



Stress and Relaxation

By Jan de Vries

Stress without a doubt is a very 'in' word these days but the majority of us probably don't realise the effects that stress has on our health. Not only can anxiety and tension be very damaging at the time we are experiencing them but they can also cause problems further down the line emotionally and physically.

A little bit of stress can be good for the body but we must learn how to deal with it correctly before it escalates into something more serious in later life. It is therefore necessary that we understand what stress is all about.

As we get older, it is not as easy to recognise the signs of stress and nervous conditions, as it is when we are younger, so it is important to get to grips with it while we are still able and before it leads to long term health complications. It is not always easy to overcome stress, yet it is essential that we do, for it is very dangerous. One must not forget that a great many degenerative diseases are a result of stress. It attacks us not only emotionally and mentally but also physically. Everything should be in harmony, and if one little thing is not working efficiently, a problem will surely result.

Life expectancy is much longer nowadays, and this is another reason why we must be careful not to let stress take its toll on our health. It is essential that we learn to understand about stress and

emotion and to pay great attention to stress, particularly when overworked. People often ask if nowadays life is more difficult than previously, as stress is so widely experienced. Life has certainly become more complicated, and in earlier days, although people were also under stress, the pace of life was less demanding. The emotional trauma we experience today was probably not present.

As I always say, prevention is better than cure, and we have to learn the art of relaxation. It is the natural answer to stress and we should make time in the day to try it.

Deep breathing exercises can result in a calmer and more relaxed mind and I often recommend the Hara Breathing technique. Hara means breathe – absolute energy and this is why breathing control exercises are so important.

Massage therapy is a great way to ease tension and help you relax. Aromatherapy for example combines the effects of smell and touch and is considered to be an ancient approach to 'total well being'.

Physical exercise is also an effective way of relieving stress. You don't necessarily have to take up a sport or join the gym, one can simply relax through swimming, cycling, walking, yoga, aerobics, golfing, and many more techniques and therapies. We need to sit down and perhaps meditate or ensure that the body at least gets a chance to recover from our daily stress.

Sleep is very important. On average adults need between 7 to 9 hours sleep to feel refreshed and energised. Some people need more than this, while others may need less. As we get older we tend to require less sleep, but every individual is different.

With the change in modern living most of us feel we can't afford to spend so much time sleeping, which is taking an increasing toll on our mental and physical health. Sleep is essential to the maintenance of physical and psychological health so you should not deprive yourself of sleep. Health and illness are based on very specific natural laws, which must always be observed. These laws concern the constant changes of being awake and sleeping, day and night, work and relaxation, happiness and sadness and so on. With the change in modern living most of us feel we can't afford to spend so much time sleeping, which is taking an increasing toll on our mental and physical health. Sleep is essential to the maintenance of physical and psychological health so you should not deprive yourself of it.

Formerly, people were obliged to go early to bed and get up early. In those times daily life depended on daylight and candles were inexpensive. In our time, there are many people who do not go to sleep before midnight and even later. As our organism still reacts to natural sources of light, this habit usually has a negative effect on our nervous system.

Somehow people under stress tend to eat high-protein meals, which is wrong, as they should be on a low-stress diet, balancing the carbohydrate with the protein intake. The nervous system works like a battery of a car in that it has a plus and a minus. If the battery runs low, it should not be charged with high-protein food. A balanced food pattern is needed to provide energy for the battery. It is all too easy to reach for the snacks that are high in salt, sugar and fat, but the diet should be kept healthy and balanced with plenty of fresh fruit and fresh vegetables. Porridge is an excellent food, as oats have a soothing effect on the nerves and can be extremely effective in strengthening and supporting the nervous system. If you do not like the taste of porridge you could try the tincture *Avena Sativa* (oats).

Healthy elimination, too, is often underestimated, and we should take this into consideration when we decide what to eat and drink. Healthy elimination means that waste material is not allowed to build up with the onset of stress into what is recognised as one of the most telling signs of a stressful situation: irritable bowel syndrome.

Anti-anxiety preparations are also very helpful and help you adapt to stress with ease, and naturally uplift your mood. L-Theanine for example is a unique amino acid commonly found in green tea. It has been determined that L-Theanine is a derivative of Glutamic Acid which is one of the neurotransmitters found in the brain and has shown to be effective in stress management.

If you would like information and advice on lifestyle, remedies or diet you can read my book *Stress & Nervous Disorders*.

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