

Hope & Healing

Heart Attack Thriving After a Heart Attack

A heart at peace gives life to the body — Proverbs 14:30

Introduction

Do you want to see a thrilling sight? Visit a gathering of about two hundred men and women who have had a heart attack and are enrolled in a cardiac rehabilitation program as they're warming up their muscles before setting off on a brisk 30 to 60 minute walk.

A heart attack can force you to lead a life you don't want, if you let it do so. There is a better way. To explore your options, let's first look at what's behind your heart attack.

What's Behind Heart Attacks

A heart attack is the end product of a chain of events that occur over a lifetime. Dr. Dean Ornish has pioneered a program that examines the causes of heart attacks and has designed a system that reverses heart disease. To thrive after a heart attack you must first get your heart stronger.

Here's what Dr. Ornish says, "Treating only the physical manifestations of the heart disease without addressing the more fundamental causes will provide only temporary relief, and the disease is likely to recur. At best, we will trade one set of problems or illnesses for another." If you were to ask Dr. Ornish what you must do to reverse the blockage in your heart, he would say: "You must begin an exercise program."

This is what the individuals in the cardiac rehabilitation program have done. They have taken charge of their physical health and enrolled in an exercise program.

"Yes, of course," you would say to Dr. Ornish. "What else?"

"You must eat low-fat, low-cholesterol foods. And, if you smoke you must quit."

"Yes," you repeat, "what else?"

This is Dr. Ornish's reply, "Well, while I think diet, exercise, and stopping smoking are important, I believe that working at a different level is also very important. We need to teach people how to quiet down the mind and gain more control over it, how to listen to other's feelings and their own, how to feel more connected to others and themselves, how to give and receive more fully."

Dr. Ornish is talking about balance, about bringing balance into your life.

Living a Balanced Life

Have you asked yourself this simple and seemingly silly question, "What do I want to be when I grow up?" It's amazing how it goes to the heart of the most important things you'll ever deal with. Now that a heart attack has forced you to consider life in a different way, it can be that now is the time for you to begin your real life.

The most important indication that you have made or will make the decision to begin your real life is your commitment to achieving and maintaining balance in every part of your life.

This is the commitment made by the participants in the cardiac rehabilitation program. They gave up smoking and changed their way of eating and several times a week they meet to exercise. All of this is essential to establish balance in your life, but there's more.

Your most important aim in life is to feel in control of every aspect of your life. You will feel better and perform better when your thoughts, feelings, emotions,

goals, values, and your body are in balance. The Law of Correspondence tells us why this is so.

The Law of Correspondence

There is a Law of Correspondence that has been written about throughout the ages of mankind. It simply says that your outer world will be a reflection of your inner world. It says that your relationships, your attitude, the amount of money you make, and your physical health are determined largely by the way you think and feel and respond to the world around you.

This law, however, cuts two ways. It explains why things go right in your life and points the finger clearly at you when they go wrong. With regard to balance, you will want to be certain that your inner world is consistent with what you want to enjoy and experience in your outer world. There are three main areas of balance that you need to be concerned with on a daily basis. They are the physical, the emotional, and the spiritual.

Physical Balance

To bring your physical life into balance you must reestablish seven habits. These were researched during the Alameda County Project, a study of how these seven factors affected the health and length of life for 8,000 persons for over 15 years.

- The first habit is to eat a good breakfast every day.
- The second habit is to eat lightly: fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean protein. Also, drink plenty of water.
- The third habit is not snacking between meals.
- The fourth habit is to not smoke.
- The fifth habit is to drink alcohol moderately, or not at all.
- The sixth habit is to sleep seven to eight hours a night.
- The seventh habit is to exercise regularly. The rule is "If you don't use it, you lose it."

Emotional Balance _____

How can you tell if you're out of balance emotionally? It's easy. Just listen to your body and your emotions. When you are in balance, you feel calm, confident, relaxed, and at peace with life and yourself. When you are out of balance you feel unhappy, stressed, anxious, angry, resentful, negative, pessimistic, and depressed.

Your job is to go through your life and throw out those parts you don't like and take the time to develop a strategy to deal with each part of your life that is detracting from your happiness. To do this, the most important thing is: You must really want it to be. Then, you must think about your concept of yourself. Ask yourself these questions.

1. If I could be anybody I wanted to be, who would I become? This helps establish an ideal of yourself for you to strive for.
2. Now, ask yourself, "Do I take the time and put forth the effort to show that I value certain things: my family, my work, and my relationships?"

3. Finally, ask yourself: "Do I like myself?"

To attain emotional balance, you must think through who you are and who you want to be.

To achieve emotional balance:

- Determine your values about your health, your family, your work, and so on.
- Examine your behaviors and identify those things that you say and do that aren't consistent with those values.
- Resolve to change things, one by one. Just beginning to change things will make you feel healthier and happier.

Spiritual Balance _____

Re-examine the role of religion in your life. Those people who get the most from their religious beliefs have a larger vision of life and find fulfillment by engaging life's challenges.

Summary _____

Your ability to thrive after a heart attack depends largely on how you view the world, how you feel about the way life is treating you. Compare an angry, cynical person to a happy, optimistic one. That's the difference between someone who risks a second heart attack and someone who doesn't.

Persons with this type personality can change through relaxation techniques, deep breathing exercises, prayer, and meditation. And when you are changed, you will thrive.

Awaken the Miracles Within You

The Miracle of Your Value

Many intelligent people work at menial jobs.

The world takes us at our own valuation.

We hear a lot about self-esteem today. You can't acquire true self-esteem from another's words. Your value is proved in the world of commerce and your self-esteem grows and your confidence increases every time you try something new. We don't always succeed. Failure teaches us what not to do the next time.

Remember: you are not without resources.

- As a child of God you express Divine Life, Divine Truth and Divine Love.
- Divine wisdom guides you.
- God is your open door to an abundant supply of whatever you need.

Believe that God will help you and will bless others through you. Then, you need not brag, pretend or feel inferior. You have value.

The recommendations and information in this handout are appropriate in most cases. However, for specific information concerning your personal medical condition, please, consult your doctor.