

Managing Our Stress as Professionals

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There is a critical message to be delivered to all of us: as professionals we need to ensure we manage our own stress so that we are efficient practitioners for those in need of our services

Raise your hand if this scene is familiar: You are raising a family, balancing priorities between work, school and family obligations, you have had a day to beat all others. You're frazzled after work, so you mood modulate with comfort food. You over do it because you haven't eaten in more than 6 hours and find yourself bloated and sleepy after an hour. You are too tired to be productive on school work or domestic chores so you make your way to bed to let go of the day.

When you try to go to bed, you lie awake for hours not being able to sleep. When you finally do sleep you toss and turn all night with a pit in your stomach. You start the next day feeling hungover and sluggish, which makes it that much harder to face those typical obstacles at work and home and life, so you feel even more wiped out. Repeat ad infinitum. Ugh. This is a typical cycle of stress. Many of us are too familiar with this scenario and how to get off this merry-go-round.

Stress is an epidemic, and it wrecks your body and your brain in more ways than one. Stress can be attributed to your hair falling out, your clothes becoming tight and your immune system and your hormones, gut, mood, and poor, overloaded brain) go haywire just to name a few. The physiological damage due to stress can be phenomenal. The good news is, you don't have to let stress hold you back.

Managing stress is a matter of establishing daily or weekly habits with some well-known techniques. Many of us hear about these techniques but fail to employ them due to our stress level. The perpetual "Catch 22" is

underway! As a practitioner I tell my patients to pick one and start with that. It is too difficult to try to incorporate everything into the routine. Starting with one change can make a significant difference. Keep in mind that a habit is established after you incorporate that change for 21 days without a break. It is also important to remember that you can break a habit by not doing that same thing for 7 days. It is harder to establish the habit but once you have it as part of your routine you are more likely to keep it going.

Here is a list of the ways you can help yourself manage your stress:

- Exercise (yoga walking, low impact aerobics, dance, weight training, swimming, bicycling, there are numerous ways)
- Eating organic whole foods
- Take nutritional supplements to aid with stress
- Meditation
- Biofeedback
- Neurofeedback
- Massage
- Psychotherapy
- Aroma therapy
- Laughter and doing something fun
- Take a trip down memory lane

Certain types of stress can make you stronger and stress is an important part of our physical well-being. Physical and mental challenges can rewire your brain so you're better prepared to handle whatever life throws your way. What new habits will you incorporate in your daily life?