



Jane Brody '62 Speaks: Take Care of the Body It's the Temple of the Mind

Conventional wisdom dictates that the college years are far from life's healthiest. Sleepless nights of study, days jam-packed with classes, and raucous weekend parties take a toll on the average college student. While negligence of one's welfare has long been accepted as part and parcel of the American college experience, in today's health conscious society, people young and old endeavor to live well no matter their stage of life.

Day-to-day stress affects not just Cornell's student body, but its faculty and staff members as well. At a university home to some of the brightest minds in the country, people still seek advice on how to care for themselves. Jane Brody '62, the renowned *New York Times* health columnist, received a warm welcome from the Cornell community during her visit to campus. In a lecture at the Alice Statler Auditorium, Brody revealed the secrets to and benefits of practicing a healthy life-style.

Having led an active life-style during her time at Cornell in the 1960s, Brody knows that current students can incorporate fitness into their daily routines. The columnist discovered her favorite sports, tennis and figure skating, as an undergraduate. While many students carp at the idea of two mandatory physical education classes, Brody voluntarily enrolled in fitness courses during each of her eight semesters at Cornell. She champions regular cardiovascular activity, proclaiming that its physical, emotional, and mental benefits never fail to shock her. Brody highlighted the comprehensive aim of education that young adults sometimes forget: "College is supposed to be an enriching experience, however most college students seem to think only about enriching their minds. Too many forget that the body is the temple of the mind." To those adults who claim that their families and professions inhibit regular physical activity, Brody offered herself as an example that an active life-style can be led at any point in life. Even as a mother of young boys, the columnist managed to fit a program of exercise into her daily routine.

In dealing with daily stress, Cornellians sometimes compromise their well-being. They engage in detrimental activities in order to relax—smoking as a tension tamer or binge drinking. Brody called smoking an addictive disease whose hazards far outweigh any of its short-term benefits, and she warned against excessive alcohol consumption, referring to the tragedies caused by binge drinking. She heralded physical fitness as the paramount stress-reducing activity.

"Exercise doesn't take time, exercise makes time," said Brody. Regular physical activity allows for clearer thinking, faster reaction time, and sounder sleep. One can make a commitment to daily exercise by picking a fun physical activity and determining an ideal time to engage in it. Whether done before going to class or after leaving the office, physical activity betters both mind and body. By increasing energy levels and enthusiasm about everyday life, regular exercise squashes stress. Brody declared that fitness allows her to release unnecessary anxiety and calm down: "Exercise has helped me change from a type A person to a type A-."

Fitness goes along with diet in shaping a healthy life-style. The columnist emphasized the need to adopt a wholesome eating pattern, and stated that Americans eat much more fat than they realize. Weight loss supplements and fad diets gain no respect from Brody—she advocated a balanced combination of proteins, fats, and carbohydrates based on the food pyramid. While the saturated fats in cookies and cakes should be enjoyed sparingly, unsaturated fats from nuts, avocado, and olive oil are beneficial to a daily diet.

Fruits and vegetables are the heroes of healthy eating. They are the only foods associated with no health risks. The columnist dispelled the modern-day myth that carbohydrates cause weight gain by explaining that carbohydrates are only fattening when consumed in excess. Brody asserted that adherence to a food pyramid-based plan, with "no deprivation, no starving, and no bingeing," helps shape a healthy body. With a smile, Brody reminded her audience, "You should fuel your body with as much care as you fuel your automobile."

Health-conscious as well as health-curious members of the audience asked Brody's opinion on a variety of fitness and nutrition topics following her lecture. One student asked the columnist whether she considered unconventional forms of exercise such as yoga and tai chi effective methods of stress reduction. Brody verified that both practices release anxiety and in addition, make their practitioners limber. When questioned about how much food to eat in the morning, afternoon, and evening respectively, the columnist repeated the adage, "breakfast like a king, lunch like a prince, sup like a pauper." An audience member asked Brody to offer her opinion on the food pyramid. Brody agreed with the recommendations of the food pyramid, but wants the government to emphasize whole grains as choice starches. She acknowledged that the pyramid will eventually have to be revised as science and technology reveal new information about food.

Questions of a more scientific nature were asked as well. Commenting on the role of genetics in determining weight, Brody said that while a genetic predisposition may exist, life-style determines the ultimate shape of the body. Brody believes that the current epidemic of Type 2 diabetes in America is rooted in the even larger epidemic of obesity and insisted that engaging in physical activity from childhood is the key to curbing Type 2 diabetes.

Before instructing her audience to get moving on the road to well-being, the columnist recommended Internet sources to consult for further advice on living well. The Center for Science in the Public Interest offers a wealth of nutritional information on its website, <http://www.cspinet.org>. Brody praised Cornell's own nutrition website, <http://www.cce.cornell.edu/food/>, as an informative Internet source for healthy living tips.

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