

TEN WAYS TO NOURISH YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM

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LET'S TALK ABOUT STRESS

Stress acts to motivate and sharpen our focus and reactions when we are faced with an immediate issue or 'danger'. This is a REALLY GOOD response. This kicks in our Sympathetic Nervous System, otherwise known as our 'Fight/Flight' or Stress Response. For example, if you were faced with an immediate danger, aka a great white shark, your 'Fight/Flight' response intelligently kicks in...thank goodness! Your body is pumped with cortisol and you act accordingly - hopefully you survive this near shark attack by fighting or flighting!

However, the issue these days is, we are often staying in this 'Fight/Flight' response as these 'immediate dangers' are popping up numerous times PER DAY e.g. work deadlines, exams, financial concerns, our increasingly busy lifestyles, city traffic, relationships, and so on. This is keeping our stress response alert, with more and more cortisol pumping through our systems and less time for our poor little Parasympathetic Nervous System (our 'Rest and Digest' response) to do what it needs to do.

This chronic stress sustained for long periods of time is affecting every system in your body. This is when stress quickly goes from being a great, intelligent response to not being such a great thing.



“

The greatest weapon against stress is our ability to choose one thought over another.”-

William James

What's the Big Deal?

The majority of patients I see have some kind of stress contributing to their health concerns. Stress can basically weave its way in to any of our bodily systems and run a muck. It can not only have a great impact on our mental health but our skin health, gut health, energy levels, sleep patterns, cardiovascular health, hormonal health, thyroid health, digestive health, immune health, weight management and more. Thus, it is SO important to not underestimate the impact that stress may be having on your physical and mental well-being. ***I strongly believe that every physical condition and symptom has a big connection to our mental health, stress being a perfect example.***



THE GOOD NEWS? THERE ARE SO MANY WAYS YOU CAN TAKE HOLD OF AND OWN YOUR STRESS - IT IS IN YOUR HANDS

So, in a nutmeg shell.... reduce your stress levels! Easier said than done right? Stress is an unavoidable part of life, so learning how to control and manage our stress is a VITAL factor in achieving overall better health and well-being.

Herbal/nutritional medicine, diet and lifestyle factors are crucial in supporting your nervous system, adrenals, and mood. Some of the many ways to help reduce/cope with your stress levels include...

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NUTMEG'S FAVOURITE 10 STRATEGIES TO HELP REDUCE AND COPE WITH STRESS



1. Enjoying at least 30 minutes of moderate activity/movement each day

Performing at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise each day has not only been linked to the prevention/management and improvement of countless physical health conditions, but plays a huge role in boosting your mood and helping relieve stress. Exercise produces the 'feel good' chemicals in our body that help reduce pain, stress and regulate our mood. **Thus, choosing moderate-intense exercise/activities that you enjoy each day is guaranteed to boost your overall physical and mental well-being!** Feeling overwhelmed, stressed or anxious? Put your walking shoes on and get moving.

2. Eating magnesium-rich foods

Magnesium helps to relax your muscles and encourage a calm mind. Some magnesium-rich foods include red and white meat, nuts, spinach, sesame seeds, tahini, bananas, cacao, prunes, parsley, sunflower seeds and legumes. Aim to include some of these foods on a daily basis. Supplementation may also be required, especially during times of stress – chat to your health practitioner about this.

Also! Run yourself an Epsom Salts bath – soak up that beautiful Magnesium through your skin!

3. Eating foods rich in B vitamins

B vitamins all work together to help nourish your nervous system, brain functioning and energy production. Foods that increase your B vitamin consumption include; wholegrains (e.g. brown rice, barley, millet, quinoa), chicken, lamb, beef, dark green leafy veggies, nuts, nutritional yeast, bananas, seafood and eggs. Aim to include some of these foods on a daily basis. Supplementation might be required – chat to your health practitioner about this.

4. Protein, Protein, Protein

Among its many roles, protein helps regulate blood glucose levels and support healthy brain chemistry, therefore helping to support your mood, concentration and sleep. Including a 'good' serve of a protein-rich food such as seafood, lean meat, organic cage-free eggs, legumes, organic tofu, full-fat dairy (if tolerated) or nuts + seeds with each meal and snack is vital. A 'good' serve of protein will roughly fit inside the palm of your hand. For example, 2 eggs at breakfast or a palm sized portion of firm organic tofu at lunch. If and when eating meat, make sure to choose (whenever possible), high-quality, organic, hormone/antibiotic-free and "grass-fed" meats. Similarly, 'wild-caught' for seafood.

5. Consuming Omega-3 fatty acids with every meal

Our essential Omega-3 fatty acids play a vital role in repairing and regenerating our brain and nervous system, helping to support memory, mood and brain functioning. Particularly good sources of omega-3 fatty acids include small oily fish (sardines, anchovies, mackerel), walnuts, flaxseed oil and avocado. Include approx. 2 tablespoons of a good fat with each main meal. Supplementation may also be required – please chat to your health practitioner about this.



6. Coffee drinkers

This one is for all the coffee drinkers out there - myself included! Unless coffee doesn't agree with you or you hate the taste, in my humble opinion a coffee a day is O.K! It has actually been associated with a number of positive health outcomes (isn't that cool!?) But like most things, too much of anything is not a great thing and can quickly be associated with a number of undesirable health outcomes, including an INCREASED STRESS response. Eep! For my coffee-drinking patients and in general, if we can get coffee consumption down to 1-2 SHOTS (not cups) of coffee/day at max – this is ideal. NB: from an ex-barista (me) a small coffee with milk contains 1 shot, and a small long black contains 2 shots.

7. Get out and smell the roses

I am not necessarily saying you have to go hug a tree, but try it, I dare you....it will probably feel pretty great, but incorporating nature on a daily basis to help calm and ground your soul. This might look like jumping in the ocean (this will help boost your magnesium too!), walking along the beach, watering your garden or walking on grass barefoot - this is called 'Grounding'.

8. Get a good night's sleep

Sleep allows for our body systems to repair and regenerate, including our precious nervous system, adrenals and brain. Ever noticed that you might feel on edge after just one poor night's sleep? Factors to help achieve a good night's sleep include; going to bed at the same time each night, waking up at the same time each morning, daily exercise in the sunshine, no screens at least 1 hour before bed, restful bedroom decor, not taking naps throughout the day and not going to bed on a full or empty stomach (eating dinner at least 2 hours before you go to bed).



9. Breathe

Deep belly breathing is a great strategy to help shift your Fight/Flight (stress) response to your Rest/Digest (calm) response. Take a moment each morning before your day starts, and similarly at the end of the day... to just breathe. Closing your eyes, placing one hand on your stomach and the other on your chest. Take a deep breath in for 4 counts, making sure your breath gets all the way down to your belly - you want the hand on your stomach to move outward! Hold for a moment, and breathe out through your mouth for 5-6 counts. Repeat for at least 8 deep breaths. Go on, give it a try now.

10. Schedule time for yourself and express your creativity.

Write, garden, paint, sing, dance or take up a new hobby or class. Re-introduce “play” back into your life! Ensure throughout the day that you are balancing work-time with play-time. What makes you tick? What makes you shine/smile or heck, even laugh!? Schedule it in, you need to do more of it!



So you fabulous human, I really hope this has helped you in some way. Start slow. I always encourage my patients to take 1-2 points that they aren't currently doing, and implement them in to their daily routine. Soon enough, it will become habit and you will be slowly but surely getting on top of that stress response.





I am someone who is susceptible to slipping in and out of states of anxiety and heightened stress. So it is a continual work in progress for myself too. Applying the ten strategies above and more, has truly helped me on my mental and physical health journey.

Take care of you and we will speak again soon.

Phoebe xxx

Feeling stressed, anxious, lacking in energy, fatigued, or just not quite yourself? Say hello, and together we can work on nourishing your nervous system & adrenals, helping you return to your Calm. I would love to meet you!

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