
Stability, Part Two

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When I was a young boy studying geography and world history in elementary school, I thought primitive people were stupid because they worshipped the sun or certain crops such as corn. Some had a "sun god" or a "corn goddess." I remember thinking, "How dumb! Why don't they know the sun is a fireball in the sky and that corn is just a plant in the ground?" Now, years later, I have come to realize how sensitive and wise primitive people really were. They instinctively understood that without the sun they could not live, and they knew that corn and other plants gave them sustenance. Modern science and biochemistry have confirmed what primitive people understood all along: we are totally dependent on the sun and plants. And we are no less dependent on them today than people were thousands of generations ago. We are technologically and scientifically advanced, but the simple fact hasn't changed that we are alive because the sun keeps shining and the plants keep growing and providing us food.

Even if we use animal foods as our main food, we are still dependent on plants because the animals



eat plants to make their flesh and milk. Even junk food, preservatives, fertilizers, and pesticides were at some point in their distant past a plant. We are completely beholden to the world of plants no matter what kind of diet we choose. The primitive people were wise to hold the sun and plants in high esteem. It was their way of saying "thank you" for these life-giving treasures of nature.

While we human beings can

perform extraordinary feats of body and mind, we can't go out in the sun and spread our arms and make food for ourselves like plants do. All we can make for ourselves by standing in the sun is a little Vitamin D—and a really bad sunburn! But we are in fact solar-powered people who must have the sun's energy internally to run our bodies. Through our food, no matter what kind it is, we are trying to do one main thing: get the energy of the sun into our cells so they can maintain the life-sustaining functions of metabolism. Body temperature, movement, nervous impulses, hormones, blood cells, mental stamina, etc., are all powered by the energy from the sun that we receive from the generosity and never-ending work of the plant world. Via the process of photosynthesis, plants transform the sun's energy into carbohydrates, protein, and fats for their own energy needs, structure, and growth. We wait on the sidelines while the plants do their work, and then harvest their labors for our own food needs.

Animal foods deliver extremely concentrated quantities of the sun's energy. They are packed with highly concentrated solar power from

all of the plant food ingested by the animal that is then transformed into its fat and flesh. One pound of beef is the concentrated energy of sixteen pounds of plant food; one pound of pork contains six pounds; one pound of chicken contains three pounds. Refined carbohydrates are also sources of extremely concentrated solar energy. One tablespoon of white sugar contains the sucrose, a simple sugar, concentrated from nine feet of sugar cane. A gallon of maple syrup requires forty gallons of sap and one maple tree only supplies ten to twenty-five gallons of sap.

Energy Circuitry

When we eat and drink, the main products of digestion (fats, amino acids, and glucose) enter the blood stream where the glucose and some of the fat are sent to the cells where they are burned, releasing the sun's energy in the furnaces of the body's metabolism. This released energy is then delivered to the body's unique energy circuitry. Modern anatomy and physiology have identified the nervous system as an electrical circuit. Traditional Eastern medicine has for thousands of years based its medicine on a different view of the body's energy; namely, energy flowing through orderly and interconnected channels in the body.

Whether we follow the tenets of modern or traditional Eastern medicine, or both, it is important to understand that the circuitry of the human body is uniquely *human*. Each form of life has its unique energy circuitry as a part of its natural make up and identity. We can very broadly compare this to electrical appliances and machines, where each has its own unique circuitry and its own requirement for how the energy will be conducted. Each takes a certain amount of voltage, etc., and if we run too many volts through a circuitry designed for less, or run less through a circuitry

designed for more, there will be problems.

Once, without realizing it, I plugged an appliance that required high voltage into an electrical outlet that delivered a lower voltage. Things went okay for a while, but then I noticed that the wire going into the outlet was hot and that the plastic covering was beginning to soften. After reading the manual, I realized that I had made a dangerous mistake. When I looked inside the wall outlet there were burn marks, the result of an appliance trying to use an insufficient load of energy for its unique circuitry.

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Each biological system has a unique energy circuitry and unique energy requirements. If we overload the human biological circuitry with more energy and/or a faster delivery of energy than it can handle, problems arise. Physical and mental instability are the result. The modern diet is delivering an extremely concentrated load of energy to the body's energy circuitry. It is well documented that cultures like the Eskimos, where animal fat has been the main food, have a short life span. This is due to the fact that the amount of solar energy packed into the animal fat causes an increase in metabolism that ages the body faster.

Highly concentrated energy from animal foods and refined carbohydrate is now the driving force behind today's society, individually and collectively. We are delivering way too much energy in too concentrated a form, and the outcome is obvious: over-driven individuals

in an over-driven society unable to slow down and really enjoy life. We blast through the years hard at work, making money and succeeding, only to ask at the end, "Where did my life go?" Our physical engine is on overdrive and its counterpart, chronic exhaustion, is close behind. We have over-heated bodies, over-stimulated nervous systems, overactive hearts—the list can go on and on.

In addition, the concentrated energy of refined sugar taken into the body is like pouring gasoline on hot coals—there is an initial flare up of energy, but it soon dies down leaving coldness behind. This contributes to the extreme shifts between activity and exhaustion and elation and depression that are experienced by so many today. Go into any elementary school classroom the day after Halloween and you will see the increased hyperactivity from all of the sugar eaten the night before. Go back one week later and you will see more depression, more sluggishness, and more absences resulting from the weakening after-effects of sugar consumption.

Physical and mental stability is impossible to maintain when we are delivering to our biological circuitry, from the single cell up to the level of the whole body, an energy supply that is over-concentrated with the sun's energy. This super-concentrated energy makes the mind run too fast. We can't enjoy the present because we are already mentally zooming off into the future.

Modern Dysfunction

From the macrobiotic point of view, the human body has evolved to run best on the energy contained in whole grains and other plant foods. Whole grains deliver a steady flow of gradually released solar energy that best runs the human body over a lifetime. Unlike animal foods, whole grains and other unrefined plant foods such as

vegetables are not excessively concentrated sources of the sun's energy. They are digested slowly and are allowed to steadily deliver the stored energy of the sun without creating a power overload that will overheat the body. The macrobiotic recommendation that whole grains be our main food with vegetables close behind, supports the modern understanding of the body's need for a steady supply and delivery of glucose to the cells.

However, in today's world there are many problems related to the digestion and assimilation of whole grains. Because there is now so much organ dysfunction such as poor assimilation and synthesis of glucose by the liver, stomach weakness, inadequate hydrochloric acid production, faulty enzyme secretion, pancreatic weakness, etc., more and more people are finding it less and less easy to derive optimal energy from the ingestion of whole grains. So, while in theory, the macrobiotic nutritional teachings are reasonable from traditional, economic and environmental viewpoints, the ability of many people to benefit from their use has decreased at an alarming rate over the last twenty years. Now there are increasing reports of allergic and negative reactions to the ingestion of whole grains that were not encountered when I started macrobiotic counseling in 1974.

It is an ominous sign when the traditional food of humanity can no longer be tolerated by individuals due to a decline in physical vitality. Because reactions to whole grains are encountered here and there, many popular authors now advise the elimination of whole grains from everyone's diet. I believe this is a mistake and a serious misunderstanding of the causes of recent negative reactions by some people to whole grains. These authors contend that the body can use protein and fat for its energy, therefore bypassing the troubles that whole

grains, with their rich sources of carbohydrate, are causing to some people. I maintain that the problem lies not in the whole grains themselves, but in the physical conditions of the individuals who are having the problems. This weakened physical condition has arisen after years of consuming highly refined carbohydrates and concentrated animal proteins and fats, as well as canned and packaged foods that are loaded with chemicals and devoid of vitality.

Naturally, the person who has overloaded his or her circuitry and become hot like an overheated engine will seek to cool down through frozen foods, iced drinks, cold beer, fruit juice, raw foods fasting, marijuana and other foods and substances that can temporarily reduce the excess heat of an over-heated body. In addition, in response to this over-driven, over-heated modern condition there has arisen the New Age approach: massage, meditation, aromatherapy, soy milk, fruit juice and raw foods fasting, vegan diets, spices, and ambient music (*Enya is a good example*). Many of the New Age therapies and activities are useful in calming and cooling an overactive and overheated physical and mental condition. In many cases, though, this modern alternative approach when done over a long period of time leaves one's condition in the opposite state: cold, deficient, and mentally spaced out. Before long, the over-cooled person is seeking the warmth of the sun via vacations on tropical islands and/or by way of a return to their former eating of animal foods.

Rather than seesawing between these extreme opposites, and rather than eliminating whole grains simply because there are some reactions or temporary intolerance of them, I recommend taking a look at why the negative reaction exists. Changing one's physical condition in order to make it stronger and better able to benefit from the tradi-

tional food of humanity is a wiser way, in my opinion.

In the first installment of this series, I wrote about the importance of gaining and maintaining physical and mental stability by supplying a steady delivery of glucose to the cells. In theory, we should be able to do this quite well with the main macrobiotic foods, grains and vegetables, since they are rich sources of polysaccharides—complex carbohydrates. However, many people today have some dysfunction of the various organs that deal specifically with the digestion, absorption, synthesis, and assimilation of glucose. Because of this, blood sugar problems are very common, and the realization of full benefits from macrobiotic eating is hampered. The main areas where organic weakness related to glucose metabolism occur are the stomach, liver, and pancreas. Other organs are involved as well, but for the purposes of this article, I will focus on the three that I feel are primary.

Recovering Stomach Strength

For many people beginning to eat whole grains, the grains have no appeal. There is no real desire for them and no appetite yet for whole grains. In so many cases this is mainly due to the fact that the stomach is weak. It has become lazy, in a sense, because it hasn't had to do the real work of digesting complex carbohydrates. The digestive enzymes and hydrochloric acid are not secreted as they would be normally. The person has eaten refined carbohydrates for years and years, causing the stomach to become weak and to lose its tone. In my opinion, the main cause for the decrease in hydrochloric acid production is the long-time consumption of refined sugar, fructose-rich foods and drinks, and highly refined foods in general.

Thus, many people reject whole grains upon first exposure because their stomachs don't have the natu-

ral strength to do thorough digestive work. It is like a spoiled child who has never had to keep his room clean or help with jobs around the house. Suddenly, one day the parents show up at the bedroom door and announce, "Today you will be responsible for yourself and you will keep your room clean and organized—plus you will help in the yard!" The child throws a fit. He or she doesn't want to do the work or be responsible after all those years of having it easy. Something similar happens to the stomach of many people when they make first attempts at eating whole grains. The stomach has become

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used to passing through highly refined carbohydrates such as refined sugar (sucrose) and simple monosaccharides like fructose without having had to mobilize much digestive power.

Polysaccharides, the complex carbohydrates of whole grains and vegetables, on the other hand, require more digestive strength and much more attention from the stomach. The best way to recover the stomach's natural strength and digestive power is through restoring whole grains to the center of one's diet, and by chewing them very well. In addition, making a natural sweet taste the center of meals is important. In part three of this series, I will go into this in detail. The famous macrobiotic "kuzu drink" is useful for strengthening the stomach as well. For this purpose, the drink needs to be made

somewhat thinner, more like sauce than gravy.

Worry, anxiety, and too much thinking will weaken the stomach, too. Everyone has had the experience of having these emotional states weaken or take away the appetite. For those who are experiencing these states, I recommend a daily practice of "palming" the upper abdominal area. This can be as simple as putting your palms on your abdomen, left palm on top of right, and doing gentle deep breathing as you focus your mind on the warmth coming from your palms into the upper abdomen.

Saving the Liver

The liver is an astonishing complex organ. The number of essential jobs it does is staggering. It plays a key role in the synthesis and delivery of carbohydrate, fat, and protein to the rest of the body. First, no matter what you currently eat, overeating in general is probably the number one factor that inhibits the full function of the liver. The best that can be done for the liver is to adopt and to practice the philosophy of "small volume, good chewing." Eat a little less, and chew a lot better. I am not advocating severely restricted eating. Just eat a bit less if you have been eating until you feel stuffed. And start out by chewing ten bites more than you have been; then increase it to twenty bites more, then thirty. Finally, see if you can reach a goal of chewing each mouthful fifty to a hundred times. It's a challenge, for sure, because we haven't been used to doing this, but for those who chew so well, the time it takes to realize the benefits of macrobiotic eating can be cut in half. No matter what you eat, eat less of it and chew it really well. In my opinion, a small volume of the typical American diet, very well chewed, is probably healthier than wolfing down mouthfuls of macrobiotic food without chewing it. Of course, when you chew the typical