

WHAT

IS

STRESS?

HOW CAN RELAXATION

HELP WITH STRESS & DISEASE?

When we face a situation that our mind feels is dangerous, our brain triggers an alarm, which releases a cocktail of chemicals into our blood adrenaline, noradrenaline and cortisol. These chemicals are designed to ready us for fighting or running away. They do this by raising heart rate and quickening breath to get more oxygen to our muscles, and releasing fat and sugar into the blood to give us a burst of energy. The trouble is that in most modern day stressful situations like a job interview or a relationship break up, the danger does not require us to fight or to run away and so the chemicals keep circulating through our body unused. This is really unhealthy.

Our bodies have not evolved quickly enough with modern life to realise that most situations that we face do not need us to fight or escape. Being late for an important meeting does not put us in some mortal danger. Our bodies are simply overreacting. This is why we see so many stress related disorders in the modern world. If our body regularly releases these stress chemicals and they remain unused, then this leads to a long term build up of stress. Our bodies become frozen in a constant state of emergency, invaded by faulty alarm bells that are constantly misfiring. It can then become a challenge to reset us.

Is stress dangerous?

An appropriate level of stress is useful for concentration and focus and to give us that extra push to achieve our goals. It is essential, if we are in a genuinely dangerous situation. However in most scenarios, our bodies are not responding appropriately to the situation and the build up of chemicals can cause many short and long term health conditions. Adrenaline raises blood pressure, which can damage the heart and kidneys. Cortisol lowers the immune system. The extra rush of fat and sugar into the blood can lead to diabetes and cardiovascular problems. Our hormonal system can become damaged.

Stress often causes the muscles to contract or tighten. Over time, these can cause aches and pains due to muscular tension; many people experience muscle spasms in their neck and shoulders as well as lower back. Stress can also cause or exacerbate muscular twitches, tics: head and jaw tension, headaches and migraines. Stress tires the body and affects sleep, it also affects digestion, which in turn impairs our ability to absorb nutrients. Apart from all the physical effects, stress causes mental, emotional and social problems. Depression, anxiety and obsessive habits can all be stress related. We can become irritable, impatient and tired, which can make work and relationships difficult.

So yes, stress can be dangerous. Therefore it is important to take action and do something about it. Many people use their bodies in ways they wouldn't dream of treating their cars, so it is important to refuel, to have an M.O.T.

You can't avoid stress completely, it is a part of our lives but you can help balance out the playing field so to speak, by taking the time to invest in your health by finding ways to relax and depressurize, whatever that may be for you!

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