**Disease**: Illness or sickness often characterized by typical patient problems (symptoms) and physical findings (signs). Disruption sequence: The events that occur when a fetus that is developing normally is subjected to a destructive agent such as the rubella (German measles) virus.

As we can see from this definition a disease is both biological and culturally defined. **Disease** is a scientifically defined ailment (but science is culturally bound). **Illness** is an ailment as experienced and perceived by the sufferer. Within the field of Medical Anthropology there are 3 basic theories of how diseases are caused. Select one of these for the use of yoga as medicine.

**Naturalistic disease theories** are those theories of illness, present within a culture, which explain diseases and illnesses in impersonal terms. This type of medical system explains illness as being due to impersonal, mechanistic causes in nature that can be potentially understood and cured by the application of the scientific method of discovery. Typical causes accepted in naturalistic medical systems include organic breakdown or deterioration, obstruction, injury, imbalance, malnutrition, and parasites. Students learning to be doctors or nurses in medical schools throughout the modern world are taught this kind of naturalistic explanation. However, there are other kinds of naturalistic medical systems also in use today. In Latin America, many people still also rely on **humoral pathology** to explain and cure their illnesses. This is especially true in rural areas.

One example of a naturalistic disease theory is the theory expressed in western medicine or biomedicine, which links disease and illness to scientific causes. This leaves any personal liability for the disease out of the equation, and the diseases are attributed to organisms such as bacteria or viruses, accidents, or toxic substances.

Other cultures have developed different naturalistic disease theories. One specific example lies in Latin cultures, which place "hot" or "cold" classifications on things like food, drink, and environmental conditions. They believe that the combination of hot and cold substances will cause an unbalanced system that leads to disease. Therefore, one is expected not to have a cold drink after taking a hot bath.

**Personalistic** medical systems explain illness as being due to acts or wishes of other people or supernatural beings and forces. There is no room for accidents. Adherents to personalistic medical systems believe that the causes and cures of illness are not to be found only in the natural world. Curers usually must use supernatural means to understand what is wrong with their patients and to return them to health. Typical causes of illness in personalistic medical systems include intrusion of foreign objects into the body by supernatural means, spirit possession, loss, or damage, and
bewitching. Most of the non-Western world traditionally accepted a personalistic explanation for illness. Today, it is mostly found among people in small-scale societies and some subcultures of larger nations.

**Emotionalistic disease theory** assumes that illness is caused by intense emotional experiences. *Susto* is an ethnomedical condition common to Latin America, and is an illness caused when the soul is displaced after a traumatic emotional or physical event. Susto can be a life-threatening illness characterized by lethargy, lack of motivation, insomnia, and diarrhea and is usually treated through spiritual means, ritual cleansings, and herbal teas. Also called *espanto*. Many medical anthropologists believe that susto is related to stress engendered by a self-perceived failure to fulfill gender-role expectations.