

LIFE, STRESS and FULFILLMENT

By Dr. S.C. Benanti

Stress is clearly a part of everyone's life. There are references to stress in daily conversations, on radio and in television ads. You can also read about it in magazines, newspapers and in both trade and medical journals. Fortunately, what stress is, how it affects us and how we can manage it are becoming better understood every year.

And this is great news, since learning how to "relax beneath your efforts" while still being highly effective and productive, in even the most demanding situations, is clearly one of the most valuable life-skills needed today.

At this point, it is well known that the effects of stress are cumulative over time. This means that stress actually builds in your system, which is why consistently high levels of stress are especially damaging to one's body, mind and relationships. However, constant and ongoing stress is not the only problem. Research has also confirmed that even periodic stress will accumulate in your system and unless it is released, it can result in both short and long term damage to both your physical and mental functioning.

Some **physical** ill-effects of stress are:

Heart Disease	High Cholesterol	Constipation
Cancer	Muscle Stiffness	Eating Disorders
Headaches	Digestive Problems	Angina
Weight Gain	Backaches	Chronic Fatigue
Weight Loss	Asthma	Arthritis
High Blood Pressure	Colds	Allergies
Strokes	Ulcers	Diabetes
Hormonal Imbalance	Diarrhea	Alcoholism

Some **psychological** ill-effects of stress are:

Anxiety	Lack of Purpose & Meaning	Accident-Proneness
Depression	Emotional Breakdowns	Social Isolation
Lowered Self-Esteem	Relationship Problems	Loss of Self-Confidence
Exacerbation of Chronic Pain	Aggressive Behavior	Increasing Fears
Declining Job Performance	Substance Abuse	Poor Concentration
Sleep Disturbances	Self-destructive Behavior	Hyperactivity
Sexual Difficulties	Regressive Behavior	Apathy

Given how common the above listed problems have become, it is essential for all of us to take our modern “stress epidemic” seriously. It is equally important to keep in mind that you do not have to be a “helpless victim” of stress. No matter what your present circumstances are, the quality of your physical, mental, emotional and interpersonal health can be protected by your own personal choices.

THE GOOD NEWS AND THE BAD NEWS

Fortunately, years of research have resulted in many opportunities for you to receive the kinds of support and guidance that will release stored up stress and tension from your system. You can also fortify yourself against the damaging effects of stress and effectively create a low-stress lifestyle while living a very active, highly productive, and very successful life. Doing so is a sure way to increase your chances of a long, healthy and joyful life, unencumbered with the kinds of problems listed above.

The bad news is that while science has provided ways to protect ourselves and/or reverse the dysfunctions of stress, far too many people still do far too little to help themselves. Their futures often end up in trouble that could have been prevented.

The following authorities shed a very clear light on the crucial importance of not missing out on the opportunity to take charge of life-stress now, before it's too late:

Living on the wheel of stress is not how we were meant to live. In a word, stress distorts everything - families, friendships, perspective, feelings, physical well-being. Stress used to be just an engineer's word. It described how much weight or pressure a structure could take before it collapsed. Now people are collapsing. In simple language, we were never meant to live this way... Being surrounded by illness doesn't mean we should be satisfied to be sick. Healthy is normal. Inner peace is the natural condition...

Dr. Ronald Hutchcraft
Peaceful Living in a
Stressful World

Your stress response is automatically called into action every time you experience or think about something threatening. There is no in-between; it is an all-or-nothing reaction. A stress response occurs in an automobile accident and will probably recur each time one relives the experience in memory. The body does not make a distinction between real and imagined events. If you are not managing your stress responses to avoid distress and achieve eustress, (a pleasant state of focused positive response) you may be laying the groundwork for diseases of maladaptation - even death.

Dr. C. Michele Haney
Stress Map

Stress can cause or seriously aggravate a variety of body problems and illnesses. This statement is substantiated by extensive research in the fields of physiology and medicine and by years of experience by well-respected practitioners in all fields of physical health and physiology.

Dr. Herbert Greenberg
Coping with Job Stress

*Ulcers are a well-known example of stress-related disorders.....Heart attack....is an infamous stress-linked disorder.....Digestive disorders such as colitis, spastic colon, gastritis, and chronic diarrhea and constipation are very sensitive to stress levels.....Although this listing of stress linked diseases could go on and on, this brief summary makes a very strong point: **that the human body - your body - is capable of literally destroying itself when it is forced to maintain a high stress alarm state for long periods without relief.***

Dr. Karl Albrecht
Stress and the
Manager

Stress-induced disorders have long since replaced epidemics of infectious disease as the major medical problem of the post-industrial nations. During recent years, four disorders have become especially prominent in the United States, Western Europe, and Japan. Described as the afflictions of civilization, they are cardiovascular disorders, cancer, arthritis, and respiratory diseases (including bronchitis and emphysema).

Dr. Kenneth Pelletier
Mind as Healer, Mind as
Slayer

TAKE ACTION

So clearly, regardless of your present stress level, and whether it is ongoing or periodic, it would be wise to take immediate action in protecting yourself from the harmful effects of past, present and future stress. You've probably heard about the straw that broke the camel's back. In terms of stress management, we all need to be vigilant about how much of a stress load we're carrying. While removing unnecessary straws from the camel's back can prevent reaching the breaking point, strengthening the camel is another crucial way to keep stress from doing harm.

“Stress-hardiness” is a phrase used to describe this strength. It results from developing the life saving ability to perceive and respond to stressful situations in ways that, at the very least, do not harm and at best strengthen you. While some people seem to be born more stress-hardy than others, the good news is that everyone who is willing *can* develop a high degree of stress-hardiness and prevent stress from taking its toll.

There are 4 basic ways to deal with the unavoidable daily stress that even the most balanced life involves:

1. Stress-Release
2. Stress-Reduction
3. Stress-Management
4. Stress-Hardiness Conditioning

Each of these is found in various degrees among the following three most powerful stress interventions:

Stress Counseling and Coaching: In collaboration with a seasoned professional, this is a great way for you to learn how to identify, reduce and manage the stress in your life and cultivate greater stress-hardiness. This is also the most direct way to increase your inner peace and power by unblocking and fulfilling more of the potential in your personal, social and occupational life.

Therapeutic Massage: True therapeutic massage, (as distinguished from so called “spa fluff” massage) is an excellent way for you to effectively release accumulated stress and tension from your system and retrain yourself to stay relaxed “beneath the efforts” of everyday life.

Nutritional Therapy: When done correctly, this can be a remarkably simple yet highly effective health-saving and illness-preventing way to fortify your body in handling the demands of stress and offsetting the depletion of your body’s reserves. For example, there is targeted nutritional support available for each of these common manifestations of stress:

- stressed & tired
- stressed & wired
- stressed & hot
- stressed & cold
- stressed & depleted

While exercise, meditation, biofeedback training, yoga, various other relaxation techniques, and dozens of self-help books and tapes can each in their own way help support your progress, **counseling, therapeutic massage and nutritional therapy** are among the most highly researched, effective, convenient and powerful interventions available today. This is why these three have been at the core of our Center’s approach since 1989.

IN CONCLUSION

Both common sense and medical science confirm that stress can and will seriously and negatively impact your whole system: physically, mentally, emotionally, and interpersonally. Also, stress on anyone of these areas will certainly bring stress to the others areas as well.

While stress can be brought on by the obvious difficult situations and uninvited changes in your daily life, there are many other less noticeable causes of stress.

These range from the subtle environmental and nutritional assaults on our bodies to the undercurrents of interpersonal and occupational pressures that affect our hearts and minds.

There is also the ongoing impact on your emotions caused by situations and relationships in daily life that interfere with your inner peace and calm . . . and as both research and common sense clearly confirm, a sense of inner peace and calm, (or more simply, your spiritual strength) is absolutely essential for minimizing the negative impact of stress, and for optimizing your overall health and well-being.

In conclusion, the single most important thing to keep in mind is that your life is built around your choices. Every choice you make is either contributing to or detracting from the integrity of your physical, mental, emotional, interpersonal and occupational functioning. In other words every choice you make is either helping or hurting your overall health and well-being . . . both for now and in your future.

Given our modern day “stress epidemic”, learning to be more “relaxed beneath your efforts” (in even the most demanding circumstances) is clearly among the most valuable life-skills needed in today’s world in order to attain greater fulfillment in all areas of your life.

At the Center for Optimum Living, we are dedicated to helping people do just that. Our clients are capable and intelligent people who want to do more to offset stress and achieve the fulfillment that comes with optimum levels of health and well-being. That’s why we are here. It’s what we do, and we’ve been doing it well for almost two decades.

Perhaps there is no better assurance than to know that the services we provide through counseling, therapeutic massage and nutritional therapy have stood the test of time. As a client of our Center, you are free to choose any one or all three of our core services according to your own interest. Each in it’s own way will help empower your mind, body and spirit to bring forth the best potentials in your self, health, work and relationships. We welcome you to call us to get started or to ask any questions you might have.

We hope that reading this has motivated you to take charge of your stress and not allow it to build up and break you down. It clearly does not have to. You can learn to keep stress at bay and increase your support for fulfilling your life’s potential and ultimately succeed at living a long, joyful and healthy life.

Remember, your health and well-being are firmly in your own hands and by taking advantage of the powerful life-supporting opportunities available today, you can enrich the quality of your life tremendously, not only for today, but for the years ahead that will comprise your future.

Wishing you the very best of
health and well-being always,

Dr. S. C. Benanti



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Dr. S.C. BENANTI, Director

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