

Natural Awakenings

Emotional Fitness

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By Kathleen Noone

I recall that prior to reframing my own attitude about fitness, the word conjured images of schlepping to the gym, sometimes in the worst weather we are all too familiar with in New York City. Then changing into workout clothes and slogging away on the treadmill, lifting weights, bicycling, etc. Then, after working up a sweat, I had to cool down, shower, re-apply makeup, change back into work clothes and schlep the workout bag once again. How many times have we all said to ourselves, “Ugh! Do I really have to work out again today?”

I had to find a new approach, so that the struggle to take care of my body—in essence all I was asking of myself—and the impact of those preconceived negative images, would cease. I pondered how I could move from confrontation to ‘carefrontation’ with my self.

I started to think about the significant ways my body has helped me over the years and recalled a profound experience from my past. About two weeks prior to the death of a wonderful man I was engaged to, I had unexpectedly gained 20 pounds. I remember feeling how strange this was, as I had not changed my diet and wasn’t on any medication, so no side effects could be blamed. I couldn’t relate the weight gain to any physical cause. But, had I not put on those extra pounds at the time of his death, I believe I would have ended up in the hospital, as I lost so much weight from the ensuing shock, I was literally down to skin and bones.

Months later, as I thought about that experience, I felt as if my body, from some intuitive, deeper consciousness, knew what I needed and protected me. This helped me realize the importance of becoming aware of my body’s needs by listening, on a much deeper level, to the things that occur in and around me.

To reach this deeper awareness, I continually invite myself to a state of emotional fitness. I arrive there by addressing all of my dimensions: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. To avoid entering a state of overwhelm—that place psychologists refer to as a “negative future fantasy” that can mushroom into a more serious upset—I like to break down my concerns by asking four key questions:

1. Physical – What can I do to be of service to myself on a physical level today? Sometimes a walk in Central Park or a nap or a massage is far healthier for me than a heavy workout.
2. Mental – How can I support my thinking in an affirmative way, so that I might break the cycle of old-paradigm thinking and depressive thoughts? Einstein said, “You cannot

solve problems with the same level of consciousness that created them.” So, if I shift my thinking, I shift my life.

3. Emotional – What can I do today to comfort myself emotionally? Mahatma Gandhi taught that life is a journey and we must be gentle with ourselves. I practice self-forgiveness and write in my gratitude journal every evening before going to sleep.

4. Spiritual – How and when can I spend time being in contemplation with my Higher Self? Being in touch with my soul, through daily contemplation, meditation and prayer, has kept me sane for many a year.