

Stress, What To Do About It?



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November 2008

Stress, it's become a common word in our culture. We all know what it feels like, but we all don't know how to handle it. I have always felt that it is a contributing factor to the onset of poor health. Oh, our bodies let us know when stress is invading. The problem is we ignore it! A nagging pain in the back, neck or shoulder, more frequent headaches (or even migraines), poor sleep, fatigue, grouchiness, overeating, frequent colds or flu. What do we do? We pop some pills that promise to take care of the problem for us. Sure, that may take care of the problem....temporarily. Then the whole cycle starts over again. What have we done to get to the root of the problem? You may say, "Well, the stressors are here to stay, so what can I really do to get to the root of the problem?" Well, let me tell you a little story about myself.

Up until my mid-twenties, my stress always showed up as digestive problems that a few times during the year could send me to the hospital. There was never really anything found to be wrong with me. After the birth of my second daughter, I went through some emotionally stressful times. I was always one to read self-help books which led me to signing up for some yoga classes at an adult-ed program. I went once a week and promised myself that during that time, I would not think about all the problems plaguing me. Well, guess what, over time, there were many shifts that occurred in my life and I never had a serious digestive issue again. I attributed this to the peacefulness and solitude that I felt during the yoga class that began to be felt in my everyday life.

So what is it about stress that makes our body react the way it does? It's the hormone

known as cortisol. Cortisol is an important hormone in the body that has a number of important functions. It is involved in proper glucose metabolism, our inflammatory response, blood pressure regulation, and our immune function, to name a few and it is secreted in higher levels when we become stressed. So initially cortisol helps us when we first respond to stress. However, it's important that the body's relaxation response be activated so that body functions can again return to normal and this is where the problem lies. Our body's stress response is activated so often that the body doesn't always have a chance to return to normal.

That's where my profession comes in and other alternative health care modalities. Acupuncture, massage therapy, reflexology, chiropractic, reiki, yoga, meditation, aromatherapy (to name a few) are all modalities that can bring about a relaxation response. You have a lot to choose from. The point is, it's up to you to bring balance back to your body, mind and spirit. Find a practitioner that you like and that listens to you and make a commitment to yourself to take action when needed. For some that may mean as often as everyday or as little as once a month. Your body will tell you when....DON'T IGNORE IT!

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