

Migraine: Pain of the Body, Cry of the Spirit addresses deep-seated, underlying origins of the migraine problem as a misalignment of body-mind-spirit. Included are practical tools: the seven-day mental diet; proven meditation techniques; therapeutic journaling; and other migraine prevention approaches.

Migraine: Pain of the Body, Cry of the Spirit

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MIGRAINE

Pain of the Body, Cry of the Spirit

*A Personal Guide to Healing and Preventing
Migraine Headaches*

Marian Frances Ordway

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Chapter 1
The Cloud That Lifts

I was with my family on a social visit. I think we had been invited for dinner. The migraine that had been hanging around most of the day now was moving rapidly into high gear. I knew I had to get home soon, first to get to my bottle of Fiorinol (a painkiller), and then to prepare the children for bed, and get myself into bed for what promised to be another bout of 48-hour agony. This was no small headache. It was what I termed “full-blown.”

I knew from experience what lay ahead. In the days, months, years preceding this, the kind of pain I was feeling typically lasted two days on one side of the head. Then there would be a day of clearance in between, followed by a migraine attack on the other side of the head. A Double Whammy.

I worried about the amount of painkilling pills I had left. *Would I have to call my doctor for a refill of the Fiorinol prescription? Would I even be able to make that call?*

I had one pill in my pocket, but I wanted to save it, to take it in conjunction with another Fiorinol for best effect. Everyone was having such a good time, but I had no choice. I announced to my husband and children, and our hosts, that we had to go, that I was getting one of my headaches, and I had to get back to my own house.

One of our hosts, whom I shall call Martin, took a long, compassionate look at me. I just shook my head. “I’m sorry,” I said. “I know it’s early yet.”

“Listen,” said Martin, “I don’t know if this will help, but I think I can try to do something about that pain. I have a way of helping people with their pain sometimes. Sort of a massage. It’s not something I tell many people about, and I can’t guarantee anything, but if you’d like to give it a try...”

His wife nodded. “He’s pretty special,” she said. “Martin has this gift. Like he says, it’s not something he talks about or wants blabbed to the neighbors, or even to people in his family.”

I assured them both that I would keep it to myself.

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She encouraged me, “Go ahead, I’ll keep an eye on the kids.” Everybody but Martin and I left the room.

“OK, what do I do?” I asked Martin. I was desperate. I was also skeptical. *But*, I reasoned, *maybe I should just get this massage, relax a little, and then get home to my drugs.*

Martin told me to stay still on the sofa where I had been sitting. He stood directly behind me and told me to close my eyes and just breathe in and out. He put one hand on my head, near where the pain was centered. He placed his other hand loosely at the back of my neck. Unlike other people who had worked on my neck and head to try to relieve my pain, Martin did not probe pressure points or massage my skin. He said quietly, “Keep relaxing, keep breathing. This will take about five minutes or so.”

Nothing much happened. Everyone went on their business around us in the other rooms of the house. All I felt from Martin was a very slight shaking in the hand that was centered on the nape of my neck. Although wide awake, I felt more and more relaxed, and my mind began to wander off.

After a few minutes the strange massage was over. Martin went off somewhere, perhaps to the kitchen. I opened my eyes, felt my head still throbbing. Pain briefly pierced me in the eye.

It was a nice try, I said to myself. *But now it’s time you got yourself home to your pills. Something you know will at least dull the pain and put you to sleep.* I gathered my things to leave, signaling to my family that it was time to go.

“Did it help?” asked the hostess.

“Yes,” I lied. “The pain seems to have gone down a bit.” I didn’t want to be impolite. I even managed a half-smile. In truth, though, I couldn’t wait to get into the car, to get home. I felt sorry for myself. And I was deeply disappointed. One more therapy that didn’t work. This pain was bigger than everybody and everything.

Martin and his family kissed us all goodbye. I thanked Martin. He sort of shrugged it off, saying, “I hope you’re feeling better.” He was sort of a shy person. Doesn’t like too much attention focused on him. Never did.

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Silently we drove home. It was a short ride—15 minutes at most. I must have fallen asleep in that short time. I remember waking up back at the house and saying, “You know what? I think I’m feeling a little better.”

I felt like lying down on the sofa. Before doing so, however, I opened the high kitchen cabinet where I kept my Fiorinol handy, and looked hard at the prescription bottle. *Should I take two pills anyway?*

I closed the cabinet, deciding against the drug. I headed for the couch. I was beginning to feel better and better. *What was going on?* I asked myself.

Physically, it felt as though a cloud was lifting off my head and gradually moving off and away, like a giant storm system carried out to sea by the wind.

This healing I was experiencing was unlike anything that had ever happened to me. *If there is a miracle, I told myself, I want to know it completely. If I get through this without drugs, I will know this miracle is true and fantastic.*

I fell asleep. My dreams were pleasant, not frenetic as migraine dreams sometimes are. Two hours later I woke up, aware that I felt no pain whatsoever. I felt tired but refreshed. The first thing I did was cry, I was so happy.

I went through a thousand emotions and as many scenarios of doubt. *If I move, maybe it will come back.* It didn’t. *If I dare to believe this migraine is gone, maybe I will get another one next on the other side of my head.* But that did not happen.

When I checked my face in the mirror, I saw nothing but serenity. A beautiful sense of relief washed over me.

I called Martin right away, overcome with emotion, and gratitude. I told him that the pain was completely gone. He told me he was glad, and that I could call him if it ever got that bad again.

“You don’t know what this means to me,” I said. I felt sort of dependent on him, guessing that I might have to call him again in the future. But underneath everything, I knew that a connection had been made on my behalf. If a five-minute laying on of hands could cure the worst, most dangerous pain I knew, then there was a way through

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pain. A non-medical way through. Something that I knew very little about. But something that I could testify to, with complete faith and conviction.

I knew that energy—perhaps electrical energy—was involved. Beyond that I knew nothing. Martin himself would not discuss the subject. He made it clear that it was a private matter. And I respected his wishes. I did not probe. After all, he was a quiet family man, a working man, a former helicopter pilot who flew rescue missions over VietNam.

Above all, he was a man of infinite compassion. He gave me the initial inspiration to learn more about the energy of migraines, and helped me find the courage to learn to heal myself.

I called on his help in only two subsequent circumstances (once at 11:30 P.M.). In truth, I wanted to call on him many more times than that, but I was afraid he would think I was intruding on his private life. I continued to suffer from frequent migraines, always drugging myself to get through them. In these two particular instances, though, I called Martin as my last resort. On these occasions, even heavy medication had made no dent in my pain, and I was severely nauseous. I was very, very sick. I was prepared to check into the hospital if his efforts failed.

In retrospect, I have considered that perhaps I needed to go through these crisis experiences, to prove to myself once and for all that a simple laying on of hands, done by the “right” person, was enough to lift the worst type of pain. As before, the treatments worked. Shortly thereafter, putting aside my last shred of skepticism, I turned in earnest to discover what this phenomenon was all about.

I began my journey of self-healing. Incredibly, once I decided to learn about the energy that lifts off pain, I immediately began to meet people that could help me on each step of the journey. Books that guided me along were simply handed to me. If I envision my journey as something painted on a game board—like Candyland or Monopoly—the first square to land on would definitely be labeled Blind Faith. Blind faith in a light touch/massage method that completely baffled and amazed me.

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What Martin does cannot be packaged. It is difficult enough simply finding the English words to express what he does. However, I have discovered that the essence of what he does, as it relates to healing energy, is present within every human being. Furthermore, this ability can be explored and developed on one's own using a variety of tools and techniques. The process is fascinating, challenging, and, in my opinion, lifesaving.

With sincere and devoted commitment, theoretically, anyone can claim access to his or her physician within. The following chapters describe critical aspects of the process involved with becoming an agent of your own healing.

Two Exercises for the Record

#1. Record Your Migraine Treatments

In your BEING Journal, set aside some pages where you can record all the types of treatments you have undergone and sought for your migraines. It's important to be able to refer to what you tried in the past, and over how many years. Leave lots of blank space, since it's unlikely you'll recall all the treatments (drugs, hot and cold showers, acupuncture, sumatriptan injections, homeopathic remedies, etc.) all at one sitting. Jot the treatments down as you remember them so that you can build as accurate a medical history as possible. Also, record (if you can remember) when migraines have bothered you the most in the past, starting from when they first began.

#2. Record Your Migraine Headache Healings

In your BEING journal, set aside a separate section of blank pages where you can record any memorable healing experiences which resulted in your migraine being completely healed more quickly or more completely than usual. Start out by discussing how long it typically takes for a migraine to heal using no painkiller, using painkilling medicine or even a combination of medicines (list approximate dosages), using a prescription migraine drug (spray,

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injection, pill), and so on. Continue on by noting any other types of healing experiences—describing what happened, how much time was involved, and your feelings about the event.

Chapter 2

Mystical Migraine

Migraine can be such a terrible phenomenon, with its pain and unpredictability, that some migraine sufferers—even though they genuinely want to know more about migraines—will find it hard to get past the front cover of this book. The slightest reminder of migraine makes them feel sick. To them, migraine is a *terror-ble* thing. Deep fright kicks in when migraine strikes. Intense fear is at hand.

One way to begin conquering a fearful thing is to examine it closely, and deal with it directly. For example, if you have a fear of dogs, perhaps from a childhood encounter with just one vicious dog, it is possible to get a handle on that fear by raising a puppy to adulthood. Your dog becomes familiar. Its mystery is gone. The master is now you, not the beast that inspired fear.

Likewise, *terror-ble* headaches demand to be taken apart and looked at very closely. Instead of running away from the phenomenon, each of us must boldly explore what migraine really is, for each individual sufferer, and try to identify its various properties and even its possible merits. We must finally consider that migraine is more than a hateful experience. This is not to say that we must embrace migraine but rather that we must put it under our personal microscopes and view it as best we can.

Moreover, since only migraine sufferers really know what's going on when an attack hits, they should be the ones telling everybody else what migraine is or is not—remembering, of course, that each person feels it differently.

The word migraine comes from the Latin words *hemi*, meaning “half” or “one side” (as in *hemisphere*, one half of the globe), and *crania* meaning “head.” In migraine, half of the head is affected, and pain is distinctly located on either one side or the other. The ailment is described from ancient times, so we know it is not a modern phenomenon.

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In medical terms, migraine is a physiological reaction that causes blood vessels to swell, putting painful pressure on tissues around the brain and on head and neck muscles. It is sometimes preceded by distortions in vision and speech, which is referred to as an 'aura.'

Since migraine involves the blood vessels, it is classified as a vascular disease. When the migraine begins, typically there is first a sudden constriction, or narrowing, of the blood vessels in the head and neck. This brief phase is followed by a sharp swing in the opposite direction as the blood vessels then dilate, or open out widely, touching sensitive nerve endings and inflicting intense pain.

The constriction phase is when some migraine sufferers experience an aura. Depending on the individual, you might see blinking or flashing lights, jagged lines, and other visual disturbances, or have some temporary blinding. You might also experience some numbing of the face, mouth or hands, and find yourself unable to express yourself clearly in speech. An aura may occur before a migraine, but not necessarily each time one is experienced. When an aura occurs without the painful headache, it's called a migraine equivalent.

Other symptoms of migraine, which can be as difficult to handle as the pain itself, include nausea, vomiting, general malaise (feeling poorly), and confusion. In many cases the sufferer finds herself/himself unable to bear ordinary light and sound. Sunshine and office lights are painfully bright, to the point where an ordinary washcloth covering the eyes can be inadequate: any light at all sears into the eyes, furthering pain. Sometimes only a black cloth draped over the eyes will help eliminate eye discomfort. Sounds are horribly amplified so that a whisper across the room is clearly heard and is received by the ear as if it were spoken aloud.

Further symptoms: For years I also experienced clogged sinuses while in migraine mode, and had frequent urination. During the aura phase, I found myself unable to concentrate and I was unusually clumsy. Since those conditions can exist without signaling the onslaught of a migraine, I frequently had to rely on other indicators to be sure I should treat myself with a migraine-prevention

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drug. For there are certain medications—the ones containing ergotamine, such as Cafergot, Bellergeral, etc.—which can head off a migraine attack if taken in the aura phase just before the headache pain hits. In my experience, there were only about 20 minutes' worth of warning time.

I discovered that one sure migraine indicator was a certain crackly feeling at the back of my neck. Also, clumsiness resulting in pain served to clue me in. I have been known to walk into closed doors, not connecting mentally that the door was not open, or walls and doorjambes while aiming to get from one area of the house to another; then several minutes later, I found myself with migraine pain. Over time, I began to take my medicine faithfully whenever such blatant lapses of kinesthetic sense—my awareness of my body's position in space—occurred.

Migraines are dangerous. Not only can they link up with depression and other serious psychological states, but medical documentation shows that people who get migraines run a higher than normal risk of suffering from stroke. (And a smoking habit really ups the ante.) Medical professionals are very concerned about that fact. Gynecologists, for example, are reluctant to prescribe birth control pills for patients who suffer from migraine. According to Dr. Judith Reichman, whose article (September, 2005) on migraines and birth control pills can be found online, women who get auras preceding migraine may be more susceptible to stroke if they go on the Pill. (Refer to <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/9493518>.) She writes, “If you have a migraine with aura, don't use birth control pills before consulting a headache specialist. And under no circumstances should you take birth control pills if you smoke and have migraines of either type”; those types are no-aura migraine and aura-related migraine. (More information on auras follows.)

Prudent doctors conduct thorough examinations and tests with their migraine patients, including tests that would reveal an underlying cause based on head injuries, diseases, brain tumors, aneurysms, or what have you. I know migraine sufferers who have been through every battery of test there is: EEG, EKG, CAT scans, and so forth. And for good reason. A severe headache, or frequently

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recurring headaches, can signal a dire emergency or even impending death.

But the majority of migraine sufferers are eventually not ruled to be in a crisis situation. They are given medication to control their symptoms, and go back to their doctors for periodic checkups.

If the headaches keep coming back, after all serious disease states have been ruled out, doctors usually counsel their patients to reduce stress. They continue to prescribe a variety of different drugs and medical therapies in an effort to alleviate their patients' suffering. The treatments meet with varying degrees of success, depending on the individual patient. To treat migraine that strikes during menstruation, for example, some doctors have tried prescribing calcium channel blockers (drugs used to control high blood pressure) and beta blockers, blood pressure medications that women take for a certain number of days prior to their period. Doctors also prescribe a nasal spray medication that is designed to reach the pain faster. They may prescribe three medications for chronic migraineurs: a preventive pill for the aura phase, a painkiller for those headaches that charge on past the aura and become full-fledged monsters, and a suppository to control nausea from the painkillers or the migraine itself. In recent years, medicines have been developed to specifically target menstruation-related migraines.

There are no statistics regarding the cure rate from migraines. What we do know is the suffering rate: Some 24 to 26 million Americans keep on getting migraines. The world rates may approach 200+ million. We also know that more women than men suffer from migraine, experiencing three times as many migraines as men. The medical literature reports that boys in puberty may get migraines for a few years, then never (or rarely) experience them again. Many, many women report that the headaches often precede or accompany menstruation. Sometimes the incidents disappear or happen less frequently after menopause. Children can get them. And migraines seem to run in the family, indicating a genetic predisposition.

People with migraine have highly individual histories related to the disease. I believe it is important to value everyone's individual experiences, and not to discount them in any way. In the past, doctors

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were openly skeptical about the aura phase, describing visual disturbances that their patients had as “illusions” or “hallucinations.” There was much veiled doubt on the part of physicians as to the realness of the migraineur’s expressed experience.

In recent decades, however, there have been great advances in the study of headaches, including migraines. Doctors know, finally, that their patients aren’t “seeing things” but are actually experiencing sensory disturbances relating to physiological changes (involving chemicals, blood pressure, and so forth) in the body’s internal system.

Nonetheless, the migraine experience is still mysterious, and little understood. It is at once fascinating and it is frightening because it still falls outside the realm of the tangible or measurable.

There is no question in my mind that migraine experiences can involve strange lights and sounds and wooziness and weird dreams and all sorts of interesting phenomena. My mother used to report seeing lights go popping on and off: “It’s like when you take a flash picture in an old Kodak camera,” she said. Symptoms like these were traditionally downplayed by the medical establishment.

To my way of thinking, if you report that you see blinking lights, then it is true that you see blinking lights. You do not “sort of” see them, you actually do see and experience them with the visual capability at a given time.

Likewise, if you see something out of the ordinary, such as all kinds of colors flashing in front of you on the road as you are driving, then you are not seeing an illusion, but you are actually experiencing colors flashing. Your experience is real to you, no matter how it is perceived by doctors or friends or others. In other words: *It is time to accept your migraine experience exactly as you know it to be.*

Above all, migraine is characterized by heightened sensitivity. What does that mean for a migraineur? Face it: you are a sensitive person. Accept this truth about yourself once and for all. Respect it. Absorb it. Give it thoughtful attention.

Next, allow yourself to take this sensitivity aspect a step further. You don’t have to look far to see that there is an enormous realm of mystical events connected with migraine, and, interestingly, these events often take place right in the middle of the worst pain.

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Migraineurs have extraordinary tales to tell, if prompted to do so, for the world of migraine is made up of far more than its tortuous image suggests. Migraineurs have been known to see and experience all of the following: vivid visions and amazing dreams; brilliant ideas; business and political schemes both fantastical and practical; the answers to problems long-unsolved; flights into the past and future; and the beginnings, middles and ends of intensely creative works of art such as paintings, films, poems, dances and even art forms not yet revealed on this planet.

Some migraine people utilize their visions consciously. They say afterwards, "Gee, I have this great plan I'm going to work on." Others are completely frustrated by not being able to remember all the complex detailing that seemed so easy while they were in the throes of the migraine. Still others dismiss all that as machinations of the mind, and tell their spouses or friends, "I had some crazy thoughts while I was sick. But don't worry, I'm okay now." They rarely convey such information to their doctors, fearing, perhaps, that it does not hold any worth, and that it is not believable.

Think for a minute, though, about the case of one famous migraineur: Lewis Carroll. Had Carroll not "believed" what he saw in his many migraine-related visions, *Alice in Wonderland* might never have been written. Consider, too, that what can seem very wacky in the bright daylight of the rational, physical world—by wacky I mean the idea of a full-sized girl following a talking rabbit down the world's deepest rabbit hole—can, over time, come to be accepted as a masterpiece. It can be a Disney movie, an epic fantasy, and the subject of political and philosophical debate.

I do not mean to imply, and never let it be said, that migraine is to be glorified. Nothing so painful, so damaging, can be good for you. But perhaps it is time to acknowledge that there is some good that has come from migraine energy. Perhaps we can even celebrate this phenomenon in a healthy fashion. At the very least we can work toward understanding and appreciating its mystical side, since that is very real and it does not go away.

Migraineurs can begin to feel better about themselves. For a long time we have been keeping our visions and insights to ourselves

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because they are so incredible to others, so unbelievable. They defy explanation. But that does not make them invalid. Migraine experiences are not less real than any other experiences. They just are.

I think it is very important to talk about migraine thinking, or what kinds of thought processes occur during migraine, as well as migraine monsters, too, including the ideas and visions and dreamlike states that can be very disturbing. You can actually feel like you are losing your mind in the throes of migraine. I have memories of my brain racing a million miles a minute for hours on end. I used to tell my family, "It feels like my brain is on overdrive."

Not surprisingly, one of the treatments some specialists use today with migraine patients is art therapy. The migraine sufferers paint to express how they feel about their migraines, or they paint how the migraine would look if it were an abstract piece of art, and so on. Of course, the art program is much more complex than that, and there are many levels, including working toward feelings of rage, expressing fears, and, in the act, giving credence to the migraine experience. All of this important psychotherapy has come at a late date, but at last it has finally arrived.

I am not sure what art therapy will mean in terms of curing and preventing migraine. But it has very promising implications for doctors and other medical professionals who, at present, exhibit very little direct knowledge of what migraine feels like and how very complex it is.

Think how much fuller our comprehension of migraine would be if we lived in a country where migraine patients were counseled by their doctors to recount the images they see! Suppose people could capture the words that tumbled through their mind during migraine, writing them exactly as they came into the head, freeform, without judgment? Or what if paints and paper were always within easy reach of the sickbed? What powerful energy would be unleashed.

Migraine is still considered a medical mystery. The physical aspects of the disease are fairly well researched and well documented, but we still do not know what is going on. That is how I came to study the unseen. This book is about the unseen aspects of migraine, where

uncovering the cause and discovering the healing are flip sides of the same coin.

Describe Your Migraines

Take time to describe and record the experience of migraine—beyond just the pain details. If you are comfortable writing about this, add these descriptions to your Being Journal or in a document on the computer. If talking is an easier form of expression for you, share your migraine experiences in depth, possibly to a close friend or relative or a support group.

If you choose to speak instead of write, consider recording your conversation. Many times, migraine experiences are much like dream experiences. They don't make much sense, and they are hard to describe because they fall outside the realm of what feels like normal perception of the world around us. Nonetheless, it is valuable to see more clearly those aspects of migraine that bring us into mystical aspects of ourselves.

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