

Pathways

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*Where there is peace and meditation,
there is neither anxiety nor doubt*

-- Francis of Assisi

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Listen to your body

I was thinking about how we talk to ourselves recently, when a thought crossed my mind: "It's O.K. to talk to yourself, but are you listening?"

The question wasn't as silly as it sounds.

What I want to talk about are food cravings, body aches and pains and overall health. What set me on this path was some pain issues I've been having recently. I listened to my body and tried to get a handle on what was happening....Was it merely stress? Was it simply muscular? Was it structural?

Several months went by before I decided that there was enough doubt in my mind for me to seek a professional opinion. I needed to be sure that there was no structural problem, so an X-ray was a reasonable path to take to allay my doubts. Once I knew that there was nothing structurally wrong, it simply became a matter of fixing the problem.

Fixing the problem involves several avenues of attack: Get a like-minded health professional on my team. Reduce the activity that was causing the pain, resolve the stress that came out at the point of weakness, develop exercises that would promote recovery, increase herbal remedies to repair muscle fibres, change some of the things that I eat to enhance the healing process and lastly, engage in some serious self-talk and visualization that would support the notion of repair and recovery.

I am a great believer in the idea of diet, exercise and visualization for maintaining both vitality and health and also for recovery from injury.

I'm sure you can accept the diet and exercise part of the formula, but before you discount the visualization aspect ask yourself this: How many times do you hear people tell you that they always get sick at a certain time of the year...and then they get sick?

So let's explore each aspect of listening and responding to messages from your body:

1. **Diet:** You are what you eat. That's simple enough. You can't expect a well-tuned, highly intricate, balance-seeking machine to run on poor fuel. Neither can you expect the machine to run at its best if it is carrying extra weight or has poorly functioning systems. Functional systems include the muscular-skeletal systems, the brain and nervous system, the alimentary system, the immune system, the surface protection system, the repair and rejuvenation systems.

As an organism and a collection of cells, the body is nothing more than a biochemical soup and a set of biochemical reactions. It doesn't take a biochemist, however, to realize that the messages we get about that soup are going to be dramatically affected by what's floating around in it.

Our bodies tell us what we need, if we listen. Unfortunately in our drug and supplement enhanced lives, are we really giving our bodies a chance to tell us the truth? Is the soup getting confused?

So the way I see it at least, when I eat I want to avoid anything that is not as close to nature as I can get. In simple terms I want my fuel to be as pure as possible. It is at least an ideal, knowing that there are plenty of times that I

Listen to your body...continued

eat 'processed foods.'

Equally, there are times when I crave a particular food, like a milk product, fruit, vegetable or fish. Sometimes when I have been working particularly hard or have a pulled muscle or feel 'weak', red meat might be a craving. At other times, if my skin gets dry for instance, it might be a sign to eat more foods with vitamin E or take in more fatty acids.

Also, I can always tell when I have eaten something that interrupts the natural rhythm of my body. I'm not talking about something that gives me a stomach ache here, I'm talking about something that I eat that changes my biorhythms at a more subtle level.

Salt, sugar, high fructose corn syrup, and artificial sweeteners are great examples here. I try to avoid all of them like the plague.

We could go on for pages about the details of diet, but let us close this portion by simply restating the obvious: Eat close to nature, never eat to fullness and keep your body running on pure fuels so that it can communicate more effectively with you.

2. **Exercise:** This one should be a no-brainer these days. We all know that exercise is good for us and in our environmentally-friendly fervor, more of us are getting out and about on bicycles and such.

Part of the problem is that many of us eat more than we really need to eat and exercise less than we should, because we are all too busy to make the time.

Another aspect of exercise is that our bodies can get really comfortable with the same regimen of activity, so

much so, that eventually, the activity has no training effect. Something to consider here is whether or not your physical activity is truly a whole body activity or whether it simply uses the same sets of muscles in the same way, repeatedly.

In a lot of ways, exercise is like diet...variety is good. Avoid the same thing over and over. Do something different.

A full-body workout, combined with an appropriate diet lubricates the joints, works and builds strong muscles and bones, massages internal organs, and enhances whole body and mind function.

Don't forget that biochemical soup though...when you exercise you dump a whole suite of endorphins into your soup that make you feel good. If you keep doing the same routine over and over, the endorphin dump decreases and the activity ceases to have the same lift. Not that I'm suggesting that you become a hormone junkie...just be aware and listen to your body talk to you.

3. **Visualization:** This goes to self-image. How do you see yourself? What do you say to yourself about what you see?

In the process of visualization we image first what we wish to become and then bring those activities into our lives. Remember, as far as your mind goes, you get what you subconsciously want...not what you consciously ask for.

Again, just like diet, garbage in, is garbage out. Health starts with visualization, is sustained by visualization and is enhanced by appropriate visualization. The quality of your

self-image will strongly impact the effectiveness of both your diet and your exercise.

It could be something as simple as "Gee, work was tough today, I'm just too tired to cook dinner and go to the gym...I'll just rent a movie, eat a pizza and have a coke." At the risk of using a cliché...do you get the picture? After all, the internal dialog that we just described was accompanied by mental imagery, that had a powerful ability to motivate a series of actions that are guaranteed to affect diet, exercise, habit and health. It's simply a matter of time.

If I see myself as a couch-potato and continue to reinforce my self-image with couch-potato-like activity, the probability is very high that I will achieve exactly what I set out to achieve.

Conversely, if I change the visualization and self-dialog we just used to something like: "Wow, that was a tough day, but I know I'll feel better after working out some of the stress from work and then having a light healthy dinner", then my couch-potato-like proclivities will be diminished and there is a non-zero probability that I will be enhancing my health in all aspects, mental and physical.

Ultimately, it's all your choice. You can listen to your body or ignore its promptings. If you listen, your body will send clearer and clearer messages. If you ignore it, your body will break down, sooner or later.

So, you see, it all comes to paying attention and listening to what your body tells you it needs to run at optimum health and efficiency. ☺

**The mind is the master over every kind of fortune:
itself acts in both ways, being the cause of its own happiness and misery.**

Seneca

Building self-esteem

Have you ever noticed that you only see what you want to see? Or believe what you want to believe? Our beliefs and perceptions of the world are colored by our experiences and expectations.

Even when it comes to your own self, you only believe those things about yourself that you have conditioned yourself to believe over the years. Your self-esteem and self-worth are both a function of what you have accepted about yourself as being true. Consequently, your functional level will be defined by your self-limiting belief systems.

Nothing else will work....for you.

Hopefully, this article will follow on nicely from the last one, and link nicely to the next.

In the next article we will talk about the cues that we got from our parents, siblings, friends and teachers when we were young. We will talk about how we might have accepted them into our self-belief system and then distorted their original intent until they do not serve us well as adults.

Ultimately, our self-limiting belief systems can be as deeply ingrained as our subconscious meta-programs for breathing or heart function.

But do you know what? You can take conscious control of breathing and heart rate response. Biofeedback mechanisms can teach you how to control your breathing and either raise or lower your heartbeat at will.

It follows then, maybe not entirely logically (because we are, to some extent, dealing with psychology

rather than physiology) that we can gain conscious control of, and then alter, our self-limiting belief systems....if we choose to do so.

The process is not dissimilar to controlling your heart rate:

First, you must be aware of your heartbeat. You must sit and bring your attention to your heart. Once you bring awareness to the conscious level, you can be aware of your heart rate whether you are moving or sitting.

Secondly, you need to concentrate on slowing your heart rate or speeding it up. There are plenty of biofeedback tools that will teach you how to do this. You can do it through meditative sitting, or you can do it with a computer program that shows you your heart rate as you watch a screen.

Eventually, you reach a point that you can combine the first and second steps at will to raise or lower your heartbeat by simply bringing your attention to the heart and giving it a conscious command. This skill can be very useful to you in times of stress, when you need to calm down.

Now let's look at the self-limiting belief system.

First, you must see your self-belief system for what it is. You might do this initially by simply making a list of what you believe about yourself: "I am good-looking, a little overweight, intelligent, gifted at music, but hopeless as a dancer. I can't seem to get a career break, but always do well with my money"....you get the idea. Recognize those parts of the belief system that work in your

favor and those that are less helpful. Recognize also that some of them could be double-edged swords, depending upon circumstances, so don't be too ready to make hard judgements till you can see how they play out in life.

Next, you can sit quietly and simply watch your thoughts come and go. See how many of them are associated with your belief systems (positive and negative). Don't judge them, simply notice them.

Once you have learned to observe your belief systems while you are sitting, it will get easier to notice them when they trip you up during the day.

When you notice a limiting self-belief system getting in your way, ask yourself if there is any basis in reality for this belief *at this stage of your life*. If there isn't then rephrase the belief and redo the action with a different expectation as to outcome.

Repeat as necessary and calibrate your way to success. I'm not saying this will be easy, or work everytime, but I am saying that like training your heart to respond to your conscious commands, you can take control over your self-dialog and change the way in which your limiting self-belief system operates to hold you back.

Like anything in life, success is its own reward; it creates reinforcing hormone responses and helps you to rewire your own mental programming.

Above all, be gentle with yourself and don't force it. Enjoy.



Taking Time

I was reading an article by my friend and chiropractor, Dr Robert Leach, this afternoon about recovery time. Simply put, it takes time to get sick, so it takes time to get well. As the article discusses, the more complicating factors there are, the longer will be the recovery...so don't expect a quick recovery from a condition that you have ignored for six months.

I'll bet you can see where I'm going with this one.

If you want to change your self-image, the longer that you have been wearing image, the longer it will take to change. Equally, the more complicating factors there were involved in developing the image, the longer will be the process of change.

Well, maybe.

There is a truth in this and also a trap.

The truth is simple: A lot of our self-image comes from the cues that we pick up about ourselves from our parents, siblings, friends and teachers and also the societal culture in which we are raised. Because many of these cues are given to us when we are young, we accept them and carry them forward into our adult years, often without ever questioning their validity.

Needless to say, rewiring a faulty self-image can be a daunting and often difficult process if we are attempting to overcome decades of self-reinforced early programming. Notice what I said here: Self-reinforced, early programming.

It can be as simple as the notion that "nothing I ever do will be good enough" or "nothing comes without hard work."

At one level each of these subtle cues that we might have picked up from a parent, sibling, friend or teacher can take root and either serve us well or undermine our efforts....or both, depending upon the circumstances....*regardless of the original context or intention.*

Let's take the latter of the two: "Nothing comes without hard work." The implications here are manifold and are a big part of the western cultural paradigm: You get what you work for and if you want something badly enough you've got to be willing to work for it. All of which is seemingly sound advice.

But what happens if things come easily to you? Do you accept them? Do you start to ask yourself when it's all going to go pear-shaped because things shouldn't be that simple or easy? Do you assume that because it came too easily, it can't be worth anything?

You see, it's not the thought that kills us here, it's what we do with it that either helps us or hinders us.

Staying with the theme here, I can rephrase the statement to something more useful: To obtain full value I must be willing to commit to the endeavor.

I can reprogram my thinking by stopping myself everytime I see one of my "self-image truths" undermining my ability to reach my own potential.

Easy to say, difficult to do.

In order to do this, you actually have to catch yourself in the act of undermining yourself and then, instead of beating yourself up over it, you simply need to rephrase the offending thought process and interrupt the process that is causing

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

- ◆ **WAITING FOR SOMETHING TO HAPPEN!!!**

you to underestimate your ability.

The trap is a little harder to see:

The trap is that we buy into an expectation of failure. There's a sense in which I'm not supposed to get it fixed right away...so inevitably, I'm going to mess up...repeatedly. But am I?

If I don't believe I'm any good at math, do I expect to keep getting the calculations wrong? What does my inner dialog tell me to expect? How much do I then fulfill the expectation to reinforce my believe that I suck at math?

Suppose that I buy into the possibility that success is an immediate option...does that change the potential outcome?

Dr Leach is right, chronic conditions take time to overcome. But just as easily, changes in aspects of our self-image can be sudden and rapid if we do not allow ourselves to be trapped by our own paradigms of expectation. So where does this leave us? What aspects of our self-image could stand some inspection and reprogramming... What are you saying to yourself about that....right now? ☹

**It will soon be time to think about
back to school options**



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