Healing Spaces: The Science of Place and Wellbeing: Implications For Designing Healthy Spaces For Healthcare Settings

Can stress make you sick? Can belief help healing? Do the place and space around you affect your health? These are the questions that Dr. Sternberg explores in her books “Healing Spaces: The Science of Place and Well-being” and “The Balance Within: The Science Connecting Health and Emotions”. In her lecture, Dr. Sternberg will answer these questions and will address how the science of the mind-body connection explains these phenomena. She will discuss how the physical environment, through each of the senses, can affect emotions negatively or positively, by triggering the brain’s stress or relaxation responses. These in turn explain how place and space around can either help healing or potentially harm health. Dr. Sternberg will review the many connections between the brain and the immune system, which underlie these effects. Understanding these concepts will allow individuals to structure their personal environment and activities to best buffer the negative effects of stress. The lecture will help healthcare providers judge how and when to judiciously apply mind-body therapies in conjunction with classical therapeutic approaches to maintain health, and will assist healthcare and hospital designers in creating spaces that support and facilitate healing. These principles also apply to the effects of the larger world on health, including urban design, which are both good for the environment and help sustain health. For more information, see <www.esthersternberg.com>.

Learning Objectives:

1) Define the concept of stress and the stress response and how stress can exacerbate illness through activation of the brain’s hormonal stress response.
2) Define the concept of the relaxation response, describe how mind-body interventions activate it and the neural pathways that influence the immune response and health.
3) Identify ways that mind-body therapeutic interventions can counter the effects of stress, activate the relaxation response and, when used together with conventional therapies, can help to maintain health and treat disease.
4) Define ways in which the physical environment affects the stress and relaxation responses and activates neural pathways that influence the immune system and health.