

Chapter Twelve

Vitality



n Chapter Four, we named, as the first of the primary causes of disease, **lowered vitality**.

What can we do to increase vitality? “Old School” physicians and people in general seem to think that this can be done by consuming large quantities of nourishing food and drink and by the use of stimulants and tonics.

The constant cry of patients is: “Doctor, if you could only prescribe some good tonic or some food that will give me strength, then I should be all right! I am sure that is all I need to be cured.”

We fully agree with the patient that he needs more vitality to overcome disease, but unfortunately this cannot be obtained from food and drink, from stimulants and tonics.

Vitality, life, life force, whatever we may call it or whatever its aspect, is not something we can eat and drink. It is independent of the physical body and of material food. If the body should “fall dead,” as we call it, the life force would continue to act just as vigorously in the spiritual body, which is the exact counterpart of the physical organism.

The physical-material body as well as the spiritual-material body are only the instruments for the manifestation of the life force. They are no more life itself than the violin is the artist.

But just as the violin must be kept in good condition in order to enable the artist to draw from it the harmonies of sound, so food and drink are necessary to keep the physical body in the best possible condition for the manifestation of vital force. The more normal our physical and spiritual bodies are in structure and function, the more

harmonious our thought life and emotional life, the more abundant will be the influx of vital force into the twofold organism.

Ignorance of these simple truths leads to the most serious mistakes. Physicians and people in general do not stop to think that excessive eating and drinking tend to rob the body of vitality **instead of supplying it.**

A Full Stomach Does Not Like to Study

The processes of digestion, assimilation and elimination of food and drink in themselves require a considerable expenditure of vital force. Therefore all food taken in excess of the actual needs of the body consumes life force that should be available for other purposes, for the execution of physical and mental work.

The Romans had a proverb: "Plenus venter non studet libenter"—"A full stomach does not like to study." The most wholesome food, if taken in excess, will clog the system with waste matter just as too much coal will dampen and extinguish the fire in the furnace.

Furthermore, the morbid materials and systemic poisons produced by impure, unsuitable or wrongly combined foods will clog the cells and tissues of the body, cause unnecessary friction and obstruct the inflow and the operations of the vital energies, just as dust in a watch will clog and impede the movements of its mechanism.

The greatest artist living cannot draw harmonious sounds from the strings of the finest Stradivarius if the body of the violin is filled with dust and rubbish. Likewise, the life force cannot act perfectly in a body filled with morbid encumbrances.

The human organism is capable of liberating and manifesting daily a limited quantity of vital force, just as a certain amount of capital in the bank will yield a specified sum of interest in a given time. If more than the available interest be withdrawn, the capital in the bank will be decreased and gradually exhausted.

Similarly, if we spend more than our daily allowance of vital force, "nervous bankruptcy," that is, nervous prostration or neurasthenia will be the result.

It is the duty of the physician to regulate the expenditure of vital force according to the income. He must stop all leaks and guard against wastefulness.

Stimulation by Paralysis

This heading may seem paradoxical, but it is borne out by fact. Stimulants are poison to the system. Few people realize that their exhilarating and apparently tonic effects are produced by the paralysis of an important part of the nervous system.

If, as we have learned, **wholesome food and drink** in themselves do not contain and therefore **cannot convey life force to the human body, much less can this be accomplished by stimulants.**

The human body has many correspondences with a watch. Both have a motor or driving mechanism and an inhibitory or restraining apparatus.

If it were not for the inhibiting balances, the wound watchspring would run off and spend its force in a few moments. The expenditure of the latent force in the wound spring must be regulated by the inhibitory and balancing mechanism of the timepiece.

Similarly, the nervous system in the animal and human organism consists of two main divisions: the motor or driving and the inhibitory or restraining mechanisms.

The driving power is furnished by the sympathetic nerves and the motor nerves. They convey the vital energies and nerve impulses to the cells and organs of the body, thus initiating and regulating their activities.

We found that the human body is capable of liberating in a given time, say, in twenty-four hours, only a certain limited amount of vital energy, just as the wound spring of the watch is capable of liberating in a given time only a certain amount of kinetic energy.

As in the watch the force of the spring is controlled by the regulating balances (the anchor), so **in the body the expenditure of vital energy must be regulated** in such a manner that it is evenly distributed over the entire running time. **This is accomplished by the inhibitory nervous system—the parasympathetics.**

Every motor nerve must be balanced by an inhibitory nerve. The one furnishes the driving force, the other applies the brake. For instance, the heart muscle is supplied with motor force through the spinal nerves from the upper dorsal region, while the pneumogastric [vagus] nerve retards the action of the heart and in that way acts as a brake.

Another brake is supplied by the waste products of metabolism

in the system, the uric acid, carbonic acid, oxalic acid, etc., and the many forms of xanthines, alkaloids, and ptomaines. As these accumulate in the organism during the hours of wakeful activity, they gradually clog the capillary circulation, benumb brain and nerves, and thus produce a feeling of exhaustion and tiredness and a craving for rest and sleep.

In this way, by means of the inhibitory nervous system and of the accumulating fatigue products in the body, Nature forces the organism to rest and recuperate when the available supply of vital force runs low. The lower the level of vital force, the more powerful will become the inhibitory influences.

Now we can understand why stimulation is produced by paralysis. **Stimulants precipitate the fatigue products from the circulation into the tissues of the body.** They do this by overcoming and paralyzing the power of the blood to dissolve and carry in solution uric acid and other acids and alkaloids that should be eliminated from the organism.

Stimulants Actually Paralyze

Furthermore, **stimulants temporarily benumb and paralyze the inhibitory nervous system.** In other words, they lift the brakes from the motor nervous system, and allow the driving powers to run wild when Nature wanted them to slow up or stop.

To illustrate: A man has been working hard all day. Toward night his available supply of vitality has run low, his system is filled with uric acid, carbonic acid and other numbing fatigue products, and he feels tired and sleepy. At this juncture he receives word that he must sit up all night with a sick relative. In order to brace himself for the extraordinary demand upon his vitality, our friend takes a cup of strong coffee, or a drink of whisky, or whatever his favorite stimulant may be.

The effect is marvelous. The tired feeling disappears, and he feels as though he could remain awake all night without effort.

What has produced this apparent renewal and increase of vital energy? Has the stimulant added to his system one iota of vitality? This cannot be, because stimulants do not contain anything that could impart vital force to the organism. What, then, has produced the seemingly strengthening effect?

The caffeine, alcohol or whatever the stimulating poison may have been has precipitated the fatigue products from the blood and deposited them in the tissues and organs of the body. Furthermore, the stimulant has benumbed the inhibitory nerves; in other words, it has lifted the brakes from the driving part of the organism, so that the wheels are running wild.

But this means drawing upon the reserve supplies of nerve fats and of the vital energy stored in them, which Nature wants to save for extraordinary demands upon the system in times of illness or extreme exertion. Therefore this procedure is contrary to Nature's intent. Nature tried to force the tired body to rest and sleep, so that it could store up a new supply of vital force.

Under the paralyzing influence of the stimulant upon the inhibitory nerves, the organism now draws upon the reserve stores of nerve fats and vital energies for the necessary strength to accomplish the extra nightwork.

At the same time, the organism remains awake and active during the time it should be replenishing energy **for the next day's work**, which means that the latter also has to be done at the expense of the reserve supply of life force.

Only during sleep do we replenish our reserve stores of vitality. The expenditure of vital energies ceases, but their liberation in the system continues.

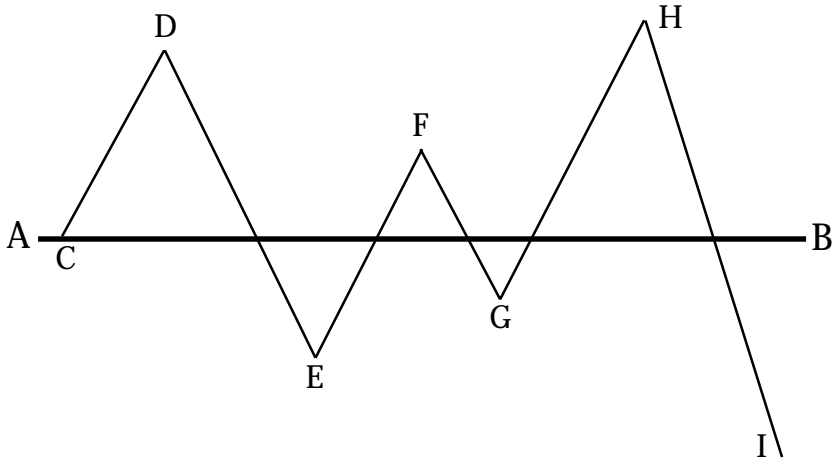
Therefore sleep is the "sweet restorer." Nothing can take its place. No amount of food and drink, no tonics or stimulants can make up for the loss of sleep. Continued complete deprivation of sleep is bound to end in a short time in physical and mental exhaustion, in insanity and death.

That the body, during sleep, acts as a storage battery for vital energy is proved by the fact that **in deep, sound sleep the aura disappears entirely from around the body.**

The aura is to the organism what the exhaust steam is to the engine. It is formed by the electromagnetic fluids which have performed their work in the body and then escape from it, giving the appearance of a many-colored halo.

With the first awakening of conscious mental activity after sleep, the aura appears, indicating that the expenditure of vital force has recommenced.

The Effects of Stimulants on the Physical Organism



In the above diagram we have an illustration of the true effect of stimulants upon the system. The heavy line A-B represents the normal level of available vital energy in a certain body for a given time, say, for twenty-four hours. At point C a stimulant is taken. This paralyzes the inhibitory nerves and temporarily precipitates the fatigue products from the blood.

As we have seen, this allows an increased, unnatural expenditure of vital energy, which raises the latter to point D. But when the effect of the stimulant has been spent, the vital energy drops from the artificially attained high point not only back to the normal level, but below it to point E.

The increased expenditure of vital energy was made possible at the expense of the reserve supply of vitality; therefore the depression following it is in proportion to the preceding stimulation. This is in accordance with the law: "Action and reaction are equal, but opposite."

The falling of the vital energy **below the normal** to point E is accompanied by a feeling of exhaustion and depression which creates a desire to repeat the pleasurable experience of an abundant supply of vitality, and thus leads to a repetition of the artificial stimulation. As a result of this, the expenditure of vitality is again

raised above the normal to point F, only to fall again below the normal, to G, etc.

In this way the person who resorts to stimulants to keep up his strength or to increase it, is never normal, never on the level, never at his best. He is either overstimulated or abnormally depressed. His efforts are bound to be fitful and his work uneven in quality. Furthermore, it will be only a matter of time until he exhausts his reserve supply of nerve fats and vital energy and then suffers nervous bankruptcy in the forms of nervous prostration, neurasthenia or insanity.

Such a person is acting like the spendthrift whose capital in the bank allows him to expend ten dollars a day, but who, instead, draws several times the amount of his legitimate daily interest. There can be but one outcome to this: in due time the cashier will inform him that his account is overdrawn.

The same principles hold true with regard to stimulants given at the sickbed.

One of the arguments I constantly hear from students and physicians of the "Old School" of medicine is: "Some of your methods may be all right, but what would you do at the sickbed of a patient who is so weak and low that he may die at any moment? Would you just let him die? Would you not give him something to keep him alive?"

I certainly would, if I could. But I do not believe that poisons can give life. If there is enough vitality in that dying body to react to the poisonous stimulant by a temporary increase of vital activity, then that same amount of vitality will keep the heart beating and the respiration going a little longer at the slower pace. Nature regulates the heartbeat and the other functions according to the amount and availability of vital force. If the heart beats slow, it is because Nature is trying to economize vitality.

In the inevitable depression following the artificial whipping up of the vital energies, many times the flame is snuffed out entirely when otherwise it might have continued to burn at the slower rate for some time longer.

However, I do not deny the advisability of administering stimulants in cases of shock. When a shock has caused the stopping of the wheels of life, another shock by a stimulant may set them in motion again.

The Effects of Stimulants upon the Mind

The mental and emotional exhilaration accompanying the indulgence in alcohol or other poisonous stimulants is produced in a similar manner as the apparent increase of physical strength under the influence of these agents. **Here, also, the temporary stimulation and seeming increase of power are effected by paralysis of the governing and restraining faculties of mind and soul:** of reason, modesty, reserve, caution, reverence, etc.

The moral, mental and emotional capacities and powers of the human entity are governed by the same principle of dual action that controls physical activity. We have on the one hand the motor or driving impulses, and on the other hand the restraining and inhibiting influences.

In these higher realms appetite, passion, imagination and desire correspond to the motor nervous system in the physical organism, and the power of the will and the reasoning faculties represent the inhibitory nervous system.

The exhilarating and stimulating influence of alcohol and narcotics such as opiates or hashish upon the animal spirits and the emotional and imaginative faculties is caused by the benumbing and paralyzing effect of these stimulants upon the powers of **will, reason and self-control**, the brakes on the lower appetites, passions and desires which fire the emotional nature and the imagination. However, what is gained in feeling and imagination, is lost in judgment and logic.

Alcohol, nicotine, caffeine, theobromine, lupulin (the bitter principle of hops), opium, cocaine, morphine, etc., when given in certain doses, all affect the human organism in a similar manner. [The new man-made stimulants affect the body in a similar fashion and add the potential of unknown side effects.]

In small quantities they seemingly stimulate and animate; in larger amounts they depress and stupefy. **In reality, they are paralyzers from the beginning in every instance** and their apparent, temporary tonic effect is deceptive. They benumb and paralyze not only the physical organism, but also the higher and highest mental and moral qualities, capacities and powers.

These higher and finer qualities are located in the front part of the brain. In the evolution of the species from lower to higher, the

brain gradually developed and enlarged in a forward direction. Thus we find in the lowest order of fishes that all they possess of brain matter is a small protuberance at the end of the spinal cord. As the species and families rose in the scale of evolution, the brain developed proportionately from behind forward and became differentiated into three distinct divisions: **the medulla oblongata, the cerebellum, and the cerebrum.**

The medulla oblongata, situated at the base of the brain where it joins the spinal cord, contains those brain centers that control the purely vegetative, vital functions: the circulation of the blood, the respiration, regulation of animal heat, etc.

The cerebellum, in front of and above the medulla, is the seat of the centers for the coordination of muscular activities and for maintaining the equilibrium of the body.

The frontal brain or cerebrum contains the centers for the sensory organs, also the motor centers which supply the driving impulses for the muscular activities of the body, and in the occipital and frontal lobes, the centers for the higher and highest qualities of mind and soul, which constitute the governing and restraining faculties on which depend the powers of self-control.

Thus we see that the development of the brain has been in a forward direction, from the upper extremity of the spinal cord to the frontal lobes of the cerebrum, from the low, vegetative qualities of the animal and the savage to the complex and refined activities of the highly civilized and trained mind.

It is an interesting and most significant fact that **paralysis of brain centers caused by alcohol and other stimulants, or by hypnotics and narcotics, proceeds reversely to the order of their development during the processes of evolution.**

The first to succumb are the brain centers in the frontal lobes of the cerebrum, which control the latest-developed and most-refined human attributes. These are: **modesty, caution, reserve, reverence, altruism.** Then follow in the order given: **memory, reason, logic, intelligence, will power, self-control, the control of muscular coordination and equilibrium** and finally **consciousness** and the vital activities of heart action and respiration.

When the conscious activities of the soul have been put to sleep, the paralysis extends to the subconscious activities of life or vital force. Respiration and heart action become weak and labored, and

may finally cease entirely.

In order to verify this, let us study the effects of **alcohol**, the best-known and most-used of stimulants. Many people believe that alcohol increases not only physical strength, but mental energy also. Regular medical science considers it a valuable tonic in all cases of physical and mental depression. It is often administered in surgical operations and in accidents with the idea of prolonging life. I have frequently found the whisky or brandy bottle at the bedside of infants and on it the directions of the attending physician.

Watch the effect of this tonic on a group of convivial spirits at a banquet. Full honor is done to the art of the chef, and the wine flows freely. The flow of animal spirits increases proportionately; conviviality, wit and humor rise by leaps and bounds. But the apparent joy and happiness are in reality nothing but the play of the lower animal impulses, unrestrained by the higher powers of mind and soul.

The words of the afterdinner speaker who, when sober, is a sedate and earnest gentleman, flow with unusual ease. The close and unprejudiced observer notices, however, that what the speaker has gained in eloquence, loquacity and exuberance of style and expression, he has lost in logic, clearness and good sense.

As King Alcohol tightens his grasp on the merry company, the toasters and speakers lose more and more their control over speech and actions. What was at first mischievous abandon and merry jest, gradually degenerates into loquaciousness, coarseness and querulous brawls. Here and there one of the maudlin crowd drops off in the stupor of drunkenness.

If the liquor is strong enough and if the debauch is continued long enough, it may end in complete paralysis of the vital functions or in death.

Hypnotism and Obsession

Again, we find the seeming paradox of stimulation by paralysis exemplified in the phenomena of hypnotism and obsession. **The abnormally exaggerated sensation, feeling and imagination of the subject under hypnotic control are made possible because the higher, critical and restraining faculties and powers of will, reason and self-control are temporarily or permanently benumbed and**

paralyzed by the stronger will of the hypnotist or of the obsessing intelligence.

There is a most interesting resemblance between the effects of stimulants, narcotics or hypnotic control and blind, unreasoning faith. The latter also benumbs and paralyzes judgment and reason. It gives full sway to the powers of imagination and thus may produce seemingly miraculous results.

This explains the *modus operandi* of faith cures as well as the fitful strength of the intoxicated and the insane, or the beautiful dreams and delusions of grandeur of the drug addict.

The close resemblance and relationship between hypnotic control and faith became vividly apparent to me while witnessing the performance of a professional hypnotist. His subject on the stage was a young woman who, under his control, performed extraordinary feats of strength and resistance. Several strong men could not lift or move her in any way.

What was the reason? In the ordinary, waking condition her judgment and common sense would tell her: "I cannot resist the combined strength of these men. Of course, they can lift me and pull me here and there." As a result of this doubting state of mind, she would not have the strength to resist.

However, the control of the hypnotist had paralyzed her reasoning faculties and therewith her capacity for judging, doubting and not believing. Her subconscious mind accepted without question or the shadow of a doubt the suggestion of the hypnotist that she did possess the strength to resist the combined efforts of the men and as a result she actually manifested the necessary powers of resistance.¹

It is an established fact that the impressions (records) made upon the subconscious mind under certain conditions as, for instance, under hypnotic influence absolutely control the activities of the physical body.

¹ It is true however that the young lady was able to resist the efforts of the men under hypnosis. This would give us some idea of the potential of our being if we could only learn to give up fear or the feeling, "I can't do that." Dr. Lindlahr seems to be dubious of the use of this power but, after all, is not any power only as useful as the purpose to which it is put. Hypnosis, like any other force, can be used to do good or harm. It is only a power or force that humans can learn to direct.

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Does not this throw an interesting light on the power of absolute faith, on the saying: "Everything is possible to him who believeth?" Blind, unreasoning faith benumbs and paralyzes judgment and reason in similar manner as hypnotic control or stimulants and in that way gives free and full sway to the powers of imagination and autosuggestion for good or ill, for white magic or black magic, according to the purpose for which faith is exerted.

It also becomes apparent that such blind, unreasoning faith cannot be constructive in its influence upon the higher mental, moral and spiritual faculties. **These can be developed only by the conscious and voluntary exercise of will, reason and self-control.**

From the foregoing it will have become evident that we cannot increase vital force in the body through any artificial means or methods from without, by food, drink or stimulant. What we can and should do, however, is to put the organism into the best possible condition for the liberation and manifestation of life force or vital energy.

The more normal the chemical composition of the blood, and the more free the tissues are from clogging impurities, poisons and mechanical obstructions, such as lesions of the spinal column, the more abundant will be the liberation and the available supply of vital energy.

Therefore perfect, buoyant health, which ensures the greatest possible efficiency and enjoyment of life, can be attained and maintained only by strict adherence to the natural ways of living and, when necessary, by the natural treatment of diseases.

