my greeting message. During those four months, I advise you to listen to just the beginning of the message and, if it's the same, then skip the rest with the # key. For those of you in the habit of texting me and/or leaving cell phone messages, I will not be available on that number 760-0200 during my eight weeks off.

Speaking of regular voice mail, this is a prime moment to remind you I always try to return phone calls promptly, usually within 24 hours. If you call me and I do not return your call within 24 hours, please assume a technical error and call me again. This will be true during my eight weeks off as well. Be SURE to leave your current call back number on your repeat message. Thank you so much as this will help me enormously.

My Schedule for 2015: I will begin my five weeks out of the office on Sunday, January 18th and return to the office on Tuesday, February 24th. I will be holding regular office hours from Tuesday, February 24th through Saturday, March 28th. I will be out of the office again for three weeks starting Sunday, March 29th returning Monday, April 20th.

To keep pace with increased operating costs, I will continue my annual practice of increasing my fees \$5/session with the exception of the 75-90 minute session which will increase \$10/session. The fee schedule for 2015 will be as follows:

A 20-25 minutes session will be:	\$145.00
A 45-50 minutes session will be:	\$200.00
A 75-90 minute session will be:	\$295.00
A 90-120 minute group therapy will be:	\$140.00

My five weeks off will be very busy! I will be attending two conferences and working on several projects that need my attention. My first project is to finish my website! I hired a website designer and thought I would be able to announce the opening of the site in this letter. My designer finished his part in late October. You may wonder, so why isn't the website done? My designer is waiting for me to submit the revised written portions and contact each supplement company. Which would I rather do, see you and attend more medical conferences or revise sections for my website. Clearly, I have been procrastinating. I am planning to allocate time in February to complete my part.

I want to have a website for you to be able to gain information and order your supplements. I want to post articles, links, etc., which I find interesting or pivotal, making it easier for you to access information we have discussed in session. I will also post past newsletters and tools. As you know, I have always sold the highest quality (GMP)

supplements at wholesale prices, with no minimum order, shipping costs, etc. It is a staggering amount of work for me that I don't always allow myself to acknowledge because I am conflicted. My conflict has been this – should I spend less of my time and energy and risk your ability to purchase affordable, impeccable quality nutrients. It means a lot to me to empower you to obtain the best and not spend your hard earned pennies on inferior or dangerous products. When I launch the website, you will be able to order from excellent companies, of course only those which meet my exacting standards, whenever you wish. The price will be 10% above wholesale to offset the monthly operating costs of the website. This “store” will be private and only available to you and your family – access is password protected.

My second project: You have heard me discuss at length changes I have had to make in the last two years to my office policies due to new Federal or New York State regulations in medicine. I am hopeful that bad news (for us) comes in threes! The newest change starts in March 2015. All prescriptions must be electronic. Therefore, a less pleasant task I will be working on over my “break” is to research, purchase, and learn to use a program for electronic prescribing.

What does electronic prescribing mean for you? On the positive side, it means no paper script to lose, possibly less wait time at your pharmacy, etc. On the negative, you must tell me when I prescribe for you where you want to fill the prescription. If your insurance is already proscriptive, then you won't have much change. For others, this law takes away some of your freedom — you cannot decide it's more convenient to use a different pharmacy after the script has been sent.

If after our session you need to fill your prescription at a different pharmacy, you will have to call me. I will listen to your message, pull out your chart, record the change in destination, go on line and send a new electronic prescription. This sounds very time consuming to me. I shall ask you to think through exactly where you want the script sent and when it will be refillable before your session. To help motivate you, I am going to institute a \$25 “ouchie” resend fee. Naturally, I don't charge to resend if I made an error.

As in prior years, if any session fee increase or prescription fee causes you significant financial hardship, please do not hesitate to let me know.

Many of you wonder what I have been learning/working on over the last year. Two years ago I increased my pace of studying of Functional Medicine. (For those of you new to my practice, I am a grateful, humble student in the Institute for Functional Medicine -- IFM. To me, functional medicine is “better medicine.” I invite you to read IFM's articulate description illuminating functional medicine. To do so, please go to functionalmedicine.org.) In order to become an IFM board certified practitioner, I took the board review class last February. I spent my three week break studying hard for the written part of the boards which I took in April of 2014. (The case report had to be submitted by December of 2014.) I am proud to share that I passed both parts of the boards and did very well. At this point, I feel I have metaphorically “graduated high school” in understanding and implementing functional medicine principles. One of my colleagues who took and passed the boards when I did was asked “What does board certified in functional medicine mean?” She answered, “I don't know but I'm proud of it.” I feel I know what it means for my patients. My IFM faculty have created a curriculum, heuristic, and standards of practice to promote optimal wellness. I feel that I took the board exam to consolidate my knowledge and to do an assessment of my progress. In the review I learned the most updated information that functional medicine is teaching. I plan to attend the IFM annual symposium which is on genetics!! I can't wait.

I am even contemplating attending the week-long foundation course applying functional medicine in clinical practice (AFMCP). Functional medicine works tirelessly to update and streamline their work, and I want to stay fresh and current. Why would I spend so much time and money to do this? Because you are a soul and a lovely spirit walking through life in your human body — I want to have the knowledge and wisdom to take the very best care of all of you.

One of the central messages in functional medicine is “food first.” The evidence is staggering and compelling. In many ways, you are what you eat. I listened with great interest to IFM's discussion on which diet is the best — nicknamed the “diet wars.” The take home is that the diets have a lot in common. ALL advocate the consumption of copious amounts of vegetables in different rainbow colors. Try to eat locally grown and organic when possible.

Avoid processed food, trans fats. Some say drink coffee, tea, and alcohol in moderation. Ironically, what is good for you is also good for the planet. In writing this newsletter, I want to remind you that the molecules in food are information. You can alter your health destiny by your choices of what and how you nourish yourself.

Recently, the word that keeps echoing in my mind is maintenance. I have been intrigued by the concept and applicability of the idea “maintenance.” To set the stage, let me state that I am innately a “people person.” For those of you who know about Myers-Briggs personality testing, I am an off the chart ENFJ. I LOVE science. (This came as a major shock to my high school self.)

So, back to maintenance. I was thinking about the second law of thermodynamics, which I roughly understood as saying any system you don't put energy into will fall into disrepair (lose energy). When I look at my kitchen, car, or office, I can clearly see that if I don't put energy into straightening, fixing, etc., it will quickly become disordered! I looked up the second law of thermodynamics on Wikipedia and found they gave more intricate, wonderful science and explanations. In one dictionary, I came across a definition I sense is more approachable: entropy can be defined as a lack of order or predictability; gradual decline into disorder. Thus the saying or joke, “entropy happens.” How is that relevant to maintenance? We have been talking about “food first” or wiser “nutrient flow” to alter our health destiny for the better. Do you personally feel you “know” some wiser health choices for yourself that are often difficult to implement and even more so to maintain? (ex: improve sleep, increase vegetables/rainbow, add more movement/exercise, de-stress, meditate, decrease processed food and sugar, etc.). We could posit entropy (you need to keep putting energy in) as the explanation as to why it can be hard work to maintain wise choices.

To me, that explanation is not sufficient to explain the difficulty. I have been thinking about another dimension—the emotional/spiritual one. Many people live a life without enough love, kindness, magic, freedom, or “sparkle.” The temptation we feel when unhappy or trapped is to reach for magic. (We have spoken of this in prior newsletters—under the topic of fight, flight, or freeze and discussions of our inner child.) In reaching for magic, we leave the world of valuing self-reliance, common-sense, and competence. We lose the “Zen” wisdom of “eat your rice and wash your bowl.” We have eating as “good” and the prep/cleanup as “bad.” We often turn “washing our bowl” into a chore, a task, a degradation and loss of magic. An antidote to this dichotomy might be to do gratitude work in the moment. For example, focusing on all we can be grateful for in having rice, dishes, two functioning hands, running water, hot running water, perhaps a dishwasher, soap, a home, etc. A few minutes of grateful reflecting can change the discordant valence to a positive one.

I have been thinking that self-care inconsistencies as possibly a symptom of feeling we have lost our magic and can't find our spirit. Thus, we make a seamless act of wisdom and gratitude into one of servitude. So how not to resent or avoid the “maintenance” trap? Practice mindful gratitude and compassion for yourself and others. I envision gratitude as a skill or talent. Any talent must take practice and, well, maintenance. Choose to feel proud and resilient when you practice maintenance without resentment or procrastination. I am amazed at how little attention positive habits get in our everyday consciousness. We tend to focus on and lambast ourselves for our lapses and poor habits. I advocate you add to your self-talk, acknowledgment of whatever you do well and wisely. This realization will help promote self-respect. And practice gratitude.

I like to send a suggestion/tool in an enclosure with your newsletter, one that you can use all year. This year in the interest of enhancing scientific knowledge, self-knowledge, self-respect, and gratitude, I am enclosing two functional medicine tools to help you with working toward “rainbow” in your nutrient flow. Try to eat from each “color” every day. A serving is a half cup. Try for 9 - 11 a day. Consider adding one item of a different color and a vegetable is a wiser choice than a fruit. Check ewg.org for the clean 15 and dirty dozen in fruits and vegetables.

(I chose the phrase “nutrient flow” instead of diet because that has become a dangerous, emotionally laden word for some.) The word diet can also get in the way of communicating an intent to eat mindfully. Please, always remember you are a soul on a journey in an amazing human body. You are worthy of love and joy, powered by delightful nutrients!

With Love and Best Wishes for Your Healthful Journey,

Nina Pesante, MD