



NLJ Fitness & Wellness Consulting

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Less Stress for More Years

By Nancy Jerominski

Stress is defined as: *“a specific response by the body to a stimulus, as fear or pain, which disturbs or interferes with the normal physiological equilibrium of an organism; physical, mental or emotional strain or tension; a situation, occurrence, or factor causing this.”*

Our food choices, jobs, relationships, the commute, and time constraints can all create stress.

McDonald's or Starbuck's offers up that morning caffeine/sugar/artificially sweetened/Trans fat laden jump start.

After work some of us stop at the local gym to be kicked around for an hour, battle traffic again, microwave a Lean Cuisine backed with diet soda to keep us, well, lean, watch TV until midnight, then toss and turn until morning.

The latest fitness crazes are “Six Weeks to Total Fitness” boot camps, eating “foods made more functional” and the relentless pursuit of non-functional “six pack abs”. Experts remind us that we must exercise 90 minutes daily to combat stress; the good old “No pain, no gain” adage.

Hmmmmmm.....

Re-read that stress definition: *“pain (boot camp class) interferes with the normal physiological equilibrium of an organism (that would be you); physical (running, “health food” bars), mental (work deadlines, finances), emotional strain or tension (relationships at home or work); a situation, occurrence or factor causing this (see all of the above)”*.

No wonder we're crabby, tired, overweight, stressed out and hate the “E” word! The very remedies to relieve stress actually add to the stress mess! Our bodies don't know we're trying to be healthy. Our bodies think we're being chased by a herd of tigers all day as we run or bike searching for food and water that is never in our caves, obligingly bathing every cell with cortisol. Consider why elite athletes are chronically injured and die at relatively young ages.

The two most potent changes to lessen stress are eating nutritionally dense food and being adequately hydrated with clean water. Wholesome food enables the millions of cells that die every second to be rebuilt from good “material”.

We truly are what we eat. If we live on fast food because we drive fast cars, our cells are literally built from that KFC drumstick or 'roided up piece of confinement raised Costco beef.

Sodas and bottled drinks are laced with additives that our bodies don't recognize to utilize. This influences our thinking, which affects what we choose to eat and the activity we choose to do or not do.



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Stay hydrated with pure, filtered water. Good food and water can brighten personal thoughts considerably.

Another strain on our system is poor breathing. Most people have lost the ability to take a deep diaphragmatic breath, breathing in the upper chest. This resembles panting, which tells the body it's stressed.

Watch a baby breathe. Their little bellies go *out* when inhaling and *in* when exhaling. So should ours.

A simple release when you feel the pressure building is to take a deep belly breath as you lift your shoulders up, exhaling as you roll them back. Inhale deeply as the shoulders lift, exhale and roll them forward. Picture a calming blue light infusing the area from sternum to throat.

Start moderate exercise by mindfully walking 10 to 30 minutes a couple of times a week. Take the stairs or park far away from the entrance. Stand upright and use your core while you walk. Make walking an art!

Stress can be channeled very positively when we are thinking, eating, drinking and moving based on what is happening in all aspects of our environment. Being mentally stimulated and having goals are forms of stress that can reap wonderful rewards.

When we think positively and eat and hydrate optimally, strenuous exercise strengthens our bodies and immune systems, keeps our metabolism working at optimal levels and our vigor intact.

When we choose **not** to make the wellness investment in our bodies at least 80% of the time by eating fake foods, participating in hard core training and strenuous dieting, we pile stress upon stress.

Pain + Strain = Drain, not gain!

Eat good food, drink pure water and move every day in moderation. Your body will thank you for it by remaining vital as you age.