



Teresa Weatherspoon

STRONG BODY, STRONG MIND

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BASKETBALL, TWO-TIME OLYMPIC MEDALIST AND TWO-TIME WNBA DEFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE YEAR

"You'll never be a basketball player." That's what my coach told me in seventh grade. He said I was too tough. Can you imagine the look on his face when I busted through his front door with an Olympic gold medal around my neck? Never a great idea to underestimate T-spoon. The grit he knocked has been the key to my game. Toughness—strength of body and brain—has taken me to the top of women's hoops and helped me through life off the court.

Here's how I see it. The power of your mind and the power of your body have a tight connection. If you have a strong body, your mind feels pumped and healthy, too. If you have a strong mind, you can craft your body to accomplish amazing things. I focus on constantly developing this double toughness. I train hard, play hard, and when life snaps at me, I live hard. This philosophy gets me through anything and everything.

Three years ago, my 19-year-old nephew Anthony died in a fatal car accident. We were so tight; he was like my brother. Every summer he'd come stay with me in New York; he was definitely my biggest fan. Anthony was always proud of me, just like I was always proud of him. When he died, the light went out. I didn't care about

basketball. I had no drive. The strength I once felt in my body and spirit was totally drained.

My family helped motivate me to get back out on the court. As soon as I started training my body, my mind got tougher. Getting strong and being fit was my recovery—my comfort. Everything I did to get strong physically made me stronger mentally. The routine of training, being on the court at 6 a.m., lifting hard and staying disciplined gave me direction again. Now I dedicate everything I do to Anthony. He is always with me. Before every game I talk to him. Whether we win or lose, I hear his voice talking back to me.

Sometimes life knocks the air out of you. People get in your face and tell you what you can't do, tragedy strikes, whatever. Every effort you make to strengthen your whole self—mind and body—will take you one step closer to overcoming your challenges and helping you achieve your dreams.

**EVERYTHING I DID
TO GET STRONG PHYSICALLY
MADE ME STRONGER
MENTALLY.**

STRONG BODY, STRONG MIND

Your body and your mind are in cahoots. They experience your life together—in good and in bad. When one is psyched, the other is, too. When you mess with one, you mess with them both. Want proof?

Check this out. Have you ever lost your appetite because you were super sad? That's your brain and emotions jiving with your body. Have you ever noticed yourself clenching your jaw when you're mad? Same thing.

This mind/body relationship is a great thing much of the time—especially in sports. When you play hard and push your body to perform, you can actually catch a mental buzz. Ever played a really tough game and felt like you were on top of the world when it was over?

Physical activity causes things called "endorphins" to be released in your body. When you work your muscles hard by running or swimming or even dancing, the endorphins sent to your brain have a big party.



Red Flags



Do You...

- ◆ Have trouble getting out of bed in the morning?
- ◆ Feel like you have no energy?
- ◆ Get out of breath with simple tasks?
- ◆ Think that you are too weak to do some things?
- ◆ Get stressed out and angry easily?
- ◆ Get super moody?
- ◆ Have trouble dealing with things?
- ◆ Have constant back or neck pain?
- ◆ Think that there is no time to exercise?

I keep my mind as fit
as my body, 'cause
when it all goes down,
I wanna win in life.

That's why sports and exercise are scientifically proven to make you feel jazzed and energized.

Choosing to live actively doesn't just help get you in a good mood. Being athletic teaches you to respect your body, reduces stress (and we KNOW kids experience stress), helps you keep your cool under pressure, and teaches you how to set and achieve goals. The list goes on and on and on and on and on (you get the point.) One of the most important benefits of physical activity is the fact that it's good for your body. Playing keeps you healthy by building strength, flexibility, endurance, speed and agility. It's good for your bones, your lungs, your heart and just about every other part of your fleshy frame.

You're never too young to make exercise and sports a priority in your life. You'll be hooking both your mind and your body up. To keep yourself motivated, start out small and build your goals, maybe even write them down. Take the dog on long walks. Take jumping jack breaks while you're doing your homework. Try new sports—do some stuff that's all about fun, like jumping on a trampoline and other stuff that makes you grit your teeth, sweat and practice mental toughness, like running around your block five times. If you dig the exercise thing, why not help your family and friends get off the couch and move? Take your aunt to yoga class. Ask your television-addicted neighbor to go toss a Frisbee. Don't just be an athlete, be a sports role model!



RESOURCES

- * www.kidshealth.org
- * www.melpomene.org