

Rest is the New Sport

Jef Geys

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Do you go to bed tired and wake up tired in the morning? Do you have burnout—difficulty concentrating, trouble sleeping, or an elevated heart rate? Jef Geys, a sports physiotherapist and osteopath with fifteen years of research and experience working with special forces in Belgium's military, writes that these symptoms, and many others not usually associated with fatigue, are signs that your body is not recuperating from the stress caused by time pressures, daily responsibilities, and physical exertion.

Geys writes that while stress itself isn't necessarily unhealthy—our bodies are programmed to respond to sudden, temporary threats followed by a recovery period—living in a state of perpetual “overdrive” puts our health at risk. “A charging lion is an acute but temporary threat,” he writes. “The problem is that our present-day challenges last longer, they pile up, and flight is not an option.”

His research into the body's need for recovery after exertion revealed that seven out of every ten people are too fatigued to engage in a physical training program without risk of injury and eventual illness. These days, even our supposed “downtime,” filled with the errands and chores left undone during the hectic work week and topped off with a workout, has become stressful. This causes the body to forget how to switch into its recovery phase, and we're left “running on fumes.”

Geys identifies the four types of fatigue—physical, hormonal, mental, and metabolic—teaches how to identify which of them we are experiencing, and gives specific recovery training plans and nutritional guidelines for each.

“The trick,” he says, “is not to reduce your stress stimuli, but to increase your capacity. You do that by properly recovering from your exertions.”

KRISTINE MORRIS (November/December 2017)

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