

Wise Woman Tradition Makes Sense and Saves Dollars in Modern Times



At a time when healthcare has become increasingly unaffordable and many have been forced to do without health insurance, it's reassuring to know that there is a way to have some control over one's own health. Named by Herbalist and Author Susun Weed, the Wise Woman Tradition is woman-centered, although not solely for women. It is accessible and effective, and the oldest known healing tradition on our planet.

Contrasting sharply to linear, scientific, male-focused "modern" medicine, the Wise Woman Tradition offers both men and women a new way to think about and create health in all stages of life. By showing people how to honor and respect themselves and the earth, the Wise Woman Way nurtures and empowers individuals to view themselves as healthy even when they have problems, and teaches them to focus on simple, easily-accessible remedies. Another key difference is the openness and freedom with which information and yes, wisdom is shared in the Wise Woman Tradition, promoting feelings of competence and power, the tools needed to exert control over escalating costs of medical treatment and prescription drugs.

Herbal medicine the Wise Woman Way is the answer for Americans struggling to stay healthy in today's harsh economic climate, according to Susun Weed. She refers to it as "people's" medicine. With the foundation of simple living, earth-based healing, and local plants, Weed introduced the world to The Wise Woman Tradition in 1985 by giving voice to it in her first book *Wise Woman Herbal for the Childbearing Year*. Now an internationally renowned teacher and author of four books on herbs and women's health, Weed notes how preventative, economical, and empowering it is to protect your health with the Wise Women Tradition.

THE WISE WOMAN TRADITION IS COST-EFFECTIVE:

Herbal infusions can prevent disease and provide optimal nutrition at a cost of less than a dollar a day. This is a far more cost-effective solution than prescription drugs or even pricey vitamin and mineral supplements. It's always cheaper to prevent a disease than to cure it, according to Weed.

In addition to being more affordable than supplements, herbal infusions just might work better. Based on the findings of a study published in 2008, vitamin and mineral supple-

mentation not only resulted in no diminishment of disease or chronic problems, their use was actually correlated with a decrease in longevity.

Daily herbal infusions cost less and save money another way as well. By caring for oneself on a daily basis, annual check-ups and multiple doctor visits become unnecessary.

The fear of facing bankruptcy due to illness can be a source of undue stress. Many people choose to stay in unhealthy relationships or job situations just to possess health insurance. People's medicine is preventative in nature, putting the power over health in each individual's hands. As Weed says, "When I see the plants and herbs in my own garden, I know no economic crisis can take away my health or my ability to stay healthy."

THE WISE WOMAN TRADITION IS ACCESSIBLE:

People's medicine merely requires getting reacquainted with nature as the first step. Weed recommends spending just 10 minutes a day quietly in nature at first in order to reconnect to our ultimate source of stability and nourishment. Even in large cities, Weed notes that dozens of edible and health-promoting plants for salads grow wild in planters, vacant lots, even between the cracks in the sidewalk. If you're lucky enough to have a backyard, you'll most likely find Plantain there -- a potent remedy for bug bites and skin wounds.

People's medicine is not only practical, but magical as well. As spending time in nature reminds us of our interconnectedness with plants and animals, we hear Mother Nature's whisperings, and her intuition becomes more and more apparent. Very often the herb you need the most is growing within footsteps of your backdoor. This is what Weed means when she refers to "green blessings".

Herbal infusions are easy to make. Identify the desired plant to suit your needs. Buy it or harvest it, chop it up, and fill a glass jar with it. Pour boiling water over it and steep for 4 hours or overnight. Drink it hot or cold, warmed up as the basis for a soup, or over ice for a refreshing pick-me-up. Just four cups a day of an oat straw or nettle infusion can nourish a person fully and keep them in the pink of health. An infusion is steeped longer than a tea, and therefore contains more nutrients. A cup of nettle tea contains 5 mg of calcium; a cup of nettle infusion contains 250 mg.

The process of making herbal tinctures, oils, vinegars and honeys is just as easy, and with them people can address many specific conditions and diseases for which they used to rely on prescription and over-the-counter drugs.

THE WISE WOMAN TRADITION TEACHES SELF-RELIANCE:

By focusing on what's growing in the surroundings and making our own herbal remedies, the Wise Woman Way helps us become more self-reliant in a time when it would be imprudent to depend on a "sick-care" system that seems on the verge of collapse.

Since the practices of herbalism predate that of modern allopathic medicine, Weed argues that the healing the Wise Woman Way is the true "traditional" medicine. In sharp contrast to disease-focused "orthodox" medicine's preoccupation with fixing what's broken, healing the Wise Woman Way acknowledges each person's right to be drug-free and self-reliant when

it comes their health. As Weed puts it, the earth offers abundant food and nourishment, or "green blessings".

THE WISE WOMAN TRADITION IS EMPOWERING:

Weed understands from personal experience feeling powerless as a doctor pronounces you healthy or unhealthy, or the frustration of being told we're fine and then being given a drug to take in order to be healthy. In fact, chronic bladder infections started her quest for answers, answers that were ultimately provided by herbs like Uva Ursi and yarrow.

People who practice herbal medicine the Wise Woman Way

know instinctively that our health is in our own hands. The Wise Woman way means that people can get off most medication if they wish to. It reminds us that we have choices even if the doctor wants to "put us" on prescription drugs or radical treatments. Herbal medicine can be used in conjunction with modern medicine, so an "either or" situation doesn't exist. As Weed has noted before, "The simple expedient of taking a dropperful of milk thistle seed tincture up to an hour prior to chemotherapy protects the liver, allowing the therapy to be more effective and the individual to be better able to tolerate the chemotherapy."

The Wise Woman Tradition is truly complementary in that it doesn't require that someone stop taking medications, or give up certain foods, or adopt an exercise program. Instead of admonishing people to blame genetics, environment, or lifestyle for their current health woes, the Wise Woman Way encourages the realization that human beings are already the physical manifestation of absolute perfection. The whole philosophy of the Wise Woman Tradition honors that simple truth and advocates that nourishing ourselves will put us on the path to health and well-being. As Weed puts it, we are the earth because we come from the earth. When we pay our respects to the earth, we are empowered to honor ourselves.

"Whether we pick plantain out of the driveway to make a healing slave or gather mullein to dry and use for lung health, whether we harvest chickweed to tincture to use to remove cysts, or pick wild oregano to make healing vinegar, each adventure opens our hearts and our eyes more to the abundance around us." Green blessings, indeed.

Susun Weed will be this year's special guest teacher at the 5th Annual Southeast Women's Herbal Conference, held October 2-4, 2009 at Camp Rockmont in Black Mountain, NC. Learn more by visiting SEWiseWoman.com.



Nancy Zampella is a freelance writer and nationally-certified yoga instructor. She is pursuing her Masters Degree in Holistic Nutrition. Visit her online at www.nancyzampella.com.

