

HEALTHLINES

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Chad's Corner

I recently attended the 1999 International Personal Training Conference in Baltimore. As usual, I came away feeling refreshed, inspired and even more dedicated to being the best personal trainer that I can be. Once again, I also learned how much I don't know. Just like with any other profession, things change. There is a voluminous amount of research being conducted in the health/fitness field presently. It's actually quite staggering. From research on supplementation to over training, etc... If you have a particular area of interest, then I can almost guarantee that there is a study being conducted. We will certainly do our best to keep you apprised of the latest research findings in the coming months and years.

One of the many interesting workshops that I attended, discussed state licensure of personal trainers. A topic near and dear to my heart. The health and fitness industry has been growing like crazy over the last several years. As Americans become more health conscious, more people are seeking professional advice on how to exercise safely and effectively. Additionally, the hands-on nature of our profession and the effect it has on the overall wellness of others places us well within the health care continuum. When one considers the increasing examination under which our industry must

exist as a result of these factors, licensure is certain. Consumers need to be able to trust that the people providing their health and fitness education and training have been properly educated, evaluated, and qualified through unwavering standards. Unfortunately, there are still an enormous percentage of "personal trainers" whose qualifications consist of a high school education and placing second in some "Mr. Musclehead" bodybuilding competition. Although these types of trainers are slowly starting to be replaced by more academically and practically trained individuals, there are still plenty out there.

I personally welcome state licensure in our profession. In my opinion, it can't come soon enough. My philosophy has always been to hire individuals who possess excellent academic backgrounds and to further provide for their practical education through having them attend top-notch national certifying fitness workshops. Body Symmetry has literally spent thousands of dollars over the last couple of years on continuing education and certifications for its employees. I think this certainly helps to set us apart from the pack as far as qualifications are concerned. I worked at a health club for 4 years as a personal trainer and generated quite a bit of revenue for the company to boot. Guess what, they never spent a single dime on continuing education for me. This is still all too common with a lot of facilities.

Nevertheless, please rest assured that Body Symmetry will continue with our never ending effort to provide highly trained, qualified trainers for you. After all, education is a lifelong journey, just like fitness.

Yours in Health, Chad Marschik

"Fall seven times, stand up eight."
- Japanese proverb

Stress Reduction *by Sara Bateman, M.S.*

Stress – the buzz word of the last decade. We wear it like a medal, feeling more important with more things we do or have, but when does it get to be too much and what effect does it have on our health?

There is no doubt that everyone encounters stress in daily life – it's inevitable. The task then, is to reduce the amount of stress and try to manage the leftover. I know you're saying to yourself, "easier said than done", but remember, nothing happens overnight- it takes time and effort.

Our world has changed drastically in the past century but unfortunately our bodies have not evolved as quickly. We are still creatures designed to hunt, gather, eat, fast, and fight. There were no meetings for earlier humans to attend, no deadlines, not even email to check!!! Our world is progressing quickly and it doesn't look to be slowing down anytime soon, so we must find ways to reinforce and take care of ourselves.

Let's consider what happens in the body when stress occurs. Hormones are released into our system for the sole purpose of helping our body get ready for some physical action. This goes way back to when there were much more physical dangers for humans. We would prepare to fight or flee; either way we had to move and move fast. These hormones (adrenaline and cortisol) cause an increase in heart rate, blood pressure, and breathing. All of these things happen so that the body can respond to the unusual physical demands. But what happens if these hormones get released, but no physical action is taken. They are left stewing in the system, where they can cause the body harm. Modern stresses are of an entirely different nature from those of long ago. Emotional stresses such as an argument with a family member or a traffic backup doesn't require a physical fight (we hope). The body does not know the difference and therefore releases hormones with such strength that they often do damage to the muscle fibers of the heart and the arterial walls. In fact, researchers have added stress to the list of risk factors for cardiovascular disease.

Never fear, there are so many things that you can do to reduce stress. I read a lot about simplifying your life, stopping to enjoy the moment, listening to the signals that your body gives to you. The underlying theme in most of these books

and articles is to open up your senses.

Here are some ways to do just that.....

The first and most important thing you can do is learn how to breathe. I know it sounds funny. Breathing is so automatic, why would anyone have to learn how it is done? The problem is that we take it for granted. I have shared the story with many of my clients about my friend Kelly who is a Breath Facilitator in Prescott, Arizona. Essentially, she counsels individuals through breath work that involves deep breathing and relaxation. Now of course this sounds a little far out (it is Arizona after all), but the basic principle is very sound. Our bodies need oxygen, in fact they crave it. The air quality in urban areas is poor, posture is usually such that it causes a decrease in lung capacity from the weight of the upper body, and we are under constant stress most of the time that orders our body to take faster, shallow breaths. Is it any wonder we all feel fatigued or get headaches often. And, knowing what we do about the effect of stress on the heart, is it any wonder that cardiovascular disease is so prominent? So, let's learn the right way to breathe. Put simply, abdominal breathing is the most beneficial. This involves taking in a deep breath all the way to the abdomen. The best way to test this is to lie down with a book on your stomach, inhale and see if the book rises. If not, you are not getting a deep enough breath. As with most things, practice makes perfect. Anytime you think of it during the day, do this exercise and soon this type of breathing will become normal for you. This is your first defense against stress.

Second, take a moment each day to stop and listen to yourself. No one around you, no music, no television, no telephone - just you. Many times the answer to a worrisome problem can come to us when there is complete silence. All it takes is 5-10 minutes. It's also helpful to practice deep breathing at this time.

Third, find ways to simplify your life. These include:

- Ask for help when you need it, (i.e. teach the kids how to do some of the household chores so everyone benefits)
- Don't worry so much. There is a song out now that has this line of advice, "Worrying is like trying to solve an Algebra problem by chewing gum." We are not only spinning our wheels if we waste our time with worry, we are also putting our health at risk.
- Figure out things you can control and take action instead of mulling over them. Try not to waste time worrying over things that are out of your control.
- Learn to say no sometimes without feeling guilty.

Although these tips barely scratch the surface, it may get you thinking of ways to simplify your own life. What works for one might not work for another. As clients of Body Symmetry, you have already taken control of your health through regular

exercise. Now take this a step further by reducing stress to control your well-being.