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Principle 15: Maintain Sound Health

Effective Mind-Body Stimulants

You want to get the greatest vigor and fullest use from your body. You can do this if you understand two important points:

1. Your body and mind are one, effectively a mind-body
2. Your mind-body is, in turn, at one with nature.

The health of your mind and body cannot be separated. Anything that affects the soundness of your mind will affect your body, and anything that affects your body will touch your mind. This is why I refer to you as a mind-body.

But you are also affected by your environment, subject to natural laws that govern your mind-body just as much as they affect trees, mountains, birds, and beasts. Understanding the way in which you can maintain a sound mind-body depends, therefore, on understanding the way nature works. You must learn to work with natural forces, not fight them.

The Rhythms of Life

When you consider the waves of the ocean, the passing of the seasons, the waxing and waning of the moon, you will see that nature moves in rhythms. There is even a rhythm in your own life from birth through childhood and adolescence to full maturity, old age, and finally birth of a new generation. Light, energy, and matter are made up of waves, either moving out in their own rhythm or bound, like a neutron, around the fixed point of the nucleus of the atom. Nothing about life is static. Movement is constant and rhythmic (though sometimes that rhythm is too large or small for us to perceive immediately). This is one reason why we enjoy music, for it reflects the rhythms and waves of our experience. You must learn to bend and sway with the rhythms of life, not to stand fixed and immobile against them. A sandy beach moves and changes with the rhythms of the waves and lasts for eons; a breakwater is soon destroyed.

Take a look at your life. Is it rhythmical? Are you following work with play, mental effort with physical effort, eating with fasting, seriousness with humor, sex with transmutation of sex into creative effort? Your subconscious does its best work on your behalf while your conscious mind is at rest. True inspiration most often comes after your subconscious has been given a task and while your conscious mind is then occupied elsewhere—that is, while your mind is playing.

Archimedes had struggled with the complex problem of determining the relative mass of two objects without finding a solution. It was only when he decided to relax and slip into his bath that his subconscious was stimulated by the water he displaced in his tub. He sprang from his bath with that now-famous cry of “Eureka!” and the solution he had been seeking. Are you giving your mind a chance to relax by playing? Interference with normal rhythmical patterns produces so many problems. If you don’t give your mind a rhythm of work and relaxation, your body will be so constantly stimulated that you will likely end up with a stress-related disorder. And without highs and lows, the things that you value begin to pale. Your past failures are what makes success sweet.

You don’t really want continuous happiness, for then your happiness would seem dull.

One of the major goals of marriage counseling is getting couples to understand that there is no such thing as being constantly in love. People in love have a series of loves, like waves on the oceans. In the troughs they are neutral in their feelings, but troughs make the peaks of the waves so much more poignant. As in life, not all the ocean's waves are of the same intensity; there are a few for each of us that reach great heights, and it is the memory and exhilaration of these moments that we store up to call upon when the going gets difficult. You have to learn to understand the waves and rhythms in your life and to live within those rhythms in order to be in harmony with the world.

The Influence of Your Mind

Just as you have to understand nature as a complex whole, moving with its own rhythms, you have to understand that your mind and body are a whole, each influencing the other. Humans are the only thinking creatures, and this power allows you to modify your world and to learn its laws. You need only to conceive the idea and believe in it to achieve the idea.

This is the story of all the successful people who have changed the path of civilization. It took countless hundreds of millions of years for evolution to develop from all the animals that walked or swam a bird that could fly. Yet the Wright brothers, with childlike faith in their own idea, had human beings airborne in a mere twenty years. That is the power of the mind, demonstrated to us by experience and reinforced by the words of countless prophets in touch with Infinite Intelligence. Christ himself said, "All things are possible even unto the end of the world." Your mind has the higher function in your mind-body. Your body is an exquisitely functioning machine for carrying your mind about and executing the dictates of this powerhouse. A smoothly functioning mind is necessary to a smoothly functioning body. Some people have bodies that are limited. They can move, see, or speak only with difficulty or not at all. Yet the power of their minds allows them to live full creative lives.

Helen Keller is a marvelous example, as are Beethoven and Edison, both of whom suffered from severely impaired hearing. Franklin Roosevelt was barely able to stand on his own, yet he inspired and led our country through the greatest depression and war we ever faced. Senator Bob Dole's arm was permanently injured in World War II, but that has not stopped him from becoming one of our most influential political leaders. The story of civilization is punctuated with greatness achieved by individuals in spite of physical limitations because these people possessed smoothly functioning minds. On the wings of a definite major purpose, faith, enthusiasm, and a positive mental attitude, they rose farther and farther from any despair over their limitations toward great heights of brilliant achievement. That is the influence of the mind.

Essentials of Success and Happiness

Many of the essential principles of success are also essential to a smoothly functioning mind. A definite major purpose and a plan for carrying it out keep you from vacillating in your efforts. Think of a situation in which you were part of a smoothly functioning plan.

You were content with the way the situation was handled. You felt at ease and comfortable. Your mind is always satisfied with the harmony produced by a well-organized plan. Anxiety develops from a poorly organized plan. Controlled attention, self-discipline, accurate thinking, personal initiative, learning from defeat, and going the extra mile all are mental tools you can use to organize and carry out your plan. They give you satisfaction both in the achievement of each step of your plan and in your overall progress. Satisfactions are important foods for a healthy mind.

Probably the most important single quality for sound mental health is a positive mental attitude and all that it entails. Two of the greatest destructive forces in the human mind are fear and its close partner, anxiety. They kill enthusiasm, destroy faith, blind vision, blunt creative effort, and dispel harmony and peace of mind--all qualities necessary for a positive mental attitude and sound mental health.

The Force of Fear

Fear and anxiety produce unharmonious, irritated restlessness in your mind that leads to serious mental maladjustment and produces its counterpart in the body in the form of serious disease, perhaps even death. There is a growing awareness in the healing professions that many human ailments are either the product of mental distress or greatly exacerbated by it.

The list of diseases that are brought on by stress is long, varied, and growing: allergies, asthma, skin disease, hypertension, cardiac problems, arthritis, colitis, and immune disorders.

Some hay fever sufferers start sneezing and itching at the *sight* of goldenrod in a vase.

Tell them the plant is artificial, and their symptoms clear. This is a simple example of how the mind can affect the body negatively. You must replace fear with understanding and faith in yourself. To do this, let's look at how fear affects the mechanisms of your body.

Temporary, fleeting fear is a normal and important function. It gets you to move out of the way of an oncoming train or keeps you from walking too near a cliff by momentarily focusing your attention--your mind--on a problem. Once the problem is over, this kind of fear is forgotten. Fear also focuses your bodily functions on a threat. That old story of a cave dweller frightened by a sound in the night is a good illustration. Instantaneously the heart begins pumping faster; blood is diverted from the digestion for use by the muscles; the blood vessels serving the muscles dilate to handle increased volume, while those near the skin contract so that less blood is lost in case of a cut. Hearing becomes more acute; the pupils dilate to take in more light; the adrenaline gland unleashes a torrent of stimulant to provide strength for a fight.

All this is preparation for surviving a battle or chase. The ensuing battle uses up the adrenaline and exhausts the other bodily systems so that they step down from their heightened readiness. Blood leaves the muscles to return to digestive and other functions. This is an extremely powerful response, one that kept our species alive over millions of years. But it is not intended to be a constant state, for it diverts the body from its normal functions. Still, some of us activate this response to some extent daily or even continually because we live in frequent fear. You must work to eliminate the causes of those fears. The fear of the loss of money: Have you set up a system to conserve and develop your assets?

The fear of ill health: Have you sought and followed worthwhile counsel? The fear of loss of love: Have you put as much effort into increasing your beloved's affection as you would into cultivating an important business prospect? The fear of death: Have you sought help and understanding to the point where fear is replaced by faith?

The list of fears is endless, yet to cultivate a positive mental attitude and develop a smoothly functioning mind that can live in harmony with itself and the world, you must conquer fear and anxiety. If the same fears and anxieties recur in your mind constantly and are paralyzing your efforts, seek the help of a good professional counselor. You aren't admitting weakness by doing this; you are expressing maturity and commitment to your health and your definite major purpose. A brief period of therapy may mean years of happiness. Remember that whatever your mind can conceive and believe, it can achieve. Isn't the person who is afraid of falling on the ice the one who falls? Repeating a fear over and over in your mind makes you more susceptible to the things you fear. You must vanquish fear before it vanquishes you.

The Force of a Positive Mental Attitude

The best way to remove fear from your mind is to replace it with PMA. Emile Coue, the French psychologist, gave us a very simple but practical formula for building PMA and maintaining a health consciousness: "Every day, in every way, I am getting better and better." Repeat this sentence to yourself many times a day until your subconscious picks it up, accepts it, and begins to carry it out in the form of good health.

This is a simple yet astounding form of autosuggestion. It depends on your belief in

the statement, but the best way to build that belief is to make the statement a part of your mental environment. Remember that your mind is strongly influenced by its environment, and by filling that environment with the right thoughts, you will come to believe them.

Eating Habits

The purpose of food is to supply the body with the things it needs to maintain itself in good repair. Your eating habits must be guided by this goal alone. Think of your digestive system as a factory. To function efficiently, it has to have a supply of a variety of materials in varying quantities. If you provide the wrong mix of materials, some jobs will never be completed, some will be done with jerry-rigged parts, and some materials will simply be stored up in every corner until the walls of the factory begin to swell. Finally the walls burst, the roof caves in, and the factory is either out of business or in need of serious and expensive repair.

Information about nutritional requirements continues to evolve as scientists work to understand more and more about the body. Pay attention to new information (but do not be swept along by fads) as it becomes available. In the main, however, some simple points will keep your diet balanced:

1. Fresh fruits and vegetables should make up the largest portion of your meals. They supply complex mixes of vitamins and trace elements, and your body is designed to avail itself of them easily.
2. Complex carbohydrates, such as breads, grains, and potatoes, should be the next largest.
3. Protein, in the form of lean meats, fish, and dairy products, is important, but it should not be the center of your meals. Select small amounts of foods you enjoy, rather than gorge yourself on steak at every meal.
4. Avoid fats; limit your intake of butter and oils, and stay away from deep-fried foods. Also avoid sugars, like candy and colas, which provide little but calories. Seek variety as well. Your bodies nutritional needs run a wide gamut, and the best way to serve those needs without becoming a food chemist is to be sure that you eat a wide spectrum of foods. Don't say, "I can't eat that way," for all you are really saying is "I don't want to eat that way." It is a very glib bit of mental gymnastics to make yourself believe that it is impossible to do what is really only unappealing or different. Why should all your efforts for success stumble over your ill health because you don't like broccoli?

Never eat while angry, frightened, or worried. Your body is simply not in a position to make use of the food when it is on a defensive footing. Worse, you can make eating a habitual response to stress, which can lead to overweight. Moderation in food and alcohol intake is important, both because your body can be overwhelmed by an excess of either and because overindulgence can become a trick to avoid dealing with some problem that urgently needs to be faced. If you find that you cannot control either, seek the help of professionals or a worthy organization like Alcoholics or Overeaters Anonymous.

Rhythms in Relaxation

Relaxation entails completely forgetting the worries and problems of the day. As desirable as this may seem, many people have trouble relaxing. Your conscious mind selects objects on which to concentrate, and this concentration means the exclusion of other thoughts. You cannot just collapse into a chair and announce, "I am relaxing," because your mind will select some object of focus, most often the very item you wish to forget about for a time. You need to select an object of relaxation for your mind to concentrate on. It can be kite flying, gardening, reading a novel, or anything else which will absorb you.

Television and the corner bar are not the answers. Cultivate a variety of interests that take your mind to new places. Practicing controlled meditation will do wonders for your mental powers. Physical activity can be a terrific thing to immerse yourself in; not only do you relax your mind, but you strengthen your body. Short periods of relaxation throughout the day can break tension and give your subconscious a chance to work. Read a magazine article; listen to a language tape; work on a crossword puzzle. This is not wasting time; it is keeping your mind in top condition through relaxation.

Sleep

Your body needs time to rebuild and revitalize itself for the next day. It is sheer stupidity to try to increase your productivity by cutting your sleeping time. Six to eight hours a night are all you need. And remember that even while you sleep, your subconscious is working. Insomnia is often caused by a failure to relax before going to bed. Don't work until you drop. Instead wind down at the end of the day by doing something you enjoy that doesn't over stimulate you. (For this reason, exercise is not good just before you go to bed.) Perhaps quiet small talk with your spouse is all you need, or an easy routine of brushing your teeth, stretching for a few moments, or making your bed. A habit which signals your body that it is time for sleep is a valuable aid.

Exercise

Ideally your relaxation and play will include exercise. Relaxing and playing are important to your mind, while exercise, which is mostly beneficial to your body, can also be of great mental benefit. You need to engage in aerobic exercise for a period of twenty minutes at least three times a week to keep your heart and lungs strong. The rate at which you exercise must be determined by your age and physical condition; trainers at any local gym or YMCA can explain this to you and help you design a simple exercise regimen that is neither expensive nor time-consuming. (How much time do you spend watching TV?) Consult your doctor before you begin any exercise program.

Exercise can be a tremendous mental and physical stimulant, clearing away sluggishness. It also teaches you persistence and concentration. Athletic training has become an important field for understanding human potential and has resulted in many techniques that can be applied to your quest for success. Bill Bowerman was a first-class track coach at the University of Oregon for many years; when he conceived an idea for a better running shoe, the lessons he had learned in training himself and others were an important part of making Nike the number one American shoe manufacturer.

Sex and Sublimation

Sex is your most precious and constructive drive; it is also the most easily debased. Sex is behind all the creative forces that advance human destiny. Sex has built cathedrals, universities, and nations. Why? Because the desire for sex causes us to work to please others, and out of that work spring kindness and the understanding of others. Sex is a completely natural desire. Do not fear or deny it. But realize that you must direct it, like all desires, to definite ends instead of letting it become an end in itself. If sex is all you want, you will do anything to get it, forgetting your faith in yourself, your definite purpose, and your moral standards.

When you want sex, remember that you cannot get something for nothing. The intimacy of sex is gained by constructive work at building a committed relationship. If you channel your desire for sex into creating and providing for that relationship, you will not only get what your heart desires but also attain the heights of achievement.

To work to your greatest good, sex and sublimation need to be alternated in a rhythmical pattern, just as work and play do.

Effective Mind-Body Stimulants

At any given time your mind-body may need a boost. Many of the best boosters are things you are already doing; you just need to be conscious of the effect they have and seek them out.

- Sexual expression or a sublimated sexual drive keys up the mind so that it works rapidly and well, with real inspiration.
- Love, the ultimate aim of sexual desire, serves a similar purpose; when the two are combined, they are unbeatable.
- Fanning your burning obsession is a strong stimulant.

- Work is a wonderful opportunity for creative expression. Do something small and definite, yet satisfying, like making a phone call or writing a thank-you note.
- A burst of exercise releases pent-up energy, drives away frustration, and stimulates the brain with increased blood and oxygen.
- A little play lets the subconscious go to work.

Discover Vitamin I

I recently went through some of my old records of the work Napoleon Hill and I did together in 1955, and I recalled our excitement over the new findings being made about vitamins. We decided to come up with our own vitamin discovery, Vitamin "I." I wrote the following:

You have heard of Vitamins A, B and the B complexes, C, D, E and K, but you have never heard of Vitamin I.

It is unnecessary to discuss how you can obtain the necessary vitamins and minerals through food and water to maintain a healthy body, as the information is so readily available. As you know, Vitamin D can be absorbed from sunshine.

What is Vitamin I? Let us assume Vitamin I is inspiration.

As far as we know, the body will absorb through food only the quantity of vitamins that it can use. These vitamins act within and on the body without conscious effort -- however, with applied effort, it will absorb and use unlimited quantities -- its effectiveness is in proportion to your willingness to receive and act. The choice is yours. Remember, no chemical, physical or mental change develops without action.

You will, over a period of a lifetime, spend large sums of money for obtaining vitamins in food and possibly food supplements, whereas Vitamin I can be absorbed from the same sources over and over again without the diminishing of the source.

Any stimulus from without has an effect upon the mind through one or more of your five senses. There is no spoken or written word, song or music, visual scene or climatic atmosphere that is in itself inspiring to you -- it is what you accept consciously or subconsciously which makes it so.

To eliminate a vitamin deficiency in the body, one chooses food for his diet that contains the necessary vitamins. For a Vitamin I deficiency, you can purposely select beneficial external influences to assist you to achieve the inspiration you are seeking.

Vitamin I can be absorbed from numerous writings, a few of which are:

- *Believe and Achieve: W. Clement Stone's New Success Formula*, by Samuel A. Cypert
- *Earl Nightingale's Greatest Discovery*, by Earl Nightingale
- *Jerry Baker's Growth Plan for People*, by Jerry Baker
- *Think and Grow Rich* and *Law of Success*, by Napoleon Hill, as well as Hill's *PMA Science of Success Course*
- *The Choice* and *The Christ Commission*, by Og Mandino
- *Guideposts* magazine from Dr. Norman Vincent Peale.

(The Bible has changed the lives of more persons than any book written for those who are ready.)

While thousands of persons claim that evangelist Oral Roberts has healed them -- some of so-called incurable diseases -- Oral Roberts states that he hasn't cured anyone. He has merely been the tool or medium -- it was up to the individual to believe, to accept, and to have faith.

The subconscious reacts if exposed long enough and frequently enough to external influences that are inspiring; therefore, select environmental influences that cause you to react just as carefully as you would in selecting food containing vitamins for the body. Because your subconscious mind reacts to your inspiring thoughts quicker and with greater effectiveness than external influence -- think inspiring thoughts.

Vitamins from food must be taken regularly for a healthy body and Vitamin I for a healthy mind. Inspiration without action is beautiful but valueless. It is short-lived and extinguished like a flame -- often never to return.

The mind is affected by the physical condition of the body to an extent, but the body is more affected by the condition of the mind; therefore, select your daily supply of Vitamin I.

When should you start? Use the self-starter: **Do It Now!**

Beginning Your Day Right

How you begin the day affects what you do with the rest of it.

Do you start off slow? If so, do you like doing that, or do you wish you could get off to a fast start? You can start each day as fast and enthusiastic as you want, if you program yourself to do so.

How? Here are six "early morning" suggestions that sales trainer Tom Hopkins gives at his seminars. They are derived from the *Think and Grow Rich* research Napoleon Hill conducted a half-century ago.

1. Listen to lively music or motivational tapes. Play cassette tapes that pick up your mood. Avoid the radio, so you don't hear bad news. Set it up the night before. Hopkins believes in programming, so he decides the night before what he's going to listen to the next morning. He sets a little stereo on the nightstand and loads it before going to bed.
2. Psyche yourself up with your own words. When Hopkins is on the road, he sometimes feels jet lag. So he's made himself a tape on which he says, "Okay, today is the most beautiful day you've ever had. Today you're going to meet the right people in the right place and time for the betterment of all. It's your obligation, Hopkins, to get moving because the people who are coming aren't responsible for how you feel. You must perform for them."
3. Push positive thinking. Hopkins believes you can't be negative about large parts of your life and positive about others. Either enthusiasm will take over or negativism will.
4. Don't knock yourself. Plenty of people will do that for you. But you're the only one who knows what a great person you are. You're the best person you know. Believe that. Feel it deeply. You've got to love yourself first.
5. Be generous with praise. Don't put your spouse or children down. Some people are unaware how frequently they do this. Many times it's done to keep the other person under control. But putdowns

damage a family the way knocking bricks out of a wall damages a building.

6. Exercise. Your body is the only one you're going to get, so take care of it. Three workouts a week, every other day, is what it takes to keep your body fit enough so your emotions and your body won't be a drag on your mind.
7. During the first afternoon of his three-day seminars, Hopkins asks everyone to commit themselves to some type of physical exercise. On the second day of one seminar, a 76-year-old man bounced in and said, "Tommy, I feel so good. I started my exercise program."

"What is it?"

"I'm committed to one push-up every morning!"

That one push-up won't make him stronger physically, but it can be the start of a gradually increasing program of physical activity. Any exercise you do starts an upward spiral. You increase mental discipline, and that leads to more physical activity.

Points to Ponder

1. I feel healthy! I feel happy! I feel terrific!
2. The purpose for eating food is to supply the body with what it needs to maintain itself in good repair.
3. To maintain a positive mental attitude and develop a healthy mind and body, you must conquer fear and anxiety.
4. Anything that affects your physical health also affects your mental health.
5. A positive mental attitude is the most important quality for sound mental and physical health.
6. Your mind and body are one and at one with nature.
7. Take the time to smell the flowers!
8. A negative mind results in physical illness, and most physical ailments begin with wrong thinking.
9. A young mind makes a young body.
10. Exercise produces both physical and mental buoyancy. It clears sluggishness and dullness from body and mind.
11. If you haven't the willpower to keep your physical body in repair, you lack the power of will to maintain a positive mental attitude in other important circumstances that control your life.