

Nature Demand

Can you work yourself to death? You can. Basically, many people know that, probably even most people. After all, one's own experience is a teacher that makes an impression. At some point, the body demands rest, and if you deny it for too long, it can become quite unfortunate.

In the course of the French Revolution, reason was elevated to the status of goddess, or more precisely: what was thought to be reason. This was evident not least in the fact that a change was made from the traditional week of seven days to a week of ten days. The decadal system was now supposed to be the sensible one — in contrast to the seven-day week. However, this innovation could not be sustained for long because the ten-day rhythm did not sit well with either humans or the farm animals they kept. They both simply went limp, and so real reason demanded to be heeded accordingly.

Ancient wise regulations granted people and farm animals considerable periods of rest. This also included a whole year of rest in a seven-year rhythm, during which the fields were not cultivated. In the Middle Ages there was three-field farming. The field area was divided into three parts. One part was cultivated with early cereals, one with late cereals, and the third remained empty. In the following year, the field that had been unused the previous year was cultivated again and the field that had already been cultivated twice in succession was left empty. Thus, after two cultivations, each field received a year of rest. The farmers, however, were not granted a year of rest. They were not given due consideration in this system compared to the other. The arable land was granted more rest than the peasants, who had to toil as serfs.

The system with the general year of rest after six years of cultivation, on the other hand, involved the farmer by granting him another 52 days of rest for each year in the piece. This reflected the seven-day week on a larger scale. If we apply this principle to the individual year, we arrive at a seventh of a

year as a rest period, and that is 52 days rounded off, which logically corresponds to one rest day for every six working days. On average, we thus achieve a five-day working week. Religious or other holidays were added to this.

The need for sleep is also part of this, but this is a truism that everyone knows. We are dealing with average values for these times. The individual need for recovery time may deviate from this to a greater or lesser extent. It is determined by the personal constitution, age, type of work, general life circumstances, state of health, nutritional habits, mental state and the quality of the recovery process.

So recreation has a lot to do with lifestyle. Some things may not seem like rest at first glance, because our idea of rest is perhaps too one-sided. Someone who is on their feet all day — or even all night — for work and thus has ten thousand or more steps to get behind them, needs a different kind of rest than someone who spends the whole day sitting down and only moves when they get a coffee or go to the toilet. In the second case, the body needs movement, muscle work, stimulation of the circulation, deep breathing in fresh air, exercises against shortening of muscles. There, the body needs rest from the stress of sitting for hours. In such cases, it needs a counterbalance, a counteraction: a regenerative counter-process.

Biological life thus exhibits an interplay. What is not used, not applied, withers away. To counteract this, however, we can trigger a stimulus for growth. This growth takes place in the regenerative rest phase. If, on the other hand, we do not set any corresponding stimuli, the interplay looks different. Then the degradation phase and the rest phase follow one another, and that is not sensible if we have the opportunity to do it differently.

So what to do? First of all, practise mindfulness and "listen" to your body's signals. Do you hear what it is telling you? It wants you to treat it well. It does not want to degenerate, but to fulfil its purpose by developing and using its abilities. Since he usually has more abilities than can be developed and applied in a human life, it is up to you to decide which ones you want to deve-

lop. This works best if the recovery times in between are spent appropriately, adapted to the respective activity of these abilities. Therefore, rest is not always optimal rest. Rather, it can and should be sensibly, purposefully and individually designed.

Those who have enough financial means can use them to arrange recovery times differently from those who lack such means. But they are not absolutely necessary to achieve good regeneration. A little imagination and a few good ideas are enough to make the best of what is available. There is not much point in giving specific advice in this context, such as how to get the exercise you need. It is more useful to find out what is good for your body. This is exactly where you should start and give it the good things it needs on a regular basis.

Both the duration of the stimulation and the rest phases are something that the body wants to have adjusted according to its individual conditions. With regard to rest phases, a distinction must be made between small and large rest phases. A small one is, for example, daily sleep or a two-day growth phase after muscle training, a large one is a longer holiday after several months of employment or convalescence after a long illness. Large rest periods, however, are often scheduled too short, for whatever reason. With them, it is not so easy to notice when the time comes when a regeneration has been reached that has invested enough strength for at least one year of gainful employment. If you think that one week's holiday is enough, you can confidently increase this by one hundred percent and make it two weeks. Since one usually falls short with the necessary time, one is not wrong if one adds fifty to one hundred percent of the time.

But it is also easy to misjudge the small rest periods. Strangely enough, we also find something like the 6:1 rhythm here. Optimal results are achieved at work if the hour is also divided in this way. After about fifty minutes of work, a few minutes of rest, a little movement, breathing deeply, drinking a cup of tea optimise performance and produce better results.

Give your body the challenges it needs, and give it the recovery time it demands. Then you are its friend and it is your good-humoured buddy; but not only that: then you are also in harmony with nature and the biology that is inherent in it, because all life follows an alternation of work and rest, of stress and regeneration. Man can detach himself from this to a certain extent, but that does him no good and alienates him from nature. Nevertheless, he belongs to it, so that in this way he comes into contradiction with himself when he distances himself from it by disregarding its rules. In this way he becomes alienated from himself. This damages his identity and inevitably leads to destructive consequences - and that does not have to be.

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