

8E THE REGISTER-HERALD
Sunday, July 4, 2010

Life!

www.register-herald.com

Exercise for your brain can delay memory problems

Hundreds of years ago, Henry David Thoreau said, "Good for the body is the work of the body... good for the soul is the work of the soul... and good for either is the work of the other." His observation is still true today. Here's why.

The link between physical health and mental health is strong one. The way you "feel" in your body effects the way you "feel" in your head. If you are sick, tired, in pain, or unable to do the things that you want and need to do, then it impacts the way you look at the world, yourself, and those around you. Did you know that studies have shown that exercise is as effective as the leading "drug" for the treatment of depression? It works the other way, too. Research indicates that as much as one third of all primary care visits are for real symptoms started by something non-physical.

When we are suffering mentally and emotionally, this may manifest in very real physical problems, pain, and disease. Stress, beyond a certain level for an extended period of time, can create chronic health problems in the same way that other negative lifestyle choices do. Little by little, eating poorly or being sedentary, can wear a person down until they "breakdown" —

and their body no longer functions correctly. Our physical condition is an outward expression of our what we've been thinking. We can amplify or minimize any physical experience by focusing our attention on it — or on the positive or negative elements of that experience. If, for example, you hit your thumb with a hammer, then stub your toe on a heavy table, you don't simply forget about your thumb, it physiologically changes the electrical connections that transmit painful experience to your brain. Don't just believe me, try it. (Only if you want to, of course.)

Not only does exercise improve your outlook and mental health, it also has a positive effect on brain function — and appears to be an important factor in delaying the onset of memory loss, dementia, and Alzheimer's disease. Seniors who are physically fit have significantly lower rates of these problems. And, those that do develop these challenges do so at a later point in life — and to a lesser extent. The theory is simple. Activity increases blood flow, as well as the release of certain chemicals and hormones, critical to maintaining mental health.

Don't forget (pun intended!) that your brain, like a muscle also needs a workout. By doing mental

exercises, games, and activities that require you to use multiple senses and/or do something new and different builds mental endurance and reserve against the natural loss of memory that comes with advancing age. Puzzles, games, and activities that are mathematical or have a musical element seem to be the most protective. Some suggestions that combine these ideas are:

- Take a class to learn something you've always wanted to understand or do (like a speak foreign language, paint, cook, create a website, build a table — you get the picture).
- Experiment with new

games to increase mind, eye, and body coordination.

- Do puzzles and games like crossword puzzles, Sudoku, and Scrabble.

- Read often —exploring different types of books, articles, internet sites.

- Remember and repeat groups of words.

- Memorize your grocery list and frequently used phone

numbers.

- Work through math functions (rather than use a calculator).

- Learn new words from a word-a-day calendar or dictionary.

- Use your left hand if you are right handed (or your right if you're a

lefty), to exercise the opposite side of the brain.

- Learn to read and play music — or sing the lyrics of a song.

- Draw, paint, work with clay, sculpt, weave, or build something.

(For more ideas and links to cool sites on this subject, visit www.bodyworkshfr.com and go the 3rd tab, Health News.)

Samuel Smiles, a Scottish author, had some sage advice about this subject; he said:

- Watch your thoughts; they lead to emotions.

- Watch your emotions; they spark actions.

- Watch your actions; they become habits.

- Watch your habits; they build character.

- Watch your character; it determines your direction.

- Watch your direction; it becomes your destiny.

Bottom line? Commit to exercising your body and your brain. After all, a healthier mind results from a healthy body — and healthier body results in a healthy mind. So let's get started with the positive thoughts, emotions, actions, and habits — to build an even healthier character, direction and destiny for our selves, families, and communities.

Previous Bottom Line articles, are available at Register-Herald.com, search Healthy Bottom Line, under the News tab at Bodyworkshfr.com news tab or on Mick Bates' Facebook page. Mick can also be heard on Power Country 105.9FM each Monday morning. Tune in at 8:15 a.m. to hear Mick on Cami Marlow's Motivational Mondays.

HEALTHY
BOTTOM LINE



Mick
Bates



BODYWORKS hfr.com

9 Yellow Wood Way • Beckley, WV 25801-7126 • 304-255-2376 • fax: 304-255-7120 • 1-888-511-4822