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Life is Worth Giving

MAINTAINING BODY AND MIND BALANCE IMPORTANT IN LIFE

by Fr. Kevin Shanley, O.Carm.

The Romans most often had an excellent and insightful saying for almost any facet of the human experience of whatever nature. This is especially true in regard to how they viewed the important and necessary relationship between the mind and the body.

Many centuries ago they coined the expression: "Mens Sana in Corpore Sano." This excellent bit of sage wisdom might well be translated, for those who have ^(since) forgotten their Latin vocabulary, as: "A Sound Mind in a Sound Body."

In addition to the Romans, many ^(OTHER) peoples in various parts of the world have concluded that a healthy relationship between the mind and the body is more than important for each person, male or female. According to the Romans and others, if anything goes wrong with either component of the human person, then the other will be effected in a negative way. It is, indeed, more than necessary that a good balance be maintained between mind and body all during life. Without such a balance, life can become more than confusing and uncomfortable for a person.

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Reaction of People

People will often make the statement, "I just feel out of sorts today." There is some nagging feeling that something just isn't right with the self or others. It is sometimes difficult to put one's finger on the cause, but the experience can sometimes remain with a person for a considerable period of time. Such an experience, too, may often be accompanied by such physical ailments as a headache or an upset stomach. It is almost as though the body is telling the mind that all is not right at present and some solution needs to be found.

As experience demonstrates, much of the difficulty can at times be traced back to some unfinished business from the near or distant past. An unresolved argument with a spouse, family member or a friend can remain with a person even for decades. An unapologized hurt, a forgotten important anniversary or similar occasion, or a misunderstood statement — all or these and more can fall under the category of unfinished issues and truly cause significant harm in the present for many.

Forgetting Doesn't Help

Such a situation, too, helps us to understand that some of the worse advice given to people in such circumstances is focused on the admonition: "Forget it!" A close second is the advice: "Put it behind you and move on!"

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People can do many things with their past memories, especially the painful ones, or their unresolved conflicts and hurts — but forgetting is neither actually possible or untimately helpful. Dealing with the past, especially with professional help or even the assitance of a friend, is a much better solution for the situation.

Role of Religion

Such people in pain need to find a way to resolve the past so that the so-called "toxic nostalgia" can no longer play an instrusive part in negating positive feelings. Thus true peace of mind and the healthy balance of body and mind is restored to an individual.

It is here that religion can play a decisive role. Not only are people urged in the "Our Father" to forgive as they would hope to be forgiven, but such an action can truly restore a sense of peace and well-being. In the process of forgiving, it is often helpful to enlist the aid of an understanding relative or close friend to assist in bridging the gap caused by past negative experiences. And prayer before such an encounter adds to the possibility of success. Thus a person may well be freed from the hurts of the past and learn to rejoice again in the life of the present.

The Stress Factor

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It is an axiom of our Faith that each person is full of mystery and beauty. Indeed, each person may well be described as "God's incredible creation." Each person, then, is both dynamic and free in life with God's spirit existing in each part of his or her life.

But each person also needs to consider that stress may well be the most significant factor in the experience of illness in the modern world. It is important, too, to understand that stress in action may well be a blessing and not simply a curse, especially in times of danger. But too much stress can also wear us down instead of ^(strengthening) ~~strengthening~~ us. It is also important to understand that our emotional behavior is similar to any other way of acting. If a person practices long enough to eliminate stress in life, healthy behavior then becomes a habit.

The emotions of people are largely determined by how they think and talk to themselves. Each person, and not something outside of self, plays the most important role in determining what that person truly feels. If a person gains control over destructive self-talks that have come to be bad habits, that person also gains control over the stressful feelings that follow.

Or, as the Romans would say: "Mens Sana in Corpore Sano."