



Integrating Physical Practices with Coaching Programs

Have you ever been working with a client and realized that having them engage in purposeful physical activity of some kind would advance the objectives of their coaching program? I mean beyond having them take a walking break instead of a coffee break. Have you also had a hard time describing in a compelling way how this would work?

I) The Body Connection: What you probably already know.

Whether you are an executive in a position demanding stamina for long hours at high intensity or a parent juggling the demands of work and home, you probably know that the healthier and more physically fit you are, the better able you are to manage the demands that are placed upon you. An energetic, strong, healthy, well rested and properly nourished body will support you in your life and work and reduce the risk of developing health problems. The proven physical benefits of exercise are many and include:

- ❖ Increased muscular strength which improves mobility and posture
- ❖ Improved cardiovascular stamina which increases energy
- ❖ Improved flexibility which maintains balance, coordination and agility
- ❖ Decreased risk of heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis and some cancers
- ❖ Increased metabolism and lean muscle mass which maintains healthy weight

II) The Mind/Body Connection: What you may or may not know.

So you know that physical activity is good for your physical health. Did you realize that it can also have a major impact on how you think and feel? Studies have proven that physical activity can lower the risk of psychological distress and boost cognitive functioning and mental health. The positive effects include:

- ❖ Improved mood and overall psychological well-being
- ❖ Decreased stress, anxiety and depression
- ❖ Increased ability to sleep soundly and awake refreshed
- ❖ Increased ability to relax and stay calm under pressure
- ❖ Increased thinking speed, manual dexterity and concentration

How does this happen? Physical activity increases the release of endorphins (brain chemicals that act like natural opiates) and the neurotransmitters associated with mood. You may also start to feel better because you are doing something positive to take care of yourself. Physical activity increases neurogenesis - the creation of neuron cells in the brain that process and transmit information. Exercise is the **only** non-pharmacological way to increase neurogenesis. And neurogenesis increases cognitive function.

III) The Mind/Body/Spirit Connection: What you may not fully realize.

If exercise increases physical, psychological and cognitive health, well-being and functioning, what more is there? The positive outcomes of engaging in purposeful physical activity can also allow for:

- ❖ Greater self-awareness, self-confidence and inner strength
- ❖ Improved sense of groundedness and presence alone and in groups
- ❖ More balance, harmony and enjoyment in your life and work
- ❖ Increased ability to stay focussed and authentic in difficult situations
- ❖ Greater self-acceptance and recognition of your uniqueness; new self-image and sense of physical self
- ❖ Increased self-expression and definition of personal boundaries
- ❖ Emotional healing: shift to self-autonomy, authority and power from a victim role



How can this be possible through body work? A skilled personal trainer will translate the goals of your coaching program into a physical activity program designed specifically for you that will support your goals by increasing your somatic awareness and capabilities. Building a healthy, fit body will increase your effectiveness in all areas of your life.

A strong, vital body not only allows you to carry heavy objects, it supports you in staying true to your intentions in heavy situations. Your physical presence in a group is a reflection of your sense of groundedness and confidence in your body. Strength training builds physical, emotional and spiritual strength that will support you in difficult conversations and in situations that require authority. Physical flexibility will increase your ability to be adaptable when faced with conflicting priorities and constant change. Cardiovascular fitness gives you the stamina and resilience needed to respond to competing demands and high intensity with grace and poise.

The more aware and at home you are in your body, the more competent you will feel. If you have trouble accessing and trusting your intuition, getting in touch with your body through intentional physical activity will increase your inner body awareness and your confidence making intuition-based decisions. Knowing your personal boundaries, respecting your body, and being in touch with its wisdom and power can contribute to freeing yourself from feeling overwhelmed by events or over powered by others. You are empowered when you are truly embodied – living fully from within your body.

Your posture is like your body's signature – it is an expression of your personal attitude, mood and self-image. Posture is also part of your emotional anatomy; how you hold your body is related to how you hold yourself emotionally and psychologically. A body that has been conditioned with strength training, that has developed suppleness through flexibility practices and that can move with energy and grace presents a posture to the world that speaks with confidence, self-acceptance, freedom and purpose.

The optimization of intellectual, physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being in a balanced way is the result you can expect from the integration of physical practices with a coaching program. When engaging in purposeful physical activity, you will begin to notice that your attention, not your effort, is what brings success. As you become more aware of your body and how it informs you and you notice your body feeling and looking stronger, more poised, supple and energized, your mindset will change. As you get into the habit of building and honouring your strengths and stretching your limits, your confidence will grow. This supports and is supported by your coaching program and motivates you to continue on your path of development and change.