

THE ECO-FITNESS BOOK

How to be naturally fit and
slim without using the gym

By Gina Groom

CHAPTER 6

More to ponder...

1. **A feature in New Scientist magazine (25 August 2007) presented a startling fact: unwanted noise causes illness, even heart problems and premature death.**

The article brought to people's attention a World Health Organisation (WHO) international study which suggests that thousands of people around the world are succumbing to disease through exposure to chronic noise pollution. It has been found that the ongoing stress on the nervous system caused by unwanted noise, increases adrenalin and cortisol in the body which can cause long-term physiological changes.

One of the antidotes to city and other noise is to get away from it all on a regular basis and what better way than your daily walk. The sense of oneness and peace, the still minutes to calm yourself and be in nature could actually be even better for your health than it would at first seem.

As well as exercising the heart, this is also an opportunity to be quiet and calm and to take a break from the stressors of the city. Even if you just walk along a canal path, in a city park, or somewhere you have selected as positive and uplifting for you, you could be giving your body a well earned break. Even better if you live in the countryside or can regularly retreat there. This picture is a riverbank just **5 minutes** from Cardiff's busy city centre.



- 2. There is a term for how new technology is affecting American children – it's called videophilia! Family visits to national parks in the US has fallen by 25% since the eighties and instead children learn about the world and nature from computer games, DVDs and the internet.**

Dr Oliver Pergams and Dr Patty Zaradic of the Red Rock Institute in Pennsylvania, coined the word **videophilia** to describe this phenomenon in contrast to the term '**biophilia**', coined in the eighties to describe people's innate affinity or need for natural areas.

Dr Pergams' and Dr Zaradic's concern is that children's decreasing level of contact with nature is likely to translate to less support for the environment in future generations.

They aim to work with other partner organisations to carry out controlled, nationwide, long-term monitoring studies examining the impacts of videophilia on childhood development and environmental sensitivity in children and adults. Such studies would begin at birth and follow individuals well into adulthood and include trying to determine the effects of videophilia on all aspects of human life (e.g., career choice, mental health, income, happiness, etc.); not only involvement with nature.

- 3. Outdated parenting practices may be contributing to an inability to self-love and self-comfort later in life; and also to depression, nervousness and stress. These symptoms could lie behind lack of motivation to exercise and comfort/emotional eating. These are patterns laid down often in the very young tender months and years of life. Several research psychologists and neuroscientists have focussed on stress, lack of bonding and attachment in babies and the consequences for the nervous system and other body systems later in life.**

Sue Gerhardt's ground-breaking book, 'Why Love Matters' explains the brain chemistry of love and attachment and conversely the chemistry when there is anxiety or separation in the young baby's life. No-one is 100% sure of the consequences of the baby's nervous system being flooded with stress (and hence cortisol), but it is likely that depression, nervous symptoms, lack of self-comforting tools and/or damaged self esteem start to show in the adolescent years and continue into adulthood.

Margot Sunderland of the Centre for Child Mental Health, London, has taken her knowledge of parenting, psychology and neuro-biology and written an accessible book for parents, 'The Science of Parenting'. It helps parents understand the negative impact of letting babies cry themselves to sleep and of separation and lack of attachment, boundaries, play and acknowledgement. It also helps parents navigate their babies and children through their emotionally challenging years, so that insecurity, confusion and emotional pain is less likely as they get older.

- 4. Talking to some overweight people, or people with eating disorders, I have also become aware that compulsive comfort eating can be a method of pushing down or suppressing uncomfortable emotions such as fear of being alone, fear of not being loved or anger. I have heard people confess that to push away their emotional pain, they turn to a tub of ice-cream. Or that as children, to avoid justifiable angry outbursts at an upsetting event, they found solace instead in sweet or fatty foods (which induce a natural opiate reaction).**

Where readers of this book find they are eating for a ‘buzz’ or to push down emotional pain, it is worth doing some personal soul-searching work focussed on this pattern. The aim would be to break the pattern and look for love and ‘positive strokes’ in the right places instead. This is now recognised by most weight loss experts, psychologists and hypnotherapists as being completely normal and nothing to be ashamed of. It is not your fault if you have picked up a pattern like this. Once aware of it, you can ask, what do I need instead? You can make moves to address your emotional needs, knowing that millions of others have had to do the same.

- 5. Scientific research from Dr James A Levine MD of the Mayo Clinic, Minnesota proves that everyday ‘functional fitness’ and carrying out household activities contributes significantly to better fitness levels and weight loss. People who fidget, move about, walk, prepare food, play with their children and do chores burn off more calories and this strategy can be more realistic and practical than going to the gym.**

Dr Levine’s concept ‘Non-Exercise Activity Thermo genesis’ (NEAT) describes the ways we burn calories without exercising in the conventional sense of the word. NEAT can make the difference between burning off those excess calories or putting on weight and has been researched in over 20 scientific studies.

‘Dr. Levine and his colleagues believe that if scientists can understand non-exercise activity better and identify what drives it, what makes people want to move around, they may be able to harness it to help the millions who are struggling to control their weight,’ read an article in the New York Times in 2005

NEAT was the subject of the BBC’s ‘Professor Regan’ series on health where Professor Regan conducted her own experiment (without dietary elements) showing significant health and fitness improvements of applying ‘NEAT’.

Eco-fitness is about more than just movement, it's about liking and knowing yourself as much as you can too.

It's about being the best you can, one step at a time.

It's about forgetting the meaning of 'perfect' or 'ideal' in a world where marketing and advertising press unrealistic images on to us.

It's about fulfilling your innate gift to be who you were meant to be, and honouring the evolutionary needs of your body. We need to move. We need fruits and vegetables. We need good protein and plenty of water. We haven't evolved for gorging on fast food and overusing labour saving devices. It's as basic as that.

Some days we are going to feel a bit down, some days full of energy. Some mornings tired, but maybe by the afternoon revitalised. After a house move, or divorce or death of a loved one, we will not be our fighting best. That's OK... Keep looking after your needs in healthful ways.

One weekend we might not be able to resist the sticky toffee pudding at a wedding reception, but the next weekend visit a day spa or go for a long walk with a friend. We are all trying our best to incorporate the health principles we have learned.

We are all struggling with our own needs and trying to find answers.

The more we become our best selves, healthy, balanced and energetic, the more we can give to others - whether that be our children, neighbours, communities or spouses. If we stay in our rut of self-loathing and confusion, we have less energy to contribute to others.

We were all born special and with so much potential. Sometimes along the way things hurt us and keep us from flourishing. It's never too late through to start appreciating who you are deep inside.

This is the best we can do for ourselves. This is the best we can do for others.



Shine! Be your best! And good luck!

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