

## **Interview with Jan DeCourtney**

### **Co-author of *Recapture Your Health: A Step-by-Step Program to Reverse Chronic Symptoms and Create Lasting Wellness***

Today, we are talking with Jan DeCourtney, C.M.T., co-author of the newly released alternative health book, "Recapture Your Health: A Step-By-Step Program to Reverse Chronic Symptoms and Create Lasting Wellness." Jan is speaking with Juanita Watson, Assistant Editor of Reader Views.

Juanita: Congratulations on the release of your new book "Recapture Your Health." Tell us what inspired the co-creation of this book?

Jan: Thank you, Juanita. "Recapture Your Health" originated with my own personal search to resolve my 20-year chronic health problems, and my desire to help my massage clients with similar health issues. After years of searching for a solution, one day I came across the website of Walt Stoll, MD, where he described the 3LS Wellness Program. I started the Program's three self-help practices right away and was excited to experience immediate improvement in my condition.

The 3LS Wellness Program was so beneficial in improving my health, plus I saw something very special in the protocol and how it uses the profound healing power of nature. So I immediately contacted Walt and asked him if I could create handouts for my clients so they could learn the program, too. To my delight, he offered to help create the handouts. Soon however, we had compiled so much useful information that the project evolved into a book. We felt that a book would reach more people.

Did you know that more than 50% of American have some type of chronic illness, and these people account for ¾ of national health care spending? These figures are from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. It is for all the people suffering from chronic illness that we wrote "Recapture Your Health."

Juanita: Give your readers an idea of what they can expect from your book.

Jan: Readers who wish to be free of chronic health problems can expect to find practical information for achieving quick results in improving their health conditions. Readers who are already feeling pretty good who follow our instructions find, often to their surprise, unexpected health improvements. All readers will learn useful skills for creating and maintaining health, and for preventing future illness. Our program is simple to understand and follow, and can be adapted to any lifestyle, interest, age, or ability.

Juanita: What are your unique backgrounds that synergized so well into this collaboration?

Jan: Walt and I come from very different life backgrounds, yet we both arrived at a holistic way of viewing health care.

I grew up in the suburbs of Chicago. My chronic health problems (constant fatigue, insomnia, difficulty concentrating, and many other symptoms) appeared when I was in my 20s. I was unable to work a full-time job, so I didn't have insurance and little money for doctors. The few times I did access medical care, it didn't really help. Thus my option was to learn as much as I could about natural, self-help forms of healing. I also pursued my deep interest in psychology and the role of emotions as part of the cause of chronic illness, while simultaneously exploring many alternative healing methods. This path of learning led me to massage school. In addition, I worked many years for the small publishing company of a Chinese acupuncture family.

Walt grew up on a dairy farm in Ohio, where he learned to have an appreciation for the web or wholeness of life. He graduated from Western Reserve University's medical school in Ohio and went on to practice strictly conventional medicine, as he had been taught. After practicing about 13 years, Walt was introduced to alternative medicine, which to his surprise, alleviated many of his symptoms that his medical school training could not even address. So from then on, he practiced holistically and joined the American Holistic Medical Association as a founding member. Walt had a very successful holistic healing center in Kentucky with many alternative practitioners on his staff, and became acquainted with many healing methods from around the world.

Thus, in "Recapture Your Health," I contribute the gentleness and compassion of a massage therapist with 11 years experience, the point of view of a patient who has struggled for decades with a chronic illness before finding a solution, a good measure of writing skills, and practical experience with psychology and many forms of alternative medicine. Walt contributes the 3LS Wellness Program that he developed and refined, his scientific and medical knowledge, plus more than 30 years of direct and practical experience with patients and working within the US medical system. Not to mention his broad clear vision, great wisdom, and in-depth understanding, which I have seen in very few people and even fewer doctors.

Something special happened when we started to work on "Recapture Your Health." We found that the blend of our backgrounds creates a wonderful synergy, as you mentioned. The sum of our experience and knowledge seems to have resulted in a book that is far greater than the parts.

Juanita: "Is Recapture Your Health" a diet book? Workbook?

Jan: "Recapture Your Health" is a practical, hands-on, how-to-do-it book. You might say it is a guidebook that will inspire and coach an individual to create his or her own unique path to better health. We teach the basic steps to take to improve health. We also teach the understanding of how those steps work for people who wish to apply the information skillfully and consciously rather than by rote.

Juanita: Tell us about the 3LS Wellness Program.

Jan: Our program is called "3LS" after the concept of a wooden 3-Legged Stool such as you might find on a dairy farm. The three legs of the stool symbolize the three practices that are the foundation of health. They are: Skilled Relaxation, Whole Foods Diet, and Right Exercise for You.

Skilled Relaxation is important for discharging stored stress in the body through reaching the relaxing alpha brainwave. If there is a magic pill for improving health, this would be it. We recommend doing a relaxation practice of your choice for 20 minutes, twice a day. The twice-a-day practice enables you to discharge the day's stress, *plus* allows the body to discharge old stress and heal chronic problems.

The Whole Foods Diet is a nutrition plan or lifetime eating plan that restores missing nutrients to your body, and ends your unconscious addiction to refined carbohydrates. Just this change in eating whole foods instead of refined foods often resolve a person's symptoms, improves energy, and results in weight loss if the person so needs. We recommend total elimination of refined carbohydrates and eating the delicious whole foods for six months to a year.

The Right Exercise for you means choosing any exercise that you are willing to do on a regular basis. We recommend aerobics as the most effective exercise for increased health, but if you can't do aerobics, or if you have other specific health goals, any exercise is good. We recommend a minimum of 20 minutes, three times a week. Exercise of all kinds, but especially aerobics, improves your metabolism. This means that your entire body and mind work more efficiently, so you have better energy and feel great.

If an individual is desperate to be free of a chronic health condition, the three practices need to be done very accurately for a period of 6 to 12 months or longer. During this time, the individual is actually reversing the causes of the chronic condition. After the person is symptom-free for a period of time, then he or she does not have to follow the program so precisely. These practices are so powerful that they may be all that is necessary for an individual to reverse a chronic illness and restore health.

Juanita: Can you make changes in only one area of the Wellness Program and expect to get results?

Jan: Oh, yes! Some people get better just from doing one practice, more get well by doing two, and by doing all three, a person has the greatest potential for reversing the chronic condition. So, while just one leg of the program brings results, it may take more to totally resolve a person's health condition. We actually recommend that most people start by adopting just one of the practices and doing it well before adding the next. Generally what happens is after a person sees the wonderful results from one practice, he or she will enthusiastically want to begin the next!

Juanita: How important is addressing one's emotional state/stress when healing from illness?

Jan: I'd like to address emotions separately from stress. They are different, although there is some overlap.

First, emotion. The 3LS works with illnesses that manifest mental-emotional symptoms, including anxiety, depression, ADD, agoraphobia, etc. Sometimes just improving physical health resolves mental or emotional issues without needing psychotherapy or counseling. In our book, we teach how each aspect of the Wellness Program can help restore mental and emotional health.

Yet we also provide information for finding a wide range of approaches to help the emotional state, like joining support groups, receiving energy work, and learning better communication and social skills. Some illnesses have their roots in emotion. Strong, recurrent emotions like fear and anger,

unresolved traumas, or repressed emotions from the past such as grief may all be a factor in illness. For some, direct mental-emotional healing needs to be a part of the solution along with the 3LS. Thus therapies like trauma resolution, psychotherapy, or counseling may be the final piece of the healing puzzle.

Now, about stress. Only 10% of all stressors are emotional, psychological, or social stressors. Most people think all stress is psychosocial in nature, but that is not the whole picture of what stress is. The other 90% of stressors are physical, chemical, nutritional, and electromagnetic. All stressors, regardless of type, cause the same response in your system: your body has a "Fight or Flight" reaction. The body response is the same whether you have a fight with your spouse, are exposed to a chemical, experience physical stress, or have a nutritional deficiency.

“Recapture Your Health” basically teaches you how to strengthen yourself so your body can withstand stress and not be affected by the effects of these constant invisible stressors, whether they are emotional, nutritional, electro-magnetic, etc. For example, many people who start this program report that they no longer catch colds where previously they caught one or two a year. Their bodies are functioning so well and their overall resilience to all forms of stress is improved. I hope this helps you understand that it is very important to address stress, and that resolving stress in turn helps emotions.

Juanita: Why is so much of what you talk about in “Recapture Your Health” typically ignored by traditional medicine?

Jan: Juanita, may I clarify your question? I think you’re referring to “conventional medicine,” which refers to standard medical practice in the United States called allopathic medicine (drugs and surgery). In contrast, the term “traditional medicine” means healing methods that have long traditions, such as Traditional Chinese medicine, which is thousands of years old and uses natural methods.

Conventional medicine ignores natural healing methods, *not* because they do not work, but because these methods are not taught to physicians in medical school. Since Walt could not be here today for this interview, I would like to directly quote what he has written about this, because he has said it so well. This quote is from the conclusion of “Recapture Your Health” - “Your doctors are not telling you what will help you the most, but not because individual docs are evil. It is because the political and economic structure of the American Medical Association (AMA)/pharmaceutical/government/insurance/big business system directly influences medical education and medical practice. I sometimes call this system the ‘allopathic monopoly.’ The AMA continues to say that different methods of natural healing are not proven. They have also been able to prevent insurance coverage for most other healing modalities, and governmental agencies (Medicaid, Medicare, retirement plans, etc), rarely pay for them either. Consequently, since other healing methods are denied insurance coverage, etc., this continues the public misperception of their ‘illegitimacy.’ By all of this, the public continues to be guided into thinking that many ‘competing systems’ or ways of providing health care other than allopathic medicine are quackery. This is one of the reasons why the US system of health care is in its present quandary and is one of the less effective systems of health care in the world.”

Juanita: What type of conditions can your book and program help?

Jan: The 3LS Wellness Program can help most chronic conditions, ranging from “nuisance” symptoms like recurrent headaches, allergies, and muscle pains to the most devastating of illnesses, like fibromyalgia, diabetes, heart disease, and arthritis. The 3LS is very effective in conditions where there is no diagnosis, where symptoms are unusual or puzzling, and where other attempts have failed. It also helps people who have been in auto or other accidents, and those who have had tried everything with no result. Walt would add that the 3LS Wellness Program helps all degenerative diseases and all lifestyle conditions. All currently studied chronic conditions clearly show that lifestyle is inextricably linked to the incidence of these conditions.

Juanita: How can your system combat the symptoms of chronic illness?

Jan: The 3LS eliminates the major stressors while strengthening your body and its functions. Your symptoms disappear by themselves as you give your body, over time, the resources it needs to heal itself. Symptoms are not just suppressed as they are when you take a drug. Instead, this program works on eliminating the root causes symptoms.

Juanita: How soon after implementing your 3LS program can one expect to start seeing results?

Jan: Some people see results immediately in the first Skilled Relaxation session! Results for the diet can be as little as a week (done correctly), aerobics in as little as six weeks (done correctly) and Skilled Relaxation can be immediate for temporary relief of symptoms, but long-term results take a month or so (done correctly, with biofeedback certification).

Juanita: How does exercise promote health and healing?

Jan: Exercise of all types improves metabolism, stamina, and feelings of well being. Different forms of exercise have varying effects and benefits, and are suitable for different individual capacities. For example, aerobics is superior for anti-aging effects and preventing heart disease. Non-aerobic exercise—for example, walking and yoga—is great for improving stamina. Strengthening exercise like lifting weights can be focused on strengthening different parts of the body, and flexibility exercise such as stretching increases ease of movement and athletic efficiency.

We recommend aerobic exercise, because it was the first really effective and medically documented approach to exercise. It provides the greatest enhancement to health and offers the most comprehensive wellness benefits for those who are able to do it. For those who cannot do aerobics, any form of exercise will still bring health benefits. My personal experience was that exercise helped my health far more than any prescription drug ever could have.

Juanita: Tell us a little about the importance of food and its contribution to healing and maintaining a healthy body/mind?

Jan: Food is one of the most important aspects of health! Your entire body is made up of the food you eat. Thus, we recommend eating whole foods. Whole foods contain complete nutrition. Refined foods (which are totally avoided in our nutrition plan), have had parts taken away and thus are stripped of nutrients. Why does this matter? Because when you eat a refined food, in order for your body to metabolize or use it, the missing nutrients must be supplied from somewhere. What happens is your body draws those missing nutrients from its own reserves or storage of nutrients. So the more

refined foods you eat, the more depleted of nutrients and the weaker you become. Whole foods, because their nutrition is complete, strengthen you. They are delicious, too.

Juanita: Why do you feel chronic illness is increasing at such an alarming rate with most people having lost touch with their innate healing abilities?

Jan: Our modern American culture and lifestyle do not take our personal needs into consideration. Our busy stressful lives leave us no time to relax, high quality food is not available in the average grocery store, and the conveniences of automobiles, computers and televisions keep us practically immobile.

Even the World Health Organization points out the connection with diet and exercise: “The main causes for increases in chronic diseases are people eating more foods which are high in fats and sugars, and work and living situations becoming less active...”

Juanita: What comments do you have regarding self-responsibility and personal choice regarding health?

Jan: I think that many people would like their doctors or their insurance companies to be responsible for their health. But ultimately, health insurance does not *ensure* health, it only provides some funding if you have high medical costs *after* you become ill. And doctors cannot be held responsible for the day-to-day choices a person makes that undermine his/her health. Nobody can be responsible for your health but yourself. Adapting a healthy lifestyle is a personal choice and the best one for living a long happy life.

People make choices based on what they believe. Some people believe that health originates inside the body, and the ability to improve health comes from deciding and taking effective action. Other people believe that outside influences determine your health and destiny, and you are helpless to do anything about your fate. This is not true! For both viewpoints, we recommend that people just begin the 3LS to see for themselves how making healthy lifestyle choices actually changes health. Most people learn by personal experience, and this program can give you that experience.

And Juanita, let me clue you in on a secret. A healthy lifestyle is not dull and boring, but it is filled with so much energy, aliveness, and interesting activity that it's incredibly fun and enjoyable.

Juanita: What sets your book apart from other health books on the market today?

Jan: First, we focus nearly the entire book on how to actually solve your health problems as quickly and efficiently as possible. We find this to be more effective than talking about theory or lengthy descriptions of the problem with no solution. Second, we added troubleshooting sections and very extensive resources, so if a person doesn't know what to do next, he or she can find the next step and not be left wondering what to do. Third, the 3LS program is unique – I've never seen anything else quite like it. Since Walt and I have both used the 3LS in our practices and in our lives for so many years, we wrote “Recapture Your Health” with a depth of personal experience and understanding that is so rare in health books these days. We help the reader understand the principles behind the practices for creative and useful application to real life. We really want our readers to get well!

Juanita: Why do you think the conventional medical system is failing people so considerably?

Jan: My personal experience is that conventional medicine fails me because I cannot afford to access it. Also, when I can access it, it fails because the methods of drugs and surgery simply do not address my problem! The system is not meeting people's needs.

Listen to these statistics from the Robert Wood Johnston Foundation:

People with chronic illness:

- 67% of the time are not advised by their doctors to make healthy behavior changes.
- 33% of the time feel they do not get enough information to manage their own health.
- 50% of the time do not feel adequately involved in making decisions about their health.

Walt would say that conventional medicine fails us by promoting the myth that *all* illnesses are only legitimately approached via the conventional concepts, while the truth is that only 15% of conditions are best first approached allopathically! He would say that conventional medicine is a political/economic monopoly.

Juanita: Some people think that living a more healthy lifestyle can be very costly - healthy foods cost more, taking time away from work affects the pocketbook, bodywork, nutritional supplements...etc. What would you say to someone that thinks they just can't afford to live healthier?

Jan: Our program can be done without spending much money. Exercise and Skilled Relaxation can both be done without spending a penny. If you think healthy foods cost more, learn to cook foods from scratch to reduce both the restaurant and the grocery bill. And if you need but can't afford bodywork, learn self-massage or self-stretching.

In "Recapture Your Health," we teach people to use creativity to go beyond any impediment you have that makes it difficult for you to achieve health. Whether it be money or time constraints, or any other factor, you can find a creative way to make this program work for you and achieve better health.

Juanita: How can your readers find out more about you and your book?

Jan: For more information about our book, or to order, visit the publisher's site at [www.sunrisehealthcoach.com](http://www.sunrisehealthcoach.com). For details about the 3LS Wellness Program, or to look up specific illnesses for healing suggestions, visit Walt's website at [www.askwaltstollmd.com](http://www.askwaltstollmd.com). Walt's site has extensive archives on many health topics, and an interactive bulletin board for asking health questions. My website at [www.lifespringarts.com](http://www.lifespringarts.com) has information about resolving muscle pain, achieving vibrant health, resources for practicing the 3LS, and other self-help articles.

Juanita: Well Jan, we wish you much success with your book "Recapture Your Health," and thank you for this honest and inspiring interview. What do you fundamentally want your readers to understand by reading your book and applying the 3LS Wellness program to their lives?

Jan: If you think that your health problem is un-resolvable or it is too hard for you to be healthy, don't give up. There is hope for even the most puzzling of health conditions. You may simply have

not yet found the information you need for your healing. Also, I'd like people to understand that healthy living is much more pleasurable and fun than they could imagine! Restoring your own good health is a very powerful, dynamic process, and the benefits are more than just physical, but also include increased mental functioning, improved emotions, and a happy spirit. You can become empowered to recapture your health.