

Loving Our Body – Fitness and Health



Establishing the correct and balanced relationship with our physical form is a natural part of being a whole human being. The two extremities of imbalance in this relationship are either to be overly attached to our body or not to be in the body at all. Our body is impermanent and imperfect. It has been created to serve a purpose in this relative dimension; one that is itself imperfect. Still, while it is not perfect, it is good enough. Having our body in relatively good shape and health is necessary to assure that it will serve its essential purpose in the years to come.

Being overly attached to the body is an expression of imbalance. When people lose the correct perspective, they identify with the body too much and forget that it is just a vehicle for the spirit. After all, no matter how much we take care of it, at some point it will grow old and die. This reflects a more general problem in those who only see the materialistic side of life; they are just like animals who live for living's sake, unconscious of their true purpose. Alternatively, there are people who are not connected to their body at all. They either live in their minds or in spaced-out, mystical or altered states of consciousness. When the spirit is not in the body, the body grows weak, deteriorates and gets sick.

In truth, most people don't fall into either extreme in regards to their connection to the body; their relationship with it is just extremely unconscious. They are attached to their body but in an entirely unconscious way, a way that does not translate into taking true care of their physical wellbeing. They eat too much, they eat unhealthy food, they eat when they are not hungry, they drink when they are not thirsty. They become fat, their muscles are weak and soft, their body is stiff, and their joints are inflexible.

Being fat is not only an aesthetic issue. It is extremely unhealthy and most of that fat is itself very toxic. Those who live on polyunsaturated fats are themselves made of that polyunsaturated fat. We can see often that when people diet and lose weight too quickly, they get sick. This is because they absorb all the toxins that were stored within the fat cells. It is shocking how people, even when they are young, can neglect themselves. Often it can be seen to reflect lower qualities such as ignorance, laziness, gluttony, and lethargy.

In the last article, we spoke about the need to eat nutritious food that at the same time increases metabolism. For instance, if one wants to lose weight, often it is not enough to eat less calories because the body adjusts by slowing down its metabolism (going into various starvation modes), and as such, one reaches a plateau and stops losing weight. In a similar way, doing extreme cardio will not guarantee weight loss because the body will again protect itself by slowing down its metabolism. Metabolism is controlled by the thyroid, and both our diet and life style should support its functioning. One of the ways to check one's thyroid is to measure one's basal body temperature and the resting pulse. While there are some individual variations, increasing our metabolism is beneficial for most people.

Statistically speaking, more people lean towards hypothyroidism. This applies especially to women because of their inherent hormonal fluctuations. Many women have estrogen dominance (a hormone that is equivalent to male testosterone). Research shows that this can cause many problems such as breast cancer, etcetera. Consequently, it seems wise for women to avoid estrogenic foods as part of a healthy diet. Estrogen has been shown to generate stress and stress has been shown to generate more estrogen. It can be beneficial to do a blood test in order to determine estrogen levels. If an excess of estrogen is detected, it can be supplemented with progesterone (a protective female hormone that brings the necessary balance).

An indivisible part of respecting our body is to take care of our physical fitness. The body has to be slightly challenged in order to mobilize its strength. There are three main types of physical exercise: muscle strengthening, cardiovascular, and muscle and joint flexibility. There are many

muscles in the body that we almost do not use. Even those who are engaged in physical work do not use all their muscles; they only use specific ones. For instance, we hardly use the muscles in our back, such as the lats (latissimus dorsi). Although we do not need to develop all our muscles in order to survive and perform basic functions, it is clear that having a physically fit body enhances our physical and energetic wellbeing, and enables the experience of being in the body to be more total. For instance, women are known for having a weaker upper body – most likely because evolution has prioritized their lower body strength for giving birth – but they would still benefit from strengthening their upper muscles. Push-ups, crunches, pull-ups, squats, and lifting weights are good methods to activate all the muscles.

The second type of exercise is cardiovascular. It is called cardiovascular, or cardio, because it engages the most important muscle in the body, which is the heart. Cardio can be either aerobic or anaerobic. The term aerobic refers to exercise which stimulates our cells to metabolize oxygen and produce carbon dioxide. This is called mitochondrial respiration and is considered to be the most efficient form of metabolism. In anaerobic exercise (exercise in which you feel out of breath), the body isn't getting enough oxygen and has to resort to burning glycogen from the muscles. This process is called glycolysis, and there are strong arguments that suggest it to be rather harmful and toxic because it produces lactic acid instead of carbon dioxide and therefore causes stress in the body.

While doing cardio is important in reaching an overall level of body fitness, it should only be done in moderation as it can cause damage to our metabolism. For instance, it appears that most athletes have hyperthyroid issues. Runners often have a reduced pulse, which can be seen as an expression of an impeded metabolism, and long distance running is particularly stressful for the body. One could say that these kinds of physical exercises belong to the category of short-lived fitness, meaning they do not necessarily promote general health and longevity. The line between aerobic and anaerobic exercise is not always clear, but ideally, while exercising, one is breathing freely without creating stress. In most cases, long walks can be much better for the body than overloading it with the stresses of running.

The third type of exercise involves working on flexibility. This can be done by stretching either in a dynamic fashion or more statically (holding different yoga postures, for instance). Hanging upside down can be a good way to open up the spine and bring blood to the head. Making sure that all our joints are more or less stretched and open should be part of being in touch with our body. A flexible body is particularly beneficial for sitting meditation as it supports energy flow and prevents unnecessary pain, or feeling blocked or physically stuck.

To support our body energetically, we also need to learn how to breathe. While doing complex yoga or chi gong breathing exercises can be helpful, often they are quite artificial and can therefore create imbalance if used excessively or incorrectly. The best things are often the most simple. We need to breathe through our belly and learn how to be one with the life force that flows through the breath. Breathing should be conscious, not in the sense of watching the breath, which is very unnatural, but in a deeper way – from the place of embodying our breath. The deepening of our relationship with breath is directly linked to our evolution into being. Without the energy of being, there cannot be correct breathing because only from being can we be one with the breath. The correct breathing involves a longer exhalation than inhalation and a natural stop at the end of exhalation. The deeper we are rooted in being and the more our diaphragm opens up, the deeper our breath becomes. True breathing naturally purifies and heals our body.

Another aspect of physical health is cleansing. It is not entirely clear whether doing prolonged fasts is beneficial for the body. When done in an extreme way, it has been shown to have an adverse effect on the thyroid, which interprets fasting as starvation and stalls the production of thyroid hormones. It is not uncommon to mistake starvation for cleansing, or self-toxification for detoxification. The matter of cleansing should be approached with caution and wisdom. Nevertheless, if one has neglected one's body for a long time, doing a one week water or juice fast can be a good idea. This can be done with colonics as colon irrigation helps remove toxins and the accumulation of old mucus from the intestines. Another option is intermittent fasting, where one eats only within a certain time-window. For instance, there is a 16/8 routine where one fasts for 16 hours (including sleep) and eats for the following 8 hours, and so on. This system can be applied

to facilitate weight loss or as a cleansing method. It is important not to overeat in the feeding window and to stop when one is satiated. It is also beneficial to do an occasional liver flush (or gallbladder flush) to remove gallbladder stones. Everyone carries a large number of stones that block their gallbladder. It is possible to flush them out naturally by following a one day cleansing method which involves taking Epsom salts followed by a large amount of olive oil. Detailed instructions are available on the internet.

While there are benefits to moderate fasting or to restricting certain foods, it should be seen as an occasional or temporary practice. People can become obsessed with special diets or with fasting. Too much fasting can be regarded as a violence against the body and its natural needs – it is the mind wanting to bend the body to its will and ideologies. Our intention should not be to control the needs of our body, but rather to have it attuned to the right desires. When our body reaches an essential degree of purification and our mind becomes silent and sensitive, the wisdom of the body can come forth. The body knows when it needs nourishment and which foods it craves. The body does not want to eat beyond the feeling of being satiated; it has a dignified relationship with food and doesn't want more than it needs. All in all, it is not a special diet or discipline but the wisdom of our natural bodily needs that determines the most correct diet and eating rhythm for each healthy human being.

Regarding the hygiene of the colon, it is important to consume enough fiber. This can be obtained from fruits and a small amount of vegetables. Milk products help with bowel movements as well. Also, it seems to be a good idea to supplement with psyllium husk or alternatively, to eat carrot salad, which helps to sweep the intestines walls. One of the ways the body gets sick is through an excess of endotoxins which enter the blood stream through the intestinal walls. These are basically the waste products of bacteria as they metabolize. Maintaining the hygiene of the bowels is essential for a healthy body.

The wellbeing of our body has a direct impact on our psychological and spiritual reality. Everything is interconnected. All the chemical processes and hormonal changes in the body directly affect how

we feel mentally and emotionally. Furthermore, our energetic resources and free energy flow need to have a healthy and agile body as their foundation. Those who are weak physically and are disconnected from their body usually also have low energy. To reach spiritual transformation, we need to be empowered on all levels, the physical one being the very base of who we are in this dimension. The body is never perfect, but still it needs to be tuned to its highest capacity in order to serve as the vehicle of our evolution and transformation.

The body has to be embraced as an integral part of who we are. When our body is loved, it loves us back and serves our soul to its highest capacity. From the standpoint of being whole, there is no discrimination between the physical, psychological and spiritual – it is all one reality, one total experience of being our complete self. As long as the physical, psychological and spiritual dimensions of our existence are disjointed, we will keep living in conflict and are bound into being fragmented. Loving our body and giving it the energy and attention it deserves is an indivisible part of being in a correct relationship with who we are as a whole being.

Blessings,

Anadi

For a full glossary of terminology, you may visit the glossary page of our website www.anaditeaching.com/glossary