REST AND STRESS

Rest is one of the most overlooked concepts in health; stress is one of the most ignored. These two combatants work at opposite ends of the health spectrum. A key aspect is that rest is an anabolic (building up) activity and stress is a catabolic (breaking down) one. By enhancing the quantity and quality of the former and reducing the intensity and duration of the latter, great improvements in health are possible.

57 ***Rest and stress are two sides of the health coin.***

The main component of rest is sleep. Sleep allows the body to regenerate, heal, recharge, and do maintenance activities. The required amount of sleep is variable from one person to the next. The more change or exertion that a person is experiencing, likely the more sleep required. Children, for example, go through a lot of physical change and generally need more sleep than do adults. Someone experiencing a lot of emotional or mental exertion can also require more sleep as these activities require a great deal of energy as well.

58 ***Sleep needs vary naturally with changing demands on body and mind.***

The manner of sleep is of importance as well to ensure fulfilling, quality sleep. Going to bed right after physical or emotional agitation tends to produce poor quality sleep. Eating close to bedtime, too, is problematic as the body uses part of the sleeping session for digestion, rather than healing and maintenance. Naturally, noises or lights that might interrupt sleep are best minimized.

Also, the manner in which one awakens is important. Ideally, the body should wake on its own, not by an alarm (the very word indicates what it might do to the quality of sleep!). Most people tend to have one complete sub-cycle of sleep about every 90 minutes. Awakening at the end of one of these sub-cycles is ideal for smooth continuity between sleep and awakening.

One useful method to avoid the need for alarm clocks is to repeat to oneself while falling asleep to awake by such-and-such a time. At first, this may not work for some, but with consistent application most people will be able to use this technique successfully.

Another aspect of rest, often overlooked, is the temporary decrease in use of a particular body system or tissue. That is, small areas of the body (muscle, nerves, etc.) can tire individually and need to be rested. No sleep is required, just a change of activity to one that uses other parts of the body. The rule of thumb here is that when one tires in any capacity (muscles, thought processes, etc.), that activity should be stopped temporarily; either do nothing or do any other activity that does not involve the fatigued area. This temporary rest allows that area to regroup and recharge enough to continue after the rest period. Eventually that activity will need to be stopped fully when recharging becomes difficult. In terms of adaptation, rest is a way to slow the onset of the Abuse adaptation response. By including rest periods, extended use of an area can strengthen and provide durability and tenaciousness to that area. Muscles and nervous system tissue alike need this rest.

59 ***Rest can be achieved at anytime because activity of one system is rest to another.***

60 ***Variety of activity promotes proper rest of all parts of the body.***

NOTES

Rest's antithesis, stress, breaks down the body's health. Stress is a survival mechanism in which long-term health is ignored for short-term survival needs. Stress can be thought of as the overuse of some aspect of the body. When severe overuse, i.e. abuse, occurs the consequence is cell damage and cell death. The more severe the stress (in intensity, frequency and/or duration), the greater the chance of cell death.

Anything that exceeds the usual level of activity (mental, emotional, or physical) constitutes a stress. If the stress is mild and short-lived, the body benefits via the principles of the Overuse adaptation response. If the stress is severe or long in duration, the body suffers. The body's stress response diverts all necessary body resources to the stressful situation in order to get out of it alive and as quickly as possible. Consequently, the body will remain in emergency mode, breaking down body tissues for survival, until the source of the stress is taken care of. A touch of stress leaves the body stronger, a lot of stress leaves it weaker.

61 ***Mild stress is necessary for the body to thrive; excessive stress harms the body.***

[End of Excerpt]