

Natural Path: Stress Reduction 101

By Dr. Carol McIntyre

Summer is here! Time to relax... right? Well, as most of us are aware, this is also the time for many projects, family gatherings and vacation plans. These activities can be rewarding and stressful all at the same time. Let's talk about the basic mechanism of stress and how we can address it in a positive manner.

Stress is the greatest producer of disease. That is my opinion. More and more research proves that a multitude of disease comes from the side effects of stress. Mental, emotional and physical stress can all be the predecessor to disease. So how does one reduce stress in a world that produces stress so easily? Let's first discuss the mechanism of how stress affects our bodies, basically, how it works.

It is a complicated process... but in short, stress raises our cortisol levels. Cortisol is the hormone that our bodies produce when stress presents itself. Cortisol is what wakes us up in the morning. It gives us our 'get up and go' response. When our body is under stress, cortisol increases. After prolonged periods of stress cortisol maintains at high levels. As time goes on, cortisol becomes exhausted and other hormones are compromised to produce cortisol so the body can maintain the response. Eventually, other hormones are then drained. Pregnenalone 'steal' is a common result of this process. This can result in many other hormonal imbalances including decrease of testosterone, progesterone and estrogen which in turn leads to more imbal-

ances. The effects are never ending and the web of interaction is too in depth for this article.

So again, how do we address the effects of stress? There are many ways to do so. First, Breathe. Research shows that breathing exercises reduce stress in general and reduce cortisol. Many different practices including Qigong and yoga incorporate breathing into the routines. This reduces stress and therefore disease states.

Second, exercise. Exercise can also reduce the increased cortisol response. For many, exercise produces an anti-inflammatory response in the body and provides a protection against disease. There is however a fine line. Excessive exercise, or exercise at a time when reserves are exhausted will actually contribute to the inflammatory cascade. Anyone starting a new exercise regime or seeing a reduction in the effects from exercise should consult a qualified physician regarding this matter.

Third, have fun! Psychologically, enjoying activities has a more positive effect on your overall immune system and therefore reducing disease

production. Making time for enjoyed activities with family and friends is a very healthy process, spiritually, mentally and physically. When dealing with family, work and everyday life, keep a positive outlook and enjoy the interaction as much as possible. You will be enhancing your health!

Fourth, eat well. Eating healthy foods and avoiding food sensitivities will also reduce inflammation in the body and again, reduce the increased production of cortisol. If you eat foods that you know irritate your system, simply avoid them. Food is healing to your body. Use food as your medicine. Pay attention to what goes into your body and you will get better results.

Finally, sleep. Cortisol reduces naturally at night in a normal healthy sequence. People who have insomnia and cannot sleep at night are very likely to have an imbalance in their cortisol rhythm. This again can affect many dif-

ferent systems in the body and cause disease. I use a 24 hour saliva test to evaluate cortisol rhythm. This is the most effective way to diagnose where the inefficiency is and know how to address it.

Currently, I am in collaboration with a few other healers in town to create a Wellness calendar for Vernonia. We are putting together classes, lectures and activities to achieve overall wellness. These classes will incorporate food classes, yoga, Qigong, educational lectures and fun hands on activities. Stay updated for more information. We plan to have a fall/winter calendar ready by mid-August.

Take time. Enjoy. Relax when you can. BREATHE. BE. Make it count and give time to you. Create a space that works in your life and for you. I look forward to continuing on building a better community for Vernonia and all of us collectively. Enjoy your summer. Thanks for joining me~ Be Well.

The July WOECC Board Meeting date has been changed to Tuesday, July 22nd at 7:00 PM

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New Eyeglass Drop Box for Lions Club

The Vernonia Lions Club now has two collection boxes for unwanted eyeglasses and hearing aids. One is at the Senior Center and a new location is in the Sentry Market on top of the toy machine, near where the ads and newspapers are located.

Library Book Sale During Jamboree Weekend



The Friends of the Library will be holding their book sale during Jamboree again this year at the VCLC. This is a fundraising event to help support programs for the library. Have you ever enjoyed a program or used the culture pass from the library? The Friends of the Library help to make this happen. Please drop by, buy a book and help support the library. The book sale was publicized incorrectly in the Jamboree program and will be held on Friday, August 1 from 4-7 and Saturday, August 2 from 9-4. Thank you for your support.

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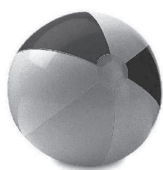
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