

SquareONE

Rehabilitation

SLEEP

AND

STRESS

MANAGEMENT

GUIDE

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We need to experience stress. Without it, there would be no reason for us to adapt and get stronger. The importance lies in knowing how to cope with and recover from the stressor.

If we perceive everyday as a threat, we will pay the price.

Our levels of inflammation will go up, blood sugar will rise, testosterone will plummet along with lean muscle mass, bad cholesterol will increase, visceral and abdominal fat will increase and with this there will be an increase in our chances of developing metabolic disease, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes.

We may feel fine now, but the symptoms will creep up. Achy joints, trouble falling asleep, feeling tired but wired during the day, digestion, leaky gut, gas and bloating.

The fact is, we live in an environment that causes our fight or flight instincts (i.e., pupils dilate, heart rate increase, digestion is inhibited, stress hormones increase) to stay in overdrive. Family, work, paying the bills, commutes, working out, electronics, and mismanaged diets.

So the question becomes “With all of this stress in our lives, how can we learn to positively cope and adapt from all of it?”

Being such an amazing organism, we have methods that are in our complete control to deal with all of this stress.

Let’s start with something we do about twenty thousand times each and every day.

Breathe

If we live in the fight or flight, sympathetic overdrive most of the day, we need to learn how to “turn off” or so to speak. We have to learn how to rest and digest. To tend and befriend.

Proper breathing offers our body a stimulus that tells us to relax and calm down. It can bring us into the moment, rid of anxiety and give us a sense of mindfulness and control.

Simply breathing right has been shown to lower our blood cortisol levels and boost our mood and productivity!

Breathing Work/Meditation

- Sit either cross-legged or upright on a chair or couch.
- Close your eyes
- Inhale through your nose for 3 seconds, feeling the cooling air at the tip of your nose as your abdominal region expands. You want the breath to go down, and wide. Not into the chest which is high, and shallow.
- Hold the breath momentarily for about one full second
- Exhale through your nose slowly for about 3-5 seconds, feeling the warm air exit, as your ribs relax down, and your belly naturally draws in towards your spine.
- Repeat for 5-10 minutes You may notice that this sounds a lot like meditation. And in a sense it is. Meditation is an act of bringing yourself into the present moment, and generating deep awareness and mindfulness to your mind, body, and senses. I highly recommend the Headspace App in which Andy Puddicombe guides you through your meditation experience. You start off by having to complete 3 levels of a foundation phase, after which you can choose “packs” that focus on things such as sleep, creativity, relationships and many more. Add friends and compare stats to see total meditation time and how many sessions they have completed. Nothing beats some friendly meditative competition. Another great app is called Calm. Very similar to Headspace, but you have a lot more options available right off the bat. You can choose to focus on sleep, stress, body scan, and more, all while listening to soothing, natural background noise of your choosing.

Restorative Sleep

Sleep as we all know is extremely important. Traditional Chinese medicine suggested every hour of sleep before midnight was worth double because of their strong regenerative nature.

In order to be regenerative, sleep needs to be honored. It must be taken with the same care that we would our diet and exercise. If our bodies naturally need about one third of our time while alive, it must be important and it must be respected.

How to Improve Sleep Quality

- Aim to get to bed around 10-11pm every night
- Turn the lights down in your home as it gets closer to bedtime (9 p.m.)
- Eliminate exposure to all electronics 45 minutes to 1 hour before bed. No T.V., laptop, and cell phones. Try to read light fiction before bed to help fall asleep.
- Check out the Flux laptop and phone app that runs in the background and dims your screen to more calming red/orange light as the evening comes.
- Leave your cell phone outside of your bedroom and make sure volume is turned off
- Make your room as dark as possible, or use an eye mask
- Keep bedroom cool and sleep in loose fitting clothing
- Try your best to avoid sleeping pills. They may increase duration of sleep, but not quality.
- Get rid of loud, obnoxious alarms. Instead, try the Phillips Natural Alarm clock which will gradually brighten about 30 minutes before your set alarm time. Choose from a selection of natural sounds (water, birds) as your alarm noise.

Nutrition

Here are some actionable nutrition tips that can help improve our cortisol balance, increase lean muscle mass and improve our ability to cope with stress.

Increase Healthy fats

Experiment with avocados, grass-fed butter, ghee, extra virgin olive oil, coconut oil, seeds (hemp, chia, flax, pumpkin), nut butters (peanut, almond), walnuts and macadamia nuts. These will help to improve cortisol balance and sex hormone functioning.

Increase Protein Intake

Aim for 1.5 - 2.0 grams of protein per kilogram of bodyweight each day to support adrenal health, immune functioning, muscle recovery and nervous system.

Reduce Caffeine Intake -

To begin, try cutting coffee intake by 50%. Aim to have last cup no later than noon.

For an afternoon pick up, try green tea with ginger, or yerba-mate tea

Some final thoughts on Stress

- You will be surprised by how much a thought can influence your body chemically, emotionally and physically. Observe your thoughts, do not judge them.
- Finding control in life is huge. If a person cuts us off in traffic, the tendency is to curse and become hysterical. Then latching onto the act and turning it into a thought that eats us up inside.
- Take a thought for what it is - just a thought. Let it come, acknowledge it and let it go.
- The only thing that happened was the act, it is now over. Gain control by

breathing and maybe tell yourself a story. “Maybe he/she was late for an appointment. I have been there before and it doesn't feel good.”

- Choose not to be harmed and you won't feel harmed. Don't feel harmed and you haven't been.
- It can ruin your life only if it ruins your character. Otherwise it cannot harm you inside or out.
- It's silly to try to escape other people's faults. They are inescapable. Just try to escape your own.
- Find a great social support network. We are the average sum of the 5 people we spend the most time. Associate with jealousy, greed and laziness - become jealous, greedy, and lazy. Associate with empathy, intelligence, and love - become empathic, intelligent, and loving.