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Listen to Your Body

If you don't feel right your body is talking you

The body is an amazing machine. Not only does it make you who you are on the outside, but internally there is much more going on than you might give it credit for. Aside from the numerous functions of the organs which keep you healthy, there are inbuilt safeguards in the forms of physical and mental feelings. Most times you will become aware of some, and although there may be no external evidence of anything wrong, if you experience one or more of these feelings you should take notice and do something to correct whatever problem your body is drawing your attention to. It might be a small matter that can be fixed in a trice. On the other hand, should it be more complex you'd better have it attended to.

Let's start with pain. Everyone experiences pain to some degree or other many times throughout life. In some instances the cause is obvious: a muscle pulled during a physical activity; a severe knock causing bruising; a surface cut or lesion; and so on. There are prescribed medical remedies for most of these which generally fix the problem. Certain conditions, however, are internal and unseen from the outside, and cures for these can be far more complicated than just a bandaid or a rub with liniment. Headaches are common and mild instances can usually be treated with a pain-killer or two. Those which are more severe like migraine, especially when they are frequently recurring may not respond to the milder medications. Stronger drugs could hold the pain at bay; but that leads down a dangerous path and simply masks an on-going problem. When the condition persists despite the drugs, here is a clear sign from your body that something is very wrong requiring a medical investigation. To ignore this message could have serious consequences.

I have often heard people, especially the athletic types, talking about pushing through the pain-barrier. They seem to believe that giving in to pain is for wimps, which they are not and never will be. What they fail to realise is that pain occurs for a reason. It is a warning that a particular physical or mental limitation has been reached. Continuing with the activity that has caused this discomfort is, for them, a matter of pride; it is also stupid and often results in some paying a heavy price in later years. Ordinary people can be just as ignorant in this regard when performing normal daily functions. Maybe they have a set of exercises that they do every day quite comfortably; but on odd occasions a muscle or tendon twinges. No worries – they carry on in the belief that a bit more will override whatever's happened and it will go away. Well it might; not always though. Neither will the slight pain in the back if they insist on continuing to lift heavy weights. I can personally testify to that and I am regretting it now.

In the past, for muscle and joint injuries doctors tended to recommend pain-killers and resting the particular limb; or in cases where the problem was in the back, complete bed

rest was the way to go. Later, thanks in part to sports physiotherapists, it was found that lightly exercising the affected area helped to strengthen and eventually repair.

Stomach complaints are quite common and many are only minor. Every so often food poisoning rears its ugly head resulting in stomach cramps, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea. The frequent cause is eating contaminated food, and many overseas visitors know about Bali and Delhi belly. If treated early the condition can be remedied quite quickly, and as long as future care is taken with food preparation it is unlikely to return. There are times, however, when a similar situation is much more serious. Should the diarrhoea be persistent and chronic (lasting for days and weeks at a time) the debilitating problem could be due to a viral parasitic stomach infection which can't be cured by the usual means. Only this year multiple cases have been diagnosed in the USA, sweeping through the eastern states. Not to be outdone, a world away in Australia it seems I have managed to contract a similar bug. It has been nearly two months now and the medical experts are still trying to find out what exactly it is. Hopefully before this article is published I will have an answer. I will cover a side-effect of this condition next.

Suffering diarrhoea over a period causes dehydration. Plenty of water plus taking a re-hydration solution containing electrolytes and salts can help the body recover. An additional consequence of this condition can be the feeling of being drained and more tired than usual. The body is saying that it needs rest and to deny that is likely to bring on other symptoms that are of far more concern. Soldiering on when tired is tantamount to pushing through what might seem a mild pain barrier. As the tiredness increases normal tasks become harder and take longer. That's annoying and tends to incite determination to make an extra effort to get the job done. Labouring under duress often causes mistakes which is aggravating – I used to be able to do this easily: why is it so hard now; what's the matter with me? Something definitely is. Before long the anxiety causes stress leading to depression and that feeling of being useless and worthless takes over. These days, too many reach this point and tend to become introverted, not wishing to admit their problem to anyone; and that's the worst thing they could do. Their body has told them in no uncertain terms that something is wrong and it is now totally necessary to share these feeling with another person – get it out in the open or risk being destroyed by it. Surely no-one wants that...?

There are tomes dedicated to this subject, so I won't go on. I will simply reiterate that when your body is talking to you, maybe you should take time out to listen.

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