

Column #2-2002: Dear I.O.W.A.:

*On Spring...and Flaxseed...*

Soon we will be on the “cusp of spring,” asking ourselves what happened to the winter? It went by so quickly. How many of us even got a chance to read one of those good books we were going to read on a snowy weekend? My “sneak-away-by-myself” books this winter turned out to be cookbooks! I am trying to find some “new” foods, beyond the traditional meat, potatoes and gravy, my farmer husband was raised to think was the beginning and ending of the food chain. The winter project at our house is to get more flaxseed into our diet. I found out that by varying the fruits in the smoothies I make nearly each morning, I could also get a hefty amount of ground flaxseed into the smoothie and still keep my husband’s interest in eating it.

According to Dr. Stephen Sinatra, Cardiologist, flaxseeds are 35% oil, 55% of which are Omega 3 fatty acids. Dr. Sinatra says flaxseeds are helpful in promoting more normal cholesterol levels as well as being good for digestion, providing a high level of lignans, helping skin health, and making you feel fuller—hence not as hungry.

In the February, 2002, *Energy Times* issue, we find that scientists are researching flax’s anticancer potential through lignans—“substances thought to reduce the possible cancer-stimulating effects of the hormone estrogen by keeping it from latching onto receptors on certain cells, such as breast cells.” “Flax may also oppose cancer by neutralizing harmful molecules called free radicals that may damage cellular structures.” (p.78) (See: *Nutr Res* 1999; 19:1233-43.)

Therefore, eating freshly ground (try 5-6 tsp.) golden flaxseed daily is an important contribution you can make to promote your own good health. I cannot recommend it enough. Further, if you know of anyone with IBS, you might suggest to them that they could learn more about the benefits of flax in their diet by consulting *Gastroenterology* 1997, 112:A836.

*Speaking of Skin Health...On Skin Brushing*

Even though I have practiced skin brushing for some time now, I really had no idea how truly beneficial skin brushing is until I took the time to examine the process. As I was skin brushing recently, a sunbeam came beaming through the window into the bathroom and through its rays I could see the “cloud of dry cells” coming off my legs from the brushing. I was intrigued. My daughter uses a special pair of gloves and skin brushes regularly. She encouraged me to do so too. I have been, but not regularly. Until I saw for myself—in that ray of sunlight—I really didn’t “get it.”

Researching the skin as an organ, I am reminded that it is the largest organ in my body. Skin carries out about 1/4 of the detoxing work of the body. It is hard for the skin to perform this function when the pores are all clogged up with cells that need to be exfoliated. Skin brushing helps the lymph system to cleanse itself of toxins. It is also supposed to help break up cellulite—if we really do the skin brushing consistently in a complete, vigorous manner—moving from the feet

upward and from the hands inward, from the shoulders downward and from the buttocks and stomach upward. Use long smooth strokes and avoid brushing areas with moles. Follow this good skin brushing with a warm shower and cool rinse. (If you don't already have a shower dechlorinator, please consider getting one.) Make skin brushing one of your good habits!

*On Managing Stress & Movement... What is Your Stress Style?*

We often turn to exercise to lessen the effects of anxiety. But did you know there is a difference between “cognitive” and “somatic” anxiety? Research is on going as to the appropriate exercise to help each of these forms of anxiety. Generally, those who react to stress more physically note responses such as: “increase in heart rate, jitteriness, diarrhea, tense stomach, pacing, becoming immobilized, and perspiring.” People who react to stress more mentally note difficulties in concentrating, worrying about things that really don't matter, imagining “terrifying scenes,” and “anxiety provoking pictures,” being bothered by “unimportant thoughts,” and feeling of “losing out because decisions aren't made fast enough” and not being able to keep “worrisome thoughts out.” See: “Exercises for Stress Control” in *Mind Body Medicine*, Daniel Goleman, Ph.D. and Joel Gurin, Eds., 1993, p. 321.

Those with a mental reaction to stress, “the cognitive anxiety type,” tend to experience relaxation in “activities that engage the mind completely, like meditation, reading an absorbing book, or playing a challenging game like chess.” Those with a stress reaction style that tends to be more physical, “the somatic anxiety type,” may find relaxation through “vigorous experience” like running along with “deep muscle relaxation or yoga” which also can be helpful to “break(ing) up the physical patterns of stress.” *Id.*, pp. 320-323.

Finally, researchers note if we experience stress both mentally and physically, then we should find activities which demand “full mental engagement, competitive sports like tennis, racquetball or tennis”, or “physical exercise of mindfulness meditation,” such as full body scan in relaxation. *Id.*, p. 321.

Qi Gong, which combines both movement and mindfulness, seems to be a perfect complement to your exercise program, whether you experience anxiety as either “cognitive” or “somatic” or more particularly, as both types of anxiety. *Soaring Crane* practice covers all areas of the body and requires the type of concentration that fully engages the mind. It can be done by most anyone and can even be adapted to be done from a chair. Consider adding Qi Gong to your movement practice.

**“A journey of a thousand miles begins at the spot under one's feet.” 64a.Tao Te Ching**

*Coming Next Month:  
Grilled Chicken Breast Salad with Cherry Vinaigrette Sautéed Onions*

*Meanwhile, be good to yourself. Keep deep breathing...new studies show a connection with weight loss. 'Til next time, when we'll explore more on body-mind-spirit issues affecting our health in “The WellFem-in-Law™” column.*

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