



## *An Article from WNC Woman Magazine*

### **Safe Haven: A Profile of Dr. Resa Johnson**

by Brenda Murphree

Peaceful. Grounded. Happy. These are the words that come to mind in the presence of Dr. Resa Johnson.

Doctor Resa, as she is known to patients, is a chiropractor and board certified clinical nutritionist who has worked for years more like an empowerment coach than a doctor. "What I want to be for people is a resource," she says. She is also, undeniably, an inspiration.

From the outside, the main elements of her life – healthcare professional, mother, wife – appear seamlessly connected. "They are. They're totally integrated," she says, as if it's the most natural thing in the world.

And for her, it is: All three of her children were born at home; she is in practice with her husband, who is also a chiropractor and clinical nutritionist; and she lives and breathes what she tells her patients (whom she often calls clients). "My belief system has always been based on natural laws and principles, and on learning to live in harmony with them."

This sense of connectedness derives in large part, she feels, from her upbringing. "My father was a chiropractor," she says, "and I grew up without ever taking an antibiotic and without ever seeing a physician other than my dad. I was brought up on whole foods, natural supplements, natural remedies and positive reinforcement. As a result I developed from an early age a strong belief in the body's ability to heal. It wasn't something abstract. I learned early on to look to the body's wisdom to see what it needed."

She has been putting that into practice professionally for 28 years now. During that time – most of it in south Florida, until a move to Asheville three and a half years ago – she and her husband, Dr. Jim Johnson, have operated a joint practice that incorporates chiropractic medicine, clinical nutrition and functional medicine. "Functional medicine," she explains, "is designed to promote health, anticipate and prevent disease, or correct an existing disease, through improved physiological function."

This husband-wife team works closely with each other, conferring on patients and sharing knowledge, and also works in partnership with other practitioners in the community. "We really work on communication and teamwork. Our whole goal is integrated patient care."

Both have pursued training in complementary fields over the years, such as acupuncture and sports physiology, and both have added various diagnostic and treatment techniques, several of which she uses with her clients today. But the primary focus, for both, remains chiropractic, functional medicine, and clinical nutrition. The framework in which she uses these tools is an unusual system called Health Coaching™.

### **The Doctor as Coach**

Health Coaching™, she says, is for someone who really wants to address all aspects of health – mind, body and spirit. "It's for people who want to feel better, take charge of their health, and maintain balance in their lives." The program starts with a detailed 26-page questionnaire, and doctor and client take off from there, working as a team, to examine all of the factors that affect health: genetics, nutrition, medicine, exercise, biomechanics, rest and relaxation habits, thoughts and emotions. "Ultimately, they begin to make conscious changes," she says.

### **In Resa's Own Words**

Doctor Resa started coaching about 15 years ago (long before the word had much meaning outside athletics) when following up with some of her toughest cases, patients who had made some progress but weren't really in optimal health. "For those who were open to it, we would do a detoxification, or add nutritional supplements, or make dietary changes, or add meditation." The results were remarkable. Soon afterward she and her husband became certified in the Health Coach™ system of nutritionally based one-on-one guidance and support.

Patients who work with Doctor Resa in the Health Coaching™ program get something that's hard to find in most doctors' offices today: "I bring awareness of the physical into day-to-day living," she says. "I give people a safe haven. A lot of doctors simply don't have time for this, because their practice is focused on other things. But for me, this is the focus."

A typical Health Coach™ patient is someone who is starting to experience physical 'challenges.' As she describes it, "They wake up, they don't feel as good in the morning, they're not popping out of bed, they have aches and pains, they're gaining weight, their vitality and vibrancy are starting to wane." Inevitable signs of aging, most of might think, but Doctor Resa maintains there's a big difference between chronological age and biological age. "You can feel great wherever you are on the calendar."

She's quick to add, though, that coaching isn't just for those of us starting to creak our way over the hill. Although she's had great success with baby boomers – and with seniors too – she also loves working with very young women, those who are "just entering into their womanhood." She becomes passionate when she talks about mothers and children. "I would really like young parents to understand that from the day they conceive, even before, the health of the parent is as important as the health of the baby. The most powerful gift you can give your child is the gift of a strong healthy system. I really believe that with all my heart."

Although not a proponent of any particular diet plan, she does have a clear recommendation for young children: whole grains, fruits and vegetables, light protein, and plenty of water. "And really keep sugar to a minimum."

How did she raise her own children like that, in this age of heavily marketed junk food? "When they were old enough I took them to the grocery store and said, 'You can have anything in the store as long as it doesn't have partially hydrogenated oils.'" She explained that their bodies were made of cells, that the walls of the cells take in nutrients and excrete waste, and that bad oils make the cell walls hard, which means they can't easily pass things in or out. "When your cells become weak, I'd tell them, 'you become weak,' and of course they wanted to be big and strong."

"I work with the walking wounded – those who are beat up from life, from their diet, from stress--and I love it, because the results are incredible. The sky's the limit. I don't put any limitations on health. I really don't. The blessing is that, if someone has a health challenge, I can help them find the silver lining. When you have a challenge, there's always a blessing. You just have to look for it.

And healing is huge. It's not just about eradicating pain or problems, it's about taking control, seeing a goal and having direction, and making things happen. Not in order to be addicted to your health, but to respect and honor what you have.

I have a really strong belief that we owe it to ourselves to do as much for our health as possible. After all, this is our life! And our health is the well-being of all parts of our lives.

My real love is to work with people who want to work in all areas of health, not just the physical. Because when you are well, your ability to give, your ability to be creative, your ability to express yourself, is magnified and can reach its height.

Alternative healthcare? I like to call it 'No Alternative' healthcare, because there really is no alternative! You need proper rest, loving relationships, good food and water, and of course play. Sometimes this sounds too simplistic, but this is the basis of good health.

It's a whole different consciousness, a whole different way of living. And I'm just a facilitator. There's a real joy about it, and, since it has always been such a part of my life, growing up with these principles, it's not just something I say. I know it first-hand."

Their home soon became known as “the nut and seed house,” and before long other parents were calling to find out where to buy a nut mix or fruit seltzer their kids had had there and asked for. “It’s really not that hard,” she says. “You just have to live your creed.”

Her nutritional prescriptions for adults usually take the form of an all-inclusive healing program, especially with clients who want to lose weight. She focuses on learning how to eat and on building optimal health, not on losing weight – although most clients who commit to the individualized program they develop with her, she adds, end up losing weight along the way.

This individualized component is I’m sure one of the most important ingredients in her success with patients. But another is clearly her attitude, which radiates through everything she says and does. “In the big picture, health is really about honoring ourselves.”

In her presence, life slows to a normal pace and you feel calmer, taller, happier – and oddly secure, the way a child feels with a loving adult. One time in the office a five-year-old came in with her mother, and, while watching them, I was struck with an overwhelming urge to be a child again just so this woman could talk to me like that. What did she say? Nothing special. But she said it in a way that made that child feel, at that moment, like the most special person in the world. I suspect all of her clients feel the same.

**The joint practice of Dr. Resa Johnson and Dr. Jim Johnson, Mountain Air Wellness Center, is located at 192 East Chestnut Street in Asheville. Doctor Resa can be reached at 828-255-0007, or at [docresa@bellsouth.net](mailto:docresa@bellsouth.net).**

*Brenda Murphree is a marketing consultant and president of Asheville-based ClearPoint Marketing Communications, Inc., a full-service agency helping businesses plan and execute successful marketing strategies.*