

A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO STRESS MANAGEMENT

Do you feel like you're burning the candle at both ends? Tense? Or like you just can't seem to unwind? It's hardly surprising.

In fact, daily stress has now become synonymous with 21st century living. Busy, multi-tasking lifestyles often leave too little time for healthy meals, exercise and relaxation. The sad truth of the matter is that living a hectic, on-the-go lifestyle leads to some form of eventual burn out.

Virtually everyone has heard of the fight or flight mechanism which the human race developed in response to the threat of being attacked. Unfortunately, the modern "sabre toothed tigers" manifest in a myriad of ways (work stress, raising children stress, EMF's from mobile phones and computers, financial stress, etc.), and these stresses are often constant. When chronic stress is left unchecked then it can lead to a cascade of negative effects on the body.

There are 4 major types of stress:

1. **Physical:** poor nutrition, lack of sleep, intense physical exertion
2. **Mental:** worry, anxiety, perfectionism
3. **Emotional:** Fear, guilt, anger, shame
4. **Psycho-spiritual:** lack of spiritual alignment, difficult relationships, life challenges
5. **Chemical:** Toxins from pollution, food additives, pesticides, cleaning supplies, personal products and even medications

When our bodies are stressed then the adrenals (the glands on top of the kidneys) release different stress hormones; cortisol and adrenaline are the two commonly known major players. The long term ongoing release of these hormones can lead to a myriad of health issues including: impaired thyroid function, digestive issues, hormone imbalances (especially in women), imbalanced blood sugar levels, blood pressure issues, heart disease, frequent colds, and the list goes on...

Key dietary and lifestyle tips for stress management:

Get adjusted regularly

Chronic stress can wreak havoc on the body. Back pain, muscle tightness, tension headaches, fatigue, and neck pain are some of the symptoms people experience when under stress. Over time, stress lowers the immune system, which makes the body more vulnerable to disease. Chiropractic treatments help relieve the uncomfortable symptoms of chronic stress. In addition, regular chiropractic adjustments can soothe the nervous system, and lessen the flight or fight response most people experience when stressed.

Nourish your body with protein rich meals

Eating protein rich meals at regular intervals is key when it comes to balancing blood sugar levels - which helps take stress off the adrenals. Some quality protein sources include: lean meats, nuts and seeds, beans (especially lentils and kidney beans for adrenal health), hemp and rice protein powder (great for smoothies), algae including chlorella and spirulina, goat cheese, and wild mackerel.

Fermented foods

The gut/mind connection is of tremendous importance when it comes to keeping stress at bay. Recent research has found that the healthy bowel flora can greatly assist in reducing anxiety, and is the heart of the human immune system response. Consuming fermented foods is paramount in order to introduce probiotics to the gut on a regular basis. Popular fermented foods include: raw unpasteurized sauerkraut, dill pickles, coconut, yogurt, kefir, and miso soup.

Include Omega 3 essential fats in the diet

Adequate omegas 3 fats are very important for stress reduction. EPA and DHA play an important role in helping with adrenal health and brain behavior. Rich food sources: wild salmon, sardines, sprouted chia and flax seeds, and blue green algae. Supplements include: fish oil, krill oil and algae oil.

Hydrate

Drink 6-8 glasses of water daily for adrenal health and hydration. Decrease the caffeine; bump out the alcohol (big adrenal stressors); and reach for green vegetable juices (fruit juices spike blood sugar levels) and calming herbal teas instead.

Exercise

Exercise plays an important role in stress reduction and overall fitness. Exercising for as little as 3 times a week can make a big difference to how you handle daily challenges. Try yoga, power walking in nature, dancing, or interval training. It doesn't matter what so long as you move your body on a regular basis.

Meditate

A good way to take stress off of the adrenals and the body/mind/spirit complex is to find the time to meditate on a daily basis. The body and breath are interconnected, and when we meditate on gentle rhythmic breathing for as little as 10 mins a day, it can have profound effects on stress reduction.