

Different Drummer Acupuncture

An Occasional Newsletter



Stress

Many health professionals believe that most if not all disease is exacerbated if not caused by stress. Most of us consider stress to be a strictly negative experience, but in reality it is any change, good or bad, e.g. getting fired or getting a raise, that can cause stress.

Stress can manifest in many different ways. Many of my patients come in and tell me they know they are stressed because their neck or low back is sore. Some have headaches or sleep problems. The reality is that stress has been shown to affect chemicals in our brains and those chemicals then effect changes throughout the body.

Stress can be defined as a change in your life. As a matter of fact stress even happens when you worry about a change that might happen! Both emotional and physical changes are stressful. Doing a marathon, getting a cold and arguing with your spouse are all stressful.

Physiology of Stress

With stress, chemical changes occur in our bodies. Some are almost instantaneous and usually short lived—think fight or flight response. When this happens digestion stops, heart rate increases, blood sugar increases, the mouth dries, your eyesight and hearing become heightened and adrenalin flows so you literally can jump higher, run faster and lift more. Other reactions however are slower to start, but the effects linger, thus allowing the body to continue to deal with the stress. This chemical activity is hard on a body and has been shown to be a leading cause of ulcers, hypertension, asthma, headaches and irritable bowel syndrome.

In my practice I treat a lot of the side effects of excess stress: muscle pain, headaches, depression, anxiety and poor sleep. Acupuncture has been shown to have an effect on endorphins which are involved in helping the body deal with stress. I recommend acupuncture for stress, but unless you want to come daily or walk around with needles you need to have other ways to help with stress.

Different Drummer Acupuncture

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Don't Worry,
Be Happy!
Since worry can
trigger the

stress response, the first thing one can do is not to worry about the past and since you don't know the future you might as well not worry about that either. But how do you suddenly stop worrying? One of the easiest ways is to focus on the present by focusing on breathing. Deep diaphragmatic breathing will help calm your nerves and get more oxygen to your brain, increasing your alertness and concentration. Try starting with 10 deep breaths every hour or two. Give it a try you'll be pleasantly surprised.

I get so
stressed when I
lose my ball!



Stretching is also a great stress reliever. I find yoga to be of great benefit. I can't think of anything else while in those challenging poses. But even little 30-second stretches at your desk can do wonders. Try pushing your chair back, folding in the middle and placing your hands palm down on your desk. Keep your elbows straight and stretch through your arms and back while trying to turn the inside of your arms toward the ceiling. You can do this while in the kitchen with your hands placed on the counter or use a wall and reach up as high as you can. I stretch while waiting for my tea water to boil.

How Diet Affects Stress

Sugar, caffeine, alcohol and nicotine are often used to help us deal with stress because they do have an effect on brain chemicals. The problem is that it is next to impossible to get the exact right amount of the exact right chemical we need to get our body out of stress. With nicotine we can become calmer, but the trouble is that nicotine triggers a biofeedback loop that makes us keep craving it. The more nicotine we use the more we crave and with higher use the positive calming effect is negated. Caffeine and sugar intensify the stress response. If you are prone to stress, eliminating or cutting back on caffeine and sugar would be very beneficial. Alcohol is a nervous system depressant and can help take the edge off stress. Small amounts have in some studies been shown to be beneficial to overall health, but anything above moderate use has been shown to be detrimental to good health.

There is no magic pill for stress relief, but being able to cope with stress can make life much more enjoyable. The key is to find and use coping skills that work for you. If you think acupuncture might work to take the edge off or to treat some of the side effects of too much stress give me call.



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Resources

www.technet.com—Includes the article The Medical Basis of Stress, Depression, Anxiety, Sleep Problems, and Drug Use, Steven L. Burns, MD.

Relax and Renew, Judith Lasater, Ph.d., P.T.
I've been recommending this book to almost all my patients. The book is on restorative yoga. These are poses primarily done on the floor with pillows and blankets to support the body. They are easy to do and are geared to helping you unwind.

www.erofit.com—This is Judy Heller's Web site; she is a personal coach who teaches classes on breath work. Her Breath-Fit classes are very worthwhile.

Yoga Secrets for Business Success, Darshan Singh Khalsa. This is a great handbook on yoga poses and breathing techniques. There are chapters on relaxation, anger and self-worth, among others.

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Butternut Squash Soup

Courtesy of Farmbytes: www.farmbytes.com

This flavorful fall soup can be served hot or cold and also freezes well. Serves 12, generously.

- 3 medium butternut squash, seeded and peeled in 1 inch cubes
- 3 medium yellow onions, peeled and diced
- 3 stalks celery, diced
- 8 green apples, cored and diced
- 3 sprigs of fresh rosemary
- 1 1/4 teaspoon dried marjoram
- 1/2 cup brown sugar (or to taste)
- 1 gallon water
- salt and pepper to taste

Prepare a herb bag by wrapping the rosemary and marjoram in cheese cloth. Set aside. Sauté onions and celery until tender. Then add water, squash, apples, herbs, seasonings and sugar. Bring to a boil.

Turn heat down and simmer, stirring occasionally, until the squash is tender, about 45 minutes. Remove from heat. Remove the herb bag. Puree in a blender or food processor until smooth.

Note: Marjoram can be difficult to find and may be omitted. If fresh rosemary is not available, substitute 2 teaspoons of dried rosemary leaves. For a creamier soup, decrease the water by 2 cups. Add 2 cups of heavy cream when the soup is pureed.



Marcia Mueller
Lic. Acupuncturist

About Different Drummer Acupuncture

I have been an athlete all my life. I compete as a race walker in road races, relays and marathons. I am also a proponent of cross training (I got an injury from over training), so I swim, weight lift and do yoga to compliment my walking. Athletes are a large part of my practice.

Acupuncture is a midlife career change for me. Previously I worked at Nike. During this time I used acupuncture for a back injury and from personal experience discovered the power in this ancient medicine. I am a graduate of Lewis and Clark College and the Oregon College of Oriental Medicine where I received a Masters degree in Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine. I have been in practice since 1998.