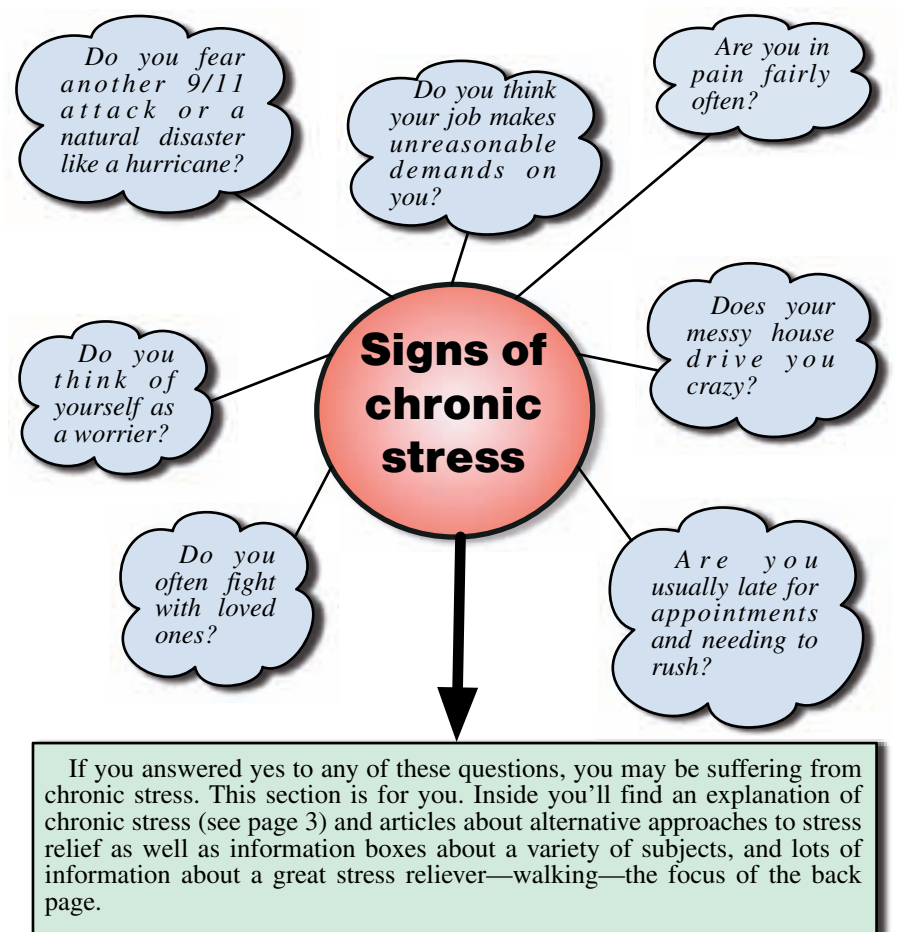
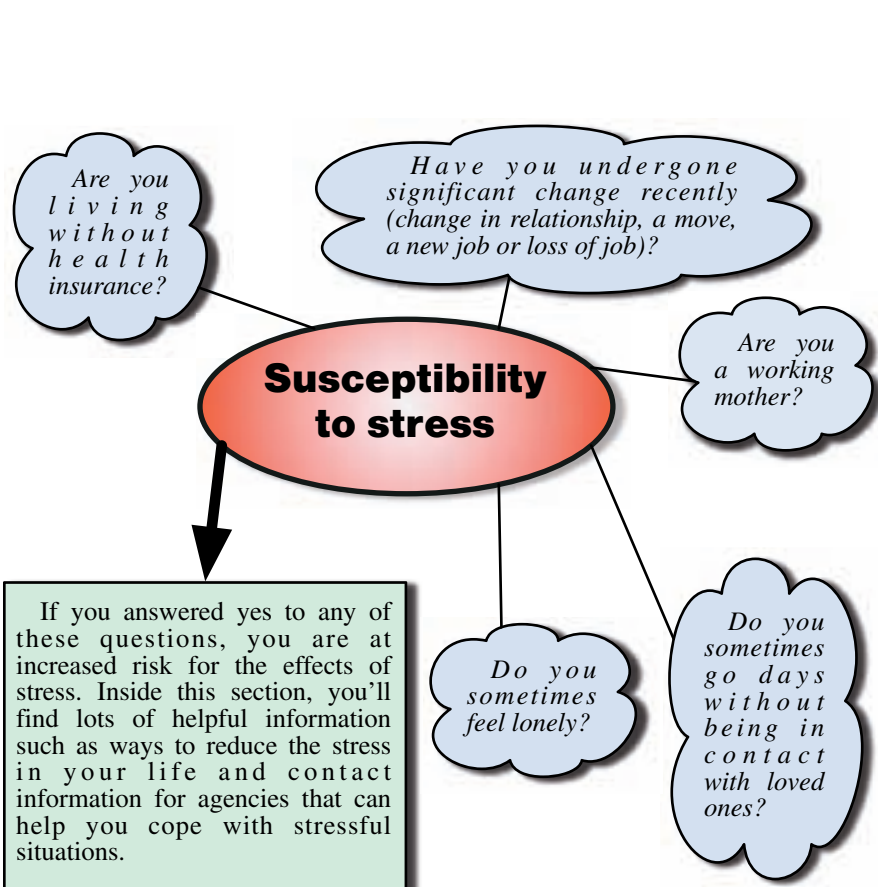
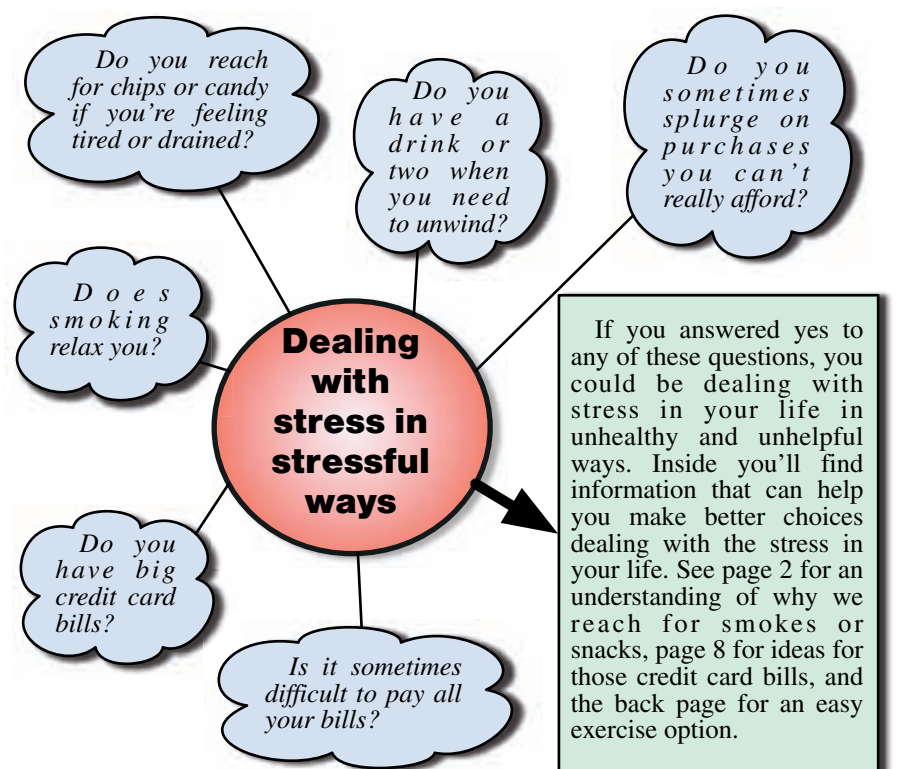
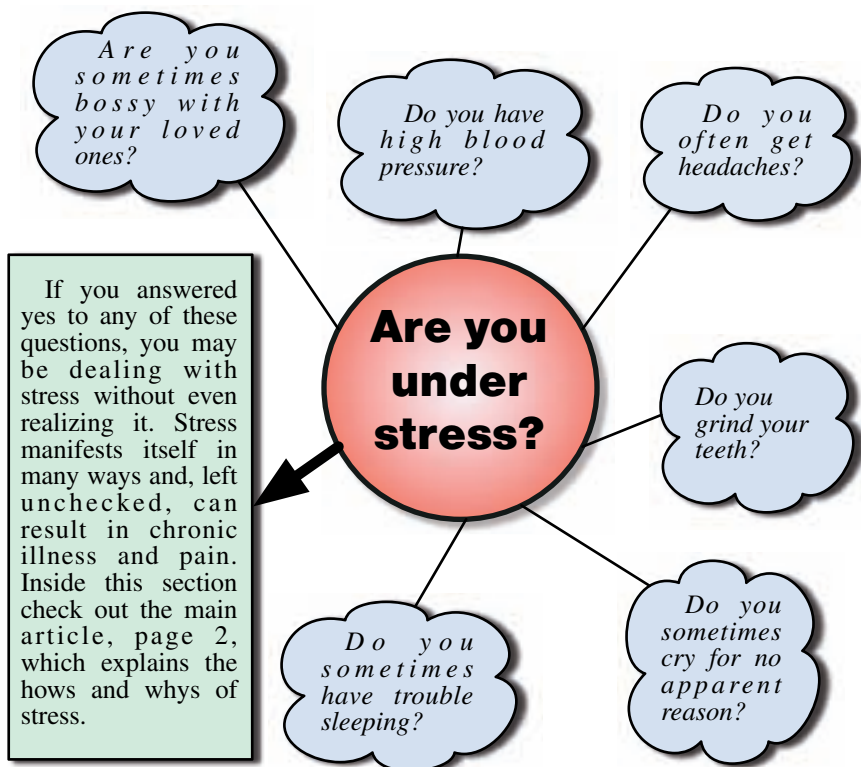


Health & Well-being

2007

Information and motivation for improving your life

Stress: What role does it play in your life?



CONTENTS

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Community Information Services

Quest for health and wellness, 2-4
Acupuncture, 6
Feldenkrais, 7
Watsu, 8
Reflexology, 9

Is your child under stress? 9
Chiropractic medicine, 10
Craniosacral therapy, 11
Walking the Peninsula, 12

Health Directory: a local guide to medical and health services, 5-8

The quest for health and wellness: Understanding and reducing stress

by Faith DeAmbrose

A stressful situation may keep you up at night, tossing and turning as you wonder how to pay an unexpected bill that just appeared. Or a stressful situation may cause a headache...compounded by a lack of sleep the night before. Stressful situations may cause a person to reach for a bag of potato chips, a bar of chocolate, a cigarette or even a cold beer.

According to health providers and professionals, whatever the reaction to a stressful situation is, it should be known that stress in small amounts is natural and healthy; however, stress in large amounts and stress that causes one to take on harmful coping mechanisms is not. Tracing our roots to the caveman, our ancient ancestors had a lot of stressors. Will there be enough food? Will I be attacked by a woolly mammoth or saber-tooth tiger? Life was stressful and as a result, early man developed what is termed today as the "flight or fight" reaction. They would either fight the woolly mammoth or they would run away.

In today's world there are no woolly mammoths, but there is rush hour traffic, demanding bosses, inconsiderate co-workers, screaming children and credit card debt. Although the latter stressors will not eat you for dinner, they can be just as intimidating and just as stressful.

The effects of stress on the body are easily traceable, medically. Stress, when detected by the nervous system, sends a series of messages to the body's nerve cells and increases the production of adrenaline, sugars, protein and cholesterol. Also elevated are blood sugar, heart rate, blood pressure and blood

oxygen level. During a stress response the body's catabolic activities (digestion, cellular growth, sex drive and sex glands) are decreased primarily because during the fight or flight response these are unnecessary.

Over time however, if the stress response becomes chronically initiated, the over production of these natural features could cause rashes or hives, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and even diabetes. Chronic stress can also cause lowered immune response, decreased circulation and fat metabolism.

Studies have also shown, explains Dr. Michael Aker, a chiropractor in Blue Hill, that "chronic stress can lead to chronic changes in our ability to learn... that cells in the hippocampus [brain] actually shrink." "Interestingly," adds Aker, "research also shows that chronic movement, stimulation or exercise results in an increase in the size of the hippocampus cells."

The body is equipped to naturally process and expel stress. When a stressor is introduced, the body enters what is called the "alarm stage." During this stage the hypothalamus area of the brain releases adrenaline, noradrenalin and corticoids and elevates a number of body functions. When the stressful situation has passed, the body

should naturally enter what is called the "resistance stage" where it adapts to the stressor and repairs any body damage that has occurred during the experience. In this case, the body works to reduce the heart rate, process the adrenaline, and so on. This is how the body evolved to handle stress. In the event that a resolution is not reached, the body then enters what is called the "exhaustion stage" where the body reenters the alarm stage and continues a cycle that will not allow the body to repair itself.

Stress that is not processed properly has the potential to appear in the form of actual physical symptoms, explains Catherine Princell, lead ScoreHealth registered nurse at Blue Hill Memorial Hospital, who added that aches and pains are often times the body's way of talking about stress.

The soreness you experience in your neck or shoulders or the dull headache around your temples may not actually require ibuprofen, it may just require a mental time out and or a deep breath. Stretching, running, biking, yoga, Pilates or a quiet walk through your backyard might make you feel better if you give it a chance, said Princell, who added that "one deep breath is enough to start the body's natural relaxation response."

From a psychological perspective

Just as stressors have the potential to cause physiological changes in the body, they also have the ability to affect behavior, attitudes and mood. As stress builds within an individual, stressful thoughts have the potential to become automatic, often replacing positive thoughts. When this happens, a glass that was half-full becomes half-empty. Princell explains that when this occurs a person has the potential to become trapped in what is called a "negative stress cycle." In a negative stress cycle, attitudes, beliefs and assumptions turn to negative moods and emotions. Princell noted that the symptoms of clinical depression and the symptoms of chronic stress are quite similar.

Under chronic stress, explained osteopathic physician Dr. Meredith Norris, people can become so used to the debilitating effects of stress that they are not able to problem-solve and therefore make poor choices. Armed with a prescription pad, Norris often writes her patients prescriptions for physical

Continued on page 3

Ways to recognize the signs of stress

by Catherine Princell, RN, Blue Hill Memorial Hospital

Symptoms, thoughts, and behaviors listed below can be the result of stress.

Physical signs and symptoms

Fatigue
Sleep problems
Frequent illness
Tight neck and shoulders
Cold or sweaty hands
Headaches
High blood pressure
Upset stomach
Fatigue
Eyestrain
Excessive sweating
Constipation/diarrhea
Nervous tics
Rashes
Teeth grinding

Thoughts and feelings

Lack of focus
Nervousness
Irritability
Impatience
Anger
Low self-esteem
Apathy
Depression
Helplessness
Hostility
Loss of confidence
Frustration
Inadequacy
Annoyance
Anxiety

Behaviors

Inability to concentrate
Overeating
Forgetfulness
Procrastination
Swearing
Reckless driving
Oversleeping
Drinking and drug use
Negativism
Increase in smoking
Belittling others
Arguing
Avoiding confrontation
Frequent accidents
Hyperactivity



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In preparing material for this section, Penobscot Bay Press interviewed only some of the many health care providers and professionals in our area. For additional information, see the health care section of the Bay Community Register, available at our newspaper offices, or the community information on our Web site, www.penobscotbaypress.com, go to Captain's Quarters, Archives.

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Reducing stress *Continued from page 2*

activities or activities that will reduce stress. "Studies have shown that writing behaviors on a prescription pad is more effective" than saying the same thing, she notes.

The poor choices that many make when under stress, said Norris, include smoking, exercising less, eating comfort foods, which are high in fat and sugar or fat and salt, and turning to alcohol or other controlled substances. "This becomes the perfect storm," said Norris, by way of contributing further to the effects of stress with additional stress.

The cycle of stress can be looked at in a different way, Norris said, explaining that in certain circumstances people can become disempowered and exhibit the equivalent of learned helplessness, a well-established and documented psychological behavior in which the individual feels they have no control over a given situation.

Is it our culture?

For early hunters and gatherers, the fight or flight response was natural; it was important. They were a people that lived according to the earth's cycles of seasons, crops and the sun. Princell argues that although our bodies are still similar to those of our cavemen ancestors, "our world has changed significantly" and become more demanding.

If our external stressors have shifted from a life-threatening saber-tooth tiger attack to possibly spending each day with a demanding and inconsiderate boss and our body is programmed to either fight or flee, what is one left to do? Hit the boss with a blunt object or run, screaming and yelling, in another direction? Neither choice will advance your career and one choice may get you arrested. Instead, said Princell, one must develop skills to help cope when stressful

situations arise—chief among them is exercise. Exercise allows the body to rid itself of all the excess sugars, cholesterol and fat that were stored while under stress.

The fact that our culture is time-based poses a "key stressor" for many, explains Dr. Philip Elkin of Blue Hill Memorial Hospital. Being on time, making the time, spending time, arranging time and finding the time often complicates situations and leaves many feeling anxious.

When people feel anxious, they tend to "stuff it, rather than talk about it," he continued, eventually leading to feelings of anger. Our culture is conducive to stuffing emotions or painful or stressful situations, said Elkin, rather than talking openly about them. Because of this many people tend to avoid spending even a quiet moment alone for fear of having to confront the stuffed issues, said Elkin, thus exacerbating the problem by not coming to terms with it.

Is it fair to say that our culture is causing

stress? "The physiological changes [our bodies undergo in response to stress] were never designed to be chronic," said Aker, noting that heart disease, stroke, cancer and diabetes have become "major killers in our society" and that depression, obesity, anxiety, fatigue, chronic pain, osteoporosis, fibromyalgia, lack of sleep, decreased sex drive, decreased fertility, indigestion, accelerated aging and attention-deficit/hyperactive disorder have become "chronic, major problems." Aker calls the above-mentioned diseases and problems "virtually all preventable," and "diseases of stress and lifestyle."

However, it is all not doom and gloom, said Elkin, who believes that stress in small amounts has the ability to provide stimulus for change—especially social change. Stress and anger have contributed to social movements, as well as historical movements for equality, he continued.

The hidden causes of stress

Stress can be caused by a variety of internal and external factors and what causes stress for one person may not necessarily cause stress for another.

According to Aker, there are two important, and less discussed, hidden causes of stress that tend to affect a large part of the populace—immobility and diet.

"The body is designed to move," begins Aker. "Not only is it unhealthy to be sedentary, it initiates a stress response. With lack of movement, the [nerve cells] fire and stimulate the release of stress hormones to initiate movement." During this process, the muscles in the body tighten. "If the tightening muscles actually become painful, such as tension in the neck while sitting at your desk, the pain fibers that are firing initiate more stress response," he explained.

A highly refined diet of carbohydrates (e.g., bread, rice, beans, potatoes, pasta, cookies, milk) releases insulin, which

Continued on page 4

Is it chronic stress?

While acute stress can be thrilling and exciting (e.g., fast run down a challenging ski slope), chronic stress is not. This is the grinding stress that wears people away day after day, year after year. Chronic stress destroys bodies, minds and lives. It wreaks havoc through long-term attrition. It's the stress of poverty, of dysfunctional families, of being trapped in an unhappy marriage or in a despised job or career. It's the stress that the never-ending "troubles" have brought to the people of Northern Ireland, the tensions of the Middle East have brought to the Arab and Jew, and the endless ethnic rivalries that have been brought to the people of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

Chronic stress comes when a person never sees a way out of a miserable situa-

tion. It's the stress of unrelenting demands and pressures for seemingly interminable periods of time. With no hope, the individual gives up searching for solutions.

Some chronic stresses stem from traumatic, early childhood experiences that become internalized and remain forever painful and present. Some experiences profoundly affect personality. A view of the world, or a belief system, is created that causes unending stress for the individual (e.g., the world is a threatening place, people will find out you are a pretender, you must be perfect at all times). When personality or deep-seated convictions and beliefs must be reformulated, recovery requires active self-examination, often with professional help.

The worst aspect of chronic stress is that people get used to it. They forget it's there.

People are immediately aware of acute stress because it is new; they ignore chronic stress because it is old, familiar, and sometimes, almost comfortable.

Chronic stress kills through suicide, violence, heart attack, stroke, and perhaps, even cancer. People wear down to a final, fatal breakdown. Because physical and mental resources are depleted through long-term attrition, the symptoms of chronic stress are difficult to treat and may require extended medical as well as behavioral treatment and stress management.

Adapted from The Stress Solution by Lyle H. Miller, Ph.D., and Alma Dell Smith, Ph.D. For more information see the American Psychological Association's Web site, www.apahelpcenter.org.



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Reducing stress *Continued from page 3*

decreases blood sugar, said Aker. The body raises levels of blood sugar by releasing cortisol, a primary stress hormone. "In addition to releasing cortisol to combat the fluctuating levels of sugar, the body also releases catecholamines, which have the effect of increasing anxiety and making the brain crave carbs as comfort food...A poor diet will cause repeated stress responses during the day which may significantly affect how we feel."

For example, Aker gives an example of a child attending school. "A child has eaten a high refined carbohydrate breakfast and they are placed sitting in a desk or a chair...They may be worried about homework not done, an assignment not understood, the hurtful words of a friend, parental fighting, etc. A normal stress response is therefore initiated. The ability to concentrate is decreased, the ability to learn is decreased, and the ability to focus is decreased. The level of distraction is increased and the need to move is increased. These are normal physiological responses that these children are experiencing in response to a stressful environment from both obvious and hidden sources of stress."

What to do, oh, what to do

We live in a culture that is demanding. We are asked to perform a number of duties,

roles and tasks. We are expected not to be slowed down, by sickness or family obligations, even if the expectations become greater. With recent technological advances we can access our work computer from home, we can send e-mail from our child's soccer game and we can answer our cell phone from anywhere in the world. Sound familiar? This may sound like a nightmare, but it is only your nightmare if you choose it to be.

Lifestyle changes are always an option, says Princell, and saying "no" is also an option for relieving stress in your life. "It is important to examine how you react to a stressful situation," said Princell, who explained that changing one's perception of a situation might go a long way to making one feel better.

Norris stressed the need for exercise, natural foods, a good support network, and the appropriate amount of rest, when asked how to reduce stress.

Avoiding alcohol and caffeine, suggests Elkin, while placing the primary focus on lifestyle. "Spend time with yourself, be honest with your emotions and enter into loving relationships."

It is most important to "take charge of your own wellness," explained Norris, "you may not be able to avoid stress, but you can avoid a toxic reaction to it."

How to stay in control of your stress

The following three approaches, excerpted from a stress reduction program created by Catherine Princell, lead ScoreHealth registered nurse at Blue Hill Memorial Hospital, are considered useful in mastering control of stressful situations. Use them individually, in tandem or all together as needed.

Change your perception of the problem

1. Share your worries. Another person may help you to see your problem in a different light.
2. Do something nice for others—it gets your mind off your problems and can give you a new perspective.
3. Give in once in a while.
4. Take responsibility for your own responses and actions—it is your response to a situation that generates stress in your body.
5. Give yourself positive verbal messages.

Change the situation or environment

1. Take a break. Sometimes a little distance gives you new answers.

2. Be realistic in scheduling activities for yourself—don't bite off more than you can chew. Say NO sometimes.

3. Establish life objectives—know what your priorities are. Sometimes a change in living situations, relationships, job, etc., is the best answer.

Cope with it

1. Work it off—blow off steam physically with exercise or an active hobby.
2. Make time to play—plan a little fun and relaxation into every day.
3. Break big problems down to more manageable ones.
4. Anticipate stressors and relax beforehand.
5. Get enough sleep and rest.
6. Avoid self-medication with drugs or alcohol.
7. Practice a relaxation technique every day.



Pleaser, pessimist, pusher?

Personality types can be identified with stress

As stress mounts in a person's life, it can manifest in a variety of ways, causing one to assume coping styles. Of these styles a number have been identified and considered to be dominant. Do any of these personalities sound like you?

The Procrastinator: This person deals with stress by letting everything pile up. It is an effective short-term coping strategy because avoiding the task does reduce stress. But sooner or later the task must be done, and the person is faced with a lot of stress instead of just a little.

The Perfectionist: The perfectionist is always striving to do better. In a situation which is already stressful (e.g., taking an exam), the perfectionist creates extra stress by insisting he or she perform flawlessly (e.g., working and reworking the problems to make sure they're correct). Their efforts are, of course, futile since we inevitably make mistakes.

The Passivist: In a stressful situation, the passive person tries to cope by disengaging or just sitting back and letting things happen. While inaction may momentarily relieve stress, it won't for long. The passive person actually ends up being frustrated and hassled

because something was done wrong while he or she was standing by. Most passivists eventually work themselves up to a state of resentment if not outright rage.

The Pleaser: The pleaser wants to be liked by everyone. She or he has trouble refusing people, expressing emotions (especially anger), and often overextends himself or herself by taking on too many responsibilities. A pleaser can be recognized by his or her ever-present smile. Actually, there is a well of resentment, anxiety, and guilt just underneath that smile. By trying to please everyone, the pleaser rarely gets his or her own needs met.

The Pessimist: This person chooses to always look on the negative side of things. If a pessimist goes on a picnic on a lovely, sunny, day, he or she is likely to draw on the fact that the mustard was left at home rather than enjoying the company of friends. Since life is full of danger and troubles to the pessimist, she or he has few moments of relaxation and pleasure, and instead spends much time in fruitless worry.

The Pusher: The pusher displays "Type A behavior," a term coined by Meyer Friedman and Roy Rosenman, two cardiologists. Such a person is highly competitive, impatient,

time-orientated, and concerned with external success. He or she tends to see things in terms of numbers (e.g., how much money they earn, how many hours a project will take to complete, etc.), and frequently tries to do two or more things at the same time. Friedman and Rosenman found that people who exhibit Type A behaviors are more likely to develop heart disease and hypertension and to have high blood cholesterol levels than are people who take a more leisurely approach to life.

The Philosopher: This person generally handles stress the best of all the personality types and is the least likely to display symptoms of stress. A philosopher does not feel compelled to prove himself or herself constantly and is fairly easygoing. The overall attitude of the philosopher is one of acceptance of life—including his or her own imperfections—and a concern for processes rather than products. The philosopher is able to relax without worrying and realizes the value of play.

Editor's note: Information provided by Catherine Princell, lead ScoreHealth registered nurse at Blue Hill Memorial Hospital.



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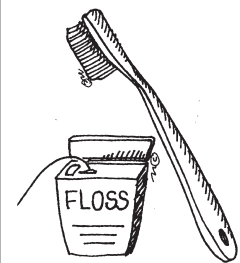
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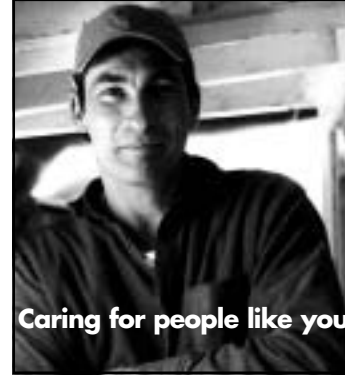
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Acupuncturists seek homeostasis

by Faith DeAmbrose

Acupuncture is an ancient form of healing that can be traced back at least 2,000 years to early Chinese civilization, although some scholars and providers debate that its roots go back even further. Focusing on the body's natural energy, or *Qi*, an acupuncturist will evaluate his or her patient to determine the best approach for treatment. Reading the body's pulse, examining the patient's tongue, and in-depth conversations with the patient is also part of an initial evaluation, or intake.

"The body will give you clues," said practitioner Ken Lowry, L.Ac., who explains that an acupuncturist works with the idea of homeostasis, or the natural and stable condition of the body. Utilizing the body's natural desire to be well, an acupuncturist uses needles to bring back the body's homeostatic condition, assuming that a lack of homeostasis causes pain and illness.

There are approximately 400 acupuncture



points found on the body, each relating to specific body parts, with each point being part of 12 known meridians (specific pathways believed to carry energy through the body) correlating to major internal organs. Acupuncture points are believed to stimulate the nervous system in order to restore proper energy flow.

According to Lowry, acupuncturists often treat illnesses or see patients with conditions that "don't make sense" to conventional Western medical doctors. "They come here because [their condition] is complicated and they need help, they need a lot of attention or they come because their condition is not

Quitting smoking actually reduces stress

Most smokers say they feel better when they are smoking or shortly after having had a cigarette. This is likely due to the nicotine in cigarettes, which causes the brain to release chemicals called neurotransmitters. Some of these, such as beta-endorphin and norepinephrine, can cause a person to feel better temporarily because they are involved in the reduction of both anxiety and pain.

There are other, nonchemical reasons that smoking might appear to relax someone who is under stress. A smoke break can provide a distraction from dealing with a stressful situation. Smoking is often a social activity, which can comfort and provide camaraderie for some people in times of stress. Also, an addicted smoker will feel better after having a cigarette because the nicotine will relieve

responding to other treatments." In this regard, acupuncturists have the ability to see a problem from a different angle, or through a different lens than a conventional physician.

Calling commonly used metaphors such as "having a broken heart, having the blues, or being unable to let go—remarkably accurate," Lowry explains that because acupuncturists take the time to evaluate the entire body, including mental-emotional issues, the whole person is diagnosed and a better understanding of the condition is achieved.

For more information about acupuncture or to find a provider in this area, visit www.acupuncture.com.

the withdrawal symptoms.

Studies are beginning to show that the perceived relaxing effects of smoking only reflect the reversal of the withdrawal symptoms that develop during nicotine depletion. Far from acting as an aid for mood control, nicotine dependency seems to increase stress. According to psychologist Andy Parrott, of the University of East London, studies show that quitting smoking actually reduces stress. To see the full study go to American Psychological Association's Web site at www.apa.org.

For aids in dealing with quitting smoking and dealing with stress, check out the following Web sites: www.cancer.gov, www.smokefree.gov, and stress.about.com.

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...aging

There are several organizations that address aging, or caring for an aging relative or friend.

The Eastern Agency on Aging provides a range of services, including support groups for caregivers, helpful information about health insurance (including assisting deciphering difficult to understand paperwork), phone check-ins, Meals for Me delivery, assistance with heating costs, even help with tax forms. For more information, call 800-432-7812 or visit www.eaaa.org.

Faith in Action offers free services to elderly and disabled residents of Hancock County. For more information, call 667-6016 or visit www.fia-communityconnection.org.

Neighborcare is a volunteer group offering free health-related services, including, among other things, visitation, transportation, and assistance with medical equipment, on the Blue Hill peninsula and beyond. For more information, call 367-5823 or 374-2273.

Health Directory

A local guide to medical and health services (continued)

Health Education

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Barbara Peppy, Director

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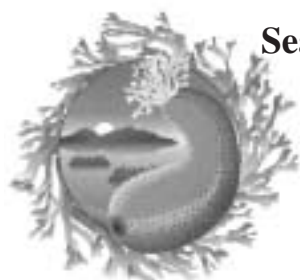
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Feldenkrais practitioners guide subtle movements

by Faith DeAmbrose

Imagine lying on the floor with your eyes closed. Cushioned by mats and warm blankets, you are guided through a series of movements that are subtle and gentle. You are asked to scan the placement of your body as it connects with the floor as the one-hour session begins and again as it ends. Does your body feel differently or does it connect with the floor in a different way? With the aid of a Guild Certified Feldenkrais Practitioner® you are instructed to make a series

of movements that focus on a particular part of the body. The subtle movements allow for conscious control over the body's muscles and the movements are not about trying, explained practitioner Gabrielle Wellman, they are about focusing attention on one's self.

The Feldenkrais method of somatic education promotes movements that directly affect the central nervous system. The central nervous system is the largest part of the body's nervous system and includes the spinal chord

and brain. The Feldenkrais method concentrates on using small movements to stimulate the central nervous system in order to make moves "smarter." According to Wellman, Feldenkrais is considered a learning method; it is not a treatment and encourages people to "think about how they move; to make the movements smarter rather than harder."

Feldenkrais can be used for a variety of reasons and to correct a number of chronic conditions, including stress. Under stressful conditions, the body will "hold" stress in

various places. Most often stress is held in the neck, shoulders and back, but it can be held most anywhere. Through the many lessons designed for Feldenkrais instruction, students, as they are called in this modality, could potentially change the patterns of stress-holding that exist within the body to restore proper functionality. "It is about learning where you are holding stress and how, through experience in movement, you can relax," explained Wellman.

In stress, continued Wellman, the muscles of the body are in a constant state of contraction, breathing is shallow, the natural response called "the flight or fight response" is activated. Under chronic stress the muscles become trained to hold contractions in certain parts of the body making movements difficult and unnatural while forcing the body, in some instances, to work against itself causing damage.

For more information about Feldenkrais or to find a practitioner in your area visit www.feldenkrais.com.

How do you know when you need professional help dealing with stress?

What if incorporating stress-relieving approaches doesn't help you feel better? How do you know when it's time to seek help from a professional such as a medical doctor or mental health professional?

Try asking yourselves these questions:

- Is your stress interfering with your job, education or home life?
- Have you been managing your stress for

an extended period of time by over- or undereating, smoking or drinking alcoholic beverages?

- Have you withdrawn from your usual social activities?
- Are you suffering from ongoing sadness, depression or fear?
- Do you often feel a sense of hopelessness?

- Have you had strange or disturbing thoughts or thoughts of suicide?
- Do you have serious problems that continue to interfere with your daily living?

A yes to any of these questions may indicate that seeking professional help could be advisable, even if just to get more information in order to more fully understand the situation and possible treatment options.

Health Directory

A local guide to medical and health services (continued)

Hypnotherapists

Hypno-Health

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Shiatsu is a form of Asian bodywork that balances the energy in our body/minds. Specific points (the same ones used by acupuncturists) are manipulated by gentle pressure applied with hands and fingers. People experience a session that is relaxing and invigorating.

See www.feldenkrais.com or www.aobta.org for more information.

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Watsu is water therapy considered to reduce stress

by Faith DeAmbrose

With your eyes closed and ears submerged beneath water heated to ideal body temperature, you are guided through a series of movements and stretches. In a fully handicapped accessible and environmentally friendly building designed solely to house a pool 22 feet in diameter, you

are surrounded by lit candles and a variety of potted plants. This is Watsu—a water therapy aimed at promoting deep relaxation and relief of a number of environmental and personal ailments—as practiced locally, in Blue Hill.

Once in the pool, the practitioner will support the client for the entire session, moving and

manipulating various parts of the body from head to toe. Watsu dates back to 1980 and is based on the ancient Japanese principles of Zen Shiatsu.

“In water,” explained certified Watsu and water dance therapist Vicki Mitchell, “there are opportunities to stretch, manipulate and hold the body in ways that are not available during a

standard table massage.” And with these opportunities, it is believed that Watsu provides a number of benefits ranging from physical to emotional.

Chief among these benefits are the relief from chronic pain, stiffness and stress, decompression and expansion of joints, increased circulation, the reduction of emotional pain and calming of the nervous system.

Watsu is considered by its practitioners to reduce stress. During a one-hour treatment the participant is silent, is given a chance to rest and also to “go inside of yourself,” explains Mitchell, “to achieve a deep, inward rest that allows the body to heal.”

When the body experiences stress, it tends to hold that stress within the body if not dealt with properly. During a Watsu session, the body, being weightless, has the ability to release stress that may harbor in bones, joints, vertebra and muscles.

For more information about Watsu or to search for a practitioner anywhere in the world, visit www.watsu.com.

...managing debt

Here, from a credit counseling Web site, InCharge Debt Solutions, is a helpful idea if you have balances on more than one card and are unable to pay much more than the minimum.

- Gather all of your most recent credit card statements, sit down with a pencil and paper, and write down the balance of each debt and the interest rate charged.

- Beginning with the lowest interest rate debt(s), pay only the minimum amount due.

- On your highest interest rate debt, pay

Reducing the stress of...

the minimum payment plus any additional amount you can afford.

- Once this debt is paid off, go to your next highest interest rate debt and apply the money you were paying toward the first debt towards the second debt.

- Also, add the minimum you were paying on the second debt and keep paying the minimum due on the others.

Getting to a zero balance

Have you wondered what it will take to get a \$0 balance on your credit card? Check out the

credit card calculator at: www.bankrate.com/brm/calc/creditcardpay.asp.

Be careful!

Turning to a business that offers help in solving debt problems may seem like a reasonable solution when your bills become unmanageable. Before working with any company, check it out with your state Attorney General, local consumer protection agency, or the Better Business Bureau.

For more information, see Fiscal Fitness: Choosing a Credit Counselor, at www.ftc.gov/credit.

Health Directory

A local guide to medical and health services (continued)

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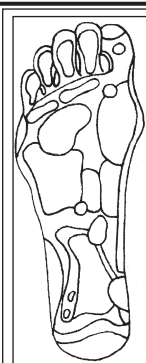
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Yoga

Reflexologists work with feet and hands

by Faith DeAmbrose

Reflexology is conducted in a one-on-one setting often in a comfortable chair that elevates and extends the feet upward and outward providing easy access for the practitioner. During a treatment only the feet are exposed—along with each of their approximate 7,200 nerve endings, 26 bones and 19 muscles.

The feet stabilize and support the body; they are the part that is grounded to the floor and the part that bears the body's weight. Those who study reflexology believe there are reflex points in the hands and feet that provide pathways to all other parts of the body, including cells, organs, glands, muscles and bones. For instance, reflexology teaches that the toes of the feet correspond to the nerve endings in the head, sinuses, and so on, the spot where the toes join the feet are the reflective of the shoulders, below that are

the lungs and further down the foot are the reflective of lower body parts including the small intestines and sciatica. These points are likewise correlated in the hands and fingers.

Reflexology is not a medical treatment, it cannot be substituted for a medical treatment and its providers are, in the majority of cases, not medically trained physicians. According to practicing certified reflexologist June Atherton, reflexology is considered a "complementary" treatment to conventional medicine, a treatment that "keeps in balance the body's natural rhythm, allowing the body to heal itself from disease, emotional issues and stress." Atherton suggests that because of the environmental stresses that many people deal with regularly, the body can lose its natural balance and natural ability to heal itself, causing the body to feel...well, "out of whack."

Reflexology is also something that indi-

viduals can practice on themselves or others without worry of causing harm or of harmful side-effects. There are a few simple exercises that anyone can do to stimulate the reflex points on feet, explains Atherton, who suggests rolling a tennis ball (a golf ball is too hard, she says) beneath the arch of the foot, practicing to pick up a marble or pencil with one's toes and when waking in the morning simply rotating each ankle and stretching. It is believed that through reflexology the body rids itself of toxins that accumulate in cells of the body. Those engaging in self-reflexology should educate themselves about the process and drink plenty of water.

For more information about reflexology or to find a practitioner throughout the state of Maine, contact the Maine Council of Reflexologists, located in Augusta, at www.reflexologyofmaine.org.

Six steps can lead to a positive change

1. Assess your current situation (e.g., How much do I exercise now? What type of exercise did I get last week? How much exercise does my family get?)

2. Note areas you would like to change (e.g., I would like to get more exercise on work days. I would like to get my family to work out with me.)

3. Set a realistic goal (e.g., I will take a walk before work two days this week. I will plan an outing for the family that includes exercise this weekend.)

4. Develop specific strategies (e.g., I will pack my lunch the night before to free up some time in the morning. I will get the kids to help me generate ideas about weekend activities.)

5. Evaluate progress (e.g., I was able to walk three times. The kids and I had fun but my husband was less pleased with our choice.)

6. Adjust your strategies and reassess your situation (e.g., Continue walking in the morning two or three times a week and increase my distance on one of them. Include my husband in the discussion of activities.)

How do you know if your child is under stress?

by Karen DeBord, Ph.D.,
National Network for Child Care

Reactions to stress vary with the child's stage of development, ability to cope, the length of time the stressor continues, intensity of the stressor, and the degree of support from family, friends and community. The two most frequent indicators that children are stressed are change in behaviors and regression of behaviors. Children under stress change their behavior and react by doing things that are not in keeping with

their usual style. Behaviors seen in earlier phases of development, such as thumb sucking and regression in toileting, may reappear.

Preschoolers

Typically, preschoolers lack self-control, have no sense of time, act independently, are curious, may wet the bed, have changes in eating habits, have difficulty with sleep or speech, and cannot tell adults how they are feeling.

Preschoolers under stress each react differently. Some behaviors may include irritability, anxiety, uncontrollable crying, trembling with fright, eating or sleep problems. Toddlers may regress to infant behaviors, feel angry and not understand their feelings, fear being alone or without their parent, withdraw, bite, or be sensitive to sudden or loud noises. Feelings of sadness or anger may build inside of them. They may become angry or aggressive, have nightmares, or be accident prone.

Elementary-age children

Typical elementary-age children can whine when things don't go their way, be

aggressive, question adults, try out new behaviors, complain about school, have fears and nightmares, and lose concentration.

Reactions to stress may include withdrawal, feelings of being unloved, being distrustful, not attending to school or friendships, and having difficulty naming their feelings. Under stress, they may worry about the future, complain of head or stomachaches, have trouble sleeping, have a loss of appetite, or need to urinate frequently.

Preteens and adolescents

Adolescents typically are rebellious, have "growing" pains and skin problems, may have sleep disturbances, may go off by themselves, be agitated and act irresponsibly.

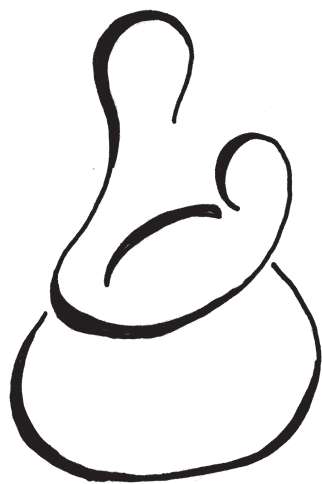
Adolescents and teens under stress may feel angry longer, feel disillusioned, lack self-esteem, and have a general distrust of the world. Sometimes adolescents will show extreme behaviors ranging from doing everything they are asked, to rebelling and breaking all of the rules and taking part in high-risk behaviors (drugs, shoplifting, skipping school). Depression and suicidal tendencies are concerns.



Reducing the stress of... children

How can you, as a parent, help reduce the stress children may experience?

- by monitoring and controlling your own stress so that you are better able to assist your children.
- by being available to talk to your children.
- by providing ways in which kids can be kids—arranging play dates with other children, offering opportunities for children to laugh and ensuring children have fun, safe activities to take part in on a regular basis.
- by providing a healthy balance of routine and structure in your children's lives.
- by observing closely and knowing if typical childhood stress has become distress and requires attention.
- by helping your children think through and brainstorm solutions for stressful situations.
- by teaching your children healthy ways to relax.
- by having realistic expectations for your children.
- by letting your children know ways you are proud of them.



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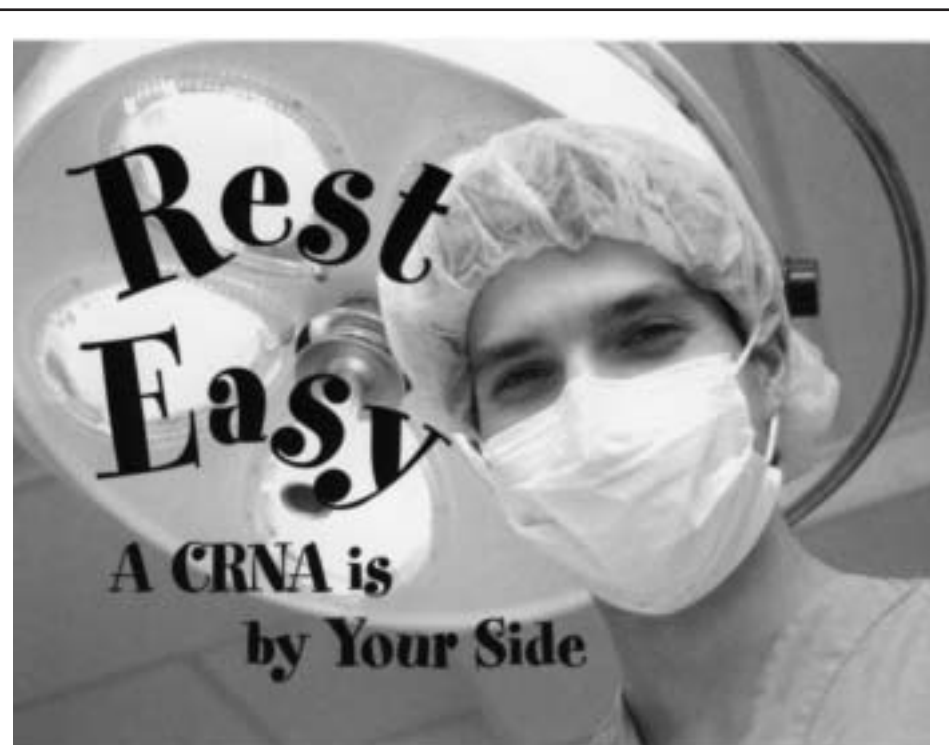
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Chiropractors recognize nervous system interferences

by Faith DeAmbrose

Chiropractic medicine assumes that the body possesses innate intelligence and responds to its environment in the most physiologically appropriate way possible. In other words, a chiropractor endeavors to provide care that supports the body's ability to adapt to the environment and maintain a stable level of health and wellness, explains Dr. Michael Aker, who practices in Blue Hill.



This includes an evaluation of the total body, including nutritional and lifestyle counseling as part of a complete care program.

Chiropractors are trained to recognize interferences to the nervous system, which can cause both physiological dysfunction and initiate a stress response. (The nervous system consists of the central nervous system—the brain and spinal chord, as well as the peripheral nervous system that is responsible for all body functions not under conscious control, including nerves, heart, lungs, and glands.) Essential to optimal functioning of the nervous system is the proper alignment and movement of spinal joints. In a typical session at the chiropractor, the patient is evaluated for physical weaknesses as well as improper spinal joint motion.

“As the world becomes more stressful, the chiropractic wellness paradigm is more important than ever,” explains Aker. “The modern chiropractic model provides a true wellness service with chiropractic adjustments, information on nutrition, stress reduction, positive thinking, aerobic, postural, core and resistance exercises and proper physiologically compatible lifestyle goal setting.” Providing the human being with the natural ingredients it needs for self-regulation, the body, a self-healing organism by design, continued Aker, will use its innate ability to heal, resulting in health and wellness.

For complete information about chiropractic medicine, visit the American Chiropractic Association Web site at www.amerchiro.org.

Reducing the stress of...

...your job

- Have realistic expectations. Know your limits. Whether personally or professionally, be realistic about how much you can do. Set limits for yourself and learn to say “no” to more work and commitments.

- Reframe problems. See problems as opportunities. As a result of positive thinking, you will be able to handle whatever is causing your stress. Refute negative thoughts and try to see the glass as half full. It is easy to fall into the rut of seeing only the negative when you are stressed. Your thoughts can become like a pair of dark glasses, allowing little light or joy into your life.

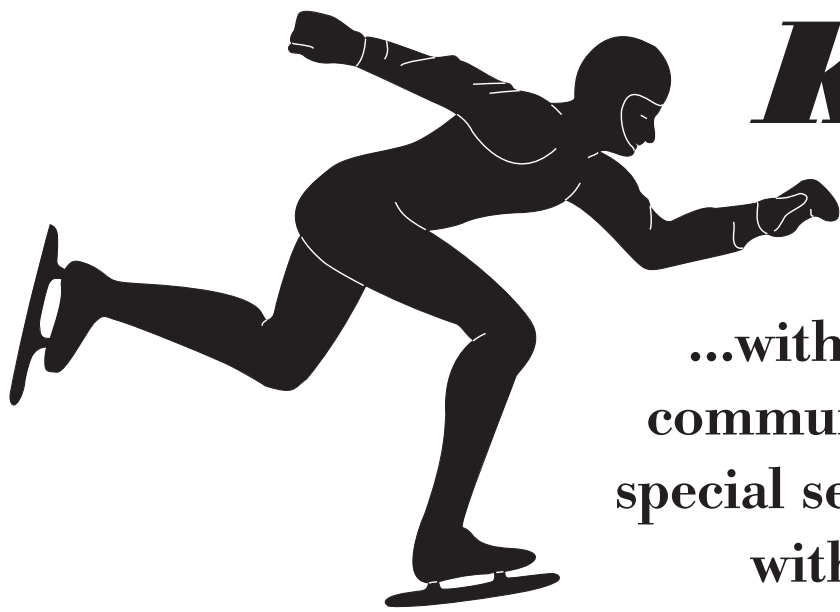
- Maintain your sense of humor. This includes the ability to laugh at yourself. Watch a funny movie: the sillier the plot the better. The act of laughing helps your body fight stress in a number of ways.

- Express your feelings instead of bottling them up. In order to live a less stressful life, learn to calm your emotions. A good cry during periods of stress or sharing your concerns with someone you trust can be healthy ways to bring relief to your anxiety.

- Don't try to control events or other people. Many circumstances in life are beyond your control, particularly the behavior of others. Consider that we live in an imperfect world. Learn to accept what is, for now, until the time comes when perhaps you can change things.

- Ask yourself “Is this my problem?” If it isn't, leave it alone. If it is, can you resolve it now? Once the problem is settled, leave it alone. Don't agonize over the decision, and try to accept situations you cannot change.

See www.helpguide.org for more suggestions.



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Therapy assesses craniosacral system

by Faith DeAmbrose

CranioSacral Therapy is a hands-on therapy performed on a client who is fully clothed. With a light touch the practitioner begins a session by evaluating the overall rhythm of the craniosacral system. This system, physiologically similar to the respiratory or cardiovascular systems, extends from

the bones of the skull, jaw, face and mouth, commonly referred to as the cranium, to the sacrum, or tailbone.

This system also houses the central nervous system and cerebrospinal fluid, which protects the spinal chord and brain. "You're body doesn't do anything that the central nervous system does not tell it to do," explained CranioSacral therapist Lori Ingram.

Focusing on the sacrum, spinal column and head, a practitioner will use his or her hands to assess the client's craniosacral system, then work towards assisting the body in achieving optimal balance and functioning. Chronic pain and fatigue, headaches and emotional issues, continued Ingram, are commonly treated conditions for cran-

iosacral therapists.

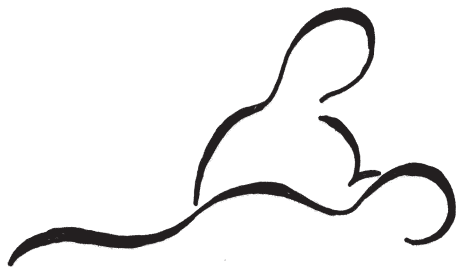
Ingram, who is also a conventional health care practitioner, explained that through her experiences with occupational therapy, she could see areas that were not being completely addressed with conventional health care. She believes this therapy should be performed in a manner that is adjunct to conventional medicine and should be done in a pro-active or as a preventative measure to combat health problems.

According to information provided by The Upledger Institute, a training institute for craniosacral therapy, the craniosacral system is vital in that it "influences the development and performance of the brain and spinal chord," and an "imbalance or restriction could potentially

cause a number of sensory, motor or neurological disabilities." Those who practice the therapy believe that through detection and correction of improper rhythms in the craniosacral system, the body will begin to heal naturally "to dissipate the negative effects of stress on the central nervous system."

Building on the premise that stress is held in various areas of the body, CST offers a number of techniques that encourage the body to release stress and help to calm affected areas of the body.

For more information about CranioSacral Therapy contact the International Alliance of Healthcare Educators at www.iahe.com or The Upledger Institute at www.upledger.com.



Reducing the stress of...

...parents, teens and loved ones

Resources for parents

Downeast Health Services offers programs such as: Maternal Child Health/Home Health, Women, Infants and Children, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Eastern Maine, Hancock County Children's Council (including a free "bootcamp" for new dads), and Parents Are Teachers Too. Downeast Health Services is located at 52 Christian Ridge Road, Ellsworth, and can be reached at 800-492-5550 or visit www.downeasthealthservices.org.

Child and Families Opportunities, Inc., provides comprehensive early education, health and family services to enrolled children and their families. They are located at 18 Avery Lane, Ellsworth, and can be reached at 800-834-4378 or visit www.childandfamilyopp.org.

Tips for teens

- Find someone to talk to—a friend, a family member, a teacher. If you don't feel better after talking to one person, talk to someone else.
- Rehearse or role play challenging situations (asking someone out, going for a job interview).
- Talk over your concerns with a trusted friend or adult.
- Don't overdo caffeine as it stresses the body more.
- Get enough sleep (if you know you'll be up late one night, make the next night an early one).
- Get fun exercise.
- Let someone (anyone) at your school know about your stress. Ask for a support group, peer support or some other help.
- Use healthy options for stress release, not drugs or alcohol.
- Learn a relaxation technique such as deep breathing or yoga.
- Develop your assertive side so you speak up for yourself and say no when you need to.

- Let your stressful feelings out—keeping stress bottled up doesn't help.
- Keep perspective. Be realistic.
- Don't commit to things you don't want to do.
- Do something nice for someone else.

Teen resources

Open Door Recovery in Ellsworth, offers substance abuse services. For more information, call 667-3210 or 568-1112.

1-800-runaway offers anonymous and confidential assistance for runaway youth or those who are considering running away.

Next Step offers dating abuse and domestic violence counseling. For more information or for help, call 800-315-5579.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline can be reached at 800-273-TALK (8255).

Helping loved ones

Seeing our loved ones struggle with stressful situations can be very painful. Below are some ways to help.

- Take time to listen, really listen, asking

clarifying questions to be certain you understand the concern. Often, being listened to is a great stress reliever.

- Respond without judgments or criticisms.

• Listen with empathy and understanding, resisting urges to share your own problems.

• Resist the temptation to take over the problem. Often what is needed is support and help, not a complete rescue.

• Help your loved one think about the situation rationally and logically. Spending some time brainstorming solutions can be very helpful.

• Encourage your loved one to maintain or return to helpful routines. Stress can sometimes overwhelm people and cause them to drop out of their usual activities.

• Don't assume that someone else is taking care of the problem.

- Take care of your own stress.
- Learn more about stress so you can recognize the signs in yourself and others.

Suicide prevention information

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline number is 800-273-TALK (8255).

When would someone call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline?

Crisis centers are equipped to take a wide range of calls, from immediate suicidal crises to requests for information about mental health. People can call:

- to speak with someone who cares,
- if they feel they might be in danger of hurting themselves,
- to find referrals to mental health services in their area,
- to speak to a crisis worker about someone they're concerned about.

For more information, go to www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org.

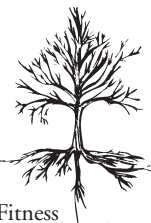
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Walking the Peninsula



Edward Page of Blue Hill leaves the Blue Hill Post Office with his dog Katie after picking up the mail on a recent winter day. Photo by Jonathan Thomas

Reducing stress by taking Healthy Maine Walks

Healthy Maine Walks is sponsored by a coalition of trail and health agencies and organizations. They work together to promote healthier lifestyles by making it easier for Mainers to find and use walking routes in communities all across the state.

For those looking for trails, the organization's Web site (www.healthymainewalks.org) includes descriptions of registered walks that include directions, contact information, where maps are available, the type of terrain, if dogs are allowed, and a thorough description of the trail and its features.

The Web site also provides a central location for towns and groups to register favorite walks.

The Healthy Peninsula Project (www.healthypeninsula.org) recently compiled trail information about the Blue Hill peninsula, Deer Isle and Isle au Haut from

the Maine Healthy Walks Web site. Binders with the information are available at local schools, libraries and healthcare providers.

Below is a list of some of the local routes (and their distances) detailed on the Web site and compiled by the HPP.

Blue Hill

Blue Hill Mountain, 2 miles
Kingdom Woods Conservation Area, 3 1/2 miles

Brooksville

Holbrook Island Sanctuary
Aaron Trail, 1 2/3 miles
Bakeman Farm Trail, 2/3 mile
Beaver Flowage Trail, 1 mile
Ferry Landing Natural Area, 1 1/2 miles
Maude E. and Eugene Snow Natural Area, 2 1/4 miles



Bright colored petunias decorated the bridge over Mill Stream in downtown Blue Hill as Carol Blyberg walked her dog Smilla on a sunny morning last summer. Photo by Jonathan Thomas

Walking trails in the Stonington, Deer Isle and Isle au Haut area

The Island Heritage Trust is a nonprofit land trust that has developed a number of nature preserves on Deer Isle that are open to the public. A map can be found at www.islandheritagetrust.org. A printed walking map of Deer Isle is also available through the IHT.

Mariners Memorial Park - Sunshine Road near junction with Route 15.

Reach Beach - Grays Cove off Reach Road Narrow neck to Oak Point.

Causeway Beach - Deer Isle end of Causeway to Little Deer Isle.

Settlement Quarry - Off Oceanville Road just beyond Webb Cove Road.

Shore Acres - Off Greenlaw District Road.

Tennis Preserve - Tennis Road off Sunshine Road.

Holt Mill Pond - Just east of Island Medical Center.

Barred Island - Off Goose Cove Road.

Crockett Cove - Off Whitman Road.

Walking options on Deer Isle also include a number of walks on public roads. Ann Hooke, of the Island Walkers group has a booklet describing the walks and noting the distances. For a copy, contact her at 348-6933.

For information about hiking on Isle au Haut in Acadia National Park, see www.acadianationalpark.com.

Walking trails in the Castine/Penobscot area

Castine

Witherle Woods Preserve, 132 acres of old growth maintained by the Maine Coast Heritage Trust, a network of trails, including 300 feet of ocean frontage along Blockhouse Point.

Rene Henderson Preserve, The Shore Road (Route 166A), almost a mile from the Castine end of the Route 166/166A intersection; approximately two miles of trails. A map is available at the trailhead and a parking area.

Walking trails in the Castine/Penobscot area

Hatch Cove Preserve, Conservation Trust of Brooksville, Castine and Penobscot; Castine Road, footpaths, gentle walking, dogs are OK.

A town walking map is available from the Castine Merchants Association or at the town office.

Penobscot

Weinland Natural Study Area, Gray Ridge Road, off Route 175 about a mile south of the village. A map is available at the trailhead where there is a parking area.

Walking trails in the Blue Hill, Brooklin, Sedgwick and Surry areas

In addition to trails noted at the Healthy Maine Walks Web site (see above), the following areas have walking trails.

Blue Hill

Downtown Blue Hill, one-half mile trail between Parker Point Road (by the fountain) and South Street (south of Mainescape).

Brooklin

Walking options in Brooklin include a number of loops on public roads.

Hales Wood Road, a 3.3-mile loop when combined with High Street and part of Route 175.

Naskeag Road/Back Road Loop, a 3-mile loop. Starting at Naskeag Harbor adds another half mile.

Harriman Point Road, a 1.9 mile or a 3.3-mile loop starting at the Reggie Sherman Baseball Field and incorporating Route 175.

Sedgwick

Cooper Farm Trail, 1 mile. Parking is available at the Route 15 Caterpillar Hill scenic overlook. The trailhead is down Cooper Farm Road a short ways.

Surry

Carter Nature Preserve, crossroad near Morgan Bay Bridge, parking.

BYOD: Bring Your Own Dog

Dogs may be walked on leashes on a number of local trails. On Deer Isle, leashed dogs are welcome on several Island Heritage Trust trails, including the Tennis Preserve. See www.islandheritagetrust.org/faqs.html for details. Healthy Maine Walks has lists of trails at www.healthymainewalks.org and notes whether dogs are welcome. Leashed dogs are welcome on Isle au Haut for day hikes on Acadia National Park trails.

"But it's too cold/icy/wet/dark!"

Indoor Walking Options

Blue Hill—The Blue Hill Memorial Hospital is available daily from September to May; 374-2836.

Stonington—For Island Community Center hours, call 367-2735.

Public schools—Many local schools, such as the Brooklin School and the Deer Isle-Stonington schools, are available during the school year.

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