

THE DUTY TO BE MENTALLY, PHYSICALLY, AND MORALLY FIT

Article by Herb Rubenstein, President, Sustainable Business Group

Introduction

Since starting this article over five years ago, I have written one book and over 75 articles, numerous legal briefs and thousands of emails. If you find this article hard to read, that's because it has been hard to write. Recently, I swam over two miles. That was easy compared to completing this article.

The purpose of this article has remained constant over the past five years: to be a catalyst to invigorate humans' desire, capacity, commitment and ability to become more mentally, physically and morally "fit". In this short article I will not go into detailed statistical measures of what constitutes being physically fit. I will also not try to define what is moral and what is not. I will also not use IQ, EQ or any other standard of mental fitness by which people might be measured or consider themselves – "fit" or "not fit". I am a relativist.

What is "fit", whether it is mental fitness, physical fitness or moral fitness, in one society or one situation or for one person would not and should not be considered "fit" in all other situations or for all other people. My key concept in that each of us given our age, background, vocation or occupation, our society's and our own personal situation, should develop a standard for ourselves as to what constitutes being mentally fit, physically fit and morally fit. The first step to reaching a standard must be to determine and accept a standard for one's self. Acceptance of a standard (like weight or body mass index in the physically fit example discussed below) is a central organizing element in creating lifelong, consistent behavior designed to meet or exceed the standard.

The Concept of Duty

Before we get too far down the road toward developing a physical, mental or moral standard for ourselves, remember the title of this article is "The Duty to be Mentally, Physically and Morally Fit". Duty is a deep philosophical concept; writings on the topic can be traced back for thousands of years. Typical sources of "duty" range from God and religion, law, societal norms such as the duty to one's fellow man or woman, duties created by our own survival instincts, and duties promoted by ethical, environmental, egalitarian, political, utilitarian or other types of philosophical approaches to life.

Often we view duties as being imposed on us by an outside force, set of beliefs, philosophies or commitments that we make that then result in our having a whole set of duties. Another approach to looking at the concept of "duty" is that duty is a function of, or product of, "choice". The decision we make to get married, have children, be an active participant in one's religious or political community and all other choices we make bring with them a unique set of duties which we accept because we have made a choice or decision. For example, if one chooses to become an environmentalist, one accepts the duty to recycle, use natural resources wisely and efficiently and to encourage others to do likewise. If one chooses to be a parent,

one accepts the duty to feed, clothe and take care of an infant and raising a child in the best possible manner.

Duty, depending on your point of view, can either be imposed from outside or can be a function of decision or a choice you make. I can follow the law because the law creates a duty on me to follow it; or I can follow the law because I chose to follow the law and create that duty for myself. Either way, duty becomes an obligation imposed either from an external source or from within yourself.

I choose to interpret duty as coming from within the person as a result of choices the person makes. But, for the purposes of this article it does not matter whether you believe duties are imposed from outside sources or within yourself.

Therefore, whether one believes that duty is a function of the choices one makes or duty is a function of the fact that one is born into society and into a world that depends on human beings to take care of themselves and be able to take care of each other, it is inescapable that human beings have duties. The question is then do human beings have a duty to be mentally, physically and morally fit?

Mentally, Physically and Morally Fit

Each person has certain capacities and potential. These capacities and potential are a function of one's genetic make up, beliefs, societal upbringing and expectations, learning and skill acquisition throughout life, the resources deployed to one's benefit, the opportunities given to and taken by the individual, plus one's personal commitment, drive, and desire to reach his or her potential. By using the term "fit", I mean a standard that is attainable for a person, given these capacities and potential.

Professional athletes set a standard for physical fitness that most of us cannot achieve. Similarly, those in a monastery or religious occupation may be able to achieve levels of moral fitness we cannot all achieve. And, the mental fitness, including emotional fitness, achievable by some gurus or geniuses, may well be beyond the reach of us mere mortals.

But mere mortals, like you and me, can set real standards for ourselves in each of these areas – mental fitness, physical fitness and moral fitness. Think about how much better off America and the world would be if everyone set and lived consistent with a physical fitness standard so that almost no one was obese, had diet-induced diabetes, or life-style- caused heart and lung cancer problems. Think about how much better off the world would be if everyone set a moral standard for themselves so that no crimes against humanity occurred, no fraudulent accounting practices took place and no child slavery or human exploitation occurred on the planet. Think about how much better off the world could be if each person set a standard for mental fitness that produced an end to illiteracy, racism, promoted new inventions and elevated communication across societies. And think about how much better off the world could be if each person set a standard for moral fitness that caused all of us to work toward, raising the standard of living for the world's poorest, eliminating murder, child abuse, war, fraud and human exploitation.

It is this clear connection between setting a duty for one's self to be mentally, physically and morally fit and such an act's obvious potential positive impact on the world that has led me to write this article. Every solution must start somewhere. This article is the result of the search for a start to dealing with some of the world's major problems, starting with you and me and individuals across the world.

Conclusion

This is not an article about utopia. The first premise in this article is that if everyone accepted that he or she had a duty to be mentally, physically and morally fit, the world would be a much better place. The second premise, which is much more profound, is that due to the fact that we live in this world, we will either make it a better or worse place by how we live our lives. Since we have an innate duty to survive and help our species, the earth and all species survive, then each person, in fact, does have a duty to be mentally, physically and morally fit since this is the surest road to meeting our duty to assist the human race, the earth and the other species

By carrying out this duty, the world inevitably will become a better place. Not a perfect place, but a better place.

This article is a straightforward roadmap to each person beginning first to set a standard for themselves in these three key areas of our lives. After these standards are set, they must be communicated. Then, one must begin to live consistently with one's standards in each of these areas as a first step. Then, recommending to others that they begin to set their own standards is the next step in the progression as this will not only encourage others to set and live by new standards for being mentally, physically and morally fit, but it will also support you in continuing to improve and live by the standards you have set for yourself. One should not jump to taking this idea to others until one has succeeded in starting to set one's own standards in these areas and started the effort to live consistently with one's standards.

A world where everyone acknowledges they have a duty to being mentally, physically and morally fit is a world that is attainable, desirable and can be accomplished in this century. Call it the "Age of Duty" or the "Age of Human Fitness." Whatever you call it, it is an age whose time has come.

My hope in writing this article is that everyone will improve their efforts to set mental, physical and moral standards for themselves. And, most importantly, that everyone, with no human being left out, will improve their efforts to live their lives consistently with the mental, physical and moral standards they have developed as their guide.

About The Author

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