

FREE BONUS REPORT

Stress – poison by slow motion

Many of the diseases we used to associate to aging such as cancer, heart disease, dementia and strokes could simply be the result of long periods of poorly managed stress.

Stress – what is it?

Pressure? Strain? Anxiety? Constant worry? Nervous tension? Trauma?
Hassle? Wound up? Cracking up? Overwhelm? Can't cope?

If you have ever experienced any of the above, or feeling as though you are a tightly sprung coil ready to release, or that your head is about to burst or crack open, or you are like a pressure cooker ready to explode then you have had the experience of feeling stressed.

Stress is the 'wear and tear' our minds and bodies experience as we attempt to cope with our continually changing environment, either in the workplace, at home or in our personal relationships.

People often think that stress is 'pressure or work', 'rush hour traffic', or caring for a sick relative but these are the triggers. Stress is actually an internal process that begins as a reaction to external triggers.

Stress is not a new phenomenon, it has existed since life began but the survival instincts we developed over millions of years that enabled us to fight off or flee from wild animals and enemies has paradoxically become the scourge of modern day life resulting in 'stress'.

The release of stress historically has been through the physical actions of fight or flight, but how can that energy, that sudden release of hormones be dispersed when we are sitting in a traffic jam, waiting in a queue or our boss has given us too much work and we feel under pressure; we can hardly punch him or her in the middle of office to make us feel better (and it is unlikely to do much for our career prospects either). This sense of feeling better is purely the physical release of built up tension caused by the release of stress hormones.

Modern man expends a fraction of the physical energy of his ancestors and our current worldwide levels of disease are indicative of the fact that many of us are not even fit enough to do a push-up or a sit up. We live in a push

button-world in which almost every physical activity has been replaced by an energy saving device, but are these devices serving us or killing us? In the 21st Century, stress should not be seen as an acceptable or inevitable price to pay for success in life. *And yet it is a slow poison that is killing us!*

Stress is never going to go away, but we need to understand it and learn to manage it.

We are never going to completely avoid some of life's stressors from simply misplacing our car keys, our car breaking down, rules, regulations and red tape but we can learn to understand how it can become the precursor to diseases such as cancer, heart disease and strokes for example.

A body under stress is a chemically altered body. It is awash with hormones and other substances that are normally kept under tight control. In the right proportions, these hormones such as catecholamines – including dopamine, adrenaline and noradrenaline, glucocorticoids such as cortisol and androgens such as dehydroepiandrosterone (DHEA) keep our bodies healthy. But when these hormones become out of balance they become a form of slow poison, leading to a staggering list of stress-related disorders. Just look at the list:

*Fatigue, indigestion, infections, irritability, diarrhoea, eczema, headaches, constipation, psoriasis, muscle tension, peptic ulcer, allergies, neck and back pain, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), asthma, atherosclerosis, loss of appetite, nutritional deficiencies, high blood pressure, anorexia nervosa, premenstrual symptoms, diabetes, weight changes, sexual problems, arthritis, insomnia, psychological problems, **cancer** and depression.*

Cortisol and DHEA have been the most widely studied of these stress related hormones. During episodes of acute (short term) stress, these hormones at first protect us by activating the body's defences through a complex chain of biochemical events. If these hormones are produced on a regular basis however, through prolonged periods of stress, they create a gradual and steady cascade of harmful physiological changes.

As levels of cortisol rise in response to chronic (long term) stress, levels of another hormone DHEA drop. The result can be breast and prostate cancer along with several of the disorders listed above. This is why in many alternative cancer therapy regimes; DHEA is prescribed in supplement form.

Basically stress is:

The psychological, physiological behavioural response by an individual when they perceive a lack of equilibrium between the demands placed upon them and their ability to meet these demands, which, over a period of times, leads to ill health. (Prof Stephen Palmer PhD, Centre for Stress Management, London UK)

As invaluable as the natural physical response was in our earlier stages of evolution, fighting and running away are rarely appropriate responses to

stressful situations in the modern world. Under long-term stress, our bodies remain in a constant state of arousal, which can result in the gradual onset of various health problems.

Our Psychological History

Only 100 years ago, a mere three generations, there were only two major decisions a person had to make: who to marry and what profession to follow.

Today, marriages, families, relationships and jobs are transient all carrying their own levels of stress with endings and new beginnings. We may even experience long periods of time without a partner and or without a job and an income.

Now some people are better than others at adapting to change and this ability partly depends on having a fully functioning immune, nervous and endocrine (hormonal) systems. Is it any wonder that hormonal health problems such as breast and prostate cancer, infertility and menopausal problems are on the increase? Is it surprising that mental health illnesses from depression to anxiety to schizophrenia now affect 1 in 4 people? That Alzheimer's is reaching epidemic proportions? That chronic fatigue syndrome, allergies and inflammatory health problems like eczema are increasing?

Types of stress

Most people think that stress is of emotional origin following a major traumatic event in our lives, and indeed events such as bereavement, marriage and unemployment for example, bring emotional stresses but the body cannot differentiate between these and other kinds of stress. There are other kinds of stress we need to take into account, be they physical, chemical, nutritional and even psycho spiritual. It is not just the major stressors that cause problems; there is evidence that high numbers of small daily hassles can also take their toll.

Immunity and Cancer

(What doctors Don't Tell You Vol 13 No 8)

The ability of stress to alter immune function and to precipitate and aggravate infectious diseases has long been recognised. (J Fla Med Assoc, 1993; 80:409-11; Arch Psych Nurs, 1994; 8: 221-7). Today suppressed immunity is recognised as a major problem associated with chronic exposure to stress hormones.

We are only just beginning to understand the ways in which stress can alter immunity and there is an evolving belief that poor immunity as a result of chronic stress may contribute to the development of cancer. Studies have found an association between acute loss, bereavement, depression and subsequent development of several types of cancer, including colorectal and prostate cancers.

But it has been in the development and progression of breast cancer in relation to life stress that has undergone the most study. Women with advanced breast cancer have been found to have high levels of daytime cortisol, whereas, in general, cortisol levels are high first thing in the morning, drop during the day and are at their lowest around midnight. Such women, on average, die a year sooner from their condition than those with normal cortisol levels.

Natural killer (NK) cell activity is important in the prevention of breast cancer metastasis and there is evidence that women with breast cancer tend to have significantly reduced NK destruction of tumour cells compared with women who have benign breast disease, or healthy breasts. In some women, chronic stress can suppress NK activity.

While conventional medicine still disputes the link, women themselves know instinctively that stress is influential. In a study of nearly 400 breast cancer survivors who had been disease-free for nine years, 42% said they believed that stress was one of the main causes of their cancer. This idea has been confirmed by scientists who have found that women under stress from bereavement, job loss or divorce, have almost a 12-fold increased risk of developing breast cancer within 5 years. (BMJ, 1995;311:1527-30)

We need to adjust our diets and lifestyles in order to survive and thrive in the 21st century. There is an answer to stress. It requires a change of mind, and changing what you put into your body.

Changing your thinking

Mental filtering: Most things that happen to us are not all bad or all good. Life is made up of good bits and not so good bits. But sometimes we just dwell on the negative aspects of what happens in our day-to-day lives. We completely discount all the other pleasant and enjoyable events. Stop filtering out all the good experiences of life and dwelling on the not so good bits.

Reframing is one of the most powerful and creative stress reducers. It is a technique used to change the way you look at things in order to feel better about them. We all do this inadvertently at times. The key to reframing is to recognise that there are many ways to interpret the same situation. It is like the age old question is your glass half empty or half full? The answer of course is both, depending on your point of view. However if you see the glass as half full, it will feel different than seeing it half empty because the way we think affects the way we feel. There are many ways of looking at the same thing so you may as well pick the one that makes you feel good. Reframing does not change the external reality, but simply helps you to view things differently and less stressfully.

Changing your diet

In order to have a healthy body we need to keep everything in balance, including our blood sugar levels.

Almost all of our energy is derived from glucose – sugar. This is the main ‘fuel’ of the body and what you eat determines the quality, quantity and availability of glucose to all your body’s cells including the brain. Consequently, maintaining an even blood sugar level is vital in order to ensure good energy levels, mood and overall health. A key way to control your blood sugar level is by watching what you eat, particularly with regards to carbohydrates.

If you eat a meal containing fast-releasing carbohydrates, your blood sugar levels go up. Insulin is then released to get the excess glucose out of your blood, into cells as fuel or into storage. If your blood sugar level is not high enough because you have not eaten for a while, glucagon is released which makes more glucose available.

Insulin, glucagon and adrenalin are proteins. This means they are made from a particular arrangement of amino acids that come from protein in food. If the blood sugar gets too low this also stimulates the release of adrenal hormones, which perceives this lack of vital fuel as an emergency. The adrenal hormones have one mission in life – your survival. If ever your survival is threatened they leap into action. This will happen even if you simply skip a meal or have low blood sugar from eating the wrong kind of food.

Have you heard of the expression ‘running on adrenaline’? This is what is happening. Whenever your blood sugar dips too low, in come the adrenal hormones to get your blood sugar level up again. Most of us are well aware of these dynamics and help the process along by stimulating the release of adrenalin when our blood sugar is low – for instance by having a coffee.

We cannot keep doing this forever, in the long term it suppresses your immune system, slows down your body’s rate of repair and metabolism. In other words, the cost of going into ‘survival mode’ frequently or for long period of time is disastrous to your health and can lead to life threatening diseases such as cancer.

Daily supplements to deal with stress

Vitamin B1	25-100mg	Co-enzyme Q10	10-50mg
Vitamin B2	25-100mg	Vitamin C	1000-5000mg
Vitamin B3	50-150mg	Calcium	150-600mg
Vitamin B5	50-300mg	Magnesium	240-450mg
Vitamin B6	50-250mg	Iron	10-20mg
Vitamin B12	5-100mcg	Zinc	10-25mg
Folic Acid	50-400mcg	Chromium	50-200mcg
Choline	100-500mcg		

SOME GREAT STRESS BUSTING IDEAS!!

- Yoga
- Eating bananas (rich in amino acid called tryptophan that has a calming effect)
- Clearing clutter. Try Feng Shui to improve the flow of energy and be ruthless with anything you haven't worn or used for a few months
- Learn to meditate
- Hide your watch (convince yourself the world won't come to a grinding halt if you miss a few less than important deadlines)
- Try a shiatsu massage. Shiatsu literally means "finger pressure" in Japanese, and it's based on the theory that manipulating specific acupressure points will help channel the energy in the body
- Tackle phobias
- Make a new friend – get a pet
- Think positive. Ward off negative thoughts with positive images by surrounding yourself with reminders of your own achievements
- Make time for yourself. Re-prioritise your life so you have time for the things that really count
- Investigate alternatives. Invest time in listing all the factors that contribute to your worries and then look for less stressful alternatives, i.e. can you delegate anything, is there any other way you can go about something
- Take up dancing
- Have a laugh. Laughter increases the amount of oxygen absorbed by the body and boosts your metabolism
- Take a mini break. A few days from the old routine will recharge you. If you can't manage this make sure you have a few short breaks away from your workstation
- Breathe out more – breathe deeply and slowly
- Eat wisely. Eat lots of fresh fruit and vegetables and at regular intervals to keep blood-sugar levels steady
- Sing out loud
- Enjoy small pleasures – a vase of fresh flowers on your desk, watching fish swim, etc.
- Try a flotation tank
- Unleash your creativity. Take up painting or pottery for example. It is important to have at least one hobby or interest outside your work and family life.
- Learn how to spot your stress warning signals, and then act on them.
- Don't be afraid to talk about situations that you find stressful
- Take a stroll when you are stressed – it can help restore your perspective.
- Avoid the habit of taking work home with you every night
- Try to be aware of any changes in your eating and drinking patterns

- “Talk truth to power” – do not be afraid to tell your line manager what really goes on in the office
- Next time you feel you have too much to do, delegate at least one task
- Learn from those who do not suffer from stress
- Avoid routinely working late and at weekends
- If you suffer from regular headaches or insomnia, see a doctor
- Make a note of anything that you can find that helps you to relax
- Listen to what your body tells you as objectively as you can
- Ask yourself if other people find you stressful to work with
- Keep a diary of the days that you feel highly stressed
- Treat yourself to something you want but would not formally buy
- Make sure your desk is as near a window as possible
- use travel time to plan you day or switch off – not to do extra work
- Spend an hour or two alone each week, away from work and family
- Try to anticipate corporate change by constantly updating your skills
- Adopt new management ideas only if they are useful – never adopt what is merely fashionable
- Protect your job by drawing attention to the value of your work
- Take advantage of training schemes to learn as much as you can about new or different work cultures
- Identify like-minded colleagues, and work with them to adapt to change
- Be prepared to change career at least once in your working life
- When learning new technology, start slowly and build confidence
- Try to set up an office near other people. Isolation can be stressful
- Make sure your home office is separate from your living space
- It is never too late to learn a new skill, such as computing
- Assess the stress factors of any new job before you accept it
- Gradually increase the number and complexity of tasks you delegate successfully every day.
- Treat all staff with dignity and respect, regardless of their positions or titles.
- Give co-workers a treat to show your appreciation
- Have lunch with a new colleague to establish a working relationship
- Introduce yourself to other people in your company by visiting their offices
- Share the journey to work with a colleague who lives nearby
- Always be flexible in your attitudes – you may not know the full story
- Plan an active part in improving the quality of office life
- Do not make major decisions too quickly
- Arrange to have lunch with your partner or a close friend once a week
- Listen carefully to what your children say to you
- If you live near your work, walk or cycle to work a few times a week
- Lean to talk openly about your emotions and feelings with close friends and confidants
- Set up a suggestion box so employees can leave ideas for reducing stress

- Relieve pressure by discussing work problems openly
- Go for a jog or swim at lunchtime to alleviate stress
- Challenge racism or sexism within your organisation
- Think about introducing a pilot scheme before a full programme
- Set up support systems to help stressed staff
- Increase investment in staff training where necessary
- Examine the resources of your organisation before deciding which strategy to use to deal with stress
- Encourage healthy eating by improving in-house canteen lunch menus
- Be aware of your organisation's policy on stress management
- Monitor cases of absenteeism, which days of the week are the worst?
- Seek out factual evidence for the effectiveness of any intervention
- Start each day stress-free by tidying your desk the night before
- Keep an executive toy to "play" with during breaks
- Try out different room plans before you settle into a new office
- When you move to a new work space, spend time thinking how to make it more pleasant
- Ask a colleague to let you know when you appear to be stressed
- Overestimate when calculating the time that a project will take
- Jot down problems on a day-to-day basis, and see if a pattern emerges
- Set realistic goals so that you do not feel stressed by too many failures to meet deadlines
- Never knowingly embarrass people by asking for help they cannot give
- Keep negative opinions about your colleagues to yourself
- Ask a member of your support staff to field calls if you have urgent work
- Try to take a five minute break from your work every hour or so
- Cross each job off your "to do" list when the job is done. It is satisfying to see a list shrink
- Do not overload people with information that they do not need
- Keep a log of messages that require a reply. Follow them up
- Write faxes and letters early in the day – your communication skills will deteriorate as you tire
- Do not ignore your problems – acknowledge them as they arise
- Avoid people and situations that tempt you to behave in ways you are not happy with
- Exercise can be short term solution to anger
- Be honest about your reasons for rejecting a task
- Try not to be pressurized into making important decisions hastily
- Practice yoga or a similar exercise routine to help you relax
- Help colleagues under stress to manage their time better
- Ask friends of stressed colleagues to help resolve their problems
- Give colleagues under stress some relaxation tips
- Offer help only if you have time to follow it up
- Suggest that your colleagues try to view problems as opportunities
- Respect other opinions – do not feel you always have to be right

- Identify and enlist the help of stress-free, supportive members of staff
- Advise colleagues to concentrate on one task at a time
- Keep a note of situations that trigger stress in your colleagues
- Ensure that staff working together are compatible
- List all the people who may be able to help a colleague under stress
- Encourage staff to be supportive of one another
- Suggest that your meetings should last no longer than half an hour
- Ask colleagues to prioritise tasks in their diaries
- When talking with a colleague, banish all interruptions
- Plan activities for each weekend. Try not to let the days just drift past
- Listen to your favourite comedian. Laughter will help you to relax
- Avoid eating or drinking heavily just before you go to bed
- When lying down to relax your body, start by relaxing your toes, and work your way upwards
- Join an evening class every year, and start to learn something new
- Take membership of a nearby sports club
- Take a holiday that allows you to pursue a hobby
- When taking up a new form of exercise, start with some lessons from a qualified instructor
- Breakfast like a king, lunch like a prince, and dine like a pauper
- Chew a crisp, raw carrot if you feel the urge to eat between meals