THE PLEASURE PRINCIPLE

The Healing Power of Joy, Laughter, and Pleasure

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A study by the research group ARISE shows that guilt can cause patients to deprive themselves of pleasure...to the detriment of their health.

The ARISE Study

According to an international research study conducted by the Associates for Research Into the Science of Enjoyment (ARISE), 41 percent of people in the UK are unable to enjoy their everyday pleasures, such as enjoying a glass of wine or a chocolate bar, because they feel guilty. This leads to an avoidance of pleasure or enjoyment. Because enjoyment and pleasure enhance the immune system, this avoidance undermines both mental and physical health.

Chronic Guilt

While guilt acts as an important check for behavior and lifestyle modification, it can be misplaced when it interferes with the simple pleasures in life. In its extreme guilt can impair attentiveness making people forgetful and more prone to error. Chronic guilt can induce stress and depression, the researchers report, leading to eating disorders, and contributing to infection, ulcers, immune system problems, neurological problems, and heart problems.

ARISE researchers report that health campaigns often send conflicting messages when they emphasize stoicism and avoidance while failing to mention the health benefits of antioxidants in chocolate and wine, the benefits of catechism in tea, or the health benefits of sex and laughter.

Stress

Furthermore, stress associated with the avoidance of guilt triggers the release of the stress hormones cortisol, adrenalin, and noradrenalin. Chronic stress causes an excess release of cortisol, which is associated with damage to the hippocampus as well as the immune system. Cognitive changes associated with stress can lead to depression and cause patients to neglect taking medications as directed.

The benefits derived from pleasure and enjoyment are lost when guilt or a preoccupation with health cause patients to avoid the things that cause them pleasure. Similarly, if partaking in pleasure is accompanied by guilt, any benefits are lost.
Chronic illness can cause us to become preoccupied with our health while we neglect other aspects of our lives. While knowledge is empowering, too much time spent researching our illness or making it the most important part of our life can be detrimental. Remembering our right to pleasure and taking the time to relax in a warm, fragrant bubble bath or sip a glass of wine while reading a favorite book are important for our well-being as well as our immune system health. Humor, pleasure, and joy are important factors in any healing protocol.

Resource:


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