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Teaching Stories

In my practice I am always looking for ways to teach and motivate my patients to strive for wellness. To this end, I find that I use teaching stories that tell them what they need to do help in their own healing. Sometimes it's easier to see a fact or a truth in a story (a parable if you will) and then extract that fact or truth and apply it.

Today, I want to share with you three of my favourite teaching stories. They are The Dog, The Car and The Frog stories.

First, The Dog Story. We know how important exercise is for our dogs. If we own one, we take it out for a brisk half-hour to an hour walk each day. So isn't it interesting how we, as human animals, forget how important it is to walk ourselves? So my question to people who don't exercise is, "If you had a dog, would you walk it?" And then, "Why would you walk your dog?" And - "If dogs need walks, doesn't it make sense that we, as animals, need them just as much?"

The Car Story. If we filled our car with gas that had some debris, water or sugar in it and it didn't run well, we would make the connection between cause and effect easily. What went into the car was making it perform poorly. One of the most important ways we obtain energy is by fueling our selves with food - and it need to be high-octane food.

If we put pollutant-laden, nutrient-depleted food laced with high amounts of caffeine and sugar into our bodies, how can we expect them to run optimally? As a matter of fact, putting in junk food and nutrient-depleted food not only makes us feel unwell, it also adds stress to all our systems. It also adds to our ongoing inflammatory load (which I will be discussing in depth in future articles), which can lead to many age-related chronic diseases.

The Frog Story. Many people say, "I have no food allergies or sensitivities." Yet their clinical history points to an ongoing allergic profile often dating back to early childhood. Others, after leaving an emotionally toxic situation, say, "How did I stay in that situation for so long?" Those on stress leave often bemoan the fact that they didn't realize that they were in such a burned-out state.

The common thread in these three situations is that we, as animals, have an amazing ability to adapt. The frog story is illustrative of that adaptive power. If you put a frog in a pot of hot water it will jump out. However, if you put that same frog in a pot of cool water and turn up the heat slowly the frog will sit and adapt to the heat changes. At some point, it will become unwell because it has adapted past the point of a healthy temperature.

We need to listen to our body's signals as they react and give us signs that the water is too hot. When we don't, the adaptive behaviour will stress our systems and our health can deteriorate.

These stories have helped me educate my patients about the importance of exercise, proper nutrition and listening to the signals of our bodies. I hope you too can glean some wisdom from these teaching stories.

Dr. Paulette Roscoe is a naturopathic physician who practices in Nanaimo. She welcomes your calls at 754-1733.

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