

REFLECTIONS ON PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

The global pandemic has had far reaching effects for us all, and psychological, emotional, and physical wellbeing is a hot topic for many organisations and their leaders.

I wanted to share some recent reflections on the link between physical and emotional wellbeing, which come partly from some recent training and development I took part in. The programme was called Physical Intelligence for Coaches <https://coachwithpi.com/> which is already having a real impact on how I work with my clients.

People generally accept that how we think can affect our mood and ultimately how we live our lives. But perhaps the impact of our physicality on our thoughts and emotions is less well acknowledged?

Mind and body are linked, and this is a two-way street – it flows both ways. Research shows that our breathing patterns and physical movement stimulates the production of hormones and the ‘chemical highway’ of our bodies delivers a fantastic cocktail to just where we need it. How often have you heard – “go for a walk, it will clear your head”, and in times of stress and anxiety we are advised to “just b-r-e-a-t-h-e”!



What if the conscious control of our breath, using diaphragmatic breathing, could calm us and help us think more clearly, making better decisions more often?

Research has shown that practised deep breathing - ‘paced breathing’ - increases cognitive function by a potential 62%. It also stimulates the production of the hormones acetylcholine, dopamine, and testosterone, lowering adrenalin and cortisol, this restores balance.

What if physical movement could increase creativity and confidence? Stretching out your arms and opening your chest stimulates the vagus nerve and the independent neurons in the gut and the heart, releasing serotonin, oxytocin and dopamine helping create feelings of optimism and achievement.

How fabulous would it be if we could take control of our thinking and feeling by our conscious breathing and movement, and enable us to control our performance and raise the level when needed?

Coaching with a physical intelligence approach is the ability to detect and strategically manage the chemistry of the body to unlock enhanced performance – inner strength, cognitive function, energy, creativity, resilience, leadership presence and endurance.

The benefits of exercise have long been acknowledged, and particularly in our recent lockdowns, we were encouraged to get some form of daily exercise for both our emotional and physical health. I love to run, and I regularly run most mornings, the feelings of happiness, achievement, and energy that I feel are addictive and the rush of 'Dopamine' in my system guarantees that I will continue to do this! Don't worry you don't have to run a 5k every day to stimulate the production of hormones, breathing and stretching will also do the trick and much easier to slot into a busy day.



As most of us don't pay attention to how we breathe, conscious focus and regular practice of different breathing techniques can have an enormous impact on our feeling of wellbeing. When this is combined with some specific movements, we raise the bar on our performance. By becoming more 'physically intelligent' we increase our control of our psychological and emotional intelligence.



Written by
Annie Richardson,
OCM Associate Coach Mentor

If you would like to know more about The OCM's approach to coaching and the benefits from increased cognitive function and leadership presence, please contact Graham Clark, MD OCM Enable, graham.clark@theocm.co.uk