

## "Know Your Physical Limitations": A Lesson From Herman

by **David Briscoe**

Freedom is a wonderful thing. It is wonderful to feel unlimited. Even the prisoner in solitary confinement can be free in his imagination. Our culture teaches us to think of ourselves as free and unlimited. But we are actually free only in spirit. Physically, we are not free or unlimited. Probably one of Herman's most powerful, simple and often repeated statements was "Know your physical limitations." Many times this was misunderstood by his students. Some saw this statement as negative, and they didn't pay much attention, but in this statement was contained the essence of many of Herman's most positive teachings.

In order to be in the physical world for a normal, healthy lifetime, it is important to know how the physical world works. It has rules. The body, being part of the physical world, needs to operate by the rules or it will get sick much more than it normally would, and then it will age prematurely.

We all know that we need oxygen. If we go into outer space or under the water, we must take our supply of oxygen with us. This is one of our physical limitations. We just can't go anywhere we want, we can only go where there is oxygen.

We all come to learn soon in life that the body's temperature maintains itself at 98.6 F. It can go up a little, maybe down a little, but it can't go up too high for too long or down too low for too long. If it does, our life is in real danger. This having to maintain a certain body temperature is another of our physical limitations. Nobody can buy their way out of this. So, knowing this, we make sure that our temperature never gets too high or goes too low. It's become common sense.

We all have to maintain a constant blood sugar level, we all have to consume food and water. These things we understand easily. When we study more about the body, we discover that it has even more, not-so-obvious limitations. In our blood we have to maintain a certain concentration of minerals like sodium and potassium. This concentration of minerals must be maintained constantly or we are in big trouble. Fortunately, there are automatic functions in the body that maintain this internal mineral concentration.

Perhaps one of the most important physiological limitations is pH or acid-alkaline balance. Human blood must be maintained constantly at a pH of 7.4. If it varies from this number by much, we would go into a coma or convulsions. Our lungs, kidneys and blood buffer system help the body remove acid so that the pH of 7.4 can be

steadily maintained. It is a natural process going on night and day without stop.

When we select food and drink, it adds acid or alkaline-forming elements to our blood after it is digested. Protein, fat and refined carbohydrates (white sugar, white flour, white rice, alcohol, etc.) all add acid to the body. Of course, we need a certain amount of protein, fat and unrefined carbohydrate, the body can handle them. It's when we eat concentrated amounts of these nutrients that we create an acid blood condition. Many, many health problem have their roots in an acid blood condition.

When we learn how to wisely choose foods according to macrobiotic principles, we discover that we can easily support our body in maintaining an alkaline blood condition. When we do this we are learning to live with a physical limitation, and we know how to stay healthy longer. By understanding that we do have physical limitations, and that be learning to embrace them and live with them, we become stronger and happier people.

Living with our physical limitations allows us to root ourselves strongly in the reality of our biological life. When we accomplish this, our spirit is able to soar freely and without limitation. It is like a majestic tree, firmly rooted in the earth, supporting its branches in their reach to the heavens.