Chocolate and its benefits has featured recently on various web sites, especially around 7 July 2016, World Chocolate Day – of course with comments like ‘everyday should be chocolate day’. It is however true that as scientists investigate the numerous claims about the benefits of chocolate, interesting discoveries are made and chocolate does seem to affect both physical as well as psychological well-being. Furthermore, as chocolate is made from the seeds of the *Theobroma cacao* tree, it is thus a natural product, and as it has been used for more than 2500 years, it must be safe – just like all natural medicine?! Be that as it may, scientific evidence does support certain benefits, though not always as unassailable and above reproach as we would like to see it. Amongst others, studies support the beneficial effect of chocolate on mental capacity and overall healthier-looking skin, ascribed to improved blood flow to the brain and extremities; mitigating the process of aging and cancer, especially skin cancer, because of the antioxidant effects of polyphenols and specifically flavonoids in cacao; reducing cardiovascular risk as it lowers cholesterol, especially LDL, and blood pressure; improving physical and mental well-being and recovery after physical and mental stress, probably because of the tryptophan and phenylethylamine in cacao. There is even evidence that cacao increases insulin sensitivity and that chocolate could thus be used to prevent the onset of type II diabetes and promote weight loss.

All of the above however, comes with at least the following qualification: All chocolate is not created equal, all benefits are applicable only to chocolate containing at least 70% cacao and, like medicine and poison, the difference is in the intake or dose. And as with drugs and alcohol, addiction and thus chocoholism seems to be a possibility due to the release of endorphins – there is even mention of successful treatment of chocolate addiction using bupropion.

Wine, especially red wine, is another of our natural medicines regularly used for its medicinal and other purposes, and while the antioxidant effects of resveratrol has received much attention in recent years, the older and well known uses and benefits of wine have not been forgotten. Its documented use in or as medicine goes back more than 5000 years and it has been added to water from the earliest times to kill bacteria or drunk as a more hygienic alternative to water. It is also documented that Hippocrates prescribed red wine for digestion, white wine for bladder problems and used wine as a disinfectant for wounds. In recent times its antimicrobial activity has been well documented and it has been indicated to be of benefit in preventing cavities to decreasing the risk of cardiovascular disease, stroke, cancer and Alzheimer’s disease. The risks and unfavourable effects are however also well described and are again mostly dose dependent.

From the above it is clear that we could say that having a piece of chocolate or a glass of wine every day would not be bad for you, in fact it might be healthy. We also know that too much of anything is bad for you, thus, everything in moderation.

Growing in experience brings with it the appreciation of moderation and the acknowledgment that too much of anything can be bad, and not only with regards to eating and drinking. We know that to perform at an optimum we need a moderate level of stress or anxiety as activator and that too much anxiety becomes maladaptive and decreases performance. Finding the balance is critical for our success and for effective human interaction. Too much self-confidence leads to narcissism; too much conscientiousness to perfectionism and inability to complete anything; being too agreeable allows others to take advantage of you; too much emotional control leads to aloofness or indifference and too much expression could lead to being emotionally out of control and transparent. The same could be said for freedom and freedom of expression and to quote Plato, “Excess of liberty, whether it lies in state or individuals, seems only to pass into excess of slavery (for others).”

The bottom line and key to success, happiness, health and life thus seems to be “Everything in moderation, including moderation.”