

February 2012

Meditation, prayer and health:

Tebow or not Tebow?



He may not have been in the Super Bowl but Tim Tebow is one of America's best-known athletes. The quarterback's penchant for kneeling down to openly pray before, during and after the games – a practice that's now called Tebowing – is controversial and a hot topic for comedians.

Public displays of faith have always been a part of sports. While praying is an individual choice, regular meditation and prayer has been shown in a few scientific studies to be an important factor in living longer and staying healthy.

A study funded by the National Institutes of Health found that persons who prayed daily were shown to be 40 percent less likely to have high blood pressure than those without a regular prayer practice.

A Dartmouth Medical School study found that patients with strong religious beliefs who underwent elective heart surgery were three times more likely to recover than those who were less religious.

A 2011 study of inner city youth with asthma by researchers at the University of Cincinnati indicated that those who practiced meditation and prayer experienced fewer and less-severe symptoms than those who did not.

And a recent Journal of Gerontology survey of 4,000 senior citizens in Durham, NC, found that people who prayed or meditated coped better with illness and lived longer than those

who did not.

According to a University of Rochester study, more than 85 percent of people confronting a major illness pray. That is far higher than taking herbs or pursuing other nontraditional healing modalities.

So how does prayer impact our health? Research suggests that long-term daily spiritual practices help deactivate genes that trigger inflammation and prompt cell death. Other studies have found that prayer and meditation increase levels of dopamine, which is associated with states of well-being and joy.

That the mind can affect the expression of our genes is exciting evidence for how personal reflection may influence the functioning of the body at the most fundamental level. However, while these studies do tell us is that people who pray and meditate tend to be statistically healthier and live longer than those who do not, we should not assume that if we pray or meditate, all will go well.

If we want to achieve maximum health, prayer or meditation alone won't cut it. We should all exercise regularly, eat healthy, drop those extra pounds – and engage in some sort of personal reflection.

Congratulations to Corrine Damlamian for her amazement performance at the January 28 GW Business School event at the House of Sweden.



TRENDING:

The "Queen of Butter," Paula Deen, recently announced she has Type 2 diabetes, joining the 26 million Americans with the disease (and 79



million with pre-diabetes). We hope she will take the lead toward prevent or delay a similar diagnosis for others by stressing healthy eating and exercise. And she should encourage those with diabetes to manage stress and take their prescribed medications. Obesity and a lack of physical activity are the most common causes of Type 2 diabetes, responsible for nearly 95 percent of diabetes cases in the U.S.

BUZZ:

Did you know that **Bench Gym** is starting its **8th year** of helping our dedicated and hard-working clients become healthy, fit and strong? We look forward to many more years of serving you.