



Balance
Point

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A Gift From
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There is a very different view out my window today; taxis and trucks and people hurry through the city streets 37 floors below me. The only patch of green is a small grassy park on a corner several blocks east of here. But even in the big city it is spring. I can smell it in the air when I walk the busy street below. It is finally spring!

Why am I in the big city today? Well, I am moving to Chicago in a few months. My husband and I have decided to move to Naperville, 30 minutes west of downtown Chicago. We are now in the midst of selling our KC house and relocating kids, cats, my business and tons of our belongings to Naperville. It is exciting and chaotic and stressful in my life right now. A true test of everything I know about stress management and relaxation!

As always, this newsletter is about what I am focused on in my own life right now. This issue contains an article about stress and how I deal with it. In Natural Ramblings I write about how hard it is to leave Morning Deer Valley. And Kids' Korner is all about baby brains. I hope you enjoy this newsletter and find something that helps you cope with the stress in your own life.

Blessings to You and All Your Loved Ones.

P. S. I will continue seeing clients in KC until mid-June. I would love to see you before I move.

Here are several KC therapists you might try.

For CranioSacral Therapy &/or Reiki I recommend: Tom Hansen (913) 441-2030 or Chris Jorgensen (816) 221-7123.

For Pregnancy Massage: Melanie Lyons (913) 486-7636. For Swedish Massage: Prairie Life Health Club (913) 648-8077.

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Natural Ramblings

I am moving. I am moving! I shake my head in disbelief and repeat that phrase once, twice, ten times a day. My mind is reeling with the logistics involved in selling one house, buying another and moving an entire family 600 miles away to a new city. It all makes my head spin. So I head outside to walk the old familiar pond path, clear my mind and find a little peace.

I walk the path and look around with a mix of sorrow and excitement; I am moving to a brand new place! But how will I leave this one behind? I have owned a lot of different houses, from small town to suburbia to country. But this hilltop is my hands down favorite. This little 3 acre plot of land has opened my heart wide. I have grown to love my space here.

I walked through the rooms of the house last night remembering... my oldest child picking out "big boy" dinosaur wallpaper for his room at the ripe old age of three. Now that same wallpaper is "for babies". My youngest child being born in the master bedroom on a stormy night in October – the bedroom that my partner and I created from ugly, unused space – the bedroom that we lovingly nicknamed our nest.

In reality the entire hilltop has been my nest. In this sheltered space I learned to trust my intuition. In this place I found the courage to quit my "important" corporate job and live off savings for years while I dug in my journal and slowly uncovered what makes my heart sing and why I am here on this Earth. In this quiet nest I learned to write again – a gift that has proven to be more precious than gold to me.

Now it is time to pack up my journal and pen and take wing to a new place. The trees whisper to me as I walk by, "It is time – fly away – it is time." I stop on the dock and look back up the hill. The trees are bursting with new buds. The birds are in full voice. New grass sprinkles the slope tender green. I love this hilltop – every stone, every leaf, every ripple on the pond. But it is time to go. I feel it in my bones. It is time to move on.

I struggle to find a way to say good bye. It seems impossible. But as I turn to go, I smile through my tears. I know that this place will travel with me wherever I go, if only in my heart.

"Happiness is not a destination. It is the attitude with which you choose to travel."

- Yogi Arit Desai



Stress Busters

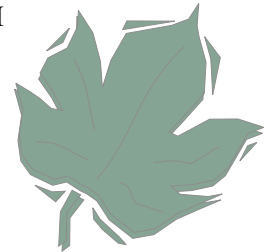


I thought I was good at handling stress – after all I have had lots of practice. And a big part of my business is teaching my clients how to relax and cope with stress. But picking up and moving an entire family and a business to a new city hundreds of miles away has humbled me.

These last few weeks have been some of the most stressful times that I have ever experienced. How do I know I am stressed? My shoulders keep migrating up around my ears, I wake up at 4am, I crave chocolate and I am so whiny <smile>!

Stress is really no laughing matter. The negative physiological effects of stress are well documented. Several hormones, including adrenaline and cortisol, are released into the blood stream in response to stress. These hormones are designed to pump us up and get us ready to either fight or flee the source of our stress. The ‘stress hormones’ come in handy if you wrestle alligators for a living. But if, like me, you are stressed out by your to-do list, adrenaline and cortisol can harm you. These hormones literally tear up your body over time. High levels of cortisol and adrenaline over months or years are linked to poor immune response, heart disease, allergies, asthma, stomach problems and even cancer.

I do not want to become a victim of my stress hormones. In self-defense, I have been rereading all my books and articles on stress and the best ways to cope with it. And I have been trying very hard to practice what I preach to my clients. The key is to find simple and quick ways to relax – things that I can remember to do even when I am panic-stricken. Here are a few tips to get you (and me) through the most stressful times:



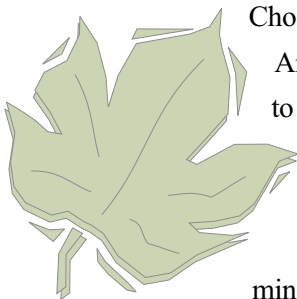
Remember to Breathe. When I get stressed out, I tighten up and breathe fast and shallow. That’s a common reaction to the hormones that get released during stressful times. Then my brain gets starved for oxygen and I cannot even think straight. When I feel my stress level rising, I make a conscious effort to breathe from my belly. This is a meditative form of breath where you imagine filling the belly with air as you inhale. Belly breathing calms me down in seconds.

Take a Walk. Exercise has been shown to decrease the levels of stress hormones in the bloodstream. My first choice is a walk in the woods, but dancing, yoga, jogging, swimming, aerobics, weight training, karate – any form of exercise will help. The trick is to get moving.

Watch What You Eat. I find it very easy to snack and eat a lot of junk when I am stressed.

Chocolate and bread are comfort foods for me – I "feel" better the minute I bite into them.

And I get that seductive carbohydrate high from them. But in between chocolate bars, I try to load up on fruits and vegetables every day, no matter how busy and stressed I get. And I eat some protein so my body can repair whatever tissues have been damaged from stress. I also take my vitamins. Vitamin C, B complex and the mineral magnesium have been shown to boost your body’s ability to cope with stress. I take these vitamins and mineral supplements at higher doses when I am having a stressful period.



Try Rescue Remedy. Bach's Rescue Remedy is a homeopathic medicine that has been around for more than a hundred years. I swear by it – a few drops under the tongue help me stay cool and calm in the midst of chaos. Look for this remedy at the health food store.

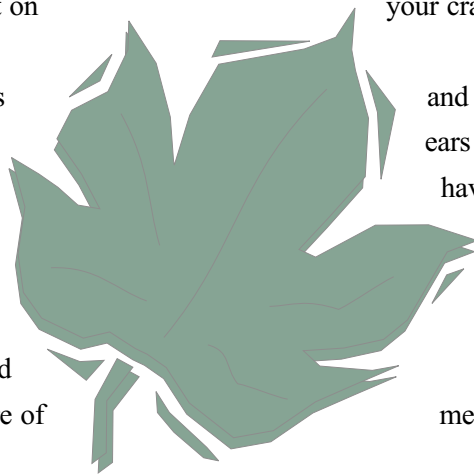
Make Love. A lot of men know this intuitively and it is time women learned it as well; a good toe-curling orgasm is a great way to blow off those nasty stress hormone levels and relax. Try it with someone you love.

Do Something Touching. Massage or energy work is another great way to relax the body, get energy flowing and decrease stress hormone levels. Touch reconnects mind and body in a very primal way. Recent studies have shown that both the receiver and the giver of massage benefit. And you thought I did CranioSacral treatments just for the money <smile>. If I cannot find someone to massage me, I rub my own forehead and jaw, making slow lazy circles with my fingertips. A few moments of gentle forehead massage works wonders.

Keep a Journal. The simple act of writing about your crummy day will make you feel better and lower your stress hormone levels. I dump how I am feeling on paper and watch my mood shift. James Pennebaker, Ph.D. researched stress and journal writing. He found that people who write about their feelings and their traumatic experiences have stronger immune function, lower stress levels and fewer doctor visits.

Make it Dark. A stressed out body goes into a state of hyper-alert and overloads very easily. Just decreasing the noise and light levels in the room calms me down and helps me shift into low gear. I like to add a little water therapy to this and lie in a hot bath with the lights off. Turning down the lights and sound has a dramatic effect on babies and small children – try it on your cranky two-year-old.

After all of my research on stress with my shoulders up around my cake this afternoon. In fact, I writing this article about stress! life makes it impossible to stay is hope - I do notice when I am Step two is to take a deep breath and suggestions listed above. Taking care of until life calms down again.



and all my practice, I still caught myself ears and a compulsive craving for chocolate have been so stressed out that I had trouble The current chaotic state of my calm and cool all the time. But there stressed out. Noticing is the first step. follow a couple of my own me in simple little ways is my best defense

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Brain Builders for Baby

I want to give your brain some information to chew on. The latest research into how the brain of a baby develops has turned up some amazing and important discoveries. These discoveries are turning some old child development theories on their ear.

Why should you care about this? Because the research shows just how much influence an attentive parent, grandparent or care-giver can have on the lifelong mental capacities of a child.

Experience Rules

The Effect of Neglect

The Power of Touch

Friendly Fat

What You Can Do

Experience Rules

The most important new finding is this: the experiences a child has in the first 3-5 years of life make a decisive difference in how a child's brain is actually "wired" together. Research shows that the most important factor in a baby's brain development is consistent care day after day after day from a parent or babysitter who loves the child and shows it. Children who have consistent, loving care and attention will have more complex, resilient and higher functioning brain wiring for life.

The Effect of Neglect

On the other hand, children who are traumatized or neglected early in life, show distinct abnormalities in brain anatomy and function that cause life-long problems with processing and retaining information as well as dealing with emotions; The brains of neglected children show activity patterns very similar to adults with Alzheimer's. And children who are physically abused or neglected expend large amounts of brain cycles on lower level functions such as breathing, motor regulation and physical safety needs, leaving 1/2 as much brain time and energy for higher cortical functions such as critical thinking and speech. In other words, how a young child is treated has a huge impact on his or her mental capacities and abilities as an adult.

The Power of Touch

The latest research on touch brings up another kind of "attention" that young children require in order to thrive. This finding is something parents have intuitively known for thousands of years: babies and young children require lots of touch. Holding, hugging, stroking and snuggling a small child is absolutely necessary for normal brain development. Children who do not receive loving human touch actually suffer physically and brain

development is stunted and delayed. Touch is not just a pleasantry for babies and small children – it is an absolute necessity.

Friendly Fat

Current research also points out how much diet affects brain development in children. It has been common knowledge for years that exposure to certain toxins such as lead, pesticides and mercury can dramatically hurt brain development in young children. But did you know that a lack of certain types of fat in a child's diet also harms the brain? More and more research is turning up the importance of Omega-3 fatty acids in a child's diet. The nerve cells in the human brain are held in position by a framework or lattice that is made up of fatty acids. If Omega-3 fatty acids are not available to make up the framework, other fats are substituted. And substituting other fats can lead to problems with misalignment of nerve cells, dropped connections and garbled communication within the brain. The need for Omega 3 fats is especially critical before birth when the brain is forming, so pregnant mom's require Omega 3 fats in their diet as well.

What does all this mean to you? What can you do that will make a difference?

Get down and play. Spending time playing, singing and talking with a child is very, very important to the child's brain development. Do it as often as you can. And when you cannot be there, find someone to care for your child who will play and sing and talk to him or her.

Snuggle, snuggle, snuggle! Touch that child in a loving and gentle way every chance you get. Rub their back or feet at bedtime, hug them to say hello, hold them after work to reconnect, carry them in a backpack when you are out and about. Show them your love through your touch.

Feed her fat. Add several foods high in Omega-3 fatty acid to your child's diet. If you are breast-feeding, add it to your own diet and baby will get it through your milk.

Stimulate him. Offer interesting sights, sounds, smells, textures and tastes to your child. Every experience adds brain connections and capacities to that baby brain.

Choose child care with care. Parking children in front of the TV for hours at a time may be an easy and cheap babysitter, but it is horrible for developing baby brains. Choose the highest quality child care that you can afford; look for a care-giver that loves to snuggle, sing and play with young children.

And most important of all: **never ever underestimate the impact your love and attention can have on a child.** Even small amounts of time spent focused on a child will help that child to flourish and bloom.

Omega 3 Fatty Acid - also called Alpha-Linolenic Acid and Eicosapentaenoic Acid (EPA) - in ocean tuna, salmon, sardines, flounder, shrimp, oysters, pumpkin seeds, black currant seed oil, cod liver oil, leafy green vegetables, soybeans, walnuts, wheat germ, fresh sea vegetables, linseed oil, wheat sprouts or flax seed oil.

The easiest way to add Omega-3 to a child's diet is by sprinkling flax seed oil on sandwiches or toast, or in milk shakes or smoothies. **DO NOT HEAT THIS OIL.**
Average Dose: Give infants and small children 1/2 teaspoon per day, adults 1 tablespoon per day.

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