

“Farm” Your Psyche To Exercise In Synchrony

Watching your body during exercise is the first step; what follows next is observing your energy and breath. The last is, of course, is your mind.

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The mind is akin to your TV monitor flashing images and information in the background as you do your work-out. If you are observant, you will notice what it adds to your understanding of what is actually happening as you go through your exercise routine. The mind gives clues for you to not only do your exercises well, but it also tells you what you can derive best from it.

The mind tells you to initiate your movement from your centre — if you have forgotten a certain movement. It will tell you to fine-tune your energy when there is tightness in your breathing, or there is lack of vigour along the spine.

It may also be said that the mind probably does all this better when you are going through the rigors of exercise with zest — not when you think of exercise as a tedious enterprise. You need to take a cue from it — to bring your [e]motion back to your centre, when required, so that you can feel in sync with the joy of movement.

It's all very much there — all your mind does is help bring your attention to take hold and build itself. But, try your best you must. Always.



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Remember — if you do not focus on the good feelings that emerge from your exercise, or do not appreciate them, your old habits take over, or return. You slip into a negative frame of mind and lose your focus. This is what generally happens when you do exercise regularly, and take a short break, and the break becomes extended for some reason or the other. You begin to think of exercise as a chore, something that is awkward and not joyful.

Or, it could be a vicious spiral — you get into mechanical movements that are expressed by negative thinking. Hence, your movements become mechanical. The best remedy that can work in this situation will actually depend on the development of constant inner awareness.

One simple idea is — doing something that works, or something that increases your vitality. This is something that will also make you feel great, even if you don't notice, or if you do you tend to play it down. It is only when you are attuned to this part of yourself will you be encouraged to continue.

To think of an example — if you think of doing an experiment, you ought to need to collect adequate data. The reason why many of our efforts towards our health fail is because we don't seem to learn from what we do. You just can't learn what you do if you do not notice its effects on you.

Needless to say, the best information on what you do is available by tapping your inside. Reliable data are collected from what you feel in your body; yet, watching the train of thoughts is, of course, useful.

It is this premise that gives you effective insights into how moving into previously unoccupied and unexplored spaces affects you.

If you play cricket, just notice how flashes through your mind help when you play the drive. If you practice dance, you know when to let your hips loosen up a bit than usual. The best part — you need not talk about it. Likewise, getting into a new yoga posture is capable of bringing up both images and memories.

In other words, what appears in your mental mirror during movement is quite instructive. So, never try to push yourself — you can't swim against the tide. You need to go with the tide. You need to put aside thoughts that won't allow you to move on. Whenever you think that you are getting into a negative phase, try to click images in your mind and connect them to the picture of exercise you do so well. It works!

When you pace your mind and watch, you immediately connect yourself with something you do every now and then. In contrast, when your work does not provide you with a calm feeling or the relaxation you need, it is time you changed or adjusted your routine in tune with what has always kept you going.

Think of exercise as a vital necessity — as vital as air, water and food. As Mahatma Gandhi said: "The mind is as much weakened by want of exercise as the body." He brought a parable in his thought — the life of the farmer, the Mahatma felt, offered the perfect work-out for both. Gandhi, of course, did not think of hi-tech agriculture. What he "quantified" was the tiller of a small piece of land living in close communion with nature — someone who co-ordinated his bodily work with the phases of the moon and the change of the seasons. This was what, he explained, aided our farmers to find the direction by looking at the stars, or when rain was about to fall by observing a particular class of birds gathering together and making noise together. The farmer, in Gandhi's idiom, was aware of nature's subtleties. He, therefore, realised and always realises the greatness of God.

The very idea also speaks of interconnectedness, or what the noted biologist Edward O Wilson calls as "consilience" of man and nature. The interconnectedness of things. We all can't, of course, be farmers, but we can all with nature's sense of completeness, and co-ordination, be in synchrony with the Divine.

This is precisely what you need to bring to your exercise, or work-out, plan — to derive the best benefits that nature always wanted you to enjoy and spread around for yourself.