

Resting helps in Sickness and in health

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Overview

Are we getting enough rest? Not sleep nor leisure, but actually taking time off to sit back and relax? For many people, taking regular periods of rest (from now on termed *resting*) is rather frowned on. It is seen as a sign of weakness, even a waste of precious time. “If you rest, you rust” seems to be a common mantra. Some link it to sloth, indecisiveness or inertia; others regard it as a luxury we can ill afford. Alas, our present-day Western way of life is highly stressful; physically, mentally and emotionally – and it’s getting worse. *The need for resting is getting more and more pressing.*

We are well aware that physical activity and exercise, together with a good diet, is a key factor in the drive for personal wellbeing. It has seized the lion’s share of publicity in both medical and lay media. However, the value of resting is very much understated. Let’s face it; most of us do not think that it contributes much, if anything, to our overall wellbeing.

However, the true value of resting in the healthcare scenario is now established. Tibb’s view is that resting contributes to better health and quality of life. Resting now has its proper place in three important areas – maintaining good health, helping to overcome disease, and supporting recuperation.

What is resting?

Resting should not be confused with not working or idleness. It does not mean just chilling out passively on the settee in front of the TV. It is a short period of protected time in which we can meditate, pray, assess our role in society, the challenges facing us, and explore the meaning of life. Resting here is active – it is “down time” which is put to good healthcare use. It can take the form of daily, but brief, cat-naps (*not* deep sleep), brief (10-minute max) closed-eye periods, or short, deep breathing sessions. In Tibb, resting is an important preliminary to meditation, especially if combined with breathing exercises.

How does resting differ from sleep? Rest is rest; sleep is sleep. Each has its own role to play in wellness, and each brings its own benefits. During sleep, Physis works to restore inner harmony by removing toxins, restoring metabolic balance and repairing or replacing damaged tissues. Sleep therefore plays a vital role in recharging the brain, removal of toxins, cell renewal and even weight

regulation. From the therapeutic point of view, resting may be regarded as the daylight version of sleep, a time when Physis can operate better to restore harmony.

Resting is essential for good health

Resting seems more and more to be a human biological need. It helps our bodies to unwind, and recover from the damage inflicted by the stresses of everyday life. It calms our anxious states, and gives us time to restore harmony to our lives. It makes us more alert and effective. Even short episodes have been shown to improve brain function. We now know that resting plays a vital, but neglected, role in rejuvenating our body. *Resting may turn out to be as important as sleep in determining our long-term health.*

There are three basic situations where resting should be encouraged:

1. During our normal daily routine, when we are generally healthy.
2. When suffering from acute illnesses, as support for Physis in restoring harmony.
3. When convalescing from illness or injury, so allowing our bodies to return quickly to normal health.

Tibb and Resting

Tibb has no doubt that regular physical activity is an essential contributor to healthy living, and this has been confirmed time and again. But as the counterpart of physical exercise, resting has not received as much attention, and is usually ignored. Tibb, however, does recognise the need for resting, as it actively helps in maintaining good health. Indeed, it considers resting during illness and subsequent recuperation as a Physis response to the disharmony wreaked by the disorder endured. Tibb advocates resting combined with both breathing exercises and meditation as a better way of benefitting from resting.

Resting as a Lifestyle Factor

Resting has traditionally been partnered with physical activity in the list of major Lifestyle Factors, shown in the table (*below*).

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| <i>Environmental Air & Breathing</i> |
| <i>Food and Drink</i> |
| <i>Movement & Rest</i> |
| <i>Sleep & Wakefulness</i> |
| <i>Emotions</i> |
| <i>Digestion & Elimination</i> |

Physis and healing

Tibb, along with other natural healing systems such as Ayurveda and homeopathy, holds that the state of our health and wellbeing is determined by Physis. This governs the infinitely complex workings of our bodies to maintain harmony. It is the source of inner healing, and for this reason it is often referred to as the “doctor within”. This process operates at all stages of life, depending on need, but especially during illness and recuperation. Whether we are recovering from the flu, pneumonia, gastroenteritis or any other ailment,

or dealing with an injury or operation, good, sound resting is essential. In the elderly, Physis begins to fade, so it takes longer to fulfil its role. This is why, as we grow older, we need more resting time to restore harmony.

Our Physis needs protected time to achieve its main role – restoring harmony to the body. It works best when unimpeded by other demands on its activities. In nature it achieves this mainly via sleep and resting. Together these help deal with the wide range of physical, mental and emotional upsets we experience daily. For people who carry out physically demanding jobs, regular resting is even more important.

Benefits of resting

There is more and more evidence that resting has a place in our wellbeing. It seems to be arguably as essential to our physical health as the food we eat, the water we drink.

Here are some benefits of regular resting:

- **It reduces stress** – Resting deals with stress in two ways. First, it allows us to calmly assess our present situation more accurately, and second, it releases more mental energy to deal with the situation.
- **It gives better performance** – We perform better after resting. Resting allows all tissues, organs and systems the opportunity to detoxify and rejuvenate. This in turn leads to better physical performance. Resting the mind, allows it to refocus and rejuvenate. We become more alert, more efficient, and feel more in control.
- **It allows meditation** – Resting allows us to take a step back, to evaluate our lives, to identify our values, and assess our roles in society. In Tibb, meditation is one of the main therapies, and is encouraged for the alleviation of anxiety, stress and other emotional disorders.
- **It fosters social contacts** – Resting provides time for fostering better social and family contacts. This helps strengthen personal relationships, which is an important factor in maintaining wellbeing.
- **It restores life balance** – Taking regular rest helps restore true harmony to our lives. Health is not just the absence of disease, but the situation where the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual dimensions co-exist in harmony. Regular rest goes some way in promoting this.
- **It improves coping ability** – As we are well aware, a crisis can hit anyone, anytime. By accepting a resting discipline, reserves of physical and mental energy will build up, to be drawn on when the unexpected strikes.

Balance of movement and resting

Tibb maintains that a balance between movement and resting is needed to help us achieve good health. As we know, it is possible to get too much exercise, which eventually leads to fatigue, dehydration, sore muscles, sprains and strains. Resting is necessary to restore harmony, by counteracting excessive exercise. It will also restore the damage inflicted on the skin and physique that excessive exercising brings

in its wake – sunken eyes, hollow cheeks, and a dry, emaciated appearance, resulting from chronic dehydration.

Practical issues with resting

Tibb maintains that to get the maximum benefit from resting, Physis must be based on good nutrition and supported by sound sleep hygiene. Unfortunately, we are not always able to prepare nutritious meals, or get enough time for nourishing sleep. Maybe one reason we are becoming more prone to chronic diseases is that we do not get enough time for resting, and Physis is not given the time needed to complete its natural role.

On the domestic scene, it is much easier for us to practice the discipline of resting if our families are also practicing it.

Too much rest

Tibb firmly advises against overdoing resting. Like too much exercise, it leads to a distortion of our bodies' humoral balance, which becomes too moist and too cold. These are qualities that, in excess, can lead to lethargy, fuzzy memory, poor recall, and maybe confusion.

Summary

Many of us are under constant, unresolved stress. It's a tremendous burden for us to bear, and eventually we pay the price in deteriorating health. Tibb approaches this healthcare issue partly by adapting the Lifestyle Factors, one of which is physical exercise and resting. Physical exercise is well established as a stress-reliever, but little attention has been paid to the other side of the coin, resting. Even so, the practice of resting is now being viewed as a viable way of maintaining good health, and as a prime feature of disease treatment and recuperation. Tibb sees resting as the daytime equivalent of sleep, as it supports Physis in dealing with the toxins, tissue damage and general wear-and-tear that bring disharmony to our inner bodies. It also provides the platform for meditation and efficient breathing exercises. The challenge of course is persuading people of the value and benefits of resting, as most claim to be just too busy to adopt resting. Once the benefits of resting emerge, the ancient practice will again assume its rightful place in lifestyle options for stress relief.

As the Roman poet Ovid said, "*Take rest; a field that has rested gives a bountiful crop.*"

Further reading

Edlund, Matthew. *The Power Of Rest: Why Sleep Alone Is Not Enough*. HarperOne, UK.

Websites

The Lost Practice of Resting One Day Each Week. Online at: <http://zenhabits.net/rest-one-day/>

Rest, Relaxation and Exercise. <http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/conditions/rest-relaxation-and-exercise>