

Power of Fasting

Fasting has numerous positive effects on the body, mind and soul. Much like a computer that has frozen or “locked up”, your system may experience a “rebooting” effect born of fasting’s virtues. Cravings for unhealthy foods are decreased by fasting, and in many cases, eliminated completely. Toxins are flushed from the body, and last but not least, there is a natural weigh-loss effect.

In addition to its strictly physical effects, fasting can also have a salutary effect on the mind. The act of fasting can be a powerful workout for one’s will-power, conditioning it as if it were a muscle. The fasting person engages in an exercise of sheer power over his or her body; this may serve to improve self-esteem as a by-product of the accomplishment itself.

The spiritual, psychological and emotional challenges of fasting may bring forth one’s “demons”, but understand that this can be a *good* thing. Demons brought to the fore must be *dealt with*. The demon that is counter-attacked frontally can no longer sneak up on its host from the inside. Fasting is a *test* that provides an opportunity to observe and learn about yourself and the conflicts within your mind.

Even if not part of a regimen, a single instance of fasting can have readily discernable, immediate benefits. The day after a fast usually sees an increase in energy level, an improvement in mood, and a decreased need for sleep.

Fasting can bring about some natural “defensive” thoughts and feelings that resist the challenge being undertaken. Sarcasm (“*this is just for crazy yogis*”), skepticism (“*it can’t possibly help me*”), fear (“*I’ve never lived without food for a whole day, what if I die?*”) and insecurity (“*there’s no way I can overcome my cravings*”) may all rear their heads. You may feel sorry for yourself (“*Poor me. While everybody is eating, I have to starve myself to death*”).

Expect all of these things, but you needn’t react, or even listen. Instead, **observe** these “demons” and how they challenge you.

Physical effects may occur during a fast. One possible effect is a feeling of lightheadedness; this can be the initial symptom of hypoglycemia. In this event, try drinking some vegetable juice. Headache or other types of pain that may develop are likely indications that your body is busy eliminating toxins.

In most cases, exacerbation of previous physical or emotional issues are due to the transient negative feelings discussed here; all these phenomena result from the process of your body eliminating toxins.

As mentioned earlier, your mind will play tricks with you during a fast, trying to discourage and sabotage your effort and determination. There is no need to fight these thoughts and feeling. Instead, it’s better to observe and write about them.

The challenge of maintaining your resolve can depend on your willingness to examine the “demons” that emerge as you fast. On the surface, there will be some fears and resentments about the process itself. But if you allow yourself to go deeper, issues from your childhood, unresolved conflicts and traumas in your life will start to emerge. Deeper still, and you may observe issues and conflicts regarding your family history. At bottom, if you care to delve that deeply, are spiritual questions.

Be sure to keep notes; this is of paramount importance. Do not react to the issues that come up, just observe them. Draw pictures of your “demons”, write letters to them, try and let go of old pains. Accept your weaknesses, who you are and how you react to them.

How to go about fasting safely? Try it for 24 – 36 hours. The best way is to start after lunch and then fast for a whole day. For example, have a regular lunch on Monday, then have no solid food until Wednesday morning. Initially, you might still have regular dinners on Monday but no solid food for all Tuesday.

Drink lots of water all day long, even if your body is telling you that you don’t need to. **Do not** eat any solid food or commercially made drinks (such as Coca Cola, Orange juice, etc...), any artificial or natural sweeteners, or any additives. If complete fasting is intolerable, have some juice freshly made from organic vegetables or fruit. Bouillon or yogurt are also acceptable alternatives.

Follow your usual routine, but those new to fasting should initially avoid heavy exercise.

Observe yourself and take plenty of notes during the day. How does your body feel when you fast? What is it trying to tell you? How do you feel? What emotions are going through your mind (anger, resentment, cravings, fear, insecurity, jealousy)? It is important to record these observations because these are the forces and the “demons” you need to deal with in your life.

During your fast or afterward, write about these emotions and their origins, how they have been part of your life. Try drawing pictures of your “demons”, write them letters or poems. They usually represent unresolved conflicts and traumas in your life.

Your first time fasting will be your most challenging experience with this discipline, since it is new to you. But every time you do it, it will get easier until it is simply just another day.

How often should I fast? If you are overweight, have severe cravings for a particular food, or a physical illness that may be connected to nutritional issues, you should allow yourself to fast every week. It is a good routine for almost anybody. If your weight is normal, or you want to fast for health maintenance or spiritual reasons, do it once every seven to thirty days.

Are there dangers? There are few. Get the advice of your physician or nutritionist about any health issues unique to your situation. If these health professionals advise against fasting, don’t do it.