

Earthing

The most important
health discovery ever?



Clinton Ober
Stephen T. Sinatra, M.D.
Martin Zucker

Foreword by James L. Oschman, Ph.D.,
author of *Energy Medicine: The Scientific Basis*

Praise for Earthing

“This inspired and well-researched book explains the perils we face by being disconnected from the power and energy of the Earth and its boundless storehouse of free electrons. Could much of the disease, chronic inflammation, poor sleep, and more be the result of this? A brilliant hypothesis well-grounded in science.”

—NICHOLAS PERRICONE, M.D.,
AUTHOR OF *AGELESS FACE, AGELESS MIND*

“Earthing ranks right up there with the discovery of penicillin. This book is probably the most important health read of the twenty-first century.”

—ANN LOUISE GITTLEMAN, PH.D., C.N.S.,
AUTHOR OF *THE FAT FLUSH PLAN*

“Earthing may be as fundamental as sunlight, air, water, and nutrients. ‘May the Ground be with you!’”

—GARY E. SCHWARTZ, PH.D., PROFESSOR OF PSYCHOLOGY
AND MEDICINE, UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA,
AND AUTHOR OF *THE ENERGY HEALING EXPERIMENTS*

“People have lost touch with the Earth. From a biblical perspective, people who lose touch with the Earth lose touch with God. Earthing reconnects us to the planet, to others, and, in a sense, to God.”

—GABRIEL COUSENS, M.D., AUTHOR OF *SPIRITUAL NUTRITION*

“Hormonal imbalances are so prevalent among women. Earthing has a profoundly beneficial effect in helping to balance the system and reduce symptoms.”

—AMANDA WARD, N.D., ENCINITAS, CALIFORNIA

“Earthing connects us to Nature and Nature is the ultimate source of health and healing. This book is a manual for one of Nature’s great healing secrets.”

—JOHN GRAY, PH.D., AUTHOR OF *MEN ARE FROM MARS,
WOMEN ARE FROM VENUS*

“Most people want the most health benefits for the least amount of work. This is it! Earthing gives you more benefits for the least work. There is no work!”

—DAVID WOLFE, M.S., AUTHOR OF
SUPERFOODS: THE FOOD AND MEDICINE OF THE FUTURE

“The feedback from patients is now so strong that I know predictably, as a doctor, this will change a person’s life.”

—DAVID GERSTEN, M.D., AUTHOR OF *ARE YOU GETTING ENLIGHTENED OR LOSING YOUR MIND?*

*“This works! It has great promise.
Something simple that should be used everywhere.”*

—RICHARD DELANY, M.D., MILTON, MASSACHUSETTS

“Earthing is a revolutionary health breakthrough that will change your life. Read this book, get grounded, and start the process of breaking the stress and illness cycle.”

—MARTIN GALLAGHER, M.D., D.C., AUTHOR OF
DR. GALLAGHER’S GUIDE TO 21ST CENTURY MEDICINE

“Wonderful book! Earthing is a return to the healing power of Nature. Scientifically based and intuitively correct, here’s a simple but powerful way to restore your health on all levels.”

—HYLA CASS, M.D., AUTHOR OF *8 WEEKS TO VIBRANT HEALTH*

“Sleeping grounded gives me sound uninterrupted sleep. I awake feeling refreshed, even with all my traveling.”

—MIRANDA KERR, SUPERMODEL

“Earthing has been a huge boost for me and the recovery process from injuries and exhaustion. I’m able to come back a lot stronger and feel a lot better.”

—CHRIS LIETO, THREE-TIME IRONMAN TRIATHLETE CHAMPION



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Foreword

By James L. Oschman, Ph.D.

Author of *Energy Medicine: The Scientific Basis and Energy Medicine in Therapeutics and Human Performance*

This book unfolds an amazing story of discovery, a process that you, the reader, will soon experience for yourself as you read through the pages ahead.

It is a rare and humbling experience for a scientist to have the opportunity to explore new ground—and this story is all about ground—and participate in research that quickly infuses better health and more happiness into people's lives. It has been an exciting and challenging process for me. I was forced to ask questions that had never been asked before. The answers have ranged from fascinating to astounding, and they have shed light on some of the most important unsolved problems in physiology and medicine.

Among the many surprising revelations this book holds is an obvious, fundamental, and yet overlooked answer to the question of inflammation—recognized as the central health issue of our time—that surely will lay the foundation for many academic investigations and doctoral projects well into the future. I say that without equivocation, as an experienced academic cell biologist and biophysicist who has published dozens of articles in some of the world's leading scientific journals. The research in this book puts forward, and from a completely unexpected direction, a powerful reason for the proliferation of inflammation and, most importantly, what we can do about it.

As you read this book, you will quickly learn some profound and life-impacting facts you never knew before about our relationship with the planet we live on. You'll learn, for instance, how electrons play a central role in this relationship. The role of electrons in biology and health has long been my favorite subject. Of special importance in my explorations of the electronic aspects of life was an association during the 1980s with the leading research group studying this subject, consisting of Nobel Laureate Albert Szent-Györgyi and colleagues from around the world at the Marine Biological Laboratory in Woods Hole, Massachusetts. A number of these great inquiring minds were electronic engineers and materials scientists recruited to study a field he created and named *electronic biology*. Dr. Szent-Györgyi was considered one of the leading scientists of the twentieth century, and his research and writings have been a continuing source of inspiration and insight. I have published a series of articles and two books on the ways electrons can move about within the human body and the ways various therapeutic methods influence electron motions. The research summarized in this book adds a whole new dimension to our understandings of electronic biology.

This book traces the discoveries of Clinton Ober, a pioneer in the cable TV industry, who uncovered the health benefits of Earthing—his term for connecting ourselves to the surface of our planet by sitting, standing, or walking barefoot on the Earth or by sleeping on special conductive sheets and pads connected to a simple metal rod stuck in the ground outside a bedroom window. Clint invented these sleep systems and a number of other devices that help us to restore a vital but previously overlooked connection with Mother Earth.

Many people describe a sense of well-being when they walk barefoot on the Earth. The stories and the research in the book reveal the background, dynamics, and implications of this feel-good sensation, a real experience indicative of something profoundly important that most of us have been missing in our lives. This missing link is so profound in fact that it seems to do away with or dramatically improve so many health challenges common in this day and age: insomnia, the chronic pain of multiple diseases and injuries, exhaustion, stress, anxiety, and premature aging. I was quickly and enthusiastically drawn into this research when I saw how many people experienced a wide variety of health benefits from simply

connecting their bodies to the Earth. Especially impressive has been the experience my physician friend and colleague, Jeff Spencer, D.C., has had during the spectacular series of victories of the American cycling teams in the Tour de France. You'll read about Jeff's remarkable story later in the book. These observations were augmented with my personal observations of many friends who benefited from the application of Earthing systems in their lives. When my massage therapist began using Earthing with her clients she achieved so many successes that physicians in the area began sending her their most difficult cases to treat. My own challenge was to determine precisely how Earthing produces such benefits and to find a way of explaining this accurately in the language of science.

Our research on Earthing has uncovered what is perhaps the most simple and natural remedy against proliferating, painful, and often deadly conditions, including the diseases of aging, created by various kinds of inflammation. As you will read further on, our hypothesis for how this remedy works is unlike any you have ever heard. In all its ramifications, we think it represents a new healing paradigm.

In short, Earthing restores and maintains the human body's most natural electrical state, which in turn promotes optimum health and functionality in daily life. The primordial natural energy emanating from the Earth is the ultimate anti-inflammatory and the ultimate anti-aging medicine.

For more than a decade, Clint Ober has tirelessly pursued a one-man mission to awaken a skeptical world to a simple and forgotten fact: that the Earth beneath our feet contains great healing energy and that connecting ourselves to this energy is immediately beneficial as well as intuitively and remarkably simple.

As with any new discovery, Clint had to endure skepticism and derision from "experts," some of whom regarded him as crazy. But he persisted and has now gathered significant scientific evidence for his out-of-the-box idea. Moreover, thousands of people who have applied the concept of Earthing in their lives feel, look, and sleep better, and they have less pain.

As we explored absolutely new avenues of research in order to validate the concept of Earthing and determine how it affects the human body, Clint turned out to be a rock solid and dedicated guide to those of us with Ph.D.s after our names. Clint often refers to his lack of education as a scientist, but what he has accomplished shows that determined and inspired

individuals can accomplish an enormous amount by teaching themselves what they need to know. I have been continually astonished by Clint's precise and accurate insights that go beyond the conclusions a logical scientific mind would usually develop. I feel that I have been privileged to work with a genuine discoverer and pioneer whose interest in helping others exceeds any personal interest by far.

Steve Sinatra, a Connecticut cardiologist who specializes in integrative medicine and has an interest in electromedicine, met Clint in 2001 and saw great promise for Earthing in his own field of cardiology, as well as medicine in general. Steve encouraged Clint to stick with it and pursue research, particularly the connection with inflammation, which had been recently found to be the probable cause of heart disease.

Persist he did. Eventually, Clint found open-minded experts in the fields of medicine, physiology, and biophysics, and inspired a series of research projects showing that the surface of the Earth is like one gigantic anti-inflammatory, sleep booster, and energizer—all wrapped up in one.

Now, Clint, Steve, and veteran health writer Martin Zucker have teamed up to present the exciting story of Earthing and how it can help all of us Earthlings.

To break new ground means to do something different from anything done before. If ever the term *groundbreaking* applies to a book, it certainly does here, literally and figuratively. This book is about the ground beneath our feet, and the revelation of a vital electrical continuum between the Earth and the living organisms that dwell upon it.

Walk, stand, and sit barefoot on the ground for a half hour or so. If you have PMS or arthritic pain or a backache or indigestion or jet lag or are just feeling fatigued, go outside (weather permitting, of course) with your bare feet placed directly on the Earth.

At the end of that time you will feel better. And as you feel better, a lightbulb will go off in your head. You will realize that although you live on the surface of the Earth your lifestyle has separated you from the limitless healing energy that, unknown to you, the surface beneath your feet holds. It's there, and always there, and yours for the taking.





CHAPTER 1

Electrical You and Your Electrical Planet

Have you ever noticed a subtle tingling or sensation of warmth rising up from your feet during a barefoot stroll on a sandy beach or grassy field glistening with the morning dew?

Did you feel revitalized at the end of your walk?

If you did, you experienced the Earth energizing your body.

The fact is that we live on a planet alive with natural energies. Its surface teems with subtly pulsating frequencies, a phenomenon unknown to most people. Who regards the sand, grass, sidewalk, or dirt beneath their feet as an energy field?

But that indeed is what the ground is and always has been.

Put another way, your planet is a six sextillion (that's six followed by twenty-one zeroes) metric ton battery that is continually being replenished by solar radiation, lightning, and heat from its deep-down molten core. And just like a battery in a car that keeps the motor running and the wheels turning, so, too, do the rhythmic pulsations of natural energy flowing through and emanating from the surface of the Earth keep the biological machinery of global life running in rhythm and balance—for everything that lives on the land or in the sea.

People.

Animals.

Fish.

Plants.

Trees.

Bugs.

Bacteria.

Viruses.

Throughout history, humans have strolled, sat, stood, and slept on the ground—the skin of their bodies touching the skin of the Earth—oblivious to the fact that such simple contact transfers a natural electrical signal to the body.

Only recently has the knowledge and significance of this connection been explored and explained by scientific experts in geophysics, biophysics, electrical engineering, electrophysiology, and medicine. From them, we are learning that the Earth's electrical energy maintains the order of our own bodily frequencies just as a conductor controls the coherence and cadence of an orchestra. We all live and function electrically on an electrical planet. We are each of us a collection of dynamic electrical circuits. In the living matrix of our complex bodies, trillions of cells constantly transmit and receive energy in the course of their programmed biochemical reactions. Think of them as microscopic electronic machines. The movement of nutrients and water into the cells is regulated by electric fields, and each type of cell has a frequency range in which it operates. Your heart, brain, nervous system, muscles, and immune system are prime examples of electrical subsystems operating within your “bioelectrical” body. The fact is, all of your movements, behaviors, and actions are energized by electricity.

OUR LOST ELECTRICAL ROOTS

Most people, even in this scientific age, are totally unaware of their bioelectrical nature. Practically no one has the slightest notion of an electrical or energetic connection between his or her body and the Earth. Nobody learns about it in school. So nobody knows that we have largely become disconnected and separated from the Earth. In developed societies, in particular, we have essentially lost our electrical roots. Our bare feet, with their rich network of nerve endings, rarely touch the ground. We wear insulating synthetic-soled shoes. We sleep on elevated beds made from insulating material. Most of us in the modern, industrialized world live disconnected from the Earth's surface. Although it is not something you probably have ever thought about, you may be suffering needlessly because of this disconnect. And you may be suffering severely, and in more ways than you could ever imagine.

As an analogy, think of a lightbulb with a loose connection. The bulb flickers, shines weakly, or doesn't light up at all. Many people go through life with flickering or weak health.

We believe this book is the first ever written about Mother Earth's natural "vibes" and how they keep us healthy and heal us—if we connect to the source. Disconnected, the body seems vulnerable and prone to dysfunction, inflammation-related disease, and accelerated aging—a startling theory just beginning to gather scientific momentum.

This is the subject of our book.

The natural frequencies of the Earth that we speak of are waves of energy caused by the motions of subatomic particles called free electrons. Nobody has ever seen an electron, but you can think of them in the setting of a beehive. The bees, buzzing around the hive, are like electrons that move around the atomic nucleus in a "cloud" of energy. Another analogy used over the years is that of planets revolving around the sun. The nucleus contains protons, with a positive charge, and neutrons, that have, as their name implies, no charge. Electrons have a negative charge.

ELECTRICALLY CONDUCTIVE YOU

To understand the primordial relationship between bioelectrical you and your electrical planet, consider for a brief moment three types of materials used in electricity: conductors, insulators, and semiconductors. An example of a conductor is the metallic copper wiring in the walls of your house or in the electrical cord that you plug into an outlet from an appliance. The outer waves of electrons in conductors—corresponding in a simplistic way to the outermost bees buzzing around the beehive or to the distant planets orbiting around the sun—are so loosely bound that they easily move in the space between the atoms. They form a kind of gas around atoms and flow freely throughout the solid conductive material. That is why they are called free electrons. Think of them as free spirits, so to speak, not bound in a relationship with any atom composing the solid material.

In insulating materials, electrons are held in a tight grip by their atoms. There are no free electrons and consequently no current can flow through these materials. Examples of insulating materials include plastic, rubber,

glass, and wood. You can now see why most of the time you are separated from the Earth. Your shoes' soles are made of plastic or rubber, and your house is made mainly of wood. Semiconductors are in between, sometimes conducting, sometimes not. Their electrical conductance is not as good as a conductor but not as bad as an insulator. Semiconductors are the backbone of modern electronic equipment because their conductance can be controlled by the application of an electric field.

Just like the Earth, your body is mostly water and minerals, and both are excellent conductors of electrons. The free electrons pulsating perpetually on the surface of the conductive Earth, fed by natural phenomenon—solar radiation, thousands of lightning strikes per minute, and energy generated from the inner core of the planet—are easily transferred up, into, and throughout your body as long as there is *direct skin contact* with the ground.

Homo erectus, back a hundred thousand generations or so, didn't know a thing about any of this. Neither did the hunter-gatherers who followed in the human timeline. Neither did the cultivator civilizations working the land about four hundred generations ago. And neither did the more recent Industrial Age incarnations. Even in today's electronic and wireless age, few know about the Earth's brimming reservoir of energetic free electrons.

Scientists back in the late 1800s first measured the Earth's subtle ground currents at different places around the world, using words such as "tranquil" and "quiet" to describe them. Present-day science refers to them as "telluric currents" and recognizes them as part of a larger system—called the "global electrical circuit"—involving clouds and the entire atmosphere. Geophysicists believe that this bank of almost limitless energy is continuously replenished with free electrons via an average of 5,000 lightning strikes per minute occurring perpetually around the planet. Without getting technical, the electrical potential present on the Earth's surface rises and falls according to the position of the sun. The intensity is more positive and energetic during the day, in support of your daily activities from wake up to shut down, and less positive and energetic during nighttime hours, promoting zzzzzzs. This daily high and low pattern sets in motion and orchestrates internal body mechanisms that regulate sleep-wake cycles, hormone production, and maintenance of health.

PAST CONNECTIONS

The basic phenomena of electricity were known since antiquity, but electricity was only harnessed for industrial and residential use about 120 years ago or so. The electron itself was discovered only in 1897, so virtually throughout the human timeline nobody knew anything about electrons. But there was plenty of knowledge over the eons of time that the ground held special healing energy and was a basic aspect of connectedness to Nature. The Earth was sacred. This knowledge, passed down over the generations, has survived in one form or another around the globe. Civilizations everywhere recognized and tuned in to the cycles of Nature for survival and health. They were aware of fundamental rhythms that regulate, for instance, sleep-wake cycles and maintenance of health, and they knew that we functioned in coordination with the Earth's cycles and rhythms. Awareness existed of connectivity among the principles of Earth, life, and health, but expressed in the language of the day.

Qi (pronounced *chee*) is a central principle in the long history of Chinese knowledge and is regarded as the energy or natural force that fills the universe. From India's Vedic past comes an equivalent term, *prana*, meaning "vital force."

In the Chinese tradition, Heaven Qi is made up of the forces that heavenly bodies exert on the Earth, such as sunshine, moonlight, and the moon's effect on the tides. Earth Qi, influenced and controlled by Heaven Qi, is made up of lines and patterns of energy, as well as the Earth's magnetic field and the heat concealed underground. And within the Earth Qi, individuals, animals, and plants have their own Qi field. All natural things, in this concept, grow and are influenced by the natural cycles of Heaven Qi and Earth Qi.

Earth Qi is absorbed, without thinking about it, when we walk bare-foot, which may explain why it's so relaxing to walk without shoes and why exercises geared toward strengthening the body and relaxing the mind (yoga, tai chi, and qigong, for instance) are often practiced without footwear. A central focus in Chinese practices involves "growing a root" and has to do with opening up communication between the bottom of the feet and the Earth. This process occurs through the "yong quan point," also known in acupuncture as the "kidney 1 point."

The ancient Greeks surely knew something about this concept. Hercules, one of the greatest heroes of Greek mythology, fought and defeated the giant Antaeus, who was renowned as a great wrestler. As the story goes, Antaeus was invincible as long as his feet remained in contact with the Earth, from where he drew his strength. He had never been defeated. Hercules, knowing Antaeus' secret, lifts the giant off the ground and strangles him to death.

Native Americans certainly honored the connection to the Earth. The late Ota Kte (Luther Standing Bear), a writer, educator, and tribal leader from the Lakota Sioux tradition, summed it up this way: "The old people came literally to love the soil. They sat on the ground with the feeling of being close to a mothering power. It was good for the skin to touch the Earth, and the old people liked to remove their moccasins and walk with their bare feet on the sacred Earth. The soil was soothing, strengthening, cleansing, and healing."

CONNECT TO THE EARTH AND HEAL

This book will show you just how soothing, strengthening, and healing the Earth is. It will totally change the way you regard the ground under your feet and your relationship to the planet you live on.

For most people, reconnecting with Mother Earth usually means camping, hiking, gardening, going to the beach, or pursuing some other activity that returns us—in body and soul—to the bosom of Nature. The reconnection we talk about in this book is something different. By reconnection we mean taking off your shoes and socks and sitting, standing, or walking barefoot on the ground, something that is absolutely free and available (of course, where safe and comfortable). The reconnection can also involve the use of conductive bed sheets or floor pads linked by wire to a ground rod outside your house or office, or plugged into a wall outlet with a modern Earth ground system.

Either way, we call this reconnection process "Earthing" or "grounding," terms we will use interchangeably. They simply mean you are connected to Mother Earth. What you are doing is akin to what is well known in the electrical world as grounding, the common practice of connecting equipment and appliances to the Earth to protect against shocks, shorts,

and interference. Applied to people, Earthing naturally protects the body's delicate bioelectrical circuitry against static electrical charges and interference. Most importantly, it facilitates the reception of free electrons and the stabilizing electrical signals and energy of the Earth. Earthing remedies an electrical instability and electron deficiency you never knew you had. It refills and recharges your body with something you never knew you were missing . . . or needed.

Exposure to sunlight produces vitamin D in the body. It's needed for health. Exposure to the ground provides an electrical "nutrient" in the form of electrons. Think of these electrons as vitamin G—G for ground. Just like vitamin D, you need vitamin G for your health as well.

As you will read in this book, the results of Earthing often translate into a significant improvement—even total transformations—in health and vitality. One patient, a thirty-six-year-old woman with advanced multiple sclerosis (MS), was so happy about her improvement after Earthing that she once ran out of her house, stood in the middle of the street, and screamed to all her neighbors to get grounded. She said she wanted to start the "barefoot revolution" and teach everyone how to get well. She had tried Earthing out of desperation—something someone had told her about—after a doctor advised her to purchase an adjustable bed, a large screen television, and to make herself as comfortable as possible. MS doesn't get better, the doctor told her. In her case it did, and dramatically so.

Another woman spent over five years with debilitating pain, inflammation, fatigue, and sleep problems after a serious car accident. Despite a long career in the health care industry, she found herself locked in an exhausting struggle to regain her health. She went from one practitioner and treatment to another. "Like Humpty Dumpty in the nursery rhyme," she said, "all of the king's horses and all the king's men could not put me back together again." Unable to work, she found herself instinctively drawn to lying in the grass or walking barefoot on the beach. In 1999, a friend gave her a conductive bed pad. She slept on it nightly, and within months her pain, fatigue, and sleep problems vanished.

"After years of pills and failed costly treatments, all I did was lay down on my bed and sleep!" she said. "I believe our bodies have the ability to recover from almost any condition if we relieve imbalances caused by stress. To do this, we must provide our bodies with essential natural elements,

Earthing at a Glance

What is Earthing?

Earthing involves coupling your body to the Earth's eternal and gentle surface energies. It means walking barefoot outside and/or sitting, working or sleeping inside while connected to a conductive device that delivers the natural healing energy of the Earth into your body. For more than ten years, thousands of people around the world—men, women, children, and athletes—have incorporated Earthing into their daily routines. The results have been documented and they are extraordinary.

What isn't Earthing?

You are not in any sense being electrocuted. Earthing is among the most natural and safest things you can do.

What happens?

Your body becomes suffused with negative-charged free electrons abundantly present on the surface of the Earth. Your body immediately equalizes to the same electric energy level, or potential, as the Earth.

What do you feel?

Sometimes, a warm, tingling sensation and often feelings of ease and well-being.

Will you feel better?

Usually, yes, and often rapidly. The degree of improvement varies from person to person. The important thing is to make Earthing a long-term addition to your daily routine, and to do it as much as possible so as to gain maximum benefits. When Earthing is stopped, symptoms tend to slowly return.

What does Earthing do?

Observations and research indicate the following benefits from Earthing; we expect many more to emerge with ongoing studies. Earthing:

- Defuses the cause of inflammation, and improves or eliminates the symptoms of many inflammation-related disorders.
- Reduces or eliminates chronic pain.

- Improves sleep in most cases.
- Increases energy.
- Lowers stress and promotes calmness in the body by cooling down the nervous system and stress hormones.
- Normalizes the body's biological rhythms.
- Thins blood and improves blood pressure and flow.
- Relieves muscle tension and headaches.
- Lessens hormonal and menstrual symptoms.
- Dramatically speeds healing and helps prevent bedsores.
- Reduces or eliminates jet lag.
- Protects the body against potentially health-disturbing environmental electromagnetic fields (EMFs).
- Accelerates recovery from intense athletic activity.

including clean air, proper nutrition and pure water, and the missing link, our connection to the natural electrical rhythms of the Earth.”

Even athletes, who operate at the most intense levels of physical human performance, have learned to ground and plug in to the natural energy of the Earth. From a group perspective, perhaps the most dramatic test of Earthing's effectiveness in recent years was demonstrated by victorious American-sponsored cycling teams at the Tour de France. The extreme physical and mental stress in this grueling race often causes sickness, tendonitis, and poor sleep among competitors. They tend to experience slow wound healing from accidents. In the 2003 to 2005 races, and again in 2007, team cyclists were grounded after their daily competition. They reported better sleep, significantly less illness, practically no tendonitis, dramatic recovery from the day's racing, and faster healing of injuries. The practice has now been found to be so beneficial that many top athletes—including swimmers, NFL football players, triathletes, and motorcycle racers—routinely Earth themselves.

Earthing is simple, basic, and powerful. We regard it as a genuine missing link in the health equation, something with astounding potential to do much good for humanity. Connecting to the Earth—either by being barefooted outside or in contact with a grounded device inside—doesn't cure you of any disease or condition. What it does is to reunite you with the natural electrical signals from the Earth that govern all organisms dwelling upon it. It restores your body's natural internal electrical stability and rhythms, which in turn promote normal functioning of body systems, including the cardiovascular, respiratory, digestive, and immune systems. It remedies an electron deficiency to reduce inflammation—the common cause of disease. It shifts the nervous system from a stress-dominated mode to one of calmness and you sleep better. By reconnecting, you enable your body to return to its normal electrical state, better able to self-regulate and self-heal.

In 1863, the eminent biologist T. H. Huxley stated that “the question of all questions for humanity, the problem which lies behind all others and is more interesting than any of them, is that of the determination of our place in nature and our relation to the cosmos.” The content of this book explores that question from the simple perspective that your place in nature, in your immediate cosmos, requires you to be directly and routinely connected to the Earth under your feet.

In the pages ahead, we will explore the health implications of mankind's disconnect and present the unusual story about how the disconnect and the reconnect were discovered. You will read accounts of amazing healing from doctors and people from all walks of life. Most importantly, you will learn how easy it is to reconnect, to get Earthed, and to feel better.



CHAPTER 2

The Disconnect Syndrome

*Illnesses do not come upon us out of the blue.
They are developed from small daily sins against Nature.
When enough sins have accumulated, illnesses will suddenly appear.*

—HIPPOCRATES

The father of medicine clearly knew what he was talking about 2,500 years ago when he saw his Greek countrymen committing all kinds of sins against Nature. Imagine what he would think today just by looking at the most supposedly advanced country in the world. U.S. medical expenses, public and private, account for more than 17 percent of the gross national product and are projected to grow at a rate of 6 percent a year. By 2018, our medical bill will represent 20 percent of the country's earnings!

Ouch. That implies a lot of sickness and an inability of the medical system to prevent disease in the first place. Hippocrates would likely say there's a mighty amount of sinning going on.

In today's scientific age, an intense debate reverberates among researchers over what's to blame for the alarming increase in immune- and inflammation-related diseases.

In March 2008, an article by Rob Stein of the *Washington Post* brought attention to one of the primary issues responsible for the health meltdown: the decline of the human immune system. His article was entitled "Is Modern Life Ravaging Our Immune Systems?"

"First, asthma cases shot up, along with hay fever and other common

allergic reactions, such as eczema,” Mr. Stein wrote. “Then pediatricians started seeing more children with food allergies. Now experts are increasingly convinced that a suspected jump in lupus, multiple sclerosis, and other afflictions caused by misfiring immune systems is real.

“Although the data are stronger for some diseases than others, and part of the increase may reflect better diagnoses, experts estimate that many allergies and immune-system diseases have doubled, tripled, or even quadrupled in the past few decades, depending on the ailment and the country. Some studies now indicate that more than half of the U.S. population has at least one allergy.”

Researchers are leveling blame at modern living because the increases have shown up first largely in highly developed nations in Europe, North America, and elsewhere, and they are on the rise in other countries as they become more developed.

“It’s striking,” one British researcher said.

“Disturbing,” said one French researcher, referring to the increase of autoimmune disorders, the difficult to treat and often disabling conditions stemming from a dysfunctional immune system that attacks the body’s own cells, tissues, and organs. Common autoimmune diseases include lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis, and type 1 diabetes. The cause remains unknown, and the reasons for the increase are poorly understood. Collectively, they are among the most prevalent diseases in the United States, afflicting between 15 and 24 million people, about 75 percent of them women.

THE RISE OF INFLAMMATION

All these conditions—as well as the major disease killers like cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and cancer—are linked to chronic inflammation, a subject that has taken over center court in medical research during the last few years. As *Time* magazine reported in a 2004 cover article, “Hardly a week goes by without the publication of yet another study uncovering a new way that chronic inflammation does harm to the body.” It torches the sensitive linings of the arteries that feed the heart and brain, leading to heart attacks and stroke. It chews up nerve cells in the brain and may contribute to the development of dementia and Alzheimer’s

disease. It can promote the proliferation of abnormal cells and facilitate their conversion into cancer. “In other words,” the magazine said, “chronic inflammation may be the engine that drives many of the most feared illnesses of middle and old age.”

The rise of inflammation in medical awareness has spawned a new term: “inflamm-aging.” Italian researchers coined it in 2006 to describe a progressive inflammatory status and a loss of stress-coping ability as two major characteristics of the aging process.

Inflammation is now believed to be the underlying cause of more than eighty chronic illnesses, and more than half of Americans suffer currently from one or more of them. Each year, millions die from these conditions. The most common chronic diseases cost the U.S. economy alone more than \$1 trillion annually—and that figure threatens to reach \$6 trillion by the middle of the century.

“Inflammation may turn out to be the elusive Holy Grail of medicine—the single phenomenon that holds the key to sickness and health,” wrote William Meggs, M.D., Ph.D., of East Carolina University in his book *The Inflammation Cure: How to Combat the Hidden Factor Behind Heart Disease, Arthritis, Asthma, Diabetes & Other Diseases* (McGraw-Hill, 2003).

THE MISSING LINK

What is clear in all this is that the immune system is being overwhelmed. The usual suspects in the scientific debate include genetics, poor diet, air pollution, obesity, physical inactivity, and even living in sterile homes. What has become evident to us is that researchers have overlooked another factor, something right under their noses, or to be more anatomically specific, right under their feet. In this book, we propose to add something new to the list of offenders: the lost connection to our planet’s natural flow of surface electrical energy and the electron deficiency in our bodies this creates. Our investigations strongly suggest that the incidence of soaring chronic diseases during our lifetimes has occurred during a period in which more and more people have become increasingly disconnected from the Earth.

Is this disconnect and deficiency a missing link, an overlooked reason why sickness statistics rise ever higher? Is it perhaps the biggest cause of

all? If inflammation is the Holy Grail of medicine, is connection to the Earth the Holy Grail of inflammation?

The answer to the first question is a resounding *yes*.

We don't presume to know yet the answer to the second and third questions. That will take years of investigation, but the initial research, along with many real life observations and experiences, provides intriguing evidence. This book is filled with that evidence. We believe that the information collected on the pages ahead packs the potential to reverse an alarming trend of failing health. We also think it can inspire entire new health standards and businesses based on reconnecting large segments of disconnected populations. We are sure that this information, if widely applied, can help any and all efforts to ease the health care burden shouldered by individuals, employers, and governments alike—literally from the ground up.

The evidence we have gathered strongly suggests that your health status stands to benefit in multiple ways when you reconnect, even if you are chronically and seriously sick and the medical system has little to offer you.

The human immune system evolved over millions of years. During this great span of time, of course, we lived mostly in barefoot contact with the Earth. We were naturally Earthed. Yet scientists haven't noticed that modern living involves a disconnect with Earth's stabilizing electrical energy and a loss of the body's natural grounded state, and that *this* loss may set up the immune system for malfunction.

Did the immune system—and the nervous system and other systems in the body—stop functioning properly when we began wearing shoes with insulating soles and living inside houses that insulate us from the natural frequencies of the environment?

Disconnecting Experimentally

What happens to the human body when it is separated from the subtle evolutionary signals from the Earth was dramatically shown by experiments in Germany at the world-famous Max Planck Institute during the 1960s and 1970s. Researchers intentionally isolated volunteers for months at a time in underground rooms electrically shielded from the rhythms in

the Earth's electric field. Patterns of body temperature, sleep, urinary excretion, and other physiological activities were carefully monitored. All the participants developed a variety of abnormal or chaotic patterns, sort of like a head-to-toe arrhythmia. They experienced disturbed sleep and waking patterns, out-of-sync hormonal production, and overall a disruption in basic body regulation.

When electric rhythms comparable to those measured at the Earth's surface were pulsed into the metal shielding around the underground chambers, there was a dramatic restoration of normal physiological patterns.

These studies, involving hundreds of participants over many years, clearly documented the significance of the Earth's electrical rhythms for normal biological function. Normal rhythms in the body establish a stable reference point for repair, recovery, and rejuvenation—in short, for full health.

Clearly, the biological chaos induced in the experiments would lead in time to ill health. The conclusion is that the biological clock of the body needs to be continually calibrated by the pulse of the Earth that governs the circadian rhythms of all life on the planet.

Experiments like these, under controlled conditions, provide dramatic evidence. Yet we don't live underground. We live above the ground but not really on the ground—and that's the problem. We're disconnected. You can perhaps look at yourself and many people around you and get an idea of the consequences of this disconnect. There's a lot of sickness. Just read the health—rather, disease—statistics and you will see more evidence that in large or small part indicates a disconnect syndrome.

How are we disconnected even though we obviously live on the planet?

The Shoe Problem

Look at what you put on your feet on a daily basis. Most of you wear one form or another of footwear that evolved from simple foot coverings designed to protect against chilly and challenging ground conditions. You are likely wearing something much more elaborate, a statement reflecting your culture, fashion, behavior, and, in many cases, even identification with a tennis or basketball superstar. You habitually wear shoes even when they do not serve any practical purpose.

The late Dr. William Rossi, a Massachusetts podiatrist, footwear industry historian, prolific author, and keen observer, wrote many disturbing commentaries on what shoes do to our feet. He strongly believed that footwear is an integral part of foot care and often complained that shoe people didn't understand feet and foot-care people didn't understand shoes.

A "natural gait is biomechanically impossible for any shoe-wearing person," he wrote in a 1999 article in *Podiatry Management*. "It took four million years to develop our unique human foot and our consequent distinctive form of gait, a remarkable feat of bioengineering. Yet, in only a few thousand years, and with one carelessly designed instrument, our shoes, we have warped the pure anatomical form of human gait, obstructing its engineering efficiency, afflicting it with strains and stresses and denying it its natural grace of form and ease of movement head to foot."

Mechanical issues aside, Dr. Rossi was uncommonly attuned to the potential health risks caused by the separation of the Earth and the body created by modern shoes with soles made of insulating material.

"The sole (or plantar surface) of the foot is richly covered with some 1,300 nerve endings per square inch," he wrote in a 1997 article in *Footwear News*. "That's more than found on any other part of the body of comparable size. Why are so many nerve endings concentrated there? To keep us 'in touch' with the Earth. The real physical world around us. It's called 'sensory response.' The foot is the vital link between the person and the Earth. The paws of all animals are equally rich in nerve endings. The Earth is covered with an electromagnetic layer. It's this that creates the sensory response in our feet and [in] the paws of animals. Try walking barefoot on the ground for a couple of minutes. Every living thing, including human beings, draws energy from this field through its feet, paws, or roots."

Dr. Rossi referred to the foot "as a kind of radar-sonic base" providing a "little-known but vital function" that serves to "extract" energy from the Earth, similar to a plant root extracting moisture from the ground for nourishment. Such "ground-to-foot vibrations may thus be an important energizing power helping to serve the body's life forces," he suggested.

How right he was, even though he was mistaken in thinking that the source of this energy being drawn up into the body was magnetic. It is

now well established that the energy residing on the surface of the Earth is primarily electrical. The central theme of our book is that we draw electrical energy through our feet in the form of free electrons fluctuating at many frequencies. These frequencies reset our biological clock and provide the body with electrical energy. The electrons themselves flow into the body, equalizing and maintaining it at the electrical potential of the Earth. Just like standard electronic equipment that needs a stable ground to function well, so, too, the body needs stable grounding to also function well.

Dr. Rossi bemoaned the fact that modern shoe soles have separated us from the energy and feeling of the ground, which is so important to the foot's sensory response. He wrote: "The bottoms of our footwear are virtually 'deadened.' A cross section of a shoe reveals several layers: outsole, midsole, insole filler material, footbed, cushioning, sockliner. An almost total blackout of sensory response."

Dr. Rossi's lament describes in a few words the post-World War II overhaul of shoe making. New materials entered the manufacturing scene: rubber, plastic, and petrochemical compounds. They have slowly squeezed out leather as the historical source of shoe soles. Nowadays, even makers of fancy men's dress shoes are increasingly switching to rubber, plastic, and other non-conductive material, just as casual and work shoes before them. Leather (processed from hides), a conductive material when moist, has been the traditional source of shoes and sandals. The original lightweight, softsole, heel-less and simple moccasin—a piece of crudely tanned leather that envelops the foot and is fastened on with rawhide thongs—is possibly the closest we have ever come to an "ideal" shoe. It dates back more than 14,000 years.

In his writings, Dr. Rossi also noted another intriguing connection between the foot and the ground—an erotic connection. The human foot, he wrote, is "rich with vibratory and electromagnetic powers linked to Earth contact—which is one reason for its age-old association with human fertility and the reproductive system."

The foot, he pointed out in his 1989 book, *The Sex Life of the Foot and Shoe* (Wentworth edition), is a primary sense organ lavishly equipped with "sexual nerves" and "every moment of standing or walking involves sensory contact with the ground." Erotic sensations "can be aroused by the

The “World’s Most Dangerous Invention”

David Wolfe, an author, speaker, and outspoken authority on health and lifestyle, deems “the common shoe” as perhaps the “world’s most dangerous invention.” After fifteen years of nutritional and lifestyle research, he incriminates the shoe as one of the “most destructive culprits of inflammation and autoimmune diseases” in our lives because it separates us from the healing energy of the Earth.

“Put a shoe on,” he says, “and it’s gone.”

touch of Earth, grass, wind, air, sun, sand, water. Such a sensation is experienced when you remove your shoes and stockings on a warm day and walk barefoot on the grass or sand, or dip your feet into a cool pool. The exhilaration is strongly sensual.”

Beds and Beyond

For the most part, the modern structures we live and do business in—our homes and workplaces—are also non-conductive and separate us from the Earth’s healing electrons. Think about where you spend most of your day: in an apartment, house, or office elevated off the ground, with a layer of wood, synthetic carpeting, or vinyl covering the floor. Unless you live on a dirt, cement, marble, or stone floor, it is unlikely that you are receiving any good vibes from below. We’ll discuss later how living and working in multi-story edifices may create a risk to health.

Like shoes and houses, beds, too, have evolved. They further separate most of us nowadays from the Earth for the third of the time we spend sleeping. We sleep (or toss and turn, as is the case for the masses of insomniacs) on nice and comfy padded elevated beds, in elevated houses, avoiding creeping and crawling things in the night.

The first record of raised beds is associated with the Egyptian pharaohs and their wealthy friends, thanks to the innovations of local Bronze Age craftsmen (3,000–1,000 BC). Although the fashion and the bedding has changed in the centuries since, the simple concept of sleeping on a platform resting on four legs hasn’t changed much.

Before the Egyptians, however, humans apparently snuggled up for the night on the ground and, of course, where accessible, in nice, dry caves. Believe it or not, in this modern age there are still cave dwellers around, most notably 40 million or so in mountainous north-central China. They live surrounded by the Earth, and the Earth's energy, and as we have heard, even with cable TV.

Anthropologists tell us they discovered evidence of grass-lined beds dating back over nine thousand years in southwest Texas. Pits were created in the soft sediment with grass piled in for some crude level of comfort. Whether straw, grass, or sleeping skins, these natural materials, when combined with perspiration from the body, have accommodated electron conductivity throughout the ages.

These are still the bedding materials of choice for many temperate-zone indigenous cultures around the world. Adult sleepers in traditional societies recline on skins, mats, the ground, or "just about anything except a thick, springy mattress," said a 1999 article at *Science News Online* that recommended researchers look at these societies for clues about sleeping patterns, insomnia, and nocturnal brain activity.

LIVING THINGS AS ANTENNAS

Our story brings us back to the transcendent question posed by T. H. Huxley about our relationship to Nature and the cosmos. In 1969, Matteo Tavera, a French agronomist, put forward a unique answer in the form of a series of provocative hypotheses, contained in a largely unnoticed book, in which he argued that our place on the planet was to live in accordance with "natural electricity, which governs us all." Agronomy is the application of a combination of sciences like biology, chemistry, ecology, earth science, and genetics. Tavera's commentary, drawing from all these disciplines and many years of intimately observing Nature as a farmer, concludes that humans are paying a steep price in terms of degeneration and illness as a result of their separation from Nature.

Tavera's book, published in France under the title of *La Mission Sacrée* (*The Sacred Mission*), emphasizes the unrecognized electrical relationship of all living things—including plants, animals, and humans—to the ground and sky. The Frenchman saw life on the planet as being regulated by an

energizing continuum from above and below, and that our structures were designed by Nature to receive and transmit that energy. Think of our bodies and forms as antennas, he said.

Tavera lamented that the modern lifestyle included “princely like structures, all built close together . . . with isolating floors, plastic clothing, and rubber-soled shoes. The electrical contacts are slowed down or totally missing” and, as a result, an increase in chronic illness has become quite evident.

Eating more wholesome food, free of chemicals, and breathing cleaner air certainly contributes to better health. But our “sacred mission,” he said, involves reconnecting with Mother Earth. Tavera warned that “man persists in going on in the direction of error,” and while “Nature is forgiving, it has its limits to those who do not relate . . . and carry electricity through their bodies for the completion of the required health balance” necessary for survival.

The French naturalist said that humans should look at examples within the animal world to see why reconnection with Earth is so necessary. “Notice that a cow left in a stable with a more limited conduction of electricity due to the insulating effect of the building is usually cold and chilly,” he wrote. “Put this same cow in the fields under the same weather conditions and it is quite comfortable. The cold nights are bearable. Chickens in the natural state of roaming never get sick. Chickens, isolated by their coop, need to be covered and protected . . . [and] look at the medicines that are required for the captive chicken. The quail in the wild have equal happiness in winter as in summer, without covering, without special lodging.

“The dog who is kept too long in the same habituation as his master and does not get to contact the Earth, as Nature intended, is keeping the veterinarian very busy.

“In the wild, the sanitary state of animals is excellent especially if it has not been soiled by the touch of man. Despite conditions seemingly uncomfortable to our eyes and probably because of those conditions, the wild animal knows no sickness. This privileged benefit is the result of his accomplishing his right to life by the proper exchange of the electric mediums.

“Be inspired by the wild animal [that] can survive so well on his own

because of his constant contact with the Earth. Compare yourself to him a little.”

Within the context of modern times, Tavera offered a variety of practical suggestions that could seemingly fit into most of our lifestyles. They included the following:

- “Walk into the wilderness and choose the grassy areas instead of the asphalt roads. Try to walk barefooted or at least with a covering that allows the electrical contact or exchange. You will notice the difference in your mood, your health. It will keep you alive with joy in your heart.”
- “As often as possible expose any part of the skin of your body to the Earth or grass, or any natural water, lake, stream or ocean. In your garden . . . moist grass is a perfect conductor.”
- “Use the trunk of a tree to lean on and rob it of some of its electricity for your health’s benefit.”
- “Bathing, especially in ocean water (because of the salts) or lake or river, is extremely good for you. If you can, walk barefoot in these waters. If you have ever done it you have already seen the benefits on your nervous system, your sleeping, your appetite, and your attitude. When you are linked to the Earth and involved in the electric exchanges, you start feeling like a human being again.”

Matteo Tavera’s writings are fascinating and alter the way one thinks about oneself, the environment, and our relationship with the cosmos. To read an English translation of his text on the Internet, visit the website www.earthinginstitute.net. His words offer great insight about our connectedness with Nature. What’s even more fascinating is that the health implications raised by Tavera’s commentary have been validated—not by a pedigreed scientist but by a non-scientist from the cable TV industry. His personal story follows next.



CHAPTER 3

Reconnecting: Clint Ober's Story

In 1993, I was forty-nine years old, successful, and feeling on top of the world. I had come a long way from challenging and humble beginnings as a boy who grew up on a farm, chased cows, baled hay, and spent long summer days walking barefoot up and down long rows of beets and beans pulling weeds.

When I was a teenager, my father died of leukemia, leaving my mother and six children to tend the crops and livestock. Being the eldest son, I had to drop out of school and run the family farm. This was common practice back then under those kind of circumstances.

By the early 1960s, my brothers were getting older. I felt a need to leave the land for the excitement of the “big city.” I wound up in the fledgling cable television industry. In the community I lived in, we only had two TV channels—one politically right, the other politically left, so the information we got was very slanted. I quickly saw that cable was the future of television. I jumped into it enthusiastically and had a lot of success organizing marketing campaigns to bring cable to people throughout Montana. I also climbed the poles, drilled the holes, sunk the ground rods, and ran the wire to install cable systems in many homes.

After a few years of working with local cable operators, I was hired as national director of marketing for a Denver company that soon grew to become the largest cable television operator in the United States. It was eventually acquired by AT&T. In 1972, I started my own business, specializing in developing cable television systems, as well as broadcast television and microwave communication properties. The company became

the largest provider of cable television marketing and installation services in the country. We had a nationwide army of contract installers working for us. When a cable system was approved for some town or city, we'd send in ten to a hundred installers. They would go through the area and install everybody who wanted cable. Then they would go to the next town, and so on. Over the years we installed cable in millions of homes throughout the country.

In an age before the Internet, I helped pioneer the first-ever cable modem and distribution through personal computers of news reports from news agencies around the world. I also became intimately involved in the early development of programming and marketing for the cable and telecommunication industries. I worked with the top people who created Cable News Network (CNN), Home Box Office (HBO), and other cable networks.

I was a highly successful entrepreneur and living the good life. I had a 5,000-square-foot mountaintop home in Colorado with a 360-degree view of Denver and the Rockies. My house was full of art and anything that money could buy.

In 1993, the good life came tumbling down. I developed a serious abscess in my liver from a root canal procedure. Eighty percent of my liver was badly compromised. The infection had spread throughout my body. All my organs were malfunctioning. I didn't get much hope from the doctors. They suggested that I put my affairs in order.

However, one young surgeon told me there was a chance to survive—although a small one—involving experimental surgery to remove most of my damaged liver. He didn't give me much hope, but it was the only hope I had. So I agreed. After twenty-eight days of painful recovery in the hospital and much physical therapy, I was able to go home. I slowly began to regain my health. It took about three or four months to be able to walk a few blocks and six months to walk a mile. Amazingly, within nine months my liver grew back to its original size.

IN SEARCH OF A PURPOSE

One morning during my long mending process, I awoke and looked outside and noticed the sky was a deeper blue and the trees were a more

vibrant green than I had ever seen before. At that moment, I felt alive again but very much different from before. A stark realization came over me that I didn't really own my home and the mountain of possessions I had. Rather, they owned me. My life had become all about taking care of my stuff. I'd spent my whole life accumulating, collecting, and taking care of it all, and trying to get more, perhaps to show off how big a success I was. I realized that I had become a slave to my possessions by my own making.

At that moment, I decided to set myself free and find something to fill my life with other than possessions. "I don't want anymore of this life," I said out loud to myself. "I want to do something different. Whatever time I have left I want to dedicate it to something worthwhile and with purpose."

I called my kids. They were all grown and scattered around the country. I told them to come and take whatever they wanted. "Anything you don't take, I'm going to give away," I said.

I sold the house. I sold the business to my employees. I went out and bought a recreational vehicle (RV), packed it up with a few necessities, and hit the road. I spent the next four years driving around the country, looking for myself and my mission. I spent a lot of time with my kids here and there, but a lot of time just doing nothing. I'd drive someplace and park for a while, waiting for something to show up.

One night in 1997 I was in Key Largo, Florida. I was getting antsy and impatient. Nothing was happening. Nothing was revealing itself to me. I had been in the same location now for a few months. While sitting and staring across the bay, I asked for guidance. I knew that something was waiting for me. When I returned to the RV, some words popped into my mind and I remember automatically writing them down on a piece of paper:

"Become an opposite charge."

Well, become an opposite charge to me meant to go out and poke people, and stir 'em up. Charge 'em up. I was sure getting impatient enough to do some stirring.

Then the second thing I wrote down was, "Status quo is the enemy." I didn't know what that meant except that I was getting tired of my status quo and doing nothing. That was the end of it. I wrote those thoughts

down on a yellow tablet and kept it for some reason. I had no idea what those words really meant.

Upon rising the next morning, an odd notion went through my mind that the Earth itself was trying to tell me something. I didn't know what, though. But I felt there was some urgency, and I knew I had to go west somewhere for the answer. I drove to Los Angeles and felt it was too crazy. Then I drove to Tucson and Phoenix, and neither of those places felt right. So I headed north and wound up in Sedona at ten one night. I parked at a recreational vehicle resort by a creek. The next morning I looked out and was enchanted by the beauty of the land. The scenery spoke to my roots, of growing up in rural Montana, exposed to Native American culture that emphasized the connectedness to the natural world.

"I'm staying here," I told myself, "until I find what I'm looking for." So I stayed for almost two years. I made friends with many local artists and gallery owners. As a hobby, and to keep me busy, I spent a lot of my time artistically lighting up the town's many art galleries.

My "lightbulb" went off one day in 1998. I was sitting on a park bench and watching the passing parade of tourists from all over the world. At some point, and I don't know why, my awareness zeroed in on what all these different people were wearing on their feet. I saw a lot of those running shoes with thick rubber or plastic soles. I was wearing them as well. It occurred to me rather innocently that all these people—me included—were insulated from the ground, the electrical surface charge of the Earth beneath our feet. I started to think about static electricity and wondered if being insulated like that could have some effect on health. I didn't know the answer, one way or another. The notion just popped into my mind.

I thought back to my years in television and cable. Before there was cable, you commonly had lots of flecks ("noise," we call it) in the TV picture. Or you had "snow" or lines and all kinds of electromagnetic interference. If you aren't old enough to remember that, you are likely familiar with the radio interference when you're driving near or under a power line and you hear all that crackle and pop.

In the cable industry, you have to ground and shield the entire cable system in every home to prevent extraneous electromagnetic signals and fields from interfering with the transmission carried through the cable.

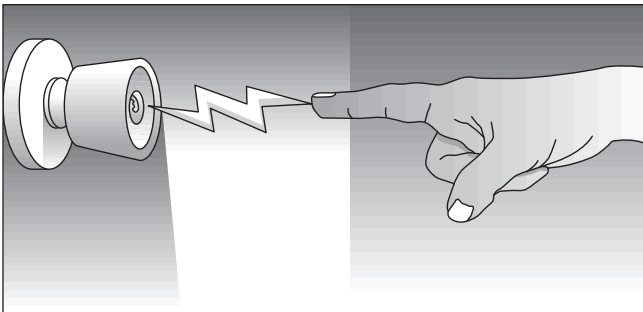
That's how you provide the viewer with a perfect signal and a crisp picture, as well as preventing signals on the cable system from leaking out into the environment and possibly disturbing police radio or TV station transmissions. The cable consists of an inner copper conductor, an insulating layer, and an outer shield. The shield is electrically connected to the Earth. It is grounded, so that the Earth can either deliver or absorb electrons and prevent damage from electrical charges. All of the cable system must be grounded and held at the same electrical potential as the Earth's surface.

What Is Electrostatic Discharge?

Static electricity is nothing more than the spark or minor shock we all experience, for instance, when we touch a metal doorknob after walking across a carpeted room (see figure below) or slide across a car seat. No big deal.

But in some industries, it is a very big deal. Centuries ago, armed forces had to use static control measures to prevent ignition of gunpowder stores. Today, such measures are required in the petroleum industry, where a random spark can also cause an explosion. In today's electronic industry, electrostatic discharge (ESD) causes billions of dollars in damage annually by destroying highly sensitive electronic parts and microchips. ESD affects production yields, manufacturing costs, product quality, product reliability, and profitability.

A whole static control industry has emerged with products such as wristbands, shoes, and conductive flooring that are widely used by electronics makers. These measures are designed to discharge potentially destructive charges.



Finger to the doorknob, showing electrostatic discharge.

THE BEGINNING OF AN ADVENTURE

Little did I know at the time, but my life was about to take a new and totally unexpected direction that would consume practically all my waking hours. It still continues to do so, a dozen years later.

It all started innocently with that one simple question: Could wearing rubber- or plastic-soled shoes, as we all do, and insulating ourselves from the ground, affect health? At the time I had a particular interest in health because earlier back surgeries had left me with constant back pain. I never slept well. I'd take Advil to go to bed, and in the morning I'd take Advil to get up and get through the day. I also took other pain medication, depending on how bad the pain was.

I knew that the body was conductive, that is, it conducts electricity. You don't have to know anything about electricity to understand that simple fact of life. Just go touch a doorknob on a very dry day and you can see or feel a spark every time. There's always a static charge on the body that builds up when you sit on fabric-covered furniture or walk on carpets.

An Amazing Experiment

Sitting there watching the foot traffic I realized that most people, certainly in the industrialized world, had little or no connection to the ground. In other parts of the world, like in the tropics and in Asia, Africa, and South America, rural people walk barefoot and often sleep on the ground. They are grounded.

I decided to try to answer the question I had asked myself. I went back to the apartment I was renting and picked up my voltmeter. (A voltmeter is an instrument that measures the electrical potential differences between the Earth and any electrical object, or any two points in an electrical circuit.) I connected a 50-foot wire to it and ran the wire out the living room door and attached it to a simple ground rod I stuck in the Earth. Then I started walking around the house and measuring the electrical charges being created on my body from being insulated from the ground. It was easy to measure the static electricity, as it would vary with every step that I took. What I found most interesting was the amount of electromagnetic field (EMF) induced potential (in volts) on my body. When I walked

toward a lamp, the voltage would go up. When I stepped back, the voltage went down. I tested this with all the electrical appliances in the living room and kitchen. The only appliances that did not create EMF voltage on my body were the refrigerator and my computer tower. They were grounded. From my background in the communications industry, this immediately made sense to me as we had to ground all of our electronic equipment to prevent electrical interference from EMFs.

Next I went to the bedroom, lay down on my bed, and registered the highest level of EMF voltage on my body. The bedroom was the most “electrically active” area of the apartment. The bed was up against a wall full of hidden electrical wires. I wondered if these electric fields could be affecting my ability to fall asleep because sleep was always a big problem.

Now my curiosity was really stirred up. The next day I went to the hardware store and bought some metallized duct tape that is used for furnace ducting. I laid some of that tape out on the bed to form a crude kind of grid. I took an alligator clip and attached it to one end of the duct tape grid. I connected a wire to it, ran the wire out the window, and fastened it to another ground rod similar to the one that the voltmeter was connected to. I then lay down on the duct tape grid and noticed that the meter was now showing nearly zero, meaning that I was in sync, that is electrically equivalent, to lying directly on the ground outside. Like all the cable systems I had installed, I was physically grounded. I was lying there fooling around with the voltmeter and the next thing I knew it was morning. I had fallen asleep with the voltmeter on my chest. I hadn't needed a pill to fall asleep. I had slept soundly for the first time in years, and I had hardly moved at all during the night.

“Wow, this is fascinating,” I said to myself. Something interesting had happened, but I didn't really understand the meaning of it. So I repeated this experiment on myself the next night. I fell asleep without a pill. The same thing happened the next night and the next and the next.

Getting High Off the Ground

After a few more days like this, I told a couple of friends about it and asked them if I could set up a similar kind of makeshift grid with metallic duct tape in their beds. That's how I started “grounding” people. It

was very innocent. One of the guys I grounded said to me, “You know, something is going on here. My arthritis pain is way down.”

I didn’t think too much about what he said, but a couple of days later I noticed that my own severe chronic pain had improved. I didn’t need the pain pills anymore. I was also feeling much better overall.

I didn’t understand anything about biology. I didn’t understand how the nerves or muscles worked, but a concept was dawning. It occurred to me that there might be an analogy between the human body and cable TV. Cable has hundreds of channels of information flowing through it. Similarly, the body has countless nerves, blood vessels, and other channels that conduct electrical signals. Maybe, I thought, when the body is grounded, it prevents the entry of “noise”—environmental electrical interference—that could disturb the internal circuitry. I started to understand in a simple way that without Earth contact the body was always being charged by the electromagnetic fields and static electricity in the bedroom or office or wherever. When you’re grounded, you don’t have a charge. When I grounded myself and my friends, the charges were removed, and we all started sleeping better and feeling better.

After I grounded a half dozen or so people, consistently improving their sleep and reducing their pain, I started to get a real high. I became more and more excited. I came to the conclusion that I may have made a great discovery. I said to myself there’s something very, very real here that needs to be further investigated.

I looked far and wide but didn’t find much information on grounding and health. In 1999, the Internet wasn’t nearly the information universe it is today. It was still fairly new and I didn’t find anything there.

I checked out the excellent university medical libraries in Arizona but didn’t come up with anything. There were a few anecdotal stories about Native Americans that were folklorish in nature. I was reminded of my younger days in Montana where many of my childhood friends were kids from the Indian reservation. I vividly remembered the time when the sister of one of my friends developed a bad case of scarlet fever. She was very sick. Their grandfather dug a pit in the ground and placed the girl in the pit. He built a fire, for warmth, near the pit, and sat next to it for a few days while the girl mostly slept. At the end of that time she was much better. I also remembered going to the home of one of my friends after school

and hearing his mother tell him to remove his shoes. "They will make you sick," she said. This all seemed very odd to me at the time, but I remembered that most things the Native Americans did were different from what I was taught to be normal. I later realized that there was always a reason based on much greater knowledge of Nature than I was ever taught.

I found information about barefoot enthusiasts who have long championed the idea of going unshod because they feel better. Some enthusiasts have formed organizations, such as the worldwide Society for Barefoot Living that promotes the benefits of taking shoes and socks off and walking naturally on the Earth. Their experience, along with medical research in the field of biomechanics, strongly suggests that many foot and back problems are partly caused by stresses and strains created by wearing shoes that force us to stand and move in ways the human body was not designed for. One dramatic example of this appears to be the success of barefoot runners. The shod foot may explain the high injury frequency in North American runners, in contrast to the extremely low running-related injury frequency in barefoot populations. Researchers have found, for instance, less force on the joints, and less plantar fasciitis and shin splints. This, however, wasn't really the information I was looking for.

I did find considerable information about electrostatic discharge and how people working on computer components and electronic chips had to be grounded in order not to damage any of the components electrically. But that wasn't it either. I had to keep looking.

I also wanted to know whether there was any possibility that sleeping "Earthed," as I started to call grounding, could be harmful. Electronics experts reassured me that the concept was perfectly safe. If you think about it, being Earthed is the natural state of living systems throughout history. It is the separation from Earth that is unnatural.

Beyond these few things, however, I couldn't uncover any concrete information anywhere relating to the possible health effects due to loss of natural grounding.