

Live Healthy and Be Well!

“The Power of Positive.....Everything!”

In this last issue of 2013, as we look forward to the new year ahead and start to think about what our “New Years’ resolutions” could be – I would like to make a suggestion. And, remember as you read this that I am never out to sell anything or promote any specific product – but do enjoy informing readers about information that could help them improve their quality of life and wellness. Before I start, let me say how much I appreciate those of you I run into that tell me you find the articles useful and enjoyable – that was always my goal when we started, and that is why I actively solicit input from you. Thank you all for reading and for your gracious comments when we see you out and about!

I have a neighbor and good friend in Lakemont who thinks a lot like me when it comes to health and wellness. Dr. Richard Huseman (PhD) has been in Academia most of his life and now runs an executive coaching firm in the corporate world. He speaks to many healthcare and physician organizations, and has been interested in health and wellness topics for a long time. For a non-physician, he has an excellent outlook about the power of being positive and how that can impact your health and personal life. He recently published a book called *Prescription Positive*, and uses it to share some “...secrets to unleashing the power of your conscious and subconscious mind to create health, wellness, and longevity.”

I would like to share with you some exciting ideas about how the power of your brain can actually have a positive effect on your personal health and well being. It does this not just as a “master computer” controlling your body, but as the place where your outlook, personality, moods, confidence, and attitude are formed and shaped. And, while we often cannot control what happens to us in life, we can use and train our brains to make good decisions, develop good habits, think positive, and manage our stress so that we can maximize quality of life.

Those of us in the medical field get to see firsthand the impact of decisions, lifestyle, outlook and attitude on the health and wellness of individuals. We have all seen old 40 year olds and young 80 year olds! A couple of weeks ago, we did an operation on Jane Schnell from Rabun Gap, a “young” 83 year old lady who came through it like a champ and wanted to know when she could start riding her bike again! I did this case knowing she would come through it easily, because she lives strong and literally *decides* to be well and healthy. She exercises regularly, eats a healthy diet, has a positive outlook, and refuses to give in to being unhealthy or old. While some might say she just got lucky and had “good genetics,” I say that is only half the battle and there are plenty of people with good genes in bad shape because they do not choose health and wellness.

One area we see the positive power of the mind at work is called the *placebo effect*. You may be familiar with this idea: An inert substance is given as medicine, and the person gets better or is literally cured of a condition. I remember as a young boy seeing an episode of the *Andy Griffith Show* in which a new, young, “book learned” pharmacist came to town and told a lady that her “medicine” given by the town doctor was actually just a bottle of sugar pills, and she did not need them! This was upsetting to the lady and she immediately became ill, of course, without

her “medicine.” The old wise pharmacist, just retired, had known this for years, but went along because these pills helped this lady believe and be well. The basis of the placebo effect is that if I give you something and tell you it will make you feel better, and you believe it and grasp it in your mind, and *expect* that it will work – it works! Example - there is no scientific or medical basis that you can get rid of warts on your hands by wearing gloves for three days, then burying them under the light of the next full moon, but I actually heard of this method curing warts when I lived in East Tennessee. If the right person (authority figure) tells or gives you something – and your mind believes it will work – it can and will have a definite effect. In days past, and even now, this technique is used to sell a lot of “snake oil.”

The placebo effect is well studied, and has been borne out by many well designed experiments. In fact, for a new drug to be approved, it must be more effective compared to a placebo – because just taking a pill or getting a shot of an inert substance (sugar pill) has an effect on people. If new drugs cannot beat this test, they usually don’t make it to the market. So, harness the power of the placebo effect by training your mind to believe that you will be better, healthier, and able to enjoy life by living more positive. Don’t give in so easily to the years and circumstances – stay young at heart and in your mind, believe you will be well and healthy, and don’t rely on medicines to do this for you unless it is necessary (which it sometimes is, by the way).”

One of the more interesting sections of Dr. Huseman’s book provides several “prescriptions” or *scripts* for better health. I will not steal his thunder completely, but will pass on two I feel are very important. The first is “Self Accountability,” or the idea of you being responsible for your health and wellness, and not relying only on doctors, or even worse, the government – to keep you healthy. Do what you can in your own life to take charge of keeping yourself well. This includes safety (such wearing seat belts, helmets, and ear/eye protection when needed), good diet choices (low fat, high protein, high fiber), healthy living choices (not smoking or drinking to excess or at all), taking medicines you need (vaccinations and blood pressure pills, for example) and not taking risks with your health. For instance, if you are a person with diabetes who is overweight, does not eat a healthy diet, smokes, drinks too much alcohol, gets no regular exercise, and you are not good about keeping your sugar controlled – then you are accountable to your disease instead of it being accountable to you. Same thing if you know you have COPD and you still smoke – it has control of you and not vice-versa. So, I am not judging and know it is sometimes hard to do – but taking accountability for your own condition and health is the better way to go, instead of thinking that is someone else’s job.

Managing your stress is another prescription for wellness. We all know that stressful conditions or environment (work, school, family, finances, relationships, etc.) can reduce the effectiveness of our natural immune system and increase the chances of sickness and disease. Find ways to channel your stress and manage it by reducing what stressors you can, and leveraging others to your advantage. Develop better coping skills to deal with the stresses of life, and resist the urge to run to the medicine cabinet to get something to help you – that is a trap that can lead to dependence on medicine, and even more stress down the road. Take charge of that aspect of your life, as well, and decide that your stress will not rule you or negatively affect your health and wellness.

There are a number of other ideas that can help you – but I will mention only one more that we could all benefit from in a number of ways, and something which has influence over all other aspects – and that is to have faith and develop the spiritual side of your life. No matter what your beliefs or doctrine, the knowledge and peace gained through regularly exercising your “spiritual muscles” will pay big dividends. I would not hesitate to say that you will never attain true health and wellness if you neglect this critical aspect of life.

So, as this year draws to a close and a new year dawns, I would encourage you to make a resolution about your health. I want you to decide to be healthy, take positive steps to attain that goal, think more positive, and be responsible and accountable for your own health and wellness. Also, try to be grateful for your health and count it as a real blessing from God. Lastly, start to believe and realize the power that your mind, attitude, and outlook can have on your everyday life.

We really do enjoy hearing from you with any questions, concerns, or ideas for future columns and/or health and wellness related issues for the *Georgia Mountain Laurel*. Please send an email to rabundocor@gmail.com, or call Jamie at 706-782-0480, and we will be sure to consider your input. If you use Twitter, then follow us @rabundocor. And...Merry Christmas to you and your families, and Happy New Year to us all! Live healthy and be well!