

Congruence

Merging Mind, Body & Emotions to Find the Spirit in Sport, Work and LIFE

By Chip Richards

In this day and age there are countless approaches to high achievement in fitness, wellness, nutrition and sports performance and LIFE. In the fitness realm we have access to many effective training modalities (cardio, strength, power, endurance, etc.), sub-modalities (free weights, functional training, stability ball, plyometrics, pilates, etc.), and cross-pollinations (yoga-lates, Tae-Bo, weights on stability balls, etc.). Thousands of dollars are spent each year researching tiny muscle fibres of the abdominals to determine the relevance of the “core” in movement. Millions of dollars are spent each year researching and promoting miracle nutrition and dietary supplement approaches.

It is indeed exciting to have access to such a myriad of advanced approaches to training the body, but in our efforts to achieve the physique or athletic performance we desire, it is quite easy to forget that we are in fact far more than just a physical body. In our mad dash to learn the latest training techniques and to discover the perfect diet and fitness program to fit our specific body type, it is very easy to overlook the *overriding* power of THOUGHT and FEELING in our sport, vitality and life. In his book *Ageless Body, Timeless Mind*, Dr. Deepak Chopra tells us that, “We are the only creatures on earth who can change our biology by what we think and feel.”¹ Indeed science and philosophy together are steadily proving that our thoughts and feelings have a huge effect upon – and in many ways create – our reality.

Our physical body does play a vital role in our life and sport performance, but it truly is only one spoke in the wheel. The real key to achieving extraordinary results in any endeavour comes in our ability to powerfully align the energies of our mind, body and emotions toward a common goal. This convergence creates a fourth entity, which in my experience is far greater than any of the individual or even two elements combined.

The following article will explore the three-way partnership between the body, mind and emotions, and the importance of their alignment to creating the true “spirit” of sport, vitality and life.

The Fastest Doesn't Always Win the Race

If the physically fastest person always won the race there would be no reason to race at all. There would in fact be no such thing as sport. In my experience with world-class athletes I have found that at the elite level, where the majority of athletes are close to their physical peak, and many are actually capable of

achieving a winning performance on any given day, the biggest challenge isn't raising their physical ability to win, but raising their mental and emotional ability to guide their body to perform at its best when it matters most. Those who experience extraordinary performances are sometimes – but certainly not always – the strongest, fastest or best physically prepared. The best performances come from those who most powerfully combine adequate physical preparation with a clear and focused mind, and positively empowered emotions. In my experience, the winner is almost always the one who FEELS best on the day, and this sense of feeling often shines out from the person like a light, long before the race even begins.

As a coach, I have always cared much more for the personal, inner journey of the individuals I coach than for what the scoreboard says. This approach is occasionally met with initial resistance, but I have found that when the spirit is aligned and the approach is 'holistic', the results always speak amazingly for themselves.

The Fittest Don't Always Live the Longest

The mental, physical and emotional congruence needed for achieving and sustaining peak performance in sport is equally true for creating health, fitness and vitality in life. Medical researchers at various prestigious institutions now agree that thought and emotions are the primary factors in creating illness (and therefore health) in our bodies.² This has been demonstrated powerfully with the use of placebos (dummy treatments such as sugar pills) in laboratory tests to successfully treat and relieve such conditions as post-surgery pain, asthma, allergies, warts, sleep disorders, obesity and many other afflictions. The same placebo treatments – which in themselves have no specific effects – have been used to cause intoxication, back pain, euphoria, blurred vision, increased libido and heart palpitations among individuals who expected such reactions.³ In short, our thoughts and feelings literally create our physical reality.

You may run a five-minute mile, eat all organic foods, exhibit perfect weight lifting form and the flexibility of a yogi, but if your mind and emotions aren't positively aligned with your body, you will have great difficulty attaining your potential in sport, fitness, wellness or life. As John Randolph Price says in The Wellness Book, "Five miles of jogging may not cancel out five minutes of hostility. And all the vitamins on the shelf simply will not overcome the physical damage caused by daily doses of resentment and unforgiveness."⁴

Indeed our bodies are the world's most powerful pharmacy and have the ability to powerfully, naturally support or degenerate our health in amazing ways. In one clinical study, scientists took the saliva from a man who was in a rage of anger, and through lab analysis, revealed the composition of the saliva to be the same as a rattlesnake's venom! This saliva was then injected into small animals and each one died.⁵ Imagine the effect of this

sort of chemical discharge in our own bodies. This is very powerful, especially when we consider that the chemical reaction of our body to 30 seconds of stress can stay in our body for up to six hours.

What is needed to attain true health and lasting fulfilment in sport and life is congruence. A sense of unity, where the elements of our physical, emotional and mental bodies work synergistically with each other and add to what each may do individually. Consider our physical, emotional and mental body as the body, engine and driver of a car. Our physical body is like the car body – beautiful to look at and full of dynamic potential, but relatively useless without an engine to propel it and a driver to steer its course. The engine of the car is like our heart, the internal and emotional energy source for all productive motion. Without it, we go nowhere, and yet as powerful and passionate as it may be, it too remains useless without a vehicle within which to express itself or a driver to guide its energy. The driver is our mind – our source of wisdom and clarity to see and navigate our way along the path. The driver's role is equally vital, but without the car body and engine, he too will be left standing on the side of the road with his thumb out, waiting for a ride. As such, our thoughts, feelings and actions are equal partners in an interdependent journey, which can flow with the power and efficiency of a formula one race car, or stop, stutter and ultimately break down like an old jalopy.

BODY + MIND + EMOTIONS = SPIRIT

When our hearts and minds are aligned with what we ask our bodies to do, incredible things begin to happen. This space of confluence – the positive coming together of mind, body and emotion – is what creates the true “spirit” behind any endeavour or pursuit. Whether rock climbing, running a marathon, rehabbing an injury or healing a disease, our moments of positive congruence and true alignment are marked with levels of flow and achievement that often exceed our expectations and explanation!

We have all experienced this feeling of flow at one time or another in sport, work, creative expression or with a loved one. In these moments we are not concerned with results, with achieving a certain end or what will happen next. We are simply and purely in the moment. Connected. We go from surfing on the wave to being part of the wave itself. From running on the trail to feeling as though our feet are not even touching the ground. Dynamic and expressive, yet totally natural and unforced. These moments of flow are often perceived as extraordinary and unexplainable “departures from normality”, but in truth they are simply outward glimpses of an inner congruence that is available to all of us, all of the time.

So how do we facilitate this sense of congruence in our daily lives? The full answer to this question is perhaps beyond the scope of this article, but the following steps will get you on the road to creating an empowering sense of inner

connection with your external world, and help you to integrate your mind, body and emotions into the spirit of what you desire.

Step 1: Become Aware

Just as you might assess your physiology (posture, stability, etc...) before creating a physical training program, the first step to integrating the forces of your mind, body and emotions is to observe them in relation to each other, and to what you really want to achieve. As Louis L. Hay says in her book *Heal Your Body*:

Stop for a moment and catch your thought. What are you thinking right now? If thoughts shape your life and experiences, would you want this to become true for you? If it is a thought of worry or anger or hurt or revenge, how do you think this thoughts will comes back to you? If we want a joyous life, we must think joyous thoughts. If we want a prosperous life, we must think prosperous thoughts. If we want a loving life, we must think loving thoughts. Whatever we send out mentally or verbally will come back to us in life form... Be willing to change your words and thoughts, and watch your life change. It's your power and your choice. No one thinks in your mind but you.⁶

Pick an area of your life that you would like to improve or achieve something special, and take a moment to honestly assess your “state” of mind, body and emotions with regard to this area. Watch to see how your thoughts translate into feelings and emotions, and how those emotions empower (or disempower) your actions toward your goal. Do you have a clear vision in your mind of what you truly desire? Can you feel in your body what it would feel like to have or achieve that goal? Are your thoughts, feelings and actions working together to support your journey towards this goal, or are their areas of incongruence? Which of the three elements are strongest? Which ones are holding you back? On a scale from 1-10, where would you be if 10 is absolute unity and power?

Step 2: Start with Your Body

If your thoughts and emotions are not fully in line with where you want to go, one of the fastest and most effective ways to shift your internal energy is by changing what you do with your body. If you are feeling upset, stressed out or frustrated, often the best first step is to stop what you are doing, take some deep breaths or go for a walk outside. This positive change in physiology usually has an equally positive effect on our mental and emotional states. When we move physically we shift energy, and this movement often allows us to see and experience our circumstances with fresh perspective. In the words of world-renowned motivational speaker and personal coach Tony Robbins, “Motion creates emotion,” which may explain why we often FEEL better about ourselves after we have a workout.

Step 3: See the Highest Vision

Once you have elevated your overall “state” into the positive, the first step toward achieving true fulfilment in any area is to get clear about what you really want. We often gauge our ambitions and make decisions about our potential based on other people’s opinions or what we have experienced or achieved in the past, but seldom do we stop to truly ask ourselves, “Who do I really want to be? What do I want to do? And why?” Ask your mind what its highest vision for your life is, and listen to what it says. Indeed the only limits that exist in our world are those we impose upon ourselves or allow others to impose upon us. Take time to create and write down your ultimate vision for your body, sport or life. See the end result in as many details and colours as you can conjure. If you have a physical ailment, don’t focus your mental energy on “healing” your body, but on seeing and envisioning your body whole and healed. Spend time each day envisioning your absolute ultimate vision, and each day strive to make that vision bigger, brighter, higher.

Step 4: Build the Feeling of that Vision

Once you have created an empowering and inspiring vision in your mind for what you truly desire, the next step is to let that mental image permeate your emotional body and feel what it would feel like to bring this vision to fruition. Take a few moments to stand, breathe and move how you would if you had already achieved your goal. Embody the feeling of your ultimate vision in completed form. Ultimately no matter what you want in your life, you want it because of how you think it will make you feel. Why do you want to lose weight? So you will FEEL more energetic. Why do you want to win the race? So you will FEEL a sense of achievement. The key to creating congruent flow in your body is to identify the emotional feeling underneath your goal and then generate these feelings in your body - in advance. Make a list of all the things in your life that give you similar feelings to those your goal will bring you, and then fill your life with activities that build the rhythm of that feeling. Success truly breeds success and as you learn to create these positive feelings in your daily life (even in small ways), two things occur. First, you become less dependent on your external circumstances to experience fulfilment in your life, and second, you actually generate a vibration in your body that tunes you in to the experiences you truly desire. In his book *Cleanse and Purify Thyself* Dr. Richard Anderson explains it this way:

...our thoughts and feelings emit specific waves (like radio waves) of energy and vibration that influence the patterns within our bodies. The patterns of negative thought and feeling automatically create physical patterns that result in disease. The patterns of Love and joy automatically create physical patterns that result in health, strength and vitality.⁷

Step 5: Carry the Feeling into Action

Create a schedule of physical activity in your life that not only supports your goals in a physical sense, but also serves to expand your mental vision and

empower your emotions. Make a commitment to be aware of your actions and when in doubt, simply ask the question, “Does this activity support my ultimate vision on all levels?” The more actions you take on the outside world that make you feel good about yourself, the faster and more powerfully your mind and heart will come into alignment with your goal.

I believe we are born into a world of truly limitless possibility. As we launch further into the technology age, we may find that the most profound breakthroughs and scientific achievements will not be found in external inventions, but rather in the breakthroughs of our own ‘inner technology’, as we learn to powerfully harness all that we think, feel say and do into the true spirit of what we desire.

Chip Richards is writer and holistic life coach. His written work extends from poetry to feature film. His coaching clientele range from business leaders and athletes, to film directors and spiritual adventurers of all walks of life. For coaching and workshop enquiries, contact Chip at chipeta3@xtra.co.nz.

References

¹ Deepak Chopra, M.D., *Ageless Body, Timeless Mind*, (New York, NY: Harmony Books, 1994),pg. 4.

² John Randolph Price, *The Wellness Book* (Carlsbad, CA: Hay House, Inc., 1998), p. 6.

³ George Leonard & Michael Murphy, *The Life We Are Given* (New York, NY: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam), p. 100.

⁴ Price, pg. 13.

⁵ Dr. Hal Huggins D.D.S., *The Price of Root Canals*. Available from Dr. Huggins office at +1-719-522-0566.

⁶ Louise L. Hay, *Heal Your Body* (Carlsbad, CA.: Hay House, Inc., 1988), p. 3.

⁷ Dr. Richard Anderson, N.D., N.M.D. (Mt. Shasta, California: Christobe Publishing), p. 20.