



Awaken Your Body

THE INDEPENDENT FORUM FOR YOUR WHOLE LIFE

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Happy New Year!

This month, we are focusing on awakening to our lives. We firmly believe in the mind, body, spirit experience of holistic living. In order to awaken your whole, and holistic life, this month, we take a look at awakening your body, spirit then mind separately. We will wrap it up with a fascinating look at awareness in the "I am aware" newsletter.

Awaken Your Body!

Most people believe, consciously or unconsciously, that their body exists to simply carry around their mind. They are then completely surprised when their bodies awaken them with illness, pain or discomfort. It is vitally important that we learn to awaken our ourselves through enhancing our connection to our body before the point of serious injury or illness.

But how do we awaken to our bodies while continuing to live in our thought centered society? Our bosses probably won't accept "needing to connect with our bodies" as a legitimate reason for time off work. Here are some simple, accessible ideas to help you awaken your connection to your body in the middle of your busy life.

Checking In

Simply checking in is the easiest way to begin to connect with your body. Try this: the next time you are driving to work, ask your body "how does it feel?" Make a mental inventory of what you hear. If you plan your day, write at the beginning of each day, "how does my body feel today?"

Another idea for awakening the connection to your body comes from Stephen Covey. In the *8th habit*, he suggests that for each situation in our life, we ask ourselves, "Is this serving my body?" Review your week. Did each situation serve your body?

Getting a massage from someone you trust

is also an excellent way to check in with your body. Really listen to what your body is saying as the massage therapist works. Listen to what your massage therapist says about your body. Does it match what your internal sensation?

Practice checking in regularly and you will find that your body is ready to awaken.

Food

Every single person, every single body is different. Our individual bodies interact with food in specific and special ways. Most people know so much about diets, calories, good foods and bad foods, yet know very little about what works for their individual body and metabolism.

It's time to find out **what works for you**. Start by getting your resting metabolic rate checked. Most fitness centers have a simple, easy to take test which measures how many calories your body burns at rest. Once you know how many calories your body burns, it's a simple calculation to determine how many calories you need to burn to lose weight, gain weight or stay the same.

Take some time to determine the foods that **your body likes**. There are simple energetic tests (usually done by chiropractors) or blood tests (usually done by allergists) to test for food allergies. Make sure that you know what you are allergic to now.

Forget the formulas! Every body responds to food differently. You might need more protein or more water than other people. Maybe you thrive on an all vegetable diet. It's up to you to determine what your body likes and needs. Become the expert on what your body likes and needs for nutrition.

Rest

Awakening your body requires that you are rested. Most North Americans live with sleep deprivation. Give yourself a good nights sleep. If you have trouble sleeping, make it a priority this year to learn how to have a good nights sleep. There are a number of excellent programs and books that will help you get sleep without pharmaceutical assistance.

Take rest one step further by dedicating yourself to a 5 minute break for every 2

hours of work. Set a timer on your computer so that you know when your 2 hours are up. Get up and get a drink of water. Walk up and down the stairs. A short 5 minute break will help you feel rested and awake.

Exercise

Most people get some exercise. Yet frequently we focus on our goals – losing weight, increasing our running times, lifting more weights – rather than the act of actually moving our body. Exercise is a wonderful way to awaken to the sensations of your body. Here's a few ideas to try:

✿ **Focus on your toe.** The philosopher Gurjeff used this fabulous technique to help his followers reconnect with the sensations of their bodies. During the living of your day, focus on the sensations from one place in your body – such as your big toe or your right ear. Try this while you work out. This technique will help you awaken to the sensations of even the smallest part of your body.

✿ **Exercise as meditation.** American Buddhist monk Shinzen Young encourages people to use their exercise time as a meditation practice. Simply focus on the in and out sensation of your breath while you are doing aerobic exercise instead of focusing on the things around you.

✿ **Focus on the process.** Rather than disconnecting through music, books or television while you exercise, try connecting through focusing on the process of your work out. Literally focus your attention on the movement of your muscles. Studies show that your workout will improve as you awaken to the sensations of your own moving body.

Try one of these ideas this week! Soon you will feel a strong connection to your vibrant, awake body.

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