

health corner

Health: Is It All in Your Head?

by Kathleen Manley of Renaissance Chiropractic

There has been a lot of research over the past few decades on the body-mind connection. Much has been learned about emotions and how they affect our health; and on how our physical condition affects our emotions. The common factor in all of this is the brain.

Our brains and nervous systems control the quality of our lives. We need to keep the brain and nervous system functioning at peak performance levels in order to enjoy life both physically and emotionally/spiritually.

The brain and nervous system are comprised of cell units called "neurons." These cells have basic needs in order to function well and keep us happy and healthy. These needs are simple: Oxygen, fuel and stimulation.

Many of us do not breathe fully enough to keep the brain well oxygenated. In severe cases, hypoxia leads to cell death. Not breathing well can lead to an increased pH level in the brain (alkalosis), which leads to feelings of mania and anxiety.

Think of times when you've felt stressed. Have you been holding your breath or breathing shallowly? Do your shoulders end up somewhere in the vicinity of your ears? Take time each day for this exercise in breathing fully:

- 1.) Stand with your feet parallel, knees relaxed, belly muscles *engaged*.
- 2.) Open your hands, palms facing forward (helps open the chest).
- 3.) Move your head back over your chest, in neutral position.
- 4.) Breathe in through your nose



for two counts.

5.) Hold two counts, then breathe out through pursed lips four counts.

6.) Repeat ten times.

Be sure to eat breakfast. Not a latte. A balanced meal with a serving of fruit, a protein and a grain is a great way to start your day and support brain health. Avoid caffeine, alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

Stimulate the brain by learning something new, exercising regularly (which also helps oxygenate the brain) and by using all of your senses. Limit TV watching, gaming and texting to no more than three hours total per day. If your job entails sitting at a computer all day, then do something more physical in your off hours.

Consider having regular bodywork such as chiropractic and massage. Chiropractic adjustments help stimulate the brain through joint tissue proprioceptors, "resetting" the brain and creating improved ranges of motion and decreased pain.

Sources: Principles of Neural Science, 4th ed. E. Kandel, J. Schwartz, T. Jessell.

Functional Neurology for Practitioners of Manual Therapy, R. Beck.

Brain & Cognition, Vol. 58 Issue 2 July 2005.

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