

## PAYING ATTENTION TO YOUR BODY

by Deb Elkin, LPC

Many of you have heard the expression, "We are spiritual beings having a human experience." If this is, in fact true, what is this vessel that allows us spiritual beings to have this human experience? It is none other than our own very human body.

Many of us tend to forget about or ignore our body. We certainly take it for granted. We forget how hard it works for us. We forget that without a healthy body, we would be hampered or restricted in how we can move and participate in the world. Why, one must wonder, would we forget about or ignore something that is so vital to our existence?

The reasons are many and varied. We were never taught to value or pay attention to our body. We don't like our body. We are too busy paying attention to everything else that actively demands our attention, which our body may only occasionally do.

Some highlights, to help us remember, and hopefully appreciate, all that our body does for us:

Our legs and feet – They take us wherever we want to go. They help us participate in the world, be it getting us to our jobs, participating in sports, dancing, or driving a car. They help us run if we are in danger. They know how to put one foot in front of the other without us even thinking about it. What a gift! Imagine what it would be like if you had to think about how to make your feet walk every time you wanted to go someplace.

Our arms and hands – They help us get things done in the world. They also allow us to reach out to others as well as to take them in. Because of our arms and hands, we can feed ourselves. We can wash our face and brush our teeth. We can pick up a crying child, swing a baseball bat, and give a loved one a hug. We can do our jobs at work. Imagine not having the ability to do these things!

Our eyes allow us to read, see who is talking to us, take in beauty, cross streets safely and watch out for danger. Our nose allows us to smell flowers and freshly cut grass, bread baking in the oven, something burning on the stove. Our mouth allows us to enjoy and appreciate the food we put in it, kiss a child's boo boo and make it better, and feel the tenderness and sensuousness of a lover's kiss. Again, what would it be like to be in the world without any one of these? Think about what you would be missing!

We need to recognize and appreciate our body for the precious commodity that it is. We need to pay attention to it so it doesn't wear out before its time. It's not meant to last forever – this is a human experience after all!

Your body gifts you with its service. Gift it back by listening to it, appreciating all it does for you, and taking really good care of it. Give it good food and some form of regular exercise (as best you can – something is better than nothing), lots of water (bodies

really like, and need, water!) and plenty of rest. Listen to it when it tells you it isn't feeling well or something is wrong.

Be sure to nurture it. If you stand on your feet all day, massage them with lotion at night and say thank you to them for serving you so well. If you are on the computer all day, stand, stretch, shake and stretch your hands and arms and back several times throughout the day. Get a massage. Take a bubble bath.

And consider taking one minute out of every day (that's not much!) to say thank you to your body for five things it did for you that day. It lets your body know you are not taking it for granted, and it helps you heighten your awareness and appreciation of all that your body does for you.

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