

## **Juggling: Exercise Both Brain & Body**

Do you want to improve your health without even thinking about it? It takes twenty-one days to form a habit. So start counting the days and watching the results. All the while you will be developing a new skill that helps both mental and physical functioning?

Just as bad habits are hard to break, good habits are easy to maintain, especially if you enjoy it, in either case. So why not make your next habit a good one, that allows you to enjoy exercising your brain and body simultaneously by learning how to juggle?

### **Exercising Your Brain**

Recent studies have found that learning ability increases with the use of your offhand in normal functioning. Actions taken by the less dominant hand apparently open the brain's power of thinking in ways that it is not always accustomed to, improving its overall capacity. While you could opt to brush your teeth, write, eat and drink with a different hand tomorrow, it would be difficult to put this into practice as a daily routine. Frankly, my toothbrush would end up in my eye, my writing would not be legible, and my stomach would grumble over inefficiency. Before we get too carried away and advocate complete ambidextrous behavior—for those of us who are not originally that diverse, outside of typing—I suggest waiting for further studies. Meanwhile, learn a skill that applies these techniques naturally as part of the process: start juggling.

A good workout will use both sides of the body and therefore both sides of the brain. Stroke victims sometimes lose movement to one side or the other of their bodies. If they are unable to move their left sides, for instance, the right side of their brain was affected by the stroke. The right side of the brain processes creativity. The left side of the brain is the logical counterpart. Most people are predominantly using one part of their brain more than the other. But just as we can train our bodies to function as a whole equally, we can also train our minds. It is all connected; therefore the good we do for our body improves our minds and vice versa. Juggling, therefore, can do this workout for you all at once. Juggling is both logical and creative. It uses logical timing with eye hand coordination in concession, but may be purposely interrupted by creative variance in pattern distributions. In other words, juggling naturally both manipulates and works out the brain and body functions.

I actually discovered these facts when researching a book that I have been writing. I didn't even realize that I was exercising this newfound knowledge until recently recognizing the effects of my daily juggling. You see: I like to juggle but I don't like to run. Let me explain. Since I'm not much for running I hadn't done enough physically in some time. Then a little more than a month ago I took to juggling, again. I'm trying to master the art of juggling five balls. It takes a little practice every night. I've almost got it. Since it has been more than twenty-one days, there have actually been noticeable physical results to report.

## **Exercising the Body**

First, my flexibility has improved. My back alignment is straighter. My posture is better. Next, my stomach muscles, or my body's core, have strengthened. I suppose the lessening of my back pain could largely be caused by the removal of my wallet that I used to sit on daily. However, I attribute much of the changes, including weight loss, to the repetitive circular arm motions of juggling; that, or having to pick up dropped balls at regular intervals—equivalent to an exercise of repeatedly touching my toes. Surprisingly, it is quite a cardiovascular exercise; I would easily compare it with walking. Although, albeit much more easy to get carried away with in amusement (Exercising without knowing it).

## **The Exercising Trick of Juggling**

When juggling, my mind is only focused on juggling, and so it is having fun while coordinating learning with my body's reaction time. Meanwhile, unwittingly, juggling builds more learning capacity by constantly using my offhand. One hand is still better than the other, but the gap is closing. So perhaps this is also evidence to suggest that one side of my brain is catching up with the other side. I do believe I have better clarity of thought, though an outlier of this could be due to other outlets such as writing. Nonetheless, the flexibility and muscle tone can just not be explained away as not being a result of juggling, and the clarity and focus I have found backs up the findings regarding what occurs in the brain. While juggling tricks you into enjoying both a physical and mental workout, the trick of juggling really is quite easy to learn.

For me, it's funny to think that I was actually using juggling to take my mind off of things when maybe in reality I was just diverting it to cultivating other functions all along. Whatever the case, juggling is relaxing and enjoyable just the same: two things that don't always come naturally with improving mental and physical health. Give it a try! You might find picking up this new skill has other pleasant ramifications. If not, you'll at least be able to entertain yourself with a new talent. Have fun juggling!