

HEALTHLINES

Spring 2005

Chad's Corner

She's back! Finally, Sara Mansfield has returned to Body Symmetry as a full-time trainer. Currently, she is slowly building her client base and would welcome any referrals you might be able to provide. Check out her fine article entitled "Mental Muscle", in this edition of Healthlines. The article definitely has a mind/body twist that is sure to interest many of you. I certainly need more tips for balancing my hectic lifestyle.

Body Symmetry just finished producing our first sport-specific conditioning video, "Baseball Conditioning for Pitchers". We intend to produce a series of videos for many sports enthusiasts and other special populations. Our next scheduled video is on golf conditioning. Should you have any ideas or suggestions for our future productions, please let me know.

Recently, I spoke with one of my clients about her exercise program. Generally, she is quite happy with her appearance, level of physical conditioning and overall present healthy lifestyle. However, we discussed her desire to refine her body that last little bit. The "last little bit" she was referring to amounts to about 4 or 5 lb. loss of body fat. Not much really, but, the "last little bit" is often the most stubborn to lose. She questioned me how she should best go about losing this amount in a reasonable amount of time. I told her I thought a super-focused 6 week period of time should be about right. Now, you might wonder what I proposed she do to get the ball rolling.

First and foremost, I advised her to schedule a 6-week period of time where she could devote herself fully to achieving her goals. *A beginning and ending date is crucial.*

During her 6-week period, I advised her to refine her daily eating routine so that she would be consuming 6 small to moderate size meals. *Consume a meal at 3 – 4 hour intervals.* It is imperative to remain in a metabolically charged state. In order to do this, one needs a steady stream of calories throughout the day. This will ensure that your body is in an anabolic state, which will better ensure that you preserve and or add lean muscle mass and burn excess body fat as a fuel source. Your ratio of proteins, carbohydrates and fats should be 30%/40%/30%, respectively. You should never be hungry or thirsty (drink water.....no booze or soda)!

I then advised her to perform intense cardiovascular exercise in a sprint fashion 4 – 5 times per week. An example would be "sprinting" on a treadmill, bike, elliptical trainer, etc.... for as hard as you can safely tolerate for 20 - 30 second

intervals, followed by a moderate pace for 60 – 90 seconds (see your trainer for a specific exercise prescription). This would be repeated for 6 – 10 cycles, which means your entire cardiovascular routine would last between 12 - 20 minutes. Have you ever looked at an actual Olympic level sprinter? They have almost no body fat. *Train as if you are a sprinter and just wait and see what happens to your body fat levels.*

Finally, I advised her that we would really step up the intensity of her resistance training the 3 times we meet each week. This would include performing supersets, drop sets, tri-sets and other forms of intensity boosting techniques. *Make sure to perform high-intensity resistance training 3 times per week.*

Yours in Health, Chad Marschik

Mental Muscle by Sara Mansfield, M.S.

When asked, most people would answer that they rarely encounter a stressful situation which they feel they cannot handle. What? We all have stressors in our lives. The fact is that we “handle” them so well, that we’ve just merely adapted to feeling the way they make us feel. STOP, don’t turn back now! This is not just another article about stress reduction. This is an article that will wake you up. Tense, tired, burned out, or even on automatic pilot? Unfortunately, this is the status quo for most people, but it doesn’t have to be. In recent years, most of us have heard the term Mind/Body medicine. We are urged to get in touch with ourselves and live life to its fullest. If you ask me, this push makes me feel more stressed because I’m not doing things the way “they” suggest. Yet, this mind body approach is becoming popular because inherently, many of us are looking for some relief and some balance in our lives. Turn on any news show that covers health topics or read any of the many magazine articles and you will find experts telling you how to live better. “Oh my gosh, I’m not taking full advantage of everyday!” “Oh no, now I’m really stressed out!” I’m sure these people mean well, but it is getting out of control. Don’t let it rattle you if you just can’t seem to embrace the changes they urge. Take a break from listening to them, and start listening to yourself. That’s what mind/body is all about. Before we get any further, I’m not saying that no one else knows what they are talking about when it comes to your health and well-being. There are many health professionals, Body Symmetry trainers included, who try to do their best at educating and facilitating change. But, the ultimate responsibility lies within you. Mind/body practices are meant to increase your awareness by examining your inner dialogue concerning your self image and the quality of your life. Only you intuitively know what it takes to do this. Once you can turn the volume down on all of the excess “noise” from other sources, you finally can hear your inner voice leading you in the right direction. With so many gadgets, solutions, computer programs and conveniences, we are losing our intuition from underutilization. Let’s dust it off and get it back to work for us.

Most of us, in our hurried and over-scheduled lives, rarely have time for quiet practices. We simply do not have the time to relax! How sad. Just as your body needs to move, so does it need to rest. Life is a balancing act. If you do the same activities every time, you put yourself at risk for overuse injuries, muscles imbalances and ultimately boredom or burnout. So, get into the practice of pausing now and then to take a self inventory. Ask yourself...., “Am I taking deep or shallow breaths as I am completing daily activities like driving or working at a computer?”; “Have I been sitting or standing in the same position for more than 15-20 minutes?”; “Has my day gotten so far away from my control that I don’t even think I can answer these questions?”

The purpose here is to get you to think about you. How simple is that? Seems like it, but some don’t like to do it. The most difficult changes we can make are those within ourselves. Old habits die hard, but if you pick away at them by replacing them with something positive, you will see in the long run that the work was well worth it. Your health will improve, you will get more out of your life and free up your chains to accept all that you deserve.

Below are some different pathways to increased mental and physical awareness. This is not meant as a finite list from which you should choose an activity. Rather, it is just an invitation to explore what you feel is the appropriate path for your own personal enlightenment and awakening.

MIND BODY PRACTICES

YOGA – There are many different yoga practices from relaxation, flexibility focused to vigorous strength and balance work. This is a great way to visit the limits of your body’s potential and expand them.

TAI CHI – An ancient Chinese discipline of meditative movements practiced as a system of exercises.

MEDITATION – You can do this anywhere, however it is challenging to be in a public or high stimulus place.

BIOFEEDBACK – Acts as a sixth sense to hear and/or see activity in your body by picking up electrical signals in your muscles. This knowledge helps to see if you could possibly be contributing to your own distress.

MASSAGE – Not just an extravagance. There is a reason it is called therapeutic massage. Your muscles hold tension all day long if you let them. Over time, that is their “normal” state. Sometimes stretching isn’t enough. Give ‘em a break now and then.

BREATHWORK – Simply increasing your awareness of your breathing rhythms and patterns. Just as you exercise your heart or your muscles, you need to exercise your lungs. Get some air into you; your body will be forever grateful.

Counting Breaths

This is one of the easiest meditations. Do it for as long as it feels comfortable. A few minutes may be all you can manage at first, but try to build up to 20 minutes if possible.

1. In a seated or cross-legged posture, close your eyes, relax your body and breathe normally for a few breaths.
2. Focus your attention on your breathing. After each exhalation, but before breathing in, count silently as follows: “One” (inhale, exhale), “Two” (inhale, exhale), “Three” (inhale, exhale), and so on until you reach five. Then start again from one.
3. Feel the air going in and out as you breathe. You will soon notice how your mind tries to distract you from counting. Just bring it gently back each time you realize you have been sidetracked.
4. When you have finished, come back from the meditation slowly and open your eyes.

Meditation Practice –

First, try not to think of this as just sitting and turning your mind off totally. Take it from me; you’ll be asleep in a matter of minutes. Rather, think of stillness. Turn your mind inward and focus on one thing. Your mind will try to wander. Use and strengthen your mental muscle to restrain the habitual wanderings of your mind.

Finally – and most importantly – no matter what mind/body activity you feel you may attempt or to what degree you are willing to embrace it, move yourself in this direction however best you can. It is personally designed for you, by you.