

STRESS AND TENSION

For most people, stress and tension add spice to life; but stress can also become very uncomfortable. It would be nice to escape when we feel the need to relax but that is not always possible. This article will focus on stress and tension and present alternative ways to relieve everyday stresses in your life.

STRESS MANAGEMENT

Stress is an internal part of life, and a “normal” level of stress is healthy. It is when this level becomes detrimental to our well-being that makes this tension counter-productive. Infectious disease, cancer, and physical aches and pains are all related to our mental health. Stress undermines our defenses, thus lowering our resistance or threshold to these problems. In the August 29, 1991 issue of the New England Journal of Medicine it was reported that people with high levels of psychological stress were twice as likely to develop a cold as those with less stress. The key factors involved in stress were stated to be the feeling that events in our life are “unpredictable, uncontrollable, and overwhelming”.

Recognition of a problem is the first step on the road to designing a strategy for stress. The common, everyday symptoms of fatigue, headaches, backache, or shoulder tension are often the first sign of a problem. A chiropractic approach for stress management is improved body awareness and overall fitness. The combination of postural changes and improved cardiovascular fitness will reduce muscular tension and pain as well as increase your overall energy level.

Learning that you are responsible for yourself and for your own stress, and that you are worth taking care of, is the first step; learning how to take care of yourself is the next step. Everyone has stress, learning how to cope effectively is the key to achieving personal and professional success in the '90s.

THREE ways to manage stress effectively include:

- Change the situations that create the tension within us
- Change our internal response to these situations
- Drain the tension that accumulates within us.

Evaluating our environment for stressors helps to identify those things around us that cause unhealthy levels of stress. This can include physical stressors such as excessive light, and noise, and stressful situations at work, or home.

If we can change the situation that regularly stresses us we have a real chance to make life more enjoyable and healthy.

In times of stress our breathing tenses. Blood flow and nervous impulses to the muscles accelerate. These conditions, if activated many times in a day can lead to exhaustion, faulty functioning of our body's systems, and frequent illness.

It is imperative in these situations to regain control of the body's automatic response. The breathing needs to be relaxed and deep. Often shoulders need to be relaxed as well as un-tensing the body. Chiropractic and massage therapy is an excellent way to learn the physical skills required to let go of our automatic stress response.

No matter how effective we become at managing our response to stress, it is inevitable that some stress will build up in most of us. This makes it necessary to regularly drain accumulated stress. This can be done in a number of ways:

- Frequent purposeful exercise
- Deep breathing exercises
- Stretching
- Chiropractic care
- Massage therapy
- Conscious relaxation of the muscles

Addressing these issues will help you effectively manage your stress on a daily basis.