

Want a Healthier Heart? Join The Spiritual Cinema Circle!

By Ryan N. Harrison, MA

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After reading *The Instinct to Heal*, by David Servan-Schreiber, MD, PhD, it becomes easy to see that the recent thrill-seeking trend in human culture is taking its toll on our bodies, and especially on our hearts. A relatively unknown fact is that the heart is a small hormone factory in and of itself. It produces its own supply of adrenaline, which it releases when it needs to function at maximum capacity. The heart also creates and controls the release of another hormone called ANF (atrial natriuretic factor). This hormone regulates blood pressure. Both of these become important when the autonomic nervous system signals the brain and heart to turn on the “fight or flight” response. Likewise, when the parasympathetic nervous system decides the threat has passed and puts on the brakes, the heart responds by slowing down and ceasing to release the hormones mentioned above. This is a very natural part of life. But something unnatural is working its way into the equation.

It has become a favorite pastime of some people to create their own stressful situations. Our culture seeks out “thrilling” entertainment that in effect, speeds up the heart and produces an adrenaline “rush.” We flock to faster and scarier roller coasters, engage in extreme sports, experience road rage and freeway frustrations, and actually pay money to view suspenseful and frightening movies that keep us up all night. Each of these things, from the heart’s perspective, elicits the “fight or flight” response, demanding a surge of energy and hormone production as well as the ability to “put on the brakes” over and over again. (Unfortunately, this is one set of brakes that we can’t easily change!) While the “fight or flight” response itself is a completely natural one, the fact that we are constantly forcing our hearts to speed up and slow down puts a tremendous strain on them.

Science has proven that stress is hard on the body. It is well known today that chronic stress produces anxiety and depression and can lead to insomnia, wrinkles, high blood pressure, palpitations, backaches, skin and digestive complaints, chronic infections, infertility, and sexual impotence. Beyond that, Servan-Schreiber writes that even negative emotions such as anger, sadness, and even ordinary worries, “reduces cardiac variability the most and sow chaos in our physiology” (pg. 45). And yet, we submit ourselves to harsh stress and emotional disquiet on a nearly daily basis.

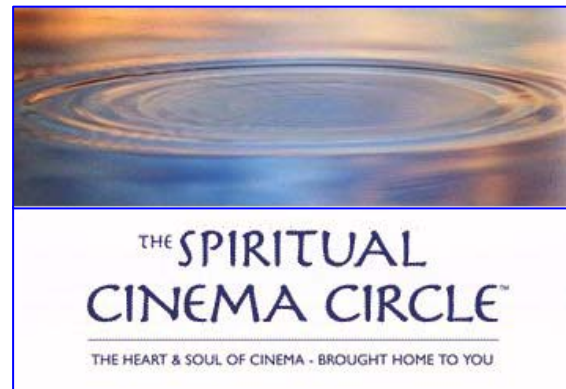
Isn’t it time you gave your heart a break?

One of the ways that you can strengthen your heart’s ability to respond to life’s daily challenges is to experience positive emotions like joy, gratitude, and especially, love. These emotions appear to actually promote what’s called “heart coherence”: your heart’s ability to accelerate and

slow down in a smooth and harmonious manner (Servan-Schreiber, pg. 43). If you need a suggestion to help you experience these life-affirming feelings on a regular basis, you're in luck!

Stephen Simon, movie director and producer of such box office hits as *What Dreams May Come* and *Somewhere in Time*, recognized the powerful effect that media has upon our culture. He co-founded an organization called [The Spiritual Cinema Circle](#) with the intent of providing for others hours of entertainment that will touch the heart and inspire the soul. "Spiritual cinema" examines who we are and why we are here, and illuminates the human condition through stories and images that inspire us to explore what we can be when we operate at our very best.

Each month, the Circle distributes 4 spiritual films on DVD to a worldwide audience of members in over 70 countries. It is the first distribution company exclusively dedicated to Spiritual Cinema. Unlike video rental services, the movies do not need to be returned and are instead collected by members to create a whole library of inspiring movies that can be watched and enjoyed countless times. The monthly movie collections include a wide variety of films, many of which have won major festival awards, but which are unlikely to be seen elsewhere, largely because the entertainment industry doesn't find "spiritual cinema" to be profitable enough.



This year, make it a resolution to treat your heart well! When you join The Spiritual Cinema Circle it's like getting two gifts for the price of one: award-winning, life-affirming entertainment, and a healthier heart, mind, and spirit.

Sign up today to start receiving your DVDs in the mail, or explore the Circle further by clicking [here](#).