



Balance Part III

We are ready to change our potential energy to kinetic energy now that we have optimally fueled our bodies. Everything going on in our bodies never stops moving, down to each and every cell and its parts. A healthy inward movement promotes our ability for a capable outward movement. Remember to keep our balance we must constantly move, constantly change.

EXERCISE

Moving your body does more than you may think. Movement and exercise has numerous benefits. It tones the muscle, lymph, cardiovascular, respiratory, and nervous systems, making them more efficient. It increases stamina, aids in weight loss, lowers "bad" cholesterol, releases endorphins which improves your mood, and helps body cleansing through perspiration and increasing blood circulation (carrying away waste products and at the same time bringing more oxygen to body cells). It reduces stress, decreases cortisol levels, and raises the immune system's functioning.

Try to build up to engaging in any movement or exercise that makes you breathe heavily and sweat four or five days a week for at least thirty minutes (aerobic exercise). This doesn't have to be boring. You can exercise with friends if you don't like doing it alone. Do things you enjoy and vary your routine. Mix it up. It could be walking, running, dancing, swimming, bike riding, jumping rope, climbing stairs, heavy duty garden work or (one of my favorites) mopping the floors while dancing and singing at the top of my lungs (with Cher). Anything that will make you sweat and breathe heavily. Yes, sex qualifies.

Three or four days a week do some non-aerobic exercise. Build up to a minimum of thirty minutes. You can do stretching, yoga, Tai chi, martial arts, or lift weights. Non-aerobic exercise improves physical balance, agility, coordination, and flexibility.

4 or 5 + 3 or 4 = X. You are absolutely right! Move every day! Minimum time spent-thirty minutes a day. Now let's move on to exercising your creative muscles.

CREATIVE ENJOYMENT AND PLAY

Do you enjoy playing? Do you express yourself creatively through art, dance, music, drama, etc.? Do you have a hobby (or two)? Play is an important part of balancing yourself. All of us are creative in one way or another and we need to express that creativity. Take the time to enjoy living!

Find something new you would like to try, or dust off an old hobby. Bored with that old hobby? Try something else. You have the freedom to do anything you like! It's Playtime! Are you a closet artist? Are you budding actor? Do you love square dancing, ballroom dancing, line dancing, or just getting out on that dance floor? Do it! Like team sports (playing not watching)? Join a team with friends, or make new ones! Can only knit hats? Knit away and donate them to a shelter! Don't just watch your kids, grandkids, nieces and nephews, play along with them! Do crafts, build sandcastles, imagine right along with them, swing, climb, seesaw, build with blocks and Legos, color, finger paint! The list goes on and on and on!

Who knows? Through play you may find you are also physically exercising! And exercising those creative muscles may yield a new source of income! You may even come up with a new invention! The possibilities are endless. You will definitely stumble across laughter....

LAUGHTER

Incorporating daily laughter adds many benefits to your life. It does wonders for relieving stress and tension, increases your air intake, releases those lovely endorphins to lift your mood, and stimulates your lungs and heart. Over the long term frequent laughing improves your immune system by dissipating long term stress. Laughter eases pain by, again, raising endorphin levels and also relaxing muscles that tense up and add to the amount of pain experienced.

If you can see the silly and absurd side of life's trials, tribulations, and foibles you can cope more easily with difficult situations. (Comedians make a living pointing out the absurd life humans live.)

So listen to your favorite comedians, watch funny movies, do look at the silly side of life, and remember to laugh with friends!

SOCIALIZATION

This subject deserves a special mention and is no less important than the others. It has been proven that people who have a network of good friends (even as few as one) recover from illnesses faster, have a better mental attitude, ease depression, and live longer. Simply chatting lowers stress hormones present in the body. Humans are social beings. Keep socialization in your life!

REST, RELAXATION AND SLEEP

In this dynamic of keeping our balance rest and relaxation are also extremely important. It restores our energy reserves, has an enhancing effect on our circulation, reduces that nasty stress, improves our mood, and helps to improve our mental functioning, being more alert and effective to problem solve. Our body does its best repair work while we are resting. So if you are cutting into your rest periods and the amount of hours sleep to do other things you are cutting into the energy your body needs to heal and restore as well. A well rested body also gets our creative juices flowing.

Because of today's rapid lifestyle we have forgotten the art of "being in the moment", which helps us to switch off the things that may be bothering us. Try to stay in the present focusing on one thing at a time. By doing this there is a positive effect on the nervous system, lowers blood pressure, and controls heart rate and body temperature. Controlled, rhythmic breathing also has the same positive physical effects.

Meditation expands parts of the brain that controls concentration, focus, and problem solving. Other parts of the brain that handle coordination, memory, breathing, blood circulation, and information flow between the brain and the body are positively affected.

Take all these healthy changes that take place with rest and realize that sleep can increase these positive effects greatly. Adults require 7-8 hours of sleep a day. Getting enough sleep improves brain function, emotional well-being, the body's physical health and its immune system. Napping doesn't replace all of the benefits lost from lack of sleep but NASA studies have shown that a 26 minute nap could improve work performance. Lack of sleep plays a definite role in accidents that can affect your well-being and that of others by negatively influencing judgment, reaction times and cause micro sleep (short bursts of uncontrolled sleep during waking hours which you may not be aware of).

Good quality air, water, and food; exercise, play, laughter, socialization, and rest/sleep all have parts to play in balancing your life and physical health. All this prepares you to walk that tight rope from one side to the other and then turn around and do it all over again! Happy Balancing!

With Gratitude,

Kai