

Cascade Quarterly News

STRESS

managing your stress

"Between 60 and 90 percent of complaints brought to a doctor's office are due to stress."

*Dr Herbert Benson,
Harvard Medical
School*

Believe it or not, you need stress in your life. Research shows again and again that the healthiest and most productive people are not those that avoid stress, but those that learn to manage stress in their lives. Stress stimulates your physical and mental performance, so rather than trying to eliminate your stress, you want to find ways to keep it at an optimal level so it becomes a positive force in your life.

fight or flight

To appreciate why massage is so effective in fighting stress, it is important to understand what is known as the *stress response*. Stress begins with an event that

places some sort of demand on you. Your mind decides whether that event may be potentially harmful to you either physically (your body) or psychologically (your self esteem). If your brain determines that there is a possibility of harm, it initiates a *stress response*. This response is also called a *fight or flight response* because it causes the same bodily changes that allowed our ancient ancestors to fight or flee from predators.

All the physiological changes that happen in your body with this response occur for one reason only: To prepare your body for physical action. Your muscles tense in preparation for

activity. Your heart rate and blood pressure increase to get blood to your muscles. To deliver oxygen to your muscles, your breath becomes quick and shallow. Your digestive and reproductive systems shut down to conserve energy. Hormones are released to keep you awake and alert. Fats and sugars are released into your bloodstream for energy.

Unfortunately, fighting or fleeing are rarely useful ways to deal with the stresses we commonly face, like money worries, relationship problems, or troubles with co-workers.

Continued on page 2....

managing your stress continued....

Because we don't respond with physical action, our bodies don't feel as though the problem is resolved and we continue to store the stress in anticipation for action.

With constant pressure, your stress never ends and you can't slow down and unwind. As a result, the stress, in a sense,

builds up in your body. You get caught in a self-perpetuating cycle of stress in which you become less and less able to relax. Tension turns into chronic headaches, or perhaps neck, shoulder, and back pain. You may not be able to sleep well which leaves you feeling so fatigued that you have

little energy to deal with your problems effectively. You may also find that it takes very little to trigger another stress response. It becomes difficult to cope with even small stresses and even taking time for recreational activities becomes burdensome.

your stress checklist

Give yourself one point for each *yes* answer.

- Do you constantly feel exhausted?
- Do you get occasional or frequent headaches?
- Do you get upset having to wait in a line?
- Do you find it hard to say "no"?
- Do you never have time to daydream?
- Have you lost a job, moved, broken up or had any other big changes in the last year?
- Do you hate the shape of your body, but can't seem to do anything about it?
- Has it been more than a year since your last vacation or massage?
- Have you had problems with insomnia?
- Do you hate it when your plans change?
- Have you had a cold in the past 6 months?
- Does your life feel out of control?

The closer your score is to 12, the higher your stress level. If you rate 6 or more, it's time to start managing your stress better.

massage to the rescue

When you're under severe or chronic stress, massage can be a fast and effective way of breaking the vicious stress cycle.

Massage triggers a *relaxation response*. This response counters the stress response and promotes various restorative processes.

As the massage progresses and the relaxation response kicks in you'll find that your breathing deepens. Your heart rate and blood pressure decrease. Muscles start to relax as tension is gently kneaded

out of your muscles. Painful sensations gradually subside. Your mind is also affected as you focus on the pleasant sensations and break the cycle of mental distress. Studies show that anxiety and depression decrease and your mood improves, possibly through the release of endorphins.

Although the relaxation effects of massage are immediate, the real benefits come when massage is used on a regular basis. Research has demonstrated that as your experience with

massage increases, the effects become more pronounced and more long lasting. Repeatedly experiencing feelings of deep relaxation with massage helps you recall those feelings of relaxation through your daily activities.

Massage also makes you more aware of sensations in your body allowing you to notice more subtle signs of stress and tension. Heed these early warning signs and you can take control of your stress before it gets out of control.

blow away your tension

When you don't have time to see your massage therapist, you can use your breath to help you release tension. When under stress, your breathing typically becomes fast and shallow. You breathe from your chest instead of taking deep relaxed breaths from your abdomen. This heightens your stress and causes unwanted tension through your neck and shoulders. You can break this pattern by using deep breathing, or

"diaphragmatic breathing" as it is sometimes called. As you do this diaphragmatic breathing you will feel the tension releasing from your back, neck, shoulders and chest. As your breathing becomes more relaxed your mind will relax and you'll feel less stress and anxiety.

To learn how to do this, place one hand on your chest and the other on your abdomen and follow the instructions that accompany

the illustrations on page 4. You can do this either sitting or lying. Focus on the sensations you are feeling in your body as you breathe. Repeat this sequence six to eight times. If you start to feel light headed, stop immediately. Practice this daily at first while you get the hang of it. If you do this exercise when you are relaxed, it will be much easier to perform when you are feeling stressed.

Continued on page 4....

"Massage, once a luxury for the elite, is now becoming a necessity for people trying to cope with fast-paced lives."

The New York Times

blow away your tension continued...



Start by exhaling to completely empty the air from your lungs. Feel your chest drop first and then your belly.



Now inhale slowly directing the air into your abdomen. You should feel your belly start to rise.



As you continue to breathe in your chest will also rise. When your lungs are full, hold your breath for several seconds and then slowly exhale.



Sonja Rawlings,
RMT RA EOT

1601 – 30TH AVENUE
Vernon, BC
V1T 2A3

Phone:
(250) 550-4727

Visit me on the web!

[Click Here](#)

If you have specific health concerns consult your medical doctor.

The information in this newsletter is educational only and is not intended to replace the advice of your personal health care providers.

About Cascade Massage Therapy

My Approach

I bring over 12 years of bodywork experience and education to the massage table! I offer you diverse and comprehensive massage therapy sessions. Your treatment goals are foremost and your needs will be heard and addressed. I utilize both traditional and alternative treatment techniques, and recommend self care tips and exercise options that evolve with your individual healing process.

My intention is to be a facilitator in the cascade of your healing process and health maintenance. I believe that within the human body is the desire and ability to be well, and through bodywork, I serve to act as a catalyst for this process.

This is your time - I encourage you to enjoy the stillness of your session, and sense the changes occurring in your body while we work - you don't need to be entertaining or start a conversation; that being said, please recognize that I do not read minds. I expect my clients to participate in his or her experience and give feedback when there is any discomfort during the treatment.



Cascade Massage Therapy is focused on education and prevention. It is important that you know what you can do to help prevent stress, tension, and pain when you are not with me. I allow for time at the end of our session to converse, suggest self care tips and exercises that would be beneficial for you, and answer any questions that you may have.

I believe that prolonged stress, whether environmental, physical or emotional is a primary factor in dis-ease and a true obstacle to healing. Therefore, *I welcome you to a peace-filled and relaxing environment where you can experience relief from pain and tension.*

Contact Me

To learn more about my work, I invite you to visit my website at :
www.cascademassagetherapy.com

You are welcome to call me at **250-550-4727** for a **free 10 minute phone consultation.**

We can discuss your goals and I will answer any questions you may have about how Cascade Massage Therapy can benefit you.