

Healthy Body

By Dr Andrew Wicking

To function optimally our brain needs healthy nourishment. About 80% of the neurochemicals in our brains are created in our stomachs. This means that happiness, passion, motivation and vitality are related to what we eat. You don't run a sports car on two-stroke fuel so don't think you can run your genius brain on junk food. Avoid the sugars, salts and saturated fats and give up fizzy sugary drinks! 'Healthy Body' includes sleeping well, eating well, exercising and staying away from unhealthy substances.

1. Sleep well

We all need refreshing sleep to live and learn well. You need at least eight hours sleep each night to function well. At times of pressure you may even need more. Sleep resets our hormone levels and protects us against stress and depression.

2. Eat breakfast

Your brain is at its best when you eat a healthy breakfast. If you want to do your best at school eat a good breakfast such as eggs, toast,

porridge or low sugar cereals rather than sugary cereals. A good breakfast will benefit concentration and memory.

3. Forget energy drinks

Just one of these drinks elevates your levels of adrenaline (a stress hormone) to five times the normal level for up to five hours after drinking. These drinks are often high in caffeine, aspartame and sugars, all of which increase your stress levels.

4. Cut out the junk food

Eating a lot of junk food will cause you to have a brain that is not only stressed out, it will also make you feel sludgy and tired.

5. Exercise

Being physically active lowers your stress levels. Exercise increases blood flow to the smart parts of our brains where problems can get solved. When we sit or lie still for too long the more primitive parts of our brain kicks in and our thoughts go around and around. Sitting

around doing nothing can be great, but if you are already a bit stressed, it will help the worries to build and circle like vultures.

6. Breathe deeply

When you feel stressed, take a moment to breathe deeply. Put your hand on your belly and take a big breath. Then slowly breathe out as you count to yourself, “one thousand, two thousand, three thousand”. Slowing down your breathing resets your body.

7. Drink water

Drinking water lowers the level of cortisol (a stress hormone) in your body

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