

Keeping Your Inner Army Strong

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By Dr. Sudip Bose, MD

Oct. 25, 2016 -- First of all, what is our inner army?

I'll review briefly from our last write up, [Leadership Under Pressure](#):

- We have an inner army in our brain.
- We have an inner army that is our physical body.

We need to feed, care for and maintain those inner armies if we expect ourselves to be ready and clear-headed to lead and function effectively under pressure or in a crisis situation. When that grenade flies into your world and goes off-- no matter what world you're living in, whether it be corporate, small business, hospitality, medical, personal, whatever -- you've got to be ready. You'll only be ready if you keep your inner army strong.

Nutrition, exercise and sleep are key to keeping your inner army strong. But time is limited. We all have only 24 hours in a day to accomplish things. So how do you maintain your body to perform maximally under pressure? How do you maintain your peak performance?



Dr. Sudip Bose speaking on corporate wellness.

We're in a state of constant stress. We need to get a good perspective on the enemy. Enemy No. 1 goes by the name of trans fat. Enemy No. 2: refined carbohydrates. You could throw fad diets in there as Enemy No. 3. We need to understand how to fuel our bodies appropriately.

NUTRITION

Think of both complex and simple carbohydrates as fuel for your body. Complex carbs include vegetables and fruit -- a combination of both fiber and sugars. At the molecular level, a complex carbohydrate is a chain of three or more carbon rings; a simple carb is made up of just one or two carbon rings. Complex carbs take longer for the body to break down and absorb, so the corresponding rise in blood sugar is more moderate. Simple carbs are absorbed very quickly by your body and subsequently increase blood sugar very quickly -- in just a few minutes, in fact. They're good for delivering a quick burst of energy. The brain can access these simple sugars very quickly. Simple carbs are sweet to the taste and include fruit juices (such as grape juice made of Concord grapes, which actually increases the number of T-cells in your body) but also include plain sugar, breads, cakes, pastas -- in short, many processed foods that are high in refined carbohydrates and that are quickly broken down by our bodies. However, try to avoid those processed foods as much as possible. You want as clean an energy source as possible.

But the bottom line is, that if we run out of energy, if we run out of our soldiers who are complex carbs, and we run out of our soldiers who are simple carbs, we're going to start breaking down protein for energy. That's not good. Protein is the foundation of our body. When you break down protein, you're breaking down your body. If you break down protein to fuel your body, it would be like burning \$100 bills to fuel a fire. Another thing to consider is that our brains cannot use protein. Our brains cannot use fats. Our brains can only use glucose -- a simple carbohydrate.

These days, though, you've got to be a food detective. When you look at the front of a package of food, there will always be some sort of messaging about whatever is the hottest food-related fad or topic. For example, it'll say "fat-free" or "cholesterol-free" on the front of the package. But what you need to do is flip it over and look at the back of the packaging, because we need to know more. There's a lot more to it. You can write "fat-free" on a label if a product has less than 0.5 percent fat per serving. So what food manufacturers do, is they just decrease the portion size. The first thing I'd look at on a label on the back of the package is the portion size. Be aware of that. For example, you might typically eat a one-cup serving of something, but the package has the nutritional breakdown for two ounces. You'd then have to multiply that by four to get the right values for you. Portion control and watching those hidden calories is hugely important. And, of course, watch for a listing of trans fats. You'll see words like hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oil. If you see it, avoid it.

The stomach is a volume detector. It doesn't detect what you're putting in, it detects the volume through stretch receptors located at the top of the stomach where the esophagus connects to it. You feel full when those stretch receptors are activated. You don't want to eat too much, you don't want to eat too little -- you want just the right amount, like Goldilocks and the Three Bears. So everything in moderation.

Also, try to follow the 80-20 rule -- focus 80 percent on eating healthy foods and give yourself about a 20 percent wiggle room to eat what you want. Not many people can stick to 100 percent healthy foods all the time.

EXERCISE AND BMR

Another effective way to stay on top of all this -- to keep that inner army strong -- is by increasing your BMR -- your Basic Metabolic Rate. Doing that is very helpful in keeping your body firing on all cylinders. Because you're going to out-eat your exercise unless you're exercising all day. Add just one muffin to what you're eating daily and it can do you in. But luckily, we burn calories in other ways. Other than exercise, we also burn calories through all these things:

- heart rate
- digestion
- respiration
- maintaining blood pressure
- maintaining body temperature
- (these total 60-75% of total energy expenditure)

You burn calories just sitting. You burn calories when you sleep at night. So, let's get the biggest bang for the buck. Let's increase our BMR. As a physician, I would say weight lifting is the

closest thing we probably have to the fountain of youth. It has so many benefits. But internally, those muscle fibers that are getting stronger are helping your BMR. BMR is directly proportional to muscle mass. So you're not doing it for the calories you're burning while you're exercising, you're not doing it to get pumped, you're doing it to increase your BMR. Start lifting weights. It's going to make a difference. It makes a difference when you're sitting, when you're lying down, when you're sleeping -- you're going to burn more calories.

When I speak about these concepts at corporate wellness days, for example, I stress that at the very least, your goal is to do something physical every day. Don't let a day go by. For example, even if all you get in is 10-15 burpees a day, it adds up. In a month, at least you've done something, and it's going to make a difference.

Also, eat a big breakfast. It gets your BMR kicking in right at the beginning of the day. You've probably heard this advice before: eat like a king at breakfast, like a prince at lunch, and like a pauper at dinner.

If we're not continually fortifying ourselves, we could crash and burn due to exhaustion, poor nutrition, bacteria, viruses ... you name it. Your immune system takes a hit. When you're not sleeping or eating right, or exercising, it can lead to all kinds of issues. Most of us can't afford to get sick. Many of us are busy -- we're busy with our jobs, with the drive to be successful, with our families, with the day-to-day routine -- and with that come certain risks. But don't be so busy that you don't take time for yourself. Feed yourself well, do something active every day, and get enough sleep to recharge yourself.

For more about Dr. Sudip Bose, MD, please go to SudipBose.com and visit his nonprofit TheBattleContinues.org where 100% of donations go directly to injured veterans

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