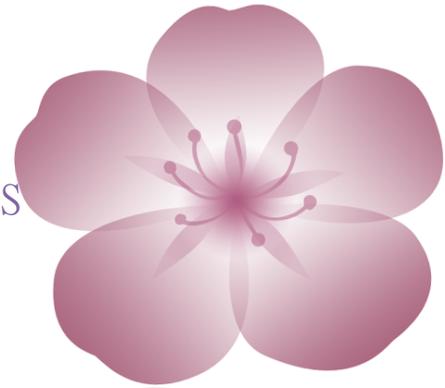


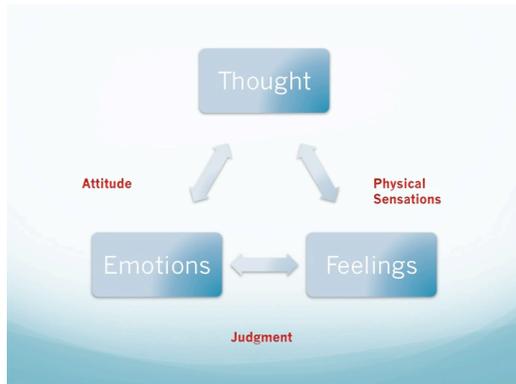
THE URBANHERBALIST

NUTRITION TIP SHEET: MANAGING YOUR STRESS



What is Stress?

Stress is your body's natural response to life events that are based on your perception or how your five senses understands and accepts situations as they occur.



Human beings live in three “internal” worlds: thought, feeling and emotion. **THOUGHTS** can trigger physical sensations in your body or **FEELINGS**. Your ability to cope with the feelings you have is expressed by your **EMOTIONS**. Emotions are the judgments we accept in order to cope with our feelings.

Physiologically, our body response to stress triggers a cycle of hormone reactions called the HPA Axis – Hypothalamus, Pituitary, Adrenal Axis. These three hormone systems communicate with one another to influence the “fight or flight” response that we now know as stress. Increases in cortisol, epinephrine and nor epinephrine influence all of our organ systems’ ability to regulate and maintain stability. Overtime this can lead to serious illnesses and diseases.

Although we may think that we are in control of our thoughts, there are many things or factors in our environment that influence and affect our thoughts and ultimately how we feel and react to those feelings. Some of these factors include:

Diet. The “SAD” diet or **S**tandard **A**merican **D**iet consists of excessive amounts of sugar, salt and artificial food additives. Eating these types of processed foods adds excessive amounts of empty calories (calories that have no nutritious value) and causes weight gain. The SAD diet is also a leading cause of food intolerances and allergies like wheat/gluten and dairy/lactose. It also increases inflammation in our bodies that can lead to digestive ailments like GERD, leaking gut and diverticulitis.

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Consuming lots of sugar and caffeine also affects our mood as well as causing blood sugar imbalance (hypo/hyper glycemia, diabetes) and dehydration.

Nutrient Deficiencies. Certain vitamins and minerals when deficient from our diets may effect our behavior/mood. Nutrients such as Vitamin D, B-6 & 12, folic acid, iron, and Essential Fatty Acids (EFAs) can alter brain function leading to cycles of depression, irritability and anxiety.

Lack of Exercise. Being sedentary increases toxins in your body and makes you feel bad! Lack of exercise also affects your blood circulation that also affects your thoughts. You are more likely to dwell on negative thoughts when you don't move. Fresh blood to the brain means fresh oxygen to your mind and fresh "thoughts" increasing your mood.

Decreased sunlight. Our modern lifestyle has moved us away from the agrarian society where we spent much of our time out doors tending fields and lives stock towards a service industrial complex that keeps us locked indoors for 20 or more hours per day! Sun light supports Vitamin D and melatonin in our bodies as well as stimulating our skin, eyesight and mood.

Consider this! If the sun's energy is the source of LIFE for plants, earth and animals, why would we as human beings not be effected by the lack of sunlight in our lives? This disconnect from nature is leading us more towards dis-ease than living an optional lifestyle.

According to the Vitamin D Council, how much sun light exposure you need depends on your skin type, where you live and the time of year or season. Fair skin people need little sunlight exposure (approximately 15 minutes) whereas darker skin people need almost 6 times as much (approximately 2 hours).

Mood and Attitude. Serotonin is a neurotransmitter that research scientists believe may be responsible for maintaining mood balance, social behavior, appetite and digestion, sleep, memory, sexual desire and function.

Stress leads to decrease levels of serotonin in our bodies influencing how we think and feel.

Activities that decrease Serotonin*

Optimal Level of Serotonin	Low Level of Serotonin
Hopeful, Optimistic	Depressed
Calm	Anxious
Good-natured	Irritable
Patient	Impatient
Reflective and Thoughtful	Impulsive
Loving and Caring	Abusive
Able to Concentrate	Has a Short Attention Span
Creative, Focused	Blocked, Scattered
Able to Think Thinks Through	"Flies Off the Handle"
Responsible	Reactive
Does Not Overeat Carbohydrates	Craves Sweets and High Carbohydrate Foods
Sleeps Well with Good Dream Recall	Has Insomnia and Poor Dream Recall

* Murray & Pizzorno, pg. 381

What might my doctor recommend?

If stress becomes a real challenge for you to cope in your day-to-day living, your health care provider may recommend medication such as mood stabilizers. Mood stabilizers balance certain brain neurotransmitters that control emotional states and behaviors. Mood stabilizers may also cause severe side effects so if you choose to begin taking such medication, please follow your doctor's instructions completely. *NOTE: once you begin taking a mood stabilizer, do not stop until you have discuss it with your doctor.*

Your doctor may also suggest talk therapy with a licensed therapist.

What can I do?

Begin to practice actions that cultivate a healthier lifestyle!

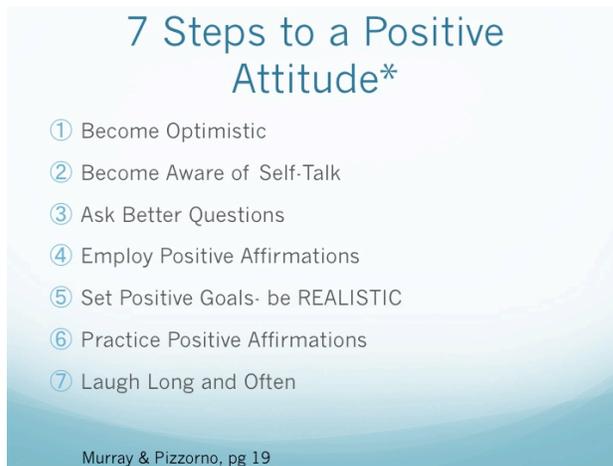
Eat a health promoting diet. A health promoting diet provides you with good sources of vitamins, minerals (vegetables & fruit); complex carbohydrates (whole grains) and essential fats (vegetable oils, fish and lean meats). Curb your diet from consuming the SAD diet- sodium, sugar and additives.

There are a variety of herbal and vitamin supplements available to support your mood and stress levels. *Please consult with a certified nutritionist or wellness practitioner to explore your options especially if you are currently taking any medications or are pregnant.*

Exercise regularly. Strive to move 30- 60 minutes daily. The type of exercise you choose depends on two things: (1) you like to do it; (2) you will do it consistently!

Establish quiet reflective time- meditation/yoga. Establishing a quiet, reflection practice helps to sustain healthy lifestyle goals over time. Quiet reflection moves us away from the “end result” action oriented view of life to being more intentional about our actions: being present in everything that we do- not focusing on an outcome.

Carry a positive attitude.



Additional Resources

Books

Encyclopedia of Natural Medicine. Authors: Michael Murray, ND & Joseph Pizzorno, ND. Three Rivers Press, New York. 1998.

Yoga as Medicine. Author: Timothy McCall, MD. Bantam Books. 2007.

Articles

How to increase serotonin in the human brain without drugs. Simon N. Young. Journal of Psychiatry Neuroscience. 2007. Nov; 32 (6): 394-399

You are what you eat: how food affects your mood. www.dujs.dartmouth.edu