



“We do not stop playing because we grow old. We grow old because we stop playing.”

Anon



December – January - February 2006 / 2007

Tis the Season of the Senses

“The time has come” the walrus said to feast on many things: To drink – and eat – and party on – have fun like queens and kings. (Apologies to the great Lewis Carroll, but at least we now have your attention!)

That’s right... it’s party time! And with the silly season comes a delightful overload of sensory pleasures. This indulgent time of year when we enjoy the heady mix of fabulous food, fine wine and great company in rather large doses.

It’s worth remembering that the ecstasy of celebration and agony of the morning after are both brought to you by the dispassionate little servant known as your nervous system. Without any hint of prejudice, favour or emotion, you are dished up your experiences through your five senses.

So to get a taste for it, let’s put our ear to the ground and see if we can sniff out some handy facts about our sense organs that will help us feel our way through the end of year festivities.

Your Eyes

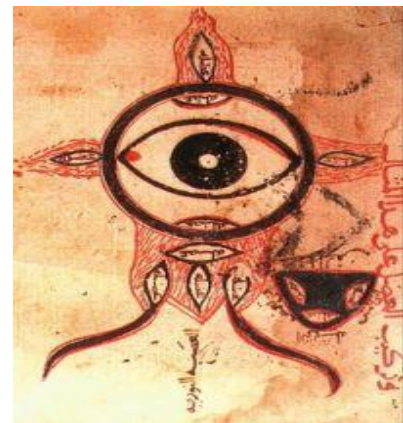
Did you know that the most active muscles of your body are those around your eyes? With over 2 million working parts, your eyes possess the ability to process 36 thousand bits of information every hour!

They rarely stop moving, even when your eyelids are closed (try closing them now and keep your eyeballs still for 10 breaths while you relax the muscles around your eyes. Ahhhh - what a relief ☺.) It’s no wonder they can feel like they’ve got sand in them at the end of a busy day of concentrating.

Even during sleep, [rapid eye movement](#) can occur. In fact, roughly 80% of the information processed by our brain comes from what we see.

Here are a few tips to help sooth these vital little workhorses.

- Drink 2-3 liters of **water** per day to ensure your eyes stay lubricated.
- Catch more than 40 winks. **Sleep** helps retinal membranes by allowing them to recharge from a hard day of seeing. You need at least five hours of sleep to help your eyes.
- Walk Away. If you sit in front of a computer all day, it’s important to **take a break** about every two hours. The light energy that comes from your computer can make your eyes ache. You can also help relieve some irritation by changing your flicker rate on your computer to seventy or above.
- Develop a screen saver. There are certain activities that require your eyes to be fully open – interacting face to face with others, driving, reading, etc. But consider how often throughout your day, you can let your **eyelids half close**. This will not only prevent them from drying out, but also reduces the amount of sensory input coming into the brain via the optic nerve. This can have a profound effect on your energy levels by the end of the day.



Your Ears

You may have heard that your ears play an important role in helping you balance. Actually, your ability to balance comes from four things.

Vision plays a big part, which you'll discover as soon as you try to stand on one leg with your eyes closed. So to do the tiny receptors throughout your body (known as proprioceptors) which are constantly sending signals to your brain about the position of your body parts relative to space.

Then there's the tiny part of your inner ears (the vestibular labyrinth) which provide even more spatial awareness information especially in relation to rotational movements. And finally, the cerebellum – the section of your brain that integrates all of the information so that you end up being able to balance.

Here's a simple little test to find out just how well your proprioceptors (including those in your ears) are working.

Balance test : stand on one leg with your eyes closed. With your hands by your sides. Time how long you can stand without having to put your second foot on the floor. If you're over 45, doing this for more than 15 seconds is very good. If you can't, it can signal a loss of balance – something that will make you more vulnerable to accidents as you age.

How to improve your balance?

Standing poses in exercise systems like yoga and Pilates can help re educate your neuromuscular system and improve your balance, while regular [chiropractic adjustments](#) will ensure your nervous system is given every chance to function at its best.



Your Tongue and Nose

When it comes to navigating a healthy path through the fun park of party foods, it's a combination of those "tasty little buds" on your tongue and that "old factory" in your nose that can make things a bit tricky.

While you're chewing, the food releases chemicals that immediately travel up into your nose. These chemicals trigger the olfactory receptors inside your nose, which work together with your taste buds to create the true flavour of that delicious Christmas lunch by telling your brain all about it!

The parts of your brain that process flavour are closely linked to the systems for learning, memory and emotion, which is why it is so easy to develop unconscious emotional eating behaviour based around family gatherings or rituals that you've followed since you were young.

The good news is, your taste buds change every two weeks, so you can re train them in no time. Have you stopped having sugar in your tea or coffee, then a month later added it again and it tasted too sweet? You can do that with any food, so why not identify what your main comfort food is now, then make a

commitment to change it to a healthier alternative for the next month. Make sure your eating ritual is the same as it was for the old food. You should find the new food gives you just as much pleasure as the old one did, even though it's a healthier choice.

Your Sense of Touch

Even your sense of touch can affect your perception of flavour. Try this experiment. Put a scoop of ice cream in your mouth - it should taste good, like ice cream. Now take the same ice cream and while putting a spoonful in your mouth close your eyes and rub a piece of velvet cloth. It will taste creamier than before! But even more astonishing if you rub your hand over a piece of fine sandpaper while taking yet another spoonful, the ice cream will seem to become gritty. It seems that what we feel with our hands with our eyes closed can be transferred in our brains to the tongue. And that's enough ice cream now... put it away ☺

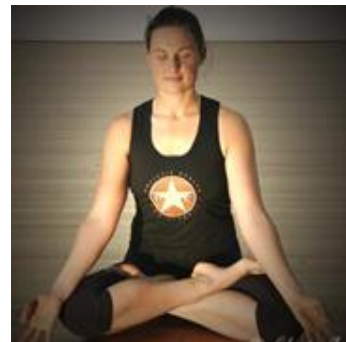
References:

"YOU The Owners Manual" Michael Roizen, M.D. and Mehmet Oz, M.D. 2005

"Smell images and the flavour system in the human brain"

Nature 444, Published online 15 November 2006

www.discoverychannel.co.uk and www.kidshealth.org/



Pratyahara – Sense Withdrawal

Thousands of years ago the yogis discovered a great way to cultivate a sense of calm in the midst of overstimulating situations.

It's a practice known as Pratyahara in which you learn to withdraw your attention from your external environment and all of the information experienced through the five senses. Your attention is constantly in one of two states. It's either focused, or distracted. There's no such thing as a weak mind or a strong mind - only a steady one, or a scattered one.

As you learn to withdraw some of your attention away from the ever distracting external world and direct it inward on your breath and on the sensations of your body you start to develop what is often referred to as will power. You're no longer a slave to your senses, but have the ability to proactively choose the right path for a healthier, happier life.

How to begin?

Direct your attention towards:

- your breath
- the quiet gaps between noises
- the ever present blanket of silence that surrounds every sound.
- the space between objects rather than the objects themselves

If you try this for a few min every day just before you sit down to eat, you may find you not only eat less, but enjoy your food a whole lot more.

Success Story

Making Good Health a Priority

Lack of time is one of the most common reasons given for not sticking to an exercise routine – but in the end time management comes down to organising your priorities. If health is in your top 3, then not making time every day (for at least a walk) amounts to nothing less than self sabotage.

Paul Fegan is a shining example of what is possible for the ultra busy business executive.

Working a 60 hr week and with frequent travel interstate and overseas, Paul still manages to fit in 3 personal training sessions per week and an activity every other day.



“I feel great and haven’t been sick all year. It makes a difference to my energy levels and ability to focus in long meetings”, says Paul.

And his results speak for themselves. Since starting with RISE, Paul has reached his goal weight and lost 5.4% body fat, which brings it down to an impressive 16.9%.

Well done mate! And thanks for your energy, enthusiasm and commitment over the last 9 months.



What's New?

RISE Featured in In Style Magazine

Check out John and Jen in the latest issue of In Style Magazine. The photo shoot was done at the Shangri La Hotel in the Rocks, Sydney, Australia.



If you can't run out and buy it, why not follow this [link](#) to see the article displayed on our site.

Healthy Holiday Tips

- Exercise regularly but not excessively. Go for a long walk, cycle or swim before breakfast everyday. Then you will have the rest of the day to relax with family and friends.
- To avoid over-eating party food make sure you are well hydrated. Drink plenty of water, at least 2 liters each day.
- Limit your consumption of alcohol, alternate alcoholic drinks with soda water or try sipping 1 or 2 glasses all evening (your body will thank you for it the next day!!)
- Stay present during social functions. Breathe deeply.
- Don't overeat; listen to your body's signals and smile as you say "no thanks" to the horderves.
- Fill up on a wide variety of water rich plant foods vegetables and fruit - before the party starts.
- Go for food in its natural state. This means avoiding boxed, canned, or pre-prepared foods. Choose the carrot sticks over the potato chips.
- When eating out avoid the bread, order any sauces or dressings on the side and skip or share the desert.
- Reduce your salt intake. Instead of salt and salty sauces, flavour your food with herbs and spices.

And finally, we'd like to wish every one a very merry Christmas and a happy new year!

We hope you are enjoying being part of the RISE community as much as we love sharing it with you. It really is our passion and we feel very lucky to have so many wonderful people in our lives. Here's to a spectacular 2007!