

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The research findings describe the clients' experiences in using spiritual healing methods. Data was collected using in-depth interviews. Hermeneutic phenomenology was a method used to explore the lived experience of chronically ill clients using spiritual healing methods. Ten informants who met the inclusion criteria were recruited from the holistic health care center in a southern province in Thailand and data collection was conducted between May 2003 and July 2004. Data were presented in three parts as follows:

Part 1 Demographic Information

Part 2 Description of Informants

Part 3 Lived Experiences of Chronically Ill Clients Using Spiritual Healing Methods

3.1 Perceived Meaning of "Spirituality"

3.2 Experiences of Using Spiritual Healing Methods in Chronically Ill Clients

3.3 Outcomes of Using Spiritual Healing Methods

Part 1 Demographic Data

Demographic data of characteristics of informants were presented in table 1.

Table 1

Characteristics of informants (N= 10)

Characteristics	Frequency
Gender	
Female	8
Male	2
Age in years	
30-39	2
40-49	2
50-59	3
60-69	3
Marital status	
Single	1
Married	7
Separated	1
Divorced	1
Religion	
Buddhist	10
Education level	
Elementary school	1

Diploma	3
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Table 1 (continued)

Characteristics	Frequency
Bachelor	3
Master	3
Occupation	
Nun	1
Housewife	2
Public servant	5
Retired	2
Income (Baht/Month)	
Unemployed	2
5,000-10,000	1
10,001-20,000	1
20,001-30,000	3
30,001-40,000	3
Diagnosis	
Chronic headaches	1
Diabetes mellitus and hypertension	1
Cancer	3
Allergies	1
HIV positive	2

Calcium deposits	1
Ischemic heart disease	1

Table 1 (continued)

Characteristics	Frequency
Length of illness (years)	
1.0-5.0	2
5.1-10.0	1
More than 10 years	7
Length of time using spiritual methods (years)	
1.0-3.0	2
3.1-5.0	1
More than 5 years	7

As depicted in table 1, most of the informants were female (n = 8) and the remaining were male (n = 2). Their ages ranged from 32-69 years. Seven of them were married, whereas each of the rest was single, separated or divorced. All informants were Buddhist. Their highest education level were diploma (n = 3), bachelor's degree (n = 3) and master's degree (n = 3). Only one of them had an elementary level of education. Half of the informants were public servants. The rest were housewives, retired and a nun. More than half of them (n = 6) earned incomes ranging from 20,001-40,000 Baht per month that was reported to be adequate to meet their needs. The diagnosis of diseases consisted of chronic headaches, diabetes mellitus and hypertension, cancer, allergies, HIV positive, calcium deposits and ischemic heart disease. Seven of them had been sick for more than ten years. Two informants had been using spiritual healing methods for 1.0-3.0 years and seven of them had been using them for more than 5 years and only one for 5 years.

Part 2 Description of Informants

All informants were living with some chronic health problems. They had been diagnosed with one or a few health problems such as migraine, hypertension, diabetes mellitus, allergies, HIV positive, calcium deposits and ischemic heart disease. A brief description of each informant is presented as follows:

1. Mrs. Aoy was a 56 years old married woman. She had earned a masters' degree and has been working as a public servant. She suffered from chronic headaches and migraine since she was 21 years old. She usually had a headache especially during her ovulation period and if she was traveling on a long plane journey. She sometimes had severe aches with nausea and vomiting. It caused her much suffering so that she needed more medicine to alleviate the symptoms. She gradually used greater amounts and more types of medicine. Her suffering was accelerated with menopausal symptoms and this caused her not to want to live any longer. She thought that if she lived, she would have to rely on medicine which would affect her work as well as her physical and mental health. However, she tried to motivate herself and keep herself healthy by joining aerobic exercises. She found that it was not suitable for her as it was too hard, so she stopped practicing it. She was later diagnosed with pyelonephritis and was admitted to hospital. It was recommended that she practice taichi to better her health but she did not do it. Later, in 2001, she had vaginal bleeding (after excessation of menstruation for 2 years). She consulted a doctor and was informed that there was a thickening of her uteri muscles by over 6 mm. The doctor gave her an appointment for curettage and a biopsy in the following two weeks. At that time, she felt anxious and was afraid that it might turn out to be cancer. She could not sleep well and always had a headache. Fortunately, at that time she met a friend who practiced meditation, she was informed that practicing

meditation could help solve her health problems. She started practicing meditation. She also interested others in similar healing methods such as universal energy and yoga. She was able to feel some benefits of meditation practice such as having a peaceful mind, feeling relax and sleeping well without medicine. As the day of the cervix curettage was coming, she was not scared, but felt more confident about the procedure. The doctor discovered that the thickness of the uteri muscles has disappeared. She thought that it was a result of the serious practice of meditation, universal energy and yoga.

Later, she did not take any pills, but she still used some healing techniques to relax her mind such as meditation, universal energy and Dhamma teachings. She felt that she worked more efficiently. She felt peaceful, calm and happy in life. Frequently, she used universal energy to heal others at the holistic health care center.

2. Mrs. Bou was a 69 years old widow woman. She had earned a masters' degree. She formally worked as a lecturer in a university. After her retirement, she was invited to be a guest lecturer and taught in a few universities in southern Thailand. She had been suffering with many health problems such as diabetes mellitus and hypertension. Furthermore, she usually had a cold and kidney problems. For these reasons, she had to take several types of medicine. She believed that her problems resulted from inappropriate health practices such as bad eating habits, exercises, and too much concern about her job and family. She always argued with her son and this could make her stressed. So she needed many pills to calm her down and ease her sleep. The doctor investigated her kidney functioning and found that the creatinine level was rising to 1.3 mg/dl. The doctor suggested she should be more concerned about herself. If she still used a lot of drugs, that could damage her kidney. Later on, she employed more healing methods such as walking and sitting

meditation, universal energy, prayer and Dhamma teachings. After using these healing methods, she experienced calmness and less worries. In addition, she experienced peace and a relaxed mind from practicing yoga. She also joined a mind cultivation course based on Dr. Siri Karinchai's work. This course assisted her understand the nature of human beings, the Law of Karma and how to control her mind. She believed that it helped her in all aspects of her life: feeling happy, having good relationships with other people and having nice sleep without any drugs.

She still practised yoga and universal energy at the holistic health care center. In caring for her mind, she used meditation, chanting in front of Buddha image, donating to the poor, giving food to the monks, and also using yoga and universal energy. She was aiming to be vegetarian and participate in a mind cultivation course at least once a year.

3. Mrs Noo was a 52 year old nun who lived in a forest temple. Thirteen years ago, she was sick with bleeding from the vagina. She went to see a doctor at the hospital and he discovered that she had the first stage of cancer of cervix. After that, she was treated with radiation therapy. During the treatment, she suffered from the treatment procedures. At that time she had heard that there was some temple in Southern Thailand providing folk treatments for cancer patients. So she decided to be a nun in order to receive the treatment at the temple. She found that her health was better within three years. She desired to continue living in some other forest temples for five years. Seven years later she had a hip injury and went to see the doctor. The doctor investigated that her cancer had spread to the hip bone. She was informed that her illness was in the final stage. She could live no more than six months. She was given only radiation for supporting, not for extending her life. The radiation caused her suffering, even though she was given morphine for pain. She asked the doctor to

stop all treatments. She decided to die at home among her loved ones but her husband left her and her children. At her home, she had only her elderly father and her children, so she thought that if she passed away, it would have made her father sad because of poverty as they did not have enough money to hold a funeral. After that she went back to the temple she had been to before. She started to use various kinds of herbs, for example, drinking herbs and painting herbs on parts of the body. After one month, she felt better and she could walk and do everything by herself. She became a nun for a second time. During that time, she found that her body was doing well but her mind was so distressed by people around her, because of their negative attitudes. She decided to leave the nunhood and joined a sitting/walking meditation course on her own at Suanmok, Suratthani province. She stayed at Suanmok for about six months until she felt peaceful. She also participated in Dr. Siri Krinchai's mind cultivation course in Bangkok. She had participated in this course four times. It made her mind overcome anger and hatred and filled her heart with loving kindness. At this time, she could control all of her daily actions; walking around, meditation, yoga, Dhamma teachings and eating vegetarian food.

Now, her body and her mind were getting well. After she had a health check at the hospital, the doctor found the cancer in remission. She was still living as a nun, making merit and sharing her experiences with nursing students, medical students and other patients at the hospital and the holistic health care center.

4. Miss. Dee was a 39 year old single woman. She had earned a bachelor's degree. She had been working as a public servant. She had a problem with her ears since 1989. She sometime could not hear anything. When she felt worried, anxious and distressed, she would be nauseous and vomited. The symptoms sometimes became worse and turned into vertigo. She went to hospital and the physician

discovered that she had autosclerosis. The physician put her on medicine but it could not solve her problems. The physician then recommended surgery but only for her right ear because a surgery on her left ear would put her at risk of ear nerve damage. After the operation, her right ear's hearing improve by 80-90%. Her left ear was still problematic. She tried to use some other healing methods to reduce the symptoms. She became interested in meditation. When she was young her grandmother always took her to the temple. She was interested in reading Dhamma. It made her feel peaceful, calm and relaxed. Gradually her suffering lessened. Her illness finally disappeared and she became well. After that she changed her lifestyle. She continued her meditation and chanting. She adopted vegetarianism and took up stick dancing. She dealt with problems using Buddhist teachings, critical thinking, and keeping herself happy. She also counseled other people.

5. Mrs. Earn was a 50 year old married woman. She had earned a bachelor's degree and had been working as a public servant. She was diagnosed as a second stage of breast cancer in 2002. She had body pain such as shoulder, and arm ache and her skin became more wrinkled. She had many wrinkles and looked aged. However, at that time, she thought that it might be a result of menopause. So she went to menopause clinic to have her health checked and to have a mammogram. In the first test, her physical examination was normal but she still felt that something was wrong. She felt pain and fatigue. So she went to see the physician again. The second time, the physician discovered a mass in her left breast. It was about 3 cm in diameter, so the physician did a biopsy. He discovered that she had second stage breast cancer. However, while she was waiting for the result, she did not feel worried or anxious, because she had studied and practiced Dhamma with a famous monk from Ampawan temple, Singburi Province. Then she was told that she had cancer.

She refused to receive modern medicine because she thought it would damage her immunity. So she tried to treat the cancer herself. However, she still went to see the physician for mammography. The physician was worried about her refusal to have modern medicine. He thought that the cancer would increase in size and could move to a more advanced stage within six months. For healing her cancer, she practiced meditation, used Dhamma teachings to guide her life and joined a mind cultivation training course at least once a year. Moreover, she practiced yoga and had herbal food. After she practiced the new way of life regularly, she understood the causal relations of mind and body. In this way, she gains wisdom more, the mind becomes illumined and happiness and tranquility arise, along with faith, vigour, mindfulness, and equanimity.

She had a regular cancer check using mammography once a year and the result showed that the cancer did not metastasis to other organs and remain a same size. She was very happy with the result of her practice. She obtained peace, calmness and gained consciousness.

6. Mrs Fon was a 51 year old married woman. She had earned a master's degree and had been working as a public servant. Since she was young, she always had fevers and felt sick in the morning when the season changed. The physician diagnosed that she was allergic and gave only antihistamine to treat her illness. The medicine made her felt drowsy. She saw herself as weak and tried to exercise more by riding a bicycle, walking and doing aerobic exercise. However, those exercises did not help much. At that time her mother passed away, this caused her such sadness that she did not want to do anything. She lost about 5-6 kilograms in weight within a month. She was very thin and weak, her illness was worse. Her husband felt worried about her health so he encouraged her to do exercises such as walking

slowly and getting exposure to pure air. One day, she happened to meet a taichi / qigong group and she thought that it might be a suitable exercise for her. After that she went to join the taichi / qigong group. She found many benefits in taichi / qigong such as mindfulness, peace and relaxation. Therefore, she spent time practising taichi and qigong from reading and learned from a Chinese teacher also. She had not only allergies but back pain as well. After practising taichi and qigong, her back pain disappeared and she could concentrate on her breathing and she felt so well. She also went to join a mind cultivation based on Dr. Siri Karinchai's training course at least once a year to help her have a better life, calmness, peace and health. She had changed her sleeping habits, ate more vegetables and started to cook for herself. She tried to practice healing methods to maintain her physical and mental health.

Now she was very happy, healthy, mindful and attained enlightenment. She usually prayed to radiate loving kindness and good wishes to all creatures. She was well experienced in the ways of life. She was able to teach others, such as students to practice qigong and taichi very well.

7. Mr. Good was a 62 year old married man. He had earned a bachelor's degree. He had retired from public service. In the middle of 2002 while he was walking, he felt breathing uncomfortable the first time. Then he went to see a doctor for physical check up. The doctor told him to have a chest X-Ray and electrocardiogram. The doctor discovered that he had a lung problem and treated him with bronchodilators. However, his problem still continued and he went to see another doctor. Later he was diagnosed with ischemic heart disease, and was prescribed anticoagulants. He believed that it happened as a result of his heavy smoking in the past. He had stopped smoking more than 10 years previously because he had a problem with his wife and children. So on the occasion of the eightieth

years anniversary of Bhuddhadasa Bhikkhu (The Lord Bhuddha's Servant), he promised to quit cigarettes, even though he suffered but he was successful. In the past he did not believe in religion. He thought that a person who believed in religion was a fool. One day he went to join a service and listened to a Dhamma speech at the Buddhist Association. After that he believed in the Dhamma teachings because this is the Buddha's body of teachings, which refer, or represent, the truths already existing in the world, thus consisting of what is good, what is evil and what is neutral. It was reasonable and very good for his life. After he read more of the Bhuddhadasa texts and the Dhamma teachings, he had belief and faith in religion. So, when he had problems, he could solve them by himself. He thought that he could find the best thing in his life, practice Dhamma teachings more and have calmness and a peaceful mind. Moreover, he did exercise such as stick dance exercise. This exercise includes gentle stretches, breathing practice, and progressive deep relaxation. It helps to extend and strengthen muscles. Stretching and range of joint motion also help decrease muscle tension and joint stiffness as well as improve body mechanism.

8. Mrs. Hut was a 41 year old married woman. She had earned a diploma. She had been working as a public service. In the middle of 2002, she was diagnosed with the final stage of liver cancer. Previously, she had often avoided having her health checked because she thought that she had a good health. In 2002, she had a feeling of poor health and had more and more pain until she could not help herself. Later, her husband took her to a hospital for a check up and the doctor discovered that her liver cancer was spreading to other organs. So, she was referred to another better equipped hospital with a specialist. While being treated at hospital, she was given many medicines. Until this time, she had not been informed of the cause of her

illness. She could not breathe easily and her pain was not relieved. Moreover, she was very anxious about her job, the expenses for treatment and the fact that she did not know what her illness was. Finally, she decided to meet another doctor who performed a liver biopsy. The doctor suggested that there was a possible sign of liver cancer that might be caused by cancer cells from somewhere else. To find the source of cancer cells, she was sent to a gynecologist for an examination and its process caused her suffering. However, they could not find the source of cancer. Her liver grew bigger and the number of spots increased and spread all over the liver. Her breathing became more uncomfortable. Finally, she had another gynecological check and this time, the doctor found a shadow on her ovary. The doctor suggested that the ovary be removed and he reinvestigated her liver cells. She was tortured with these examinations and treatments. She thought that if her ovary was removed, the cancer cell would still exist, and it meant that she would still be suffering from the illness. As a result, she refused any treatment, decided to go home and waited for the death.

At that time, she felt hopeless, anxious, fearful and uncertain. She was worried about her two children. Before she left the hospital, a nurse there suggested her to heal the illness with universal energy, but she still was not interested. She asked her husband to accompany her to a holistic health care center. She decided to have treatment there. One month later, her pain was relieved and she felt better and had more energy to live in this world. For further healing, it was recommended that she meet Dr. Prakrit Panjamala, a universal energy master living in Bangkok. At the first meeting with Dr. Prakrit, she was very impressed and had faith in him. After having treatment with the doctor for a while, her pain vanished and she felt better. Later, she tried to meditate which increased her own power to cure herself. She kept

practicing meditation for seven months, finally she gradually gained back her health and could help herself again.

Now, she did meditation every night and could heal herself when she had pain. Moreover, to better her health, she had changed her eating habits, used detoxification, took a sunbath in the morning, used herbal remedies and frequently made merit. She usually prayed in front of the Buddha image in the morning and before going to bed and asked forgiveness for apologize the fates. In addition, she radiated loving kindness and good wishes to all creatures. In this ways, she had a peaceful mind, calmness, relaxation and promotion of sleep also.

9. Mrs. Ice was a 38 year old housewife. She had earned a secondary education. She was informed by a doctor in the hospital which she was attending for antenatal care that her blood test was HIV positive infection. When she heard this, she was shocked because she had never thought that it would ever happen to her. She was not angry with her husband. They tried to support each other. After that, she told her parent about her HIV infection. Her parents supported them and tried to cheer them up and helped them fight the illness. Later, after she gave birth, the baby frequently had pneumonia. Her neighborhood knew that the couple was infected with HIV, so they tried to keep away from the family. One day during her husband stayed in hospital she met a woman who practised johrei. That woman told her about the Holy Light that could remove the poison out of the body through vomit, urine and excrement. She became interested in this healing method, so she asked the woman to use Holy Light to cure her husband. After her husband received the Holy Light for four days, he became better and was allowed to go home. He died peacefully among surrounded by his love ones. Her son passed away six months later. Even though her husband had passed away, she had faith in johrei. She

decided to use the johrei healing method and she perceived that it taught her about the mind-body relationship, the Law of Karma, and the concept of natural survival. Afterwards, she worked collaboratively with a doctor in a hospital in the south of Thailand for setting up a group of people to help the victims of HIV. She intended to apply johrei to treat herself and other people. Moreover, she was a leader who visited the HIV positive patient. She was a lecturer who educated them about the disease. She always reminded others to be aware and use protection before having sex. Later, she met a man who decided to live with her. He was very understanding and always was beside her to cheer her up when she had problems. Every four months, she went to practice johrei and learn Dhamma in Surat Thani Province.

Now, her condition was in the asymptomatic stage. She was still healthy and happy with her life. She practised johrei everyday. For this reason, she became relaxed and found inner happiness, which could improve concentration and awareness that could control the fluctuations of the mind, resulting in calmness.

10. Mr. Koo was a 62 year old married man. He had primary education, and was an employee in a university in the south of Thailand. In 1992, he discovered that he was infected with HIV positive. He got the disease from a prostitute. After he knew that he was HIV positive, he did not tell his wife and children. He had tried to separate from his wife. She was worried about him and thought that he had another woman. Three years later, his lymph node on the right thigh swelled up, so he went to see a doctor. The doctor suggested surgery to him. He also suggested that he should tell his wife the truth. When his wife knew that she was not disgusted with her husband, but she still took care of him and encouraged him to fight the disease. To fight with the disease, he had to keep taking anti-viral drugs and herbs. Moreover, he started to do exercise by walking regularly, meditating and making

merit. He always went to temples on Buddhist Holy days to offer alms to the monks, pray in front of Buddha image and spread compassion to all creatures.

Now, his HIV infection was at the asymptomatic stage. There were no complications from the disease. He could live life normally and his wife always empowered him. He perceived that everything was continuously changing so he did only good things for himself and others. He practiced meditation seriously, praying, keeping the five precepts and believing in the Law of Karma. With these practices, he developed the ability to calm the mind and experienced inner peace which helped him live peacefully with the disease.

Part 3: Lived Experience of Chronically Ill Clients Using Spiritual Healing Methods

Through the process of thematic analysis of chronically ill clients using spiritual healing methods, the data from interviews of 10 informants yielded three categories and 15 themes. The categories are (1) perceived meaning of “*spirituality*”, (2) experiences of using spiritual healing methods in chronically ill clients, and (3) outcomes of using spiritual healing methods. The perceived meaning of “*spirituality*” category consists of three themes: (1) power of life (2) awakening the mind to understand things as they really are and (3) moral conduct brings goodness, reflecting self-worth. The experiences of using spiritual healing methods in chronically ill clients consist of three themes: (1) Buddhist concepts in daily life (2) mind-body connection methods, and (3) modified macrobiotic. The outcomes of using spiritual healing methods consists of 8 themes: (1) having a peaceful mind (2) being mindful (3) relief from suffering (4) understanding the nature of life, attaining wisdom (5) gaining faith and belief in the Law of Karma (6) having loving kindness (7) enhancing body system functioning, and (8) complete recovery.

Perceived meaning of “spirituality”

The study indicated that the 10 informants had different experiences and definitions that could be classified into three themes as (1) the power of life (2) awakening the mind to understand things as they really are and (3) moral conduct brings goodness, reflecting self-worth.

1. The power of life

The result of this study showed that the 10 informants perceived and defined the spirituality as abstract and invisible but not known through physical senses. It was dynamic and able to direct us to right actions for oneself as well as for other people and had to do with the fundamental propelling force of our lives. Moreover, it also created inner strength within the mind as the great power of life as seen below:

Mrs. Bou *“Spirituality is abstract like a power of life. The power drives one to go the right way by right concentration, not be anger. Understanding reality as it is or it is not and then peace would remain in our mind...”*

Mrs. Earn *“Human beings consist of body and soul. The soul or spirituality is a power that influences our life. Or else it is a positive power to bring us to do the right thing in the right way. Life is a cycle of birth, ageing, pain and death. Finally, we cannot take any material possession with us when we die. Even, suffering and happiness are impermanent, therefore, we should not be attached to such things, even our bodies ...”*

Mr. Koo *“Spirituality is an invisible thing but has a power to guide us to see things with consciousness. When we have consciousness, it becomes helpful in developing greater and more profound mindfulness and wisdom. It is a power of life that brings us calmness, happiness and health. So we have loving kindness or are not selfish to others and we can live in peace in the society...”*

2. Awakening the mind to understand things as they really are

The study found that the 10 informants perceived and gave the meaning of spirituality by understanding of natural life as reality, including birth, ageing, suffering and death. Everything in the world changes. Having excellent mental

abilities to understand life as reality, enjoying life happily and with stability, even though disturbances were present. With the awakening mind, we understand the cause and condition of any situation that influences the mind as follows:

Mrs. Noo *“Spirituality is the perception of reality, without any illusion. Just understand what is good or bad and then consider what is going on around us with consciousness. That makes us know ourselves and the nature of life. Everything has to grow and die. Then we are not attached to things that are subject to change and we have peace of mind. When we feel calm, we also have relief from our illness...”*

Mrs. Fon *“Spirituality is an awakening mind. When having problems, we know appropriate ways to deal with them. It is also essential for us to do the right things for our society as we can, involving in being responsible for what we do for other people and society. We need to accept and understand that life will change. Our mind, thus, is stable and calm. The mental problems also are down.”*

Mrs. Ice *“Spirituality helps me understand why I was born and that leads to a life of virtue, truth and respect. In knowing that life changes all the time, it is essential to realize and desire to assist others who are suffering, not let the suffering control our mind.”*

3. Moral conduct brings goodness, reflecting self-worth

With reference to the 10 informants, they all explained that spirituality was the state of the mind because when we do goodness, our mind will be good. We could always do good things and could distinguish between right and wrong. Moreover, we would have happiness and strength to fight with problems and sufferings, as follows:

Miss Dee *“Spirituality is a high level of the state of mind. It is a mind that can determine morality related to virtue. Spirit is a happy mind. It happens when we have no hesitation. It is a strong mind that nothing can interrupt, even one’s desire.”*

Mr. Good *“Spirituality helps us apprehend the morality. It makes us be happy and contented with a simple life. It does not necessarily mean we are happy when we are rich, because ordinary people can also be happy. When we feel happy, we also want others to be happy...”*

Mrs. Hut *“If we have no spirit, we tend to ignore our body and soul. When we have spirit, we will be aware of our eating behavior. Being vegetarian is the way that keeps us from killing other life forms and it is the way to make merit to make us happy...”*

Experiences of Chronically Ill Clients Using Spiritual Healing Methods

The study found that the informants perceived the experiences of using spiritual healing methods as ways of shaping their thinking and practices in daily life. The healing methods had great power to heal the informants from their illnesses and help them maintain their health, gain wisdom, have a peaceful mind and be really happy. Even though they could not escape from their illnesses, could overcome their suffering from physical and spiritual distress. The healing methods they used could be divided into three types: (1) Buddhist concepts in daily life (2) mind-body connection methods and (3) modified macrobiotics.

1) Buddhist concepts in daily life

All informants in this study were Buddhist. They believed that this world of suffering is the result of a bad cause. The informants needed to take responsibility for whatever good or bad that they experienced. However, they could change the results of their bad deeds (sin) for the better by accumulating religious merits. The informants who were seeking to purify themselves kept the five precepts, which consisted of no intentional killing, stealing, having illicit sex, telling a lie and taking intoxicants. These would stop them from sinning, and the Dhamma teachings would show what is right. If the merit the informants made as a result of their deeds was greater than demerit, then that informant could be considered a good person. As two informants expressed:

Mrs. Aoy “...I am interested in religion so I try to study Dhamma which can make me peaceful and happy, keep the five precepts and offer food to the monks. Such merit favourably affects my present as well as future incarnations ...I think we should be concerned with Dhamma and the five precepts because Dhamma teaches everyone to be happy and to avoid suffering and the five precepts are aimed at keeping a clear mind and a healthy body”

Mrs. Bou “...I ride a bike to the temple if I do not have class in the morning. I usually make merit and offer alms to the monks on major Buddhist holy days. After we offered food to the monks, we received a blessing in return. When I hear the monk teaching Dhamma, I feel calm and peaceful. I keep the Buddha’s teachings in my mind all the time. I realize that I have to do meritorious acts, stop from sinning and to be kind to other living creatures. That is also a way to gain merit...”

2. Mind-body connection methods

All informants in the study used to practice mind-body connection methods. They believed that the mind controlled the body. If a person was able to control the mind, it would result in tremendous power that could be used to cure oneself or others. The mind-body connection methods consisted of six types: (1) meditation (2) yoga (3) taichi / qigong (4) pranic healing (5) universal energy and, (6) johrei.

2.1 Meditation

All informants in the study used meditation as a healing method. In addition, all of them participated in a mind cultivation course based on Dr. Siri Karinchai’s methods. This course taught Buddhist concepts and provided various training activities to cultivate mindfulness, for example; keeping the five precepts, practicing meditation (sitting and walking meditation), praying, listening to Dhamma, and paying respect to parents’ goodness. These Buddhist teachings and training activities aim to purify physical and mental conducts, and finally help attain wisdom and peace. From the study, meditation used by the informants can be divided into 3 types: (1) Anapanasati meditation (2) walking meditation (3) praying meditation.

2.1.1) Anapanasati meditation

According to the study, there were three informants who practiced Anapanasati meditation that could be divided into two groups (1) meditation through breathing (2) meditation through number counting.

2.1.1.1) Meditation through breathing

There were three informants practising meditation through breathing. Breathing mindfulness is a basic form of meditation taught by the Buddha. It is specially about the mindfulness of in-and-out breathing which leads to rapture (piti), then to calmness (sukha), which in turn leads to concentration and then to equanimity. According to the Buddha's teaching the Anapanasati Sutra, practising mindfulness of breathing meditation as a part of the Noble Eightfold Path leads to the removal of all defilements and finally the attainment of enlightenment. Two informants described it thus:

Mrs. Aoy "At first I practised the meditation by focusing my attention on in-and-out breathing. When I slowly breath in, I comprehend it as such, and when I breathe out, I comprehend it as such. When I breath in a short breath, I comprehend it as such, and when I breath out a short breath, I comprehend it as such. I exercise my awareness so as to see the beginning, the middle and the end of these two functions of breathing in and breathing out. I comprehend with wisdom the calming down these two aspects of in-breathing and out-breathing."

Mrs. Noo "I have kept practising meditation for the last two years by breathing in deeply and then breathing out slowly. It makes me feel fresh like my body is cleaned. I feel that practising meditation not only makes my mind stable, but also helps release endorphins that makes me feel relaxed."

2.1.1.2) Meditation through number counting

One informant practised Anapanasati meditation by using number counting. The mere counting was not itself meditation, but the counting had become an essential aid to meditation. The informant realized that the counting was an easy method to control the wandering mind. As she described:

Miss Dee *“I was interested in Buddhism since I was 13-14 years old, especially in practicing meditation by counting. There are a few methods of counting. One way is to count while taking the breath. It is a way to make the mind stable. You count as “one, one”; the second as “two, two”; the third as “three, three”; the fourth as “four, four” and so on up to the tenth breath which is counted as “ten, ten.” Then I return to “one, one” and continue again up to “ten, ten.” This is repeated over and over from one to ten. I consciously count the number without a break, without stop. I can derive much benefit and become calm and insightful...and have decreased tension and anxiety...it is important for maintaining health and preventing disease.”*

2.1.2) Walking meditation

One informant said that concentrating on each step while walking was more helpful in focusing the attentive awareness to one point. Walking meditation was the act of walking while focusing on the movement of the body and the placement of the foot on the floor with each slow purposeful step. This was confirmed by the informant’s experience:

Mrs. Fon *“I had never known what the power of meditation was until I had practised walking meditation. First, I try to bring to awareness of my own standing posture. It is not visualization, but feeling my body as it is. I am relaxed and have a straight posture. I hold my hands together to help keep my composure. I make the mind free, calm, relaxed and happy. I learn to let go of all my problems and thoughts. I give my mind a break. Just be with the present moment and be aware. I start walking and then I concentrate on the step I am taking. It makes me gain consciousness. During the walk, I realize that I am aware of myself in the act of moving purposefully.”*

2.1.3) Meditation through praying

There were two informants who prayed regularly in their daily life. They expressed that praying was a way to make the mind concentrate using words. This activity would help develop mindfulness. Moreover, while praying, the informants felt like listening to the Buddha’s teachings reminding them to do meritorious deeds. As they described:

Mrs. Bou *“When the monks were chanting, I would listen to the prayer carefully. To me praying was like listening to the Buddha teaching, and that helped to remind me to behave in the right way.”*

Miss Dee *“I pray every night before I go to sleep. While I am praying, I concentrate on the prayer in order to recognize the Buddha and his teaching, so it seems that I can get closer to him. I also feel that I concentrate more and am more generous.”*

2.2) Yoga

Some informants mentioned that yoga was considered another type of moving meditation. Yoga unites body and mind through breathing. Yoga practice could improve concentrating, and establish an awareness of the mind. In addition, yoga released tension in muscles and joints, and holds the posture and tone of the muscles.

Mrs. Aoy *“I usually spend an hour doing yoga movements and deep breaths. It is an exercise that helps me improve concentration, and establish an awareness of mind that can control the fluctuations of the mind, resulting in the quality of calmness. Moreover, yoga helps to extend and strengthen muscles. This practice helps decrease muscle tension and joint stiffness as well...I feel happy and am ready for work all the time.”*

Mrs. Noo *“I do yoga every morning. It is an exercise which simply increases body flexibility. This is because yoga focuses on the health of the spine, its strength and flexibility. It releases muscle tension and gain strengthens the joints. It can protect one from arthritis.”*

2.3) Taichi / Qigong

One of the informants who practiced taichi and qigong in her daily life. She stated that taichi and qigong were sometimes referred to as Chinese yoga. It is a form of self-defense like forces with the intention of cultivating internal energy or "chi or qi". It too focuses on breathing coupled with body alignment. If practiced on a regular basis, tai chi and qigong create physical balance by building endurance and perseverance. Like yoga, it quiets the body, allowing emotions to come up and be

released, emotions that have been hidden deep within the cells of the body. Through this internal calming, one is able to resist outside stresses. The strength comes from inner rather than external power.

Mrs. Fon *“Taichi and qigong were considered as a movement meditation. These methods lead to gradual mental detachment, calming my mind and reducing stress. Besides they were exercises, which had the benefit extending the body and aligning of trunk. I was not hot-tempered and became more patient because of practising taichi and qigong. They gave me peace of mind and promoted healthy. These methods become part of my daily activities.”*

2.4) Pranic practice

The result of the study showed that there were two informants who learnt to control their breath correctly. Breathing techniques can harmonize the flow of prana to the higher chakras. Moreover, these techniques also produce a sense of rebalancing and slowing down the physical body resulting in calmness of both body and mind. The patient report:

Mrs. Bou *“Every morning, I try to take a deep breath to increase the oxygen intake to the body which helps me gain energy which is drawn from the sun, air and earth to heal physical ailments and emotional imbalances....At first I took 21 deep breaths continuously in the morning and 21 times in the evening. After that I increased the number. I felt better and could walk longer than before....I thought that it may be because of pranic practice and taking up oxygen into the blood and absorbing them into cells. Therefore it made me healthy, increased energy and brought calmness of body and mind.”*

Mrs. Earn *“Slow breathing in and out through the nose and mouth is to take fresh air into the lungs. Hold the breath as long as possible, and then let it out gradually through the mouth. It is a way of taking in a great amount of oxygen, an element that is essential to every cell in the body, which helps me relax.”*

2.5) Universal energy

There were three informants who applied universal energy to cure body and soul. It was a way of meditating and absorbing the power of nature into the body in order to heal illness and restore health. Some informants told the following:

Mrs. Aoy *“While I am practising sitting meditation, I concentrate on a sacred image that I pay respect to in order to absorb the light into my body. I feel*

warmth on my palm. It proves that there is a power that can heal pain by putting the palm on the part painful of the body.”

Mrs. Bou “At first , I took universal energy treatment, he (healer) let me practise sitting meditation and then he (healer) put his palm on the painful part of my body in order to cure the disease with a blue light.”

Mrs. Hut “I had to practice meditation and concentrate on what I believed in. I asked for the light and then I would see the light shining brightly like the sun. The light was applied to heal the disease, like giving radiation treatment.”

2.6) Johrei

One informant healed her body and mind by practising johrei. It is believed that it is pure energy received from heaven which can help people to be free from the consequence of Karma and also help them to have good health because the mind is purified by the heavenly light.

Mrs. Ice “Johrei was used not to treat a disease but to fill the mind with happiness. I had keep learning johrei and realized it was the way of Buddhism teaching us to liberate ourselves from suffering. This can be achieved through moral behaviour, wisdom and mental development. Moreover, johrei is to let the energy of universe pass through every part of the body to restore health.”

3. Modified macrobiotics

The result of the study showed that all 10 informants changed their habits and proceeded with the concept of modified macrobiotics, concerned with natural living. There were 5 aspects; (1) healthy food (2) stick dance exercise (3) adequate of rest (4) positive thinking and (5) detoxification.

3.1) Healthy food

Five informants who changed their eating habits and were more concerned about healthy food. They live in accordance to their ecological environment, eating natural, local, seasonal produce as well as using local products

Mrs. Bou *“I tried to avoid eating meat and preferred to have local vegetables and herbs.”*

Mrs. Noo *“After practising yoga, I made yoghurt to eat with bananas so that it could help me defecate easily.”*

Miss Dee *“I started to eat green vegetables which helped the body resist inflammation.”*

Mrs. Earns *“Naturally human beings were not creatures that consumed meat, so I had gradually changed my habits to have less meat and eat more vegetable.”*

Mrs. Fon *“I tried to cook food that had no monosodium glutamate and changed to eat more vegetables. When I am cooking, I always feel peaceful state of mind with compassion, focus, good thoughts and well wishes all the time...”*

3.2) Stick dance exercise

Two informants chose the stick dance exercise, a kind of martial art, which helped to keep the balance between the physical and mental. It could help every system in the body to work efficiently.

Miss Dee *“As I got older, I started take care of my health more than before by using the stick dance (Rum Kra Bong) which was the way of holism. It was easy and helped me to become healthy.”*

Mr. Good *“I could exercise every part of my muscles by doing the stick dance (Rum Kra Bong). I felt that my muscles were getting stronger and I had more concentration because of this exercise.”*

3.3) Adequate rest

The results of the study showed that there were two informants who changed their habit into take adequate rest. Having enough sleep helped the body enhance its immune functioning.

Mrs. Earn *“The doctor suggested that I sleep before 9.00 PM. because from 9.00-11.00 PM was a period that the body released the growth hormone which could restore health.”*

Mrs. Hut *“I would take a nap for two hours in the afternoon and went to bed early in order to heal the illness and help the body work efficiently.”*

3.4) Positive thinking

Two informants had changed to a more positive way of thinking. It helped ease anxiety and depression and also made the mind stable.

Mrs. Aoy *“Everything is changing all the time, so I am not worried about birth, ageing, suffering and death.”*

Miss Dee *“I learned from the Buddha’s teachings that there are continuous changes due to the Law of Cause and Effect. This is the same law stated in modern scientific textbook. The Law of Cause and Effect is known as Karma. Nothing ever happens to us without actions. We receive exactly what we earn, whether it is good or bad. We are what we have done in the past. Our thoughts and actions determine the life we live. If we do good things, in the future good things will happen to us. If we do bad things, in the future bad things will happen to us...”*

Mrs. Hut *“As we cultivate mindfulness, we see deeply that everything is continuously changing. I know that no one can get away from death. Understanding the Dhamma will bring peace of mind to us.”*

3.5) Detoxification

According to the study, there were two informants who received detoxification treatment in order to remove the toxin from their bodies.

Mrs. Earn and Mrs. Hut with regarded to detoxification *“Detoxification has been used to detoxify the liver by using coffee enema. It is a low-volume enema that remains only in the lower part of colon. When the stool reaches this point, it contains many toxins, which are sent to the liver for detoxification. The method is to mix 1-2 table spoons of organic coffee into 800-1,000 ml of clean water and then stir it to make sure all is mixed in the water, then bring to a boil and boil for 3 to 5 minutes (while stirring occasionally). Remove from the stove and let the coffee cool down to*

room temperature. Strain the coffee through a fine sieve to remove as many coffee ground as possible. Pour some of the coffee mixture into the enema bag. Release the clamp until the coffee begins to flow out, then clamp the bag again. Hang the enema bag at a height of about 3 feet, not higher. Lie on the floor and gently insert the nozzle. Use vegetable oil on the nozzle if needed. Release the clamp and let the coffee mixture flow into the sigmoid colon. Clamp the tubing as soon as there is a sensation of "fullness" or when the enema bag is empty and remove the nozzle. If possible, without forcing, retain the enema for 10 minutes, and then empty bowel. Thus, when the colon is evacuated, the toxins and bile are carried out of the body... I repeat this process in the morning and evening twice a day or once a day which depending on time..."

Outcomes of using spiritual healing methods

In this stage, the informants discovered the consequences of practicing healing methods. The results of the study revealed that the informants were satisfied with their own practice and thought that they chose the right choice. One informant regarded it lucky to be affected by cancer which leads her to practice the right way of living.

Mrs. Noo *"If I did not have cancer, I would not have been enlightened. I thought because I was ill, I could touch the core of Buddhism."*

The other informants could live peacefully. Even though they still suffered from the illness, they could deal with the pain consciously. As one informant mentioned:

Mrs. Hut *"Even though I have not recovered from the illness, I can help myself and feel peaceful, calm, relaxed and more importantly I can continue living with my lovely family."*

According to the study, it was found that the results of the informants perception regarding the use of spiritual healing methods could be divided into 8 themes: (1) having a peaceful mind (2) being mindful (3) relief the suffering (4) understanding the nature of life, attaining wisdom (5) gaining faith and belief in the

Law of Karma (6) having loving kindness (7) enhancing body system functioning, and (8) complete recovery.

1. Having a peaceful mind

The informants perceived that they had experienced agitation, frustration and disharmony. So they tried to seek healing methods to maintain peace and harmony. The informants adopted meditation, yoga, taichi, universal energy, etc. with the main aim of quieting their minds and bringing peace and happiness into their lives.

Mrs. Aoy “ When my body was sick, my mind was also sick. Then I always felt so anxious because I didn’t know how to endure suffering as a result of the pain. What a lot of suffering it was!. After that I started to practice meditation, yoga and universal energy. The ultimate aim of these practices was to achieve real peace of mind and lead a happy, useful life. And I develop the ability of mind to be strong, flexible and stable all the time. I think the mind is the most valuable thing for human being.”

Mrs. Bou “Before I had a chance to practise meditation, yoga or other healing methods. I always felt anxious, frustrated and nervous. Now I have changed and am more relaxed and stable. I frequently practice meditation, yoga and universal energy. These methods enable me to experience peace and harmony because they purify and develop an awareness of mind.”

2. Being mindful

The informants perceived that breathing meditation could enable one to be mindful and developed an awareness of mind. As they expressed:

Miss Dee “ I practiced mindfulness by focusing on in and out breathing for about 5 years. I then realized that breathing in and out continued happening without a break or stop. Since I do not consciously reflect on it, I do not realize the presence of this breathing. If I do so, I can derive much benefit by way of calmness, mindfulness and insight.”

Mrs. Hut “I practiced being conscious of my breathing everyday before going to bed. I always used to have back pain and muscle ache. This practice is used to bring about mindfulness naturally at the spot where the in breaths and the out breaths are felt entering and leaving the nostrils. Then I try to maintain my awareness of the sensation of the breath, keeping the awareness as steady and consistent as possible. I do this until I get sleep, so I do not need to take any sleeping pills, and my pains became better.”

3. Relief from suffering

The informants perceived that during their illness, they had encountered suffering, pain and frustration. Modern medicine could treat only physical problems but it did not cure a person as a whole. Most of the chronically ill informants could not completely get rid of their illnesses. When they adopted spiritual healing methods, they found that these healing methods promoted deep relaxation and helped gain energy. These were necessary for good health and peace of mind, as described by one informant:

Mrs. Noo "Cancer is spreading to other parts of my body. I feel pain in my leg, hip and especially, bones. I was informed that my illness was at the final stage. I could live no more than six months. I was given only radiation therapy for supporting, not for extending my life. The radiation caused me suffering, even though I was given morphine for relieving pain.So I asked the doctor to stop all treatment..... I went back to the temple I had been before...I decided to be a nun and joined in a meditation course and practised by myself for about six months. I feel better, my body and mind are getting well. I feel no pain, no suffering and no distress."

4. Understanding the nature of life, attaining wisdom

According to the study, 3 informants understood the nature of life human beings regarding birth, aging, illness and death which no one can escape. They were not much concerned with their bodies because they knew that everything is continuously changing. All of us will pass away eventually as a part of the natural process. We should always keep in mind the impermanence of life and to have no self. In Buddhism there are Three Characteristics, namely impermanence (anicca), dissatisfaction or suffering (dukkha), and that all things have no self (anatta). Buddhism is a religion based on intelligence, science and knowledge. Buddhists believe in the power of karma, or actions based on desire. Such actions, either good or bad, make a person continue in the cycle of reincarnation, being reborn repeatedly

until achieving enlightenment, success coming through one's own effort. The Buddha, in addition, taught that life was inherently suffering. He told of the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path to the cessation of suffering. The Buddha explains that the proper way to live is to follow the Middle Way. We can follow the Middle Way by living a modest or reasonable lifestyle making do with only what we need.

Mrs. Aoy *"When I practice meditation. I realize that life is full of misery: birth, ageing, sickness and death are all suffering. So I see that all. All Sankhara or phenomenal (compounded) things are subject to Anicca or impermanence, Dukkha or suffering and Anatta or non-self, which are the three characteristics of existence..."*

Mrs. Bou *"...I understand that birth, ageing, sickness and death, are unavoidable. However the doctor can heal only physical problems. As to the mind, we have to heal that by ourselves. After practicing, I believed in sin or virtue more than in the past. I have not anger. I try to do good...practise the Middle Way of Buddhist doctrine. I accept that everything exists only temporarily...and we can not order our bodies to remain always young and attractive and our minds to be always happy. In the past, I misunderstood about life. Now I realize the truth and always evaluate my practice. I am able to face the problem with a peaceful mind, and I am living with real happiness..."*

Mrs. Noo *"...Blanket mind...and I know about the cause and effect fom Paticcasamuppapa (the Dependent Origination. This is a Buddhist analysis of existence in terms of cause and effect). To destroy craving (tanha), therefore, I had to break the circle of the cause and effect which made me suffer...After that I developed a certain way of taking care of myself..."*

5. Gaining faith and belief in the Law of Karma

The majority of informants expressed a strong belief and faith in the Law of Karma. Every cause has its effect. Karma is created by actions - our thoughts, words and deeds - and manifests itself in our appearance, behavior, attitudes, good and bad fortune. It is all the positive and negative influences or causes that affect our lives. Therefore, they realized recognized that they need to seek ways to purify themselves. The following are some of their thoughts:

Mrs. Earn *"I believe in the law of cause and effect, so I have tried to keep the five precepts strictly."*

Mr. Good *“After I read Dhamma books, I feel faith and belief in Buddhism. Particularly the Law of Karma is the accumulation of effects from the good and bad causes that we bring with us from our former lives, as well as from the good and bad causes we have made in this lifetime, which shape our future. Karma is created by actions, our thoughts, words and deeds. Therefore I quit cigarettes because I knew it was bad behavior, and that it would make me die sooner...”*

6. Having loving kindness

The informants expressed having loving kindness toward all creatures and human beings. They always performed merit and sent their good wishes to others to be happy.

Mrs. Aoy *“ ... In the past I felt selfish and had more craving. However, now I always pray and spread my loving kindness to all human beings, all animals and all creatures, so that someone who is happy will be happier and someone who is suffering will have less suffering. I also try to help others who need help to heal their illnesses by providing universal energy”*

Mrs. Fon *“ My mind is gentler and I desire to help others to be happy. If I can help others who are unhappy with their lives and need help. I do not delay helping them and assist them to cope appropriately with their problem...”*

7. Enhancing body system functioning

Three informants perceived that they could strengthen the system of their body systems to work efficiently.

Mrs. Noo *“ Practicing sitting meditation and yoga can help control the endocrine system and nervous system work efficiently.”*

Miss Dee *“I practice sitting meditation so that I can control and follow my in-out breathing , be happy...relax my mind and enhance the body system to work normally, which can protect one from illness.”*

Mrs. Earn *“Formerly, my skin was quite dark and wrinkled but after I practised meditation, I felt that my skin was clearer. It seemed like the cells and the system of my body are healthier.”*

8. Complete recovery

The study found that one informant perceived that she recovered from cancer using by herbal treatment and yoga. She said:

Mrs. Noo *“I always practise sitting and walking meditation and other kinds of healing methods such as yoga I have been praying and studying Dhamma teachings for 3 years. When I went to hospital to have my health checked, it was found that I had recovered from the illness completely.”*

Discussions

This session presents an overview of the finding generated from this study. The research outcomes in conjunction with current literature were also discussed.

Perceived meaning of “spirituality”

The findings from the study clarified that the perceived meaning of “spirituality” can be classified in three categories: 1) power of life 2) awakening the mind to understand things as they really are 3) moral conduct brings goodness, reflecting self-worth.

The informants perceived the meaning of “spirituality” as a power of life that was abstract and intangible not visible to the naked eyes but sensed through feelings or emotions. The power requires continuous and intensive practice for a long time. The majority of informants mentioned that this power is not through knowledge alone, but from some other sources. It comes about through compassion, peace, a sense of forgiveness, a sense of tolerance (Sateansud, 2001). This power helps the informants reduce stress and experience inner peace. Because the informants are able to face the inevitable problems of life with a calmer, more tranquil attitude, therefore, they can gain much inner strength. This inner strength helps the informants pass through the tribulations of life and they do not experience their distressful effects.

The increase of concentration and reduction of stress and tension help the informants achieve success in their worldly lives.

The informants perceived meaning of “*spirituality*” as awakening the mind to understand things as they really are. The informants relate spirituality to wisdom. This is a result of a healthy spirit leading to developing a clear and peaceful mind. The informants comprehend the real nature of existence that changes according to the Law of Karma. In other words, awakening the mind facilitates the development of wisdom to see the world as it really is. The mind does not cling and does not attach itself to anything and reveals the deep interrelatedness and impermanency of all things (Punyanontachai, 1997). The informants in the study understood that everything depended on the Law of Cause and Effect known as the Law of Karma. We receive exactly what we did, whether good or bad. We are the way we are now due to the things we have done in the past. Our thoughts and actions determine the kind of life we can have. If we do good things, in the future good things will happen to us. If we do bad things, in the future bad things will happen to us. The Buddhist teachings suggest that the Middle Way (the Eight Fold Path) is the important way to end suffering. This path can help a person develop moral strength through the avoidance of negative action and the cultivation of positive qualities (Chanchamnon, 2003). The person who lives with a free mind, an independent mind, a perfect mind or an enlightened mind will always live his or her life in peace and happiness here and now, not waiting until after death. This is what the Buddha taught and is the goal of Buddhism. Thongprateap (2002) stated that the Buddha teaches all human beings how to develop and improve their lives and end suffering. Then the mind will be free and liberated.

Spirituality was also perceived as moral conduct bringing about goodness, reflecting self-worth. The informants perceived that morality has to do with behavior and happiness, and is basically the same all over the world. Morality made the informants be good people behaving in accordance with the general principles of community life and in such a way as to cause no distress to themselves or others. It is said to mean the power to understand the difference between right and wrong intentions. If the intention is good, it is rooted in positive mental qualities such as love, compassion, and wisdom. From the study the informants saw morality and goodness as being based on the Buddhist teachings (Dhamma) and that they reflect such eternal values as compassion, respect, self-restraint, honesty, and wisdom which reflect on self-worth. The informants expressed that after performing the merit - making acts such as offering food to the monks, donating things to poor people or helping others experiencing the tribulations of life. These acts of giving are important ways to gain merit. Payutto (1993) suggests that selfishness and craving result in suffering. Conversely, compassion and love bring happiness and well-being. Therefore, only by eliminating desire can one find peace of mind and promote healing.

2. Experience of Using Spiritual Healing Methods in Chronically Ill Clients

Nowadays, the development of the modern medical system has an important role in caring for people's health and curing their diseases and illnesses. Modern medical therapies always depend on the cause of illness and doctors will give treatment based on the patients' symptoms. The responsibilities in taking care of patients are divided among many medical specialists, so sometimes treatments conflict. Even though modern medicine can cure severe diseases, the patients may

suffer from physical or mental disabilities later that cannot be treated by modern medicine. They finally seek for spiritual healing methods to heal their suffering.

Buddhist concepts in daily life

Chronically ill clients usually perceived that to their lives and spirituality are threatened (Intarasombut, 1993; Phuwarawutpanit, 1993). As a result, they felt hopeless with long-term treatment and the suffering brought about by treatment. In this study, all of the informants were Buddhist. Buddhism teaches that a human being does not begin with birth and end with death, but is linked to the concept of Karma (the Law of Cause and Effect). Three Characteristics and the Eight Fold Path. These teachings suggest that selfishness and craving result in suffering and the causes of illness. Conversely, compassion and love bring happiness and well-being (Payutto, 1993). According to these beliefs the informants tried to make merit, eliminate selfishness and greed. Lundberg & Trichorb (2001) stated that Thai Buddhist philosophy teaches that the individual is responsible for his or her own destiny and that he or she can change that destiny to the better by accumulating religious merit. Buddhism helped the clients with cancer to understand the reality of life under the Law of Karma. The informants did merit making acts that were comfortable and suitable for them. On Buddhist holy days, they visited the temple to pay respect to the Buddha's image, offer food to the monks, listen to special sermons, keep the five precepts, and practise meditation. These performances enabled them to experience peace and harmony. They purified the mind to free it from suffering and the deep seated causes of suffering. In addition, these practices led step by step to the highest spiritual goal of full liberation from all mental defilements.

Mind-body connection methods

Mind-Body connection methods mean the methods used to enhance the quality of mind in order to bring about a healthy body. On the other hand, what we do with our physical body, for example what we eat, how much we exercise, and even our posture can impact our mental state (Mind-Body Therapies, 2006). The informants in the study had employed many mind body connection techniques such as meditation and prayer, yoga, taichi / qigong, pranic practice, universal energy, johrei, and modified macrobiotic to relax their minds, release stress and open the body up to profound healing.

In meditation practice, the informants used different kinds of meditation, for instance Anapanasati meditation, walking meditation, meditation through prayer depending on their own preference. The meditation defined by Payutto (1993), emphasizes on concentration and brings the mind to focus on one point or object, thereby achieving strength of concentration. The results are peaceful states of mind and mindfulness. According to the Buddha's teaching in the Anapanasati Sutra, practicing mindfulness through of breathing meditation as a part of the Noble Eightfold Path leads to the removal of all defilements and finally the attainment of Nibbana (Chanchamnong, 2003). The Buddha's teachings were based on his own experience in using Anapanasati as part of his means of achieving his own enlightenment. However, breathing mindfulness should be practiced along with metta bhavana (radiation of loving kindness and good wishes to all creatures) so one does not withdraw from the world and lose emotional attachment and compassion (Chuaprapaisilp, 2004). The Anapanasati meditation is the practice which follows the sensation of ordinary breath as it flows in through the nostrils and fills the chest and abdomen (Rattayano, 1998). Then the person tries maintaining the attention at one point, which can recite “Bhudd” and “ Thoo” or do number counting. The purpose is

to allow a person to notice the working of the mind, and to bring a measure of peaceful clarity into the mind. It recommends the practice of Anapanasati meditation as a means of cultivating the seven factors of awakening: mindfulness, discernment, and persistence, which leads to rapture (piti), then to calm (sukha), which in turn leads to concentration and then to equanimity (Krajangdan, 2001). Finally, the Buddha taught that as these factors developed progressively, the practice of Anapanasati would lead to release or nirvana.

Walking meditation is a form of meditation in action. Walking meditation develops balance and accuracy of awareness as well as durability of concentration. One can observe very profound aspects of the Dhamma while walking and even get enlightened (Karinchai, 2002). Walking meditation consists of paying attention to the walking process and use awareness to follow the actual sensations throughout the leg area.

Prayer is seen mainly as a powerful psycho-physical practice that can enhance meditation, which the informants were repeated pray more and more. It helped them to clear their minds of immoral thoughts to find inner peace and happiness. According to Wasee (2000) if one concentrates on the words of prayers, when one's attention on the repetition of a syllable will help clear the mind. When distracting thoughts do occur, the person can return to this repetition of the syllable to help eliminate other thoughts. Tongchontip (1987) mentioned that Buddhist prayer is a form of meditation, it is a practice of inner reconditioning. In addition, for Buddhists, prayer expresses an aspiration to pull something into one's life, like some new energy or purifying influence and share it with all beings. Likewise, prayer inspires the mind towards wisdom and compassion for others and ourselves (Karinchai, 2002).

Meditation contributes spiritual well-being and health. After serious practice the outcome is to discover and cultivate qualities such as compassion, equanimity, wisdom, joy and moral integrity (Panyanonthachai, 1997). However, many people want to reach the ultimate aim the practice which is an end to suffering, and to discover unconditional and complete freedom, flexibility and self - actualization. They want to be strong in spirituality, self-confidence and self worth (Patumchareanwattana, 1990). Meditation contributes to a good life, strong mind and self healing. Chumsai Na Ayutthaya's study (cited by Thepsuriyshon, 2005) shows that older people who practice Anapanasati meditation have spiritual well-being and peace after a session. Peace can control and stop selfishness. If the meditator practices seriously, it will have smooth breathing, bring about a good mind. Moreover, when the mind has concentration the body will release endorphins that make one feel relaxed, have good health and life (Wasee, 2001). According to Chumsai Na Ayutthaya's (cited by Thepsuriyshon, 2005) study it was found that after practicing meditation, the meditators were peaceful. In most meditative practices the EEG patterns exhibit a slowing and synchronization of alpha brain waves with theta brainwaves predominating. Apparently, an alpha wave pattern is most conducive to creativity and to the assimilation of new concepts, while the theta response seems to be a stage at which the mind is capable of deep insights and intuition. It is significant to note that practiced meditators can continue to exhibit alpha and theta waves after the meditation period has ended (Wallace et al 1971); the theta rhythm also occurs during a state of maximal awareness (Niedermeyer & Da Silva 1993). In addition, Triamchaisri (1999a) stated that during meditation decrease in body metabolism manifests with a decreased breathing pattern, decreased heart rate, and decreased blood pressure. There is also a marked decrease in the level of

oxygen utilization and carbon dioxide elimination by muscle. Furthermore, autonomic nervous system decreases in states of anxiety or stress, increases during relaxation, resulting in decreased norepinephrine blood levels which contribute to decreased lactate blood level, too. Therefore, decreasing of the lactate blood level could decrease anxiety and enhance good mental health which enhances the ability to cope with stress.

According to eight informants in the study who practiced mindfulness meditation in the morning after they woke up or before they went to bed, they would pray for a short time for a specific purpose such as healing or loving – kindness for ten to thirty minutes a wording to their own needs. Also if they prayed with purified mind, it would help them gain peace, and calmness like relaxation (Dhamma-isara, 2003). Meditation could also be applied in their daily activities, such as standing, walking, sitting, sleeping, talking or driving a car that when they had to know what they were doing, as these activities lead to mindfulness, which can be applied to charity, the precepts, and wisdom or the Eight Fold Path (Thai: Mak Pet) (Karinchai, 1999). This path can help a person develop moral strength overcome negative action and cultivate positive qualities (Karinchai, 2001). In addition, when the mind is at peace, is not selfish, then it must have virtues and concentration, enlightenment, and wisdom.

From the study the informant perceived the lived experience of using spiritual healing methods and tried to be patient and diligent in practising virtues, being charitable, keeping the five precepts and using wisdom. Consequently, the person would discover more consciousness, obeying strictly the five precepts (sila), and then the person would achieve real peace of mind and lead a happy, useful life with

mindfulness. Also “to see things as they really are” is a logical process of mental purification through self observation or a meditation called “Vipassana Meditation.” Karinchai (2002) showed that the precepts are a method to teach meditation. In other words meditation is a method to teach precepts. Therefore, the precepts and meditation teach each other and then wisdom is predominant and one can see things as they really are. The [teachings](#) of the [Buddha](#), declared that the way that leads to the end of [dukkha](#), or [suffering](#) is the Noble Eightfold Path.

A few informants were using yoga as their healing methods. Yoga exercises have a holistic effect and bring body, mind, consciousness and soul into balance (Fontaine, 2000). In this way yoga assists informants in coping with everyday demands, problems and worries. In the study informants expressed that yoga teaches basic principles of spiritual, mental, and physical energies to promote health and wellness. According to Anchalisankasa (2004) yoga develops a greater understanding in the practitioner of the purpose of life and one’s relationship to nature, culminating in wisdom. In addition Kuhn (1999) stressed that yoga focuses on achieving a higher state of consciousness and it is practiced for its physical and psychological benefits. It is used to relieve anxiety, stress, and pain, treat addictions and migraines, enhance spatial memory and increase auditory and visual perception (Fetrow & Avila, 2001; Cline, 2003).

Three informants chose traditional Chinese exercises to promote health. They selected taichi and qigong to perform daily. They perceived that tai chi and qigong have an underlying philosophy that life is precious. If practiced on a regular basis, taichi and qigong create physical balance and perseverance. Triamchaisri (1999b) gave more information that qigong is based on qi also qi means air, the

breath of life or vital life energy. This art involves breathing exercises combined with meditation. The breathing exercise helps induce a state of meditation. It also cultivates and deliberately controls a higher form of vital energy. Moreover, Earenireumitta & Vejchaphong (2004) said that some people who practice qigong everyday do this to treat and cure an existing illness, which others are trying to prevent the onset of diseases and reduce stress. It offers individuals a way to achieve a relaxed harmonious state of dynamic equilibrium. Similar, to meditation, qigong lowers blood pressure, the pulse rate, the metabolic rate, lactate production and oxygen demand which means a decrease of sympathetic nervous system functioning (Xu, 1994). Therefore those practicing the exercises achieve a state of tranquility, release from tension during the state of mindfulness, endorphins are released making them happy.

Pranic practice is a part of breathing control. According to the informants who practised abdominal orthodromic respiration 'or chest breath,' there is an upward and outward movement of the chest. The first is diaphragmatic breathing which involves using the diaphragm (the dome shaped muscle which separates the chest and the abdominal cavities) to breath, which pushes out the abdominal wall or 'tummy' when breathing in, and flattens when breathing out. The second is practicing nose inhaling and mouth exhaling in which the informants breath slowly and deeply through their nose. Nose breathing ensures slower breaths to the lungs since the nostrils are a smaller passageway than the mouth. This is the healthier way to breath as the lungs are able to fill completely, providing the body with sufficient oxygen (Phirasorn, 1997). The movement of the diaphragm gently massages the abdomen which increases blood circulation and functioning, thus promoting relief from stress (Phirasorn, 1997).

Three informants had belief and faith in universal energy. However the clients had to believe in universal energy first, and believe in Dasira Narada (a former monk) who discovered the universal energy healing method. At first the client and healer focus on the present moment while not putting any pressure or tension on the mind. They pray and ask for power. They ask for forgiveness from the fates. Then they relax and practice mindfulness by focusing on their breathing and pulling the energy in and fill the body with it. From the study, three informants were both client and healer, who were specialist in universal energy healing. The informants believed that the healer can bring about healing by manipulating some sort of life force, such as laying hands on the client and drawing appropriate amounts of energy to whatever areas of the client's body need it. The energy centers, also known as chakras (found in Hinduism), are opened to enable the patients to channel higher amounts of universal energy. After that energy passes through a purified channel in their body and by this process, treatment takes place. Oschman & Oschman (2000) stated that energy from outside can open the communication channels and facilitate tissue repair and replacement.

Johrei is a Japanese pranic healing, a kind of energy life force. From the study, one informant practiced johrei to help the body maintain good health. She mentioned that this healing is to clean or release negative aspects of karma. This method is easy to practice and success to cleanse or release suffering resulting from sins in the past existences. Moreover, this form of healing manipulates restores and balances the flow of energy which can solve emotional or spiritual problems rather than treat a specific physical problem (Saratat, 2006).

Modified macrobiotics

Some informants in the study chose modified macrobiotics for promoting health and longevity. From the study, the modified macrobiotics were healthy food, stick dance exercise, adequate rest, positive thinking and detoxification. All of them joined the modified macrobiotics course to learn more. They also read more in order to learn about supportive dietary and lifestyle changes that provided the greatest positive impacts on their life. The informants claimed that modified macrobiotics advocated a diet of in-season, locally grown locally produce which had no chemicals added. Besides, they stressed that the macrobiotic view was that eating proper varieties and proportions of foods helped them achieve balance and harmony. Therefore, appropriate food choices depend on variables like an individual's health, age, sex, geographic location, physical activity, and the season, etc. The macrobiotic diet emphasizes low in fat and high in complex carbohydrates, fiber, local fruits and vegetables. Fish should be eaten more than other meats. Eating a wide variety of foods is encouraged, because different foods nourish you in different ways (Ittarat, 2005). Subchareon (2002) stated that Thai traditional medicine uses herbal food or medicine for adjusting and balancing body element. However, a single herb sometime cannot cure the illness. It requires a balance of several herbs, a more holistic approach. Besides, stick dance exercise practiced to heal physical pain, to make muscles, tendons and bones flexible making one more active and more relaxed. After the body relaxes, it is a good time for growth hormone (GH) to release in plasma levels. Some of the effects of GH are immediate: increased energy and also ability to concentrate, others take a few months to a year to show up: increased aerobic capacity and strength, thickening of hair, tightening of wrinkles and loose skin, decrease in visceral fat; and one takes two years: strengthening of osteoporotic bones (Bilkis & Mark, 1998). Beyond these effects, the informant informed that

after practicing the stick dance exercise, they became more positive in their thinking, relaxed, open minded and really happy. When facing life with happiness, it could alleviate the suffering from illness or worry.

Moreover, detoxification was also used by the informants who practiced macrobiotics. The coffee enema was used to detoxify the liver. It is a low-volume enema that remains only in the sigmoid colon. There is a duct between the sigmoid colon and the liver called the entero-hepatic circulation system. When the stool reaches this point, it contains many toxins, which are sent to the liver for detoxification. The coffee enema will increase the transit time in the bowel. The caffeine that is absorbed into the entero-hepatic system causes the liver ducts, including the bile ducts, to empty into the sigmoid colon and be eliminated. For macrobiotics accept the body and mind as the same, mind made body and body made mind. A macrobiotic practice encourages the body's natural ability to heal itself. If the body is not burdened by toxins and excesses, it can function better and thus heal any illness that does occur. For this reason, macrobiotics is a lifestyle involving an awareness that humans are connected to nature, and therefore, what is best for physical bodies are those things from the earth that aim at restoring and maintaining health (Wasee, 2001). The concept of treating cancer by Dr. Aree Wachiramano, consist of 1) having sanitary food 2) breathing fresh air 3) having good emotions 4) exercise, especially fast walking in the morning and evening 5) bowel elimination or detoxification 6) enough rest and 7) the Four Paths of Accomplishment having (basis for success) 7.1) will; aspiration 7.2) energy; effort; exertion 7.3) thoughtfulness, active thought, 7.4) investigation; examination; reasoning; testing (Wachiramano, 2004).

Outcomes of using spiritual healing methods

Chronically ill clients usually perceived that their lives and spirituality are threatened (Intarasombut, 1993; Phuwarawutpanit, 1993). As a result, they felt hopeless with long-term treatments which caused suffering from unavoidable side effects of treatments. They turned to alternative treatment for their own salvation. In this study, all of the informants were Buddhist. One essence of Buddhism is the emphasis on the Noble Eightfold Path or the “middle way” a way of life aimed at achieving the final goal, which is to end the inadequacy or suffering of life. It consists of eight factors and can be categorized into three fundamental modes of training, called Trisikha (Chanchamnon, 2003). The three modes are sila (morality) resulting in a peaceful mind and loving kindness, samadhi (concentration) resulting in mindfulness and enhanced body system functioning, and panna (wisdom) resulting in understanding the nature of life or attaining wisdom, gaining faith and belief in the Law of Karma, relieving suffering and recovering completely from illness.

The informants believed in sila. It is for the development of bodily and verbal actions under Right speech, Right action and livelihood. And Samadhi, for development in mentality under Right effort, Right mindfulness and Right concentration. The informants had changed their behavior in some ways such as **trying to experience consciousness every day**, strictly observing the five precepts, not killing any animals and not committing sin. The precepts teach what is to be avoided, being negative in nature. This refers to the practice of abstaining from killing, stealing, committing sexual crimes, telling lies, taking intoxicants such as liquor and

other habit-forming drugs such as hemp and opium. These practices are characteristics of honest, respectable persons. Payutto (2002) said that the observing precepts could be compared to cleaning an area ready for work. However, in daily life the informants practise mindfulness or concentrate on the present time all the time. The results are peaceful states of mind and mindfulness. Therefore, when a person develops moral strength, the consciousness will follow. One informant emphasized that when her mind was suffering, she always read Dhamma books which made her feel strong to face every problem which attacked her. There was one informant who said that she went to listen to Dhamma on religious days. She told that when she heard Dhamma teachings, she felt like she was sitting in front of the Buddha and afterwards she felt delighted. It was an inspiration. I strengthen mind, consciousness and fulfilled her life. Some informants listened to a Dhamma sermon every morning. It became a daily habit. Two informants had moral conversations with a guru who specialized in Buddhism, and applied them in their real life. The principle of Dhamma covered several moral topics such as the Law of Karma (cause and effect) good deeds, detachment, realization of the inescapability of birth, ageing, pain and death. The mentioned activities were able to reduce their bad deed, selfishness which eventually resulted in happiness, peace, a conscious mind and mental relief. Moreover, it could make life better in an ideal society (Karinchai, 2002). Consequently, the person would discover more consciousness, keeping and purifying the five precepts (sila) with seriously, and then the person would achieve real peace of mind and lead a happy, useful life with mindfulness, also “to see things as they really are” it is a logical process of mental purification through self observation or meditation. This is called panna or wisdom which consists of Right view and Right thought.

Our thoughts and feelings influence the body via two kinds of mechanism: the nervous system and the circulatory system (Snyder, 2003). These are the pathways of communication between the brain and the rest of the body. The brain reaches into the body via the nervous system. This allows it to send nerve impulses into all the body's tissues and influence their behavior and express mental functions (Singh, 1998). The brain can thus affect the behavior of the immune system with its nerve endings extending into the bone marrow (the birthplace of all white cells), the thymus, the spleen, and the lymph nodes. However, Barrett (1993) emphasized that inadequate lymph leads to disorders of the nerve cells and endocrine glands. Practising mind-body connection methods can stimulate the thymus gland resulting in adequate production of lymphocytes, which are an essential component of the immune system. In addition, Cline (2003) conducted the study of the effects of exam stress on medical students and found significant drops in the activity of nature killer (NK) cells as well as in the numbers of NK percentage of T helper cells in the blood. Therefore, the chemistry of the stress response has been found to lower immune functioning. On the other hand, previous research studies reported the immune function enhance effects of positive emotion associated with relaxation and positive imagery, according to Kiecolt-Glaser, Glaser, Willinger and colleagues (1985 cited by Nguyen, 1991) they found that relaxation and guided imagery techniques produced a significant increase in NK cell activity among older subjects. They reported the enhancement of immunocompetence in a geriatric population of 45 subjects given relaxation training 3 times a week, social contact, or no contact. At the end of the intervention, the relaxation group showed a significant increase in NK activity and decrease in antibody titers to herpes simplex virus, both signs of enhanced cellular immunity.

These healing were methods practiced in order to maintain physical health, induce altered states of consciousness, develop insight, achieve peace, and gain spiritual strength as well as spiritual purification. The special training of consciousness effectively regulates every biological system of the body as well as its technical and mechanical facilities. Cultivation of the mind leads to cultivation of the body, leading to further cultivation of the mind and so on, eventually attaining an exquisite level of cooperation and coordination between the two.