



Nourish your heart before nourishing your body

MARK EXPLAINS WHY LOVE, HAPPINESS AND PLEASURE ARE FAR MORE IMPORTANT THAN ANY DIET OR EXERCISE, WITH REFERENCE TO BOTH ANCIENT AYURVEDIC WISDOM AND WESTERN HEALTH SCIENCE. HERE ARE EIGHT TIPS FOR YOU TO FOLLOW FOR BETTER HEALTH, AND NOT ONE OF THEM MENTIONS THE GYM OR EATING YOUR GREENS.

BY MARK BUNN

Certain things catch your eye, but pursue only those that capture your heart. [Old Indian saying]

Who is healthier: the person who eats the perfect diet but hates their job and is constantly critical of themselves – or the person whose diet is at best average but loves what they do and feels contented with their lot in life? Who is more likely to die young: the person who exercises for two hours a day and has a washboard stomach but lives in a toxic relationship – or someone who is a few kilos overweight but is happily married, laughs often and enjoys the loving support of friends and family?

While it would be unwise to diminish the benefits of eating well or being fit, if we were to ask the enlightened sages of times past, or even many modern-day neuroscientists, the latter examples would more likely be suggested as the

healthier in the true sense of the word. The reason is that, while diet and exercise are vitally important, the ancients knew that the unseen, non-physical world of our emotions affects our health most profoundly. The Swnwt or 'Lady Doctors' of ancient Egypt, based everything they did in the art of healing on their understanding that 'health comes from a happy heart'. Even back then it was understood that, to a large degree, our emotions create our physical reality.

Just as radio waves are unable to be seen, yet travel throughout space and time creating tangible, concrete effects (like music), the latest discoveries of mind-body medicine show how our thoughts and feelings do the same. Neurotransmitters, or brain chemicals in layman-speak, have been shown to have receptors on immune system cells throughout our entire body. Receptors for pain-reducing opiates exist not only in our brain but in our stomach and intestines.

In reality, every idea, nuance of thought, whim or feeling we have is gossiped to every

other cell in our body through the language of chemistry, electricity and vibrational energy in the blink of an eye. Indeed, ancient spiritual masters have suggested that our dominant feelings not only change the chemical and electro-magnetic fields within us but also around us. This may explain phenomena like auras, the so-called subtle 'emotional energy bodies' and even how we can feel uplifted, peaceful or uncomfortable just by being around certain people.

The ancient Vedic sages knew all about the power of our emotional state. That's why for thousands of years before 'modern science', the timeless Ayurvedic texts have encouraged us to eat only when settled and happy. Eating when anxious or upset is known to disturb the internal digestive processes, such that even the healthiest food can literally become poison to the body.

In Ayurveda, the experience of enjoyment and pleasure is not only considered of primary importance in terms of diet but in everything from exercise to conception. In former times, to aid conception, the first prescription for any prospective father

and close family members was to make the intended mother-to-be happy. While extensive recommendations about what foods, herbal preparations and even sexual practices to promote conception were also known, in the ancient texts it is said, 'a happy woman can conceive at any time'. It is understood that when a woman is happy and contented on the deepest level, the subtle channels responsible for the proper nourishment and transportation of reproductive materials 'open like a lotus'.

Everyday suggestions for nourishing the emotions

CHOOSE JOY

While external circumstances can affect our lives, and difficulties, sorrows and times of emotional pain will always arise, we generally have an amazing ability to choose our reality. We can focus on things which nourish our emotional health or those that sap our spirit. We can choose to do work that fulfils our heart or work that merely 'pays the bills'. We can choose to focus on what's good in the world or

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despair at all the injustice. We can choose our attitude each day.

How can you choose more love and joy in your life today?

LOVE THYSELF

It has been repeated throughout the ages, 'The only true love is self-love'. This of course is not in the egotistical sense, but in the sense that the love of others is really only a reflection of the love we have inside. While connection to others is indeed a powerful medicine, the ancients have declared that loving ourselves is the only love we have complete control over and is what ultimately underpins our emotional state of mind. Loving ourselves regardless of being the right dress size, having the perfect partner or being successful, is the emotional equivalent of eating good quality food.

How can you be more self-loving today?

TRANSCEND

According to ancient Vedic science, the most profound way to nourish our emotional health is to nourish the level of life that underlies our emotions. This is the non-physical level of life, the level of spirit or consciousness. Enlivening the inner field of consciousness in order to integrate brain activity and culture more balanced and stable emotional functioning is achieved through meditation practices.

Cultivate a 'no worries' mentality

When social researchers analyse the lives of healthy, long-living people, one of the most consistent findings is that they rarely worry too much about things. Jeanne Calment, the French woman known throughout the world as the longest recorded living Westerner (she died at 122), said 'If you can't do anything about it, don't worry about it'. So simple, so beautiful, yet so fundamentally wise and true.

How can you cultivate more of a 'no worries' mentality or an attitude of 'take it as it comes'?

ASSOCIATE WITH POSITIVE, UPLIFTING PEOPLE

Do you have certain people, even friends or family, who always want to bring you down or see the worst in any situation? Do others in your life tend to make you feel better about yourself and have a positive, uplifting view of life? Thoughts have energy and so those you associate with can affect your emotional energy environment.

How can you associate more with people who uplift your spirits and less with negative or critical individuals?

MAKE PEACE WITH THE AGEING PROCESS

Trillions of dollars are made each year on cosmetics, cosmetic surgery and anti-ageing pills and potions – all based on the belief and expectation that growing older equals more pain and senility and less beauty and value. While not easy in our 'youth-obsessed world', where possible, cultivate the ancient, enlightened way of looking at life as nothing but a never-ending series of cycles, each with its own

beauties and lessons. Refuse to buy into the collective expectation that growing old need be associated with decay or pity. Take inspiration from the long-living people throughout history who have remained purposeful throughout their days and understood that real beauty is found not in how we look but in who we are.

MAKE TIME FOR YOUR PASSIONS

At the deepest level, passion and positive emotion are one and the same. Following our passions not only feels good, it is good for us. Mother Nature wants us to be happy and experience joy, and the way she designed us to do this is through our passions.

How can you spend more time engaging in a personal passion or doing something you love?

Mother Nature has provided an opportunity for us to receive an abundance of heart medicines within the everyday moments of our lives ...

- ♥ loving hugs, the words 'I love you', a simple compliment
- ♥ a child's unbridled laughter, a friend's warm embrace
- ♥ a mother's consoling touch, engaging in a personal passion

All we need to do is stop long enough to enjoy them.

THE GOLDEN RULE - NOURISH YOURSELF FIRST

While it is great to help others, natural wisdom and commonsense (which are basically the same thing) tell us that unless we are feeling good within ourselves, and our own promotional piggy bank is full, we will not feel naturally inclined to emotional uplift or help others. It is a basic law of life that unless we love and nourish ourselves first, we can't truly love and nourish others. Nature's wisdom is not to be martyrs. Nourish your emotional needs first and foremost. This is the ground upon which you can provide the greatest service to others and the world.

What is one thing you can do this week to nourish your own emotional wellbeing?

This article is based on excerpts from Mark's book, 'Ancient Wisdom for Modern Health', available in bookshops.



Mark Bunn is a Sydney-based natural health coach, author and speaker, trained in Western & Eastern health-science (Maharishi Ayurveda). He will be speaking more on this topic at the Sydney 'Love Summit' on 11/11/11.

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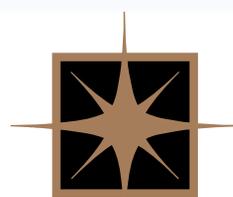


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