

Well Being

Stillpoint Rehabilitation & Wellness, LLC

Tuning Your Exercise Routine

People who exercise are healthier, more energetic, think more clearly, sleep better, and have delayed onset of dementia. They also get relief from anxiety and mild depression, comparable to medication and therapy. If you are having trouble sticking to a program, try these tips:

-Always exercise on Mondays. It sets the psychological pattern for the week.

-Never skip exercising for two days in a row. You can skip a day, but the next day, you *must* exercise no matter how inconvenient.

-Think about context. If you do not like weight-training, it might just be that area of the gym or the (grunting) people there. Maybe you try to run or walk in the morning, but it's too cold. Maybe the music in your gym is too loud or annoying. Maybe you are exhausting yourself during exercise and it depletes rather than energizes you. It's your life. Change. Make it work for you.

-Exercise frequently. It cannot just be a game of basketball every week. In my home, we dance in the living room every night after dinner. Go up and down the stairs forty times if you like that better.

-Skip the shower. If you don't have time both to exercise and take a shower, find exercise (weight-training, yoga, pilates, walking) where you don't need to shower afterward.

-Look for ways to jazz up your exercise routine. Could you upgrade to a nicer gym? Buy yourself a new iPod? Work with a trainer? Get a pedometer? Upgrade your gear? Exercise is a high priority for a healthy life, so this is the place to spend some money if it helps.

This month, I asked esteemed psychologist Dr. Nancy Roberts to give us a few tips for surviving and even thriving this holiday season.

Here Come the Holidays!

Even though we may look forward to the holidays with great excitement, many of us also feel the increasing stress of multiple demands on our time and energy. If you are prone to "**holiday overload**" here are some tips:

Prioritize... and remember *less can be more*, whether this involves decorating, shopping, baking, or socializing. Let go of activities that are not meaningful. Don't go through the motions just because someone expects it of you or it's always been done this way. **Decide** what is important to you and **balance** this with the needs and requests of loved ones. Feel free to **create new traditions**. Negotiate plans with your spouse/partner, family, and friends to make sure you are not left feeling exhausted or resentful. **Delegate** whenever possible.

And remember to take breaks from the hustle and bustle to reflect on and **be grateful** for all the **blessings** in your life!

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Physical Medicine

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Flex Account Alert

You may want to stock up on over-the-counter (OTC) medication with cash left in your flexible spending account. In 2011, the new health care law bans using these accounts to pay for most OTC meds, unless you have a prescription.

Newsorthy

A study published in the New England Journal of Medicine found that the practice of **Tai Chi** has greater benefits than traditional exercise for individuals with **fibromyalgia**. Tai Chi is a mind-body practice that originated in China as a martial art. It combines meditation with slow gentle movements, deep breathing and relaxation to move vital energy through the body.

I know Katherine Kates has ongoing Tai Chi classes in Bangor. Check her out at www.katherinekatestaichi.com.

The use of nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) is associated with an increased risk of serious health problems. These drugs are commonly prescribed for pain and inflammation. If you are using these medications, which includes aspirin, Motrin, Aleve as well as prescription medications, use them wisely and as with any medication, be certain that you are addressing the cause of your problem and not just suppressing it.

If you are using NSAIDs for arthritis pain, consider a trial of **Limbrel**.

This is a new medical food which has concentrated **flavonoids**, which are **anti-inflammatory** and **antioxidant** compounds found in some foods. Many of the health benefits of colored fruits and vegetables, red wine, dark chocolate and green tea are directly related to their high flavonoid content. The concentration available in Limbrel is much higher than you can get in a normal diet. The dosage is 250 mg twice per day and even though it is classified as a **medical food**, it is available by prescription only at this time.

An Integrative Approach to Lower Back Pain

We are going to use the issue of lower back pain (LBP) to illustrate how integrative medicine works. Up to 80% of adults experience LBP at some point in their life. This may range from strain related to over-use to significant neurologic compromise. Pain in the lower back may also be referred from internal organs (viscera) or distant musculoskeletal structures, like the feet or the jaw.

Once a serious underlying medical disorder has been ruled out, the goal becomes to resolve pain and restriction before further complications arise. This may involve correction of musculoskeletal issues, such as postural problems or muscle imbalances. Some are diagnosed with lumbosacral radiculopathy (known as a pinched nerve or sciatica) caused by a vertebral disc herniation or compression of the nerve by bone growths. In many cases, there is no cause identified for the pain. Pain that does not go away within 6 months is considered "chronic pain". At that point there is a risk of serious decline in function, muscle atrophy, depletion of energy, and depression.

Using an integrative medicine approach provides tools for looking deeper. What else is going on with this person? Who

are they? Why did this happen? What message is the body/mind sending? How can they heal? Are there lessons to be learned from this? What changes are necessary?

By integrating knowledge from ancient medical systems like the acupuncture meridians, the five elements, the chakras, other energy systems, and mind-body techniques, the range of possible treatments expands.

For example, in acupuncture theory, the Bladder meridian runs from the face up to the head and down the dorsal zone to the little toe. Dysfunction in this meridian can cause spine, buttock and lower extremity pain as well as bladder and cervical spine problems. The Bladder and Kidney meridians are associated with the Water element which is linked with the ear (hearing) and bones as well as the emotion of fear. An imbalance in the Water element can affect the Fire element (palpitations, anxiety, depression), the Wood element (headaches, visual problems) or Metal (allergies, bowel issues). The Balance method asks us to look at the hand or forearm to treat LBP. Another area to consider are the energy centers called Chakras. Many

traditions recognize seven of these "wheels of light" which are located at the major nerve bundles. The first one is at the base of the spine and a dysfunction in this energy center can manifest as lower back pain. The main aspect of the Root chakra is security. So for instance, lower back pain can develop when one does not feel supported in a relationship or when there is a sense of financial or material lack.

It has been proven that the thoughts you think and belief systems you have adopted can influence your ability to heal from an illness. These may be conscious or subconscious in nature and identifying the harmful ones is so critical for long-term healing.

So, whether the issue is a bone, muscle, nerve, fascia, disc, ligament or a meridian, an element, a chakra, or just plain old "stinking thinking", it is important to keep an open mind. Usually it is a combination of factors which need to be addressed in order to get the results you desire.

In my experience, combining Western medical science with Eastern healing systems and mind-body techniques is a great strategy for restoring health.