

A HEALTHY MIND IN A HEALTHY BODY

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*“One should always care for one’s health,
Oh dear as a matter of fact health is wealth.
A healthy person can secure everything.
Believe dear he is better than a king.”*

Alexander Pope

It is a very popular saying that “a sound mind lives in a sound body”. Body and mind constitute two parts of a whole. If our mind is happy, we do our work actively and energetically. If the body is healthy, the mind also remains radiant and enthusiastic. Psychology gives us an insight as to how the body and mind function in a coordinated way.

It is a universal fact that there is much importance of good health in the life of all men, women and children. A weak person cannot do anything with success and pleasure. On the other hand, a healthy person can be truly happy by possessing sound health. A person with sound body and sound mind enjoys one's life most happily and very successfully. In short sound health is the basis of true happiness for all as without good health, life becomes a burden to all persons. For all such persons, all joys and attractions of the world are fully meaningless.

Health is the greatest blessing in life. Health is not only wealth but everything. One can enjoy life only if one is healthy. A sick person cannot taste dainty dishes. He cannot move for recreation. He has to depend upon others. Dependence means loss of independence. He may have the choicest things and riches but can enjoy nothing. He becomes an object of pity. He is a burden on others. He loses mental peace. Body is the temple of God. A person who is not healthy will not get the grace of God. We should be careful to maintain good mental as well as physical health. Experts and doctors have prescribed various ways for the maintenance of good health.

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Tips for Maintaining a Good Health:

There are some definite and useful ways to improve and maintain good and sound health whether mental or bodily. They are:

Healthy Diet: Having healthy and balanced diet is also essential for healthy body and mind. When it comes to a healthy diet, balance is the key to getting it right. This means eating a wide variety of foods in the right proportions. It is advised to eat 5 different portions of fruit and vegetables per day, try and eat a rainbow of colours to get vital sources of vitamins and minerals. Starchy foods such as bread, pasta, cereals, potatoes and rice are your main source of energy giving you fuel for the day. These should make up 1/3 of our daily diet. Meat, fish, eggs and beans provide us with protein which is needed for growth and repair. Milk and dairy foods - such as cheese and yoghurt provide us with calcium which helps our bones grow strong. Fat and sugar are still important to have some fat in our diet helps our body to function properly. We need to try and reduce 'bad' fats such as cakes, butters, biscuits and pastries as too much of these foods can increase the risk of heart disease and weight gain. That is why getting the right proportion is key of good health.¹

Water : The human body can last weeks without food, but only days without water. The body is made up of 50 to 70 percent water. Water forms the basis of blood, digestive juices, urine and perspiration, and is contained in lean muscle, fat and bones. As the body can't store water, we need fresh supplies every day to make up for losses. Not drinking enough water can increase the risk of kidney stones and, in women, urinary tract infections at the same time drinking too much water can also damage to body and cause hyponatraemia (water intoxication). Approximate adequate daily intake of fluids (including plain water, milk and other drinks) in liters per day include 0.7 to 0.9 for infant, 1.0 to 1.2 for children, 1.4 to 1.9 for teenagers and 2.1 for women and 2.6 for men.²

Physical exercise: Physical exercise is extremely important to staying healthy both in body and mind. Being active can help a person continue to do things they enjoy and be independent as one ages. Long term physical

¹ <http://www.helpguide.org/articles/healthy-eating/healthy-eating.htm>

² http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bharticles.nsf/pages/water_a_vital_nutrient?open.

activity increases the benefits of long-term health. This is the reason many health experts advise individuals to be as active as possible and to set aside at least three days a week for some form of activity that keeps the heart beating at a steady pace. Physical exercise also has many mental benefits. For example, a person diagnosed with depression or anxiety is most often asked to conduct some form of physical activity apart from taking medication. This is because, the body produces hormones known as endorphins which improve mood and relieve stress. Depression can be alleviated by improving mood and anxiety can be relieved by reducing stress.³

Sleep: A good and sound sleep is very much crucial for the maintenance of a healthy body : As important as sleep is for the body, evidence suggests that it may be even more critical for the brain. There is strong evidence that sleep's role extends beyond the body and includes critical brain functions, such as memory function, creative processing, and emotion regulation. Recent studies suggest that sleep is critical for solidifying or 'consolidating' memories so that we integrate what we learn into long-term knowledge. Recent studies have shown that during sleep, neuronal populations previously engaged in a learning task are reactivated. Even a single night of sleep deprivation can render one more negative and more emotionally unregulated the next day than is experienced with a full night of restorative sleep.⁴

Calmness: Being calm with oneself is one of the key factors for a healthy body and healthy mind. Anger is a natural, healthy emotion that we all need to express. Sometimes, anger can become uncontrollable and harmful- and it can even lead to violent behavior. The problem is not the anger; it is the way we handle it. This can cause a breakdown in communication. Anger is a by-product of an underlying hurt we're feeling deep down inside, probably experienced since childhood. Hence, this makes us more vulnerable to our current situation. This is helpful in making quick decisions during an emergency (fight or flight), but it can also cause us to act impulsively without thinking through a situation. When anger interferes with rational thinking, we may act aggressively, propelled by our natural

³ <http://www.health.gov/paguidelines/guidelines/chapter2.aspx> see also <http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/fitness/in-depth/exercise/art-20048389>.

⁴ <http://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/feathres/9-reasons-to-sleep-more> see also <http://healthysleep.med.harvard.edu/healthy/matters/benefits-of-sleep>.

instinct to survive or protect someone from an impending threat. Some research suggests that inappropriately expressing anger can be harmful to our body. Long-term and intense anger have been linked to mental health concerns such as anxiety, depression, and self-harm.

Yoga : Yoga the science and art of life, was discovered by our forefathers and they handed it over to us as a priceless heritage. Its value is seriously realized in today's world. Today's world is dynamic, and stressful. To meet its demands we have to work hard. In the process, we develop stresses and strains. Yoga is a science that enlightens us regarding why we feel stress, tension and pain. It suggests a life style which is free from stress and pain. It restores the imbalances in our physical and mental systems. It makes our body and mind effective for leading a happy and healthy life. Yoga is also considered as a discipline for happy and effective living. There are two aspects of Yoga. One is outer and the other is inner. The outer aspect of Yoga deals with the postures (Asanas) and breathing exercises (Pranayama) which revitalize our body and mind. It also consists of certain rules and regulations regarding our diet, habits and behavior.

The inner aspect of Yoga includes concentration and meditation which aim at taking us to higher levels of consciousness, consequently giving us peace and delight. Those who try to understand the principles of Yoga and practice the techniques of Yoga have been observed to lead a happy, fruitful and balanced life.

Pranayam : Yoga says that *Prana* is not merely breath but it is cosmic energy. It is the life-giving principle which is everywhere. It is manifested in every form of existence - organic and inorganic. By breathing exercises it is possible to raise the degree of circulation of *prana* in body. In order to enjoy good health, a person needs at least 60 deep breathes in a day. Shallow breathing is directly or indirectly responsible for a number of physical and mental diseases ranging from common colds to nervous disorders. To function properly, our brain requires three times more oxygen than the rest of our body. If it does not get its share, it extracts it from the total supply to the body. That is why brain workers intellectuals often tend to have a poor physique and bad health.

Deep breathing not only refreshes the whole system but also cleanses it. The functioning of our mind is closely related to breathing.

When we are calm, our breathing is deep and slow. When we are excited and agitated, our breathing is shallow and fast. Vice versa is also true. When deliberately slow down our breathing rate, we consciously take deep breaths, then our perturbed mind becomes quiet and is at peace.

Normally, we breathe between 13 to 15 times per minute. It has been observed that the animals like tortoise breath 5 to 8 times per minute and live much longer than human beings. It is also observed that people with addictions like cigarette and liquor have greater breathing rates and their longevity is limited. When we run fast our breathing rate increases temporarily but with that exercise, our muscle tone and circulation increases. That in turn slows down and deepens our natural breathing and increases our longevity.

Some more exercises in Pranayama are as follows :

1. **Pooraka** : Taking air in slowly and consciously - deep inhaling
2. **Rechaka** : Giving air out slowly and consciously - deep exhaling
3. **Kumbhaka** : After inhalation you keep the breath in for a few seconds or after exhaling you stop for a few seconds before inhaling. (This should be done under proper guidance.)
4. **Kapalbhati** : You exhale fast and inhalation is automatic. This clears the sinuses and provides a gentle massage to abdominal muscles.
5. **Bhasrika** : This is brisk breathing. Inhaling and exhaling is quick and fast.
6. **Sheetali** : Here we give a tube like shape to our tongue and slowly inhale through our mouth and slowly exhale through the nose. In summer this Pranayam makes our body cool.
7. **Seetkari** : Here our upper teeth line and lower teeth line touch each other. We inhale slowly through mouth and the air massages our gums gently. In the same way we exhale through mouth pushing air out gently through the passages between the teeth.
8. **Nadi Shuddhi** : Here we take air in from left nostril and give it out through right nostril. Then again we inhale from the right and exhale from the left. This is one cycle. One should do at least five cycles at a time thrice or four times during the day. This purifies our body.

Simple deep breathing also helps a lot in gaining enough oxygen supply for your brain and the rest of your body.

Meditation :Yoga compares the mind with a lake. When agitated and restless, the lake can not reflect the sky. Only when it is calm and undisturbed, it can mirror the sky. In the same way, a calm and poised mind can reflect the universal energy. The final aim of meditation is to gain the vision of truth, to realise the oneness with all life and to enjoy peace and bliss. For meditation, relax your body, sit comfortably in squatting posture, keep your spine neck and head in a straight line. Let your chest spread out a little. First concentrate on your breath and breathe deeply. Exhale fully and inhale deeply a few times. Let the mind follow breath and listen to its sound. If you listen attentively you will be able to hear 'sohum'. 'So' when the breath flows in, 'hum' when the breath flows out. You need not repeat it yourselves. Just listen to that and you will be able to hear the humming musical note within you. This is the part of cosmic vibration. By concentrating on this inner vibration, you will be in tune with the cosmic sound. Then all the ripples of thoughts and emotions will quieten down. The lake of your mind will become still and you experience peace and bliss. In this state of silence you will forget all differences and become one with all Life.

There is a fundamental link between our mind's health and our body's health. A sound mind can live only in a sound body, and we can maintain a sound body with the help of sound mind. With sound health, good thoughts and useful social acts we may bring about much social good and national uplift. A nation of healthy and bright young men and women is an asset to our modern human civilization.

Citizens of tomorrow, as the students of today are zalled, shall have to combine a healthy physique with a healthy intellect. The trophies of success have been won by those young men and women who laid emphasis on oft-quoted dictum 'healthy body healthy mind'.⁵

⁵ <http://www.preservearticles.com/2011111216954/725-words-essay-on-a-sound-mind-in-a-sound-body.html>.