

Seminar explores optimism in a pessimistic world

By ALANA LISTOE
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"Ultimately, it is about changing the world and we think this is how you do it," Puran Bair said Sunday at the close of a weekend seminar on restoring optimism.

Puran and wife, Susanna Bair, of Tucson, Ariz., believe that being optimistic heals the heart and therefore can heal the Earth through the love of another. They delivered this message to a group of people who attended a three-day seminar over the weekend.

Betsy Hart of Missoula believes that meditation focusing on heart rhythm lowered her blood pressure so much that she has been medication free for four

years.

Hart found the couple's book, "Living from the Heart," more than five years ago at a bookstore. The concepts made sense to her, she said, so she further investigated and took an online course from the couple's spiritual school, Institute for Applied Meditation.

The practices she learned since that time has given her a tremendous amount of body awareness and enabled her to successfully manage her lupus, she said.

"It has changed my system's response to stress," Hart said.

Optimism is the positive interpretation of one's current experience and the confidence that she or he can have an influence on the

future, according to information supplied at the seminar.

The Bairs believe pessimism is dangerous because it leads to self-destructive behaviors, a sense of hopelessness and despair and generates damaging chemicals in the body.

The work the couple promotes is heart meditation — a practice in which one becomes conscious of his or her heartbeat and breathing. This is accomplished by a shift in attention and breath

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Susanna Bair, of Tucson, Ariz., lead a three-day seminar on optimism this past weekend in Helena.



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rhythm to create a connection between the nervous, endocrine, respiratory and circulatory systems — literally uniting the heart, mind and body, according to their brochure.

"The heart is a resource and treasure that has yet to be discovered," Susanna Bair said. "We need to learn how to deal with pain instead of taking pain killers."

Puran said the heart in all people has been damaged and hurt, therefore creating

"holes" where needed energy seeps out. It is through mediation and optimism that the heart can heal and begin to have a greater love for the world and its people, he said.

"We want change with greater compassion for diversity," Puran said.

Attendees at the seminar learned that the power and capacity of the heart may be restored by concentration on the physical heart, rhythmic breathing, expanding the scope of attention, and honoring one's past experiences.

Susanna said this topic is particularly important today.

"We find that America really needs to recover the optimism," she said.

Bob Blanchet of Wyoming says he started meditation classes with Dan McMannis (a student of the Bairs) a year ago with his wife mainly for personal growth.

"I feel like the state of the world requires renewed optimism," Blanchet said.

"We make the assumption that optimism is a natural thing that gets eroded over time," Puran said. "We see optimism as a result of a strong heart and pessimism as what happens when the heart becomes weak."

He added that people

today "get crabby and are easily annoyed," a direct result from a lack of energy in the heart.

Ideally, he said, the heart should continuously give energy and love and continuously recharge itself too.

Susanna Bair pointed out that 100 years ago today — Sept. 11, 1906 — marked the beginning of Gandhi's non-violent path to peace in the world.

The couple travels all over the country holding seminars, however this was their first time in Montana. Tonight, they'll speak at St. Patrick's Hospital in Missoula from 7 to 9 p.m.