



# SPIRITUAL ATHLETES

By Nichole Eck

*Caring for our bodies helps us to feel the Spirit, think and make good decisions, and serve those around us.*

Athletes know better than anyone that if you want your body to perform at its best, you need to take good care of it. Training for top athletes includes getting enough sleep, getting the right nutrition, and avoiding harmful things like drugs and alcohol.

But did you know that living that way can strengthen our spirits as well as our bodies? The body and the spirit are connected. It takes both of them together to become a living soul (see D&C 88:15). Caring for our bodies helps us to feel the Spirit, think and make good decisions, and serve those around us.

Satan wants us to believe that we can do whatever we want with our bodies with no consequences, but how we treat our bodies affects us physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually.

Here are just some of the ways we can strengthen our spirits by taking care of our bodies.



## GETTING ENOUGH SLEEP

The scriptures tell us not to “sleep longer than is need-ful” and to go to bed early and “arise early, that [our] bodies and [our] minds may be invigorated” (D&C 88:124). When we don’t get enough sleep, or get too much, our minds are often sluggish and distracted. A clear mind is important to receiving and understanding the promptings of the Holy Ghost. Getting enough sleep also helps our bodies have the physical strength to go throughout the day doing the things Jesus Christ wants us to do.

## EATING HEALTHY

The Word of Wisdom, found in Doctrine and Covenants 89, tells us what we should eat and what we should keep out of our bodies. It teaches us to avoid overindulgence and make nutritional choices with “prudence and thanksgiving” (D&C 89:11). If we follow its principles, including

eating grains, meat, fruits, and vegetables in variety and moderation, we get the physical reward of being able to “run and not be weary, and . . . walk and not faint” (D&C 89:20). But we also get the amazing spiritual reward of “wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures” and the promise that “the destroying angel shall pass by [us]” (D&C 89:19, 21). By following the Word of Wisdom and eating nutritiously and wisely, we “gain the blessings of a healthy body, an alert mind, and the guidance of the Holy Ghost.”<sup>1</sup>

## EXERCISING REGULARLY

Regular exercise is also an important way to take care of our bodies. It has been shown to help with many emo-tional issues, including anxiety and depression, which can sometimes makes it harder to feel the Spirit. “As you do physical things, you train not only your body but also your



mind. Exercise strengthens emotional health.”<sup>2</sup> If we keep our bodies in good shape, we will also be more capable of serving those around us now and in the future on full-time missions. Jesus Christ does not want His disciples to be lazy or slothful.

## AVOIDING ADDICTION

Drugs and alcohol inhibit our brain’s ability to make good decisions, weaken our self-control, and make it difficult to hear the Spirit’s promptings. They can lead to addiction and “destroy your mind and your body.”<sup>3</sup> Addictions “limit your ability to make choices for yourself.”<sup>4</sup> Following the Word of Wisdom by avoiding drugs and alcohol, as well as tea, coffee, and tobacco, will allow you to “remain free from harmful addictions and have control over your life.”<sup>5</sup>

## REGULATING YOUR EMOTIONS

It’s also important to be aware of your emotional health. It’s normal to have discouraging, depressing, or anxious moments or days, but “if you have prolonged feelings of sadness, hopelessness, anxiety, or depression, talk with your parents and your bishop and seek help.”<sup>6</sup>

## FULFILLING YOUR POTENTIAL

In all areas of our physical health, we should “practice balance and moderation.”<sup>7</sup> Avoid extremes in diets or exercise that could harm your body. “Seek healthy solutions to problems. Do all you can to safeguard your physical and emotional health so that you can fulfill your divine potential as a son or daughter of God.”<sup>8</sup>

Just like athletes know that taking care of their bodies doesn’t guarantee a gold medal, we know that following the Word of Wisdom and other guidelines in the scriptures “does not promise you perfect health, but it teaches how to keep the body you were born with in the best condition and your mind alert to delicate spiritual promptings.”<sup>9</sup> **NE**

*The author lives in Utah, USA.*

### NOTES

1. *For the Strength of Youth* (2011), 25.
2. Adrián Ochoa, “Be Strong, Be Healthy, Be Smart,” *New Era*, Oct. 2013, 43.
3. *For the Strength of Youth*, 26.
4. *For the Strength of Youth*, 27.
5. *For the Strength of Youth*, 25.
6. *For the Strength of Youth*, 27.
7. *For the Strength of Youth*, 25.
8. *For the Strength of Youth*, 27.
9. Boyd K. Packer, Apr. 1996 general conference.