

Stability - Part 1

David Briscoe

It is common for many to feel unstable in today's hurry-up world. There are many demands on our time. There is much to do. From one day to the next there are a multitude of underlying uncertainties about one's job, relationships, finances, etc. For much of society life is lived anxiously, and there is a sense that unpredictable winds of change may be gathering at any moment to blow through and leave chaos behind. Even knowing how to maintain one's own daily health has become a cause of anxiety and confusion. There are so many ideas and theories coming and going. Which one is right? Whose theory of health is correct? How should we make decisions and choices about health in the midst of so many contradictory statements and teachings?

There is far more dietary confusion and anxiety about personal health choices expressed to me now by friends and those who call seeking macrobiotic information, than there was even ten years ago. Today there is more and more focus on isolated segments of nutrition such as enzymes, minerals, vitamins, etc., generated, I believe, from the fact that most people today consume a diet devoid of the complete nutrition once



provided by whole foods. Out of this confusion, new diets proliferate and gain overnight popularity among temporarily zealous adherents. Our heads overflow with such a downpour of dietary do's and don'ts that it seems impossible to swim to a stable shore of health in the flood created by all the confusion of diets and ideas about health. How can stability be created and maintained by following the latest information when even the so-

called health experts and government authorities argue with each other about what is and isn't good nutrition?

My main suggestion is to try one's best to keep it simple when it comes to health and food. In the end, it is very simple: You have to find out for yourself what makes sense to you and what brings you the most stability, vitality, and happiness. I have personally gotten into trouble whenever I have followed experts, even those who I have admired very much. Now, I just try my best to listen carefully and to see what makes the most sense to me in my own circumstances. Sometimes, friends and acquaintances ask if I can help them find a way to get a sense of stability in their lives, both physically and mentally. Because of my own unstable youth, and also due to the rocky emotional life I lead for so many years prior to 1972 when I was blessed with the discovery of macrobiotics, I really appreciate stability and I empathize with the search for it that so many are expressing today. Consequently, I would like to offer some simple ideas about how to create stability in the midst of the stress and apparent confusion of today.

Initially, let's focus on our own body cells. We find that in a single cell there is one main source of stability: glucose. Glucose is the main source of each cell's energy. When this energy is stabilized and burning smoothly, the cell is in a state of stability. If this energy is not burning smoothly, there is instability in the function of the cell. What is the main cause of instability in a single cell? In my opinion it is the quality and quantity of glucose being delivered to the cell. If we can learn how to deliver glucose to our cells in a way that results in a steady and gentle production of energy, we will be providing stability to the cell. When this cellular stability is established and maintained at the level of a single cell, the foundation for stability is laid for our entire health.

So, when people who are feeling unstable ask me where they should begin in their practice of macrobiotics, I tell them to begin by understanding carbohydrates. Yes, all nutrients are needed, but for establishing stability, I choose to start with carbohydrates. I suggest they take time to become aware of all of the ways they consume carbohydrates during a one-week period. They keep a diary, writing down when they choose to eat or drink white sugar, artificial sweeteners, sodas, white bread, white noodles, white rice, honey, maple syrup fruit, fruit juice, French fries, baked potatoes, etc. If it is a macrobiotic person, I also ask them to keep track of when they consume soy milk, rice milk, rice syrup, barley malt, amasake, whole grains, and so on.

The next step is to understand carbohydrates. We talk about three of the "Saccharide sisters:" Poly, Di and Mono. To give their full names, they are "Poly Saccharide," "Di Saccharide," and "Mono Saccharide." These are the chemical names for three basic carbohydrate groups. Poly is the true and steady complex carbohydrate. She doesn't fall to pieces easily. Next, is Di. She is not complex

like Poly, instead she chooses to go about in simple pairs, thus the "di" in her name. While a polysaccharide is a complex long chain of molecules strung together, a disaccharide is a much shorter chain of just two molecules. Finally, we come to Mono. She is a loner. She doesn't bond with anything else. She is a big hurry, always rushing through everything she does. As the monosaccharide, she is the simplest form of carbohydrate. A monosaccharide is a single molecule of glucose, fructose, or galactose all by itself. Monosaccharides and disaccharides are also called "simple sugars," with the monosaccharides being the simpler of the two. Only polysaccharide is a genuine "complex carbohydrate."

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The human body was designed to take in, digest, and assimilate carbohydrate in a natural progression that supplies it in a steady and gentle manner to its cells. It is supposed to go like this: polysaccharides, complex carbohydrates, in the form of whole grains and vegetables first enter the mouth. Most of them don't taste sweet when they first touch the tongue. This is due to the fact that the natural sugar of the polysaccharides is still bound up in long and complex chains of glucose and not yet exposed to the taste buds. However, as we begin to chew them, an enzyme in our saliva begins to work on dissolving the long chains of the polysaccharide, changing it into disaccharide, a simpler sugar. At this point we begin to

taste the sweetness that was locked in the grains and vegetables. However, it still doesn't taste sweet like white sugar, which, by the way is also a disaccharide, because the resulting simple sugar from well-chewed whole grains and vegetables is not as concentrated as the processed sugars and syrups we can buy and use.

Next, this chewed food is swallowed and goes on to the stomach where the process of polysaccharide becoming disaccharide is completed. Then it moves on to the small intestine where the final process of digestion takes place as the disaccharides are further broken down until they are single molecules, or monosaccharides, of glucose. Only when it reaches this final stage of digestion into a single molecule of glucose, can carbohydrate be absorbed from the small intestine into the blood stream and be delivered to the individual cells of one's body.

The natural digestion of carbohydrate goes like this:

polysaccharide → disaccharide →
monosaccharide

There is a reason for this natural process; namely, the steadiest and most natural concentration of glucose can be delivered to the cells. With this natural process of carbohydrate digestion and assimilation in place, the possibility of cellular stability is the strongest. Having the polysaccharides of whole grains, supplemented by vegetables, as our primary foods in each meal, allows for a process of steady yet not overwhelming glucose delivery to the cells. If we bypass this naturally ordained process and make the more concentrated disaccharides and monosaccharides of sugar, honey, fruit juice, rice syrup, barley malt, etc., the main or significant source of carbohydrate day to day, we may be destabilizing the glucose of the cells, thus leading to overall physiological instability. It's not possible to remain stable and grounded in our thinking,

emotions, and relationships when there is instability at the cellular level. In my opinion, this usually subtle and unknown cellular instability is a primary cause of instability on the larger levels of our mentality, psychology, and sociology. Unstable cellular life leads to unstable life at the larger physical level, which after all, is a gathering of trillions of individual cells to create one organism. What is happening at the level of the single cell is reflected at the larger level of the whole body and mind. What is happening in a single cell in the body and in one's mind are one and the same.

If we deliver large rushes of glucose to the blood stream as a result of regular consumption of alcohol, sugar, honey, maple syrup, etc., cellular instability will be a result. Even though the body has mechanisms for managing glucose and some scientists and nutritionists maintain that these mechanisms properly manage the glucose no matter whether it comes from refined carbohydrates or from complex carbohydrates, still I believe that the daily consumption of disaccharides and monosaccharides weakens the body's glucose-regulating mechanisms. These writers and health professionals often say that all carbohydrate ends up as glucose, so it really doesn't matter if it starts out in food as polysaccharide, disaccharide, or monosaccharide. However, I am confident that some day it will be more fully understood by the science of modern nutrition and medicine that the kind of carbohydrate that is consumed is extremely important. If you want to create more stability in your life, a stability that is very flexible and adaptable, I hope you will learn how to understand carbohydrates and the significant role they play in the steadiness of our day-to-day physical and mental life.

It seems to me that with glucose as the main factor, the center, of each cell's stability and energy, that the daily human diet then should reflect

Human Cell's Center of Energy

Human Diet's Central Food



and support this important fact. At the center of the human diet we should place that food which will supply the main source of our cells' energy and stability. If we put protein at the center of the human diet, it doesn't reflect the fact that carbohydrate is the center of our cell's energy and stability. Yes, for sure we need protein, but it is not our body's first choice as supplier of cellular energy and stability. We could put fat at the center of the human diet, and it would provide us with its own kind of energy, but this would be more like pouring motor oil into a car's gas tank. It's common knowledge that fat causes all sorts of problems when consumed in too great a proportion. The medical research has been filled for decades with recommendations for reducing our fat consumption. So, fat can't be at the center of the human diet.

If we put sugar, sodas, candy, pies, juices, syrups, ice cream, etc., at the center of the human diet, we will get glucose from them for sure, but it will be way too much, way too concentrated, and way too fast. This is already known to cause all sorts of physical and mental troubles. So refined and concentrated carbohydrates, even from organic sources, won't do us much good if we place them at the center of the human diet. Dietary supplements can't be placed at the center of the human diet either. They can't produce the kind of steady energy and vitality that sustains healthy, long-term activity. That's why they are referred to as "supplements."

Some people would have us place fruits at the center of the human diet, but fructose is a monosaccharide, or simple sugar, that quickly enters the blood stream and can, in excess, lead to cellular instability. Also, fruit, like simple sugar, contains a high concentration of potassium. In the macrobiotic view, this is another reason for eating fruit wisely (and less frequently than whole grains and vegetables), and not excessively. This may come as a shock to many because we have all been told since we were very young that we should eat more fruit. Please don't misunderstand: I am not saying fruit is bad, or don't eat fruit. My own experience with it, and in observing many others, is that for optimal health, stability, and vitality, fruit belongs in a peripheral position in the human diet, not at the center as a main daily food.

Sometimes when a person makes whole grains the center of the diet, he or she feels tired or not so strong in the beginning. This is often due to weakness of the following organs, which are essential in glucose metabolism: the liver, pancreas, and kidneys (including the adrenal glands). Additionally, the stomach and small intestine may be weak, resulting in inadequate digestion and absorption of carbohydrates. So, the establishment of cellular stability can be hindered by the poor function of these organs.

In the second part of this series, I will write about how to strengthen these organs in order that the complex carbohydrates of whole grains

and vegetables can be more fully utilized by the body and physical and mental stability more successfully achieved and maintained. In the third part, I will write about the importance of cooking techniques and the selection and combination of foods that bring out the simple sweet flavor of grains and vegetables. With this naturally sweet flavor at the center of meal creations, more support for stability of body and mind can be built. Finally, in the fourth and last installment of this series, I will write about building upon the biological foundation an ever-deepening stability of mind, heart, and daily living through a connection with the immensity of creation, the wholeness of nature, and the originating mystery of life.

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