

Stop Stress Before It Stops You

It's not unusual, you've been going flat out and finally that long awaited week-end off arrives and you come down with a cold or fever. This is no surprise; chronic stress depresses the immune system lowering resistance to infection. In our age of long work hours, e-mail, cell phones and constant multi-tasking it is no wonder that most of us are under chronic stress. In fact there is an epidemic of stress-related illness in our culture: More than a third of the population suffers with sleep disturbance, anxiety is rampant and heart disease, for which stress is a major risk factor, is the number one killer. Don't you think it is time to take action? One place to begin is by getting to know your stress warning signs. Just as cars have a red light on the dashboard that comes on when the engine overheats, we too have warning signs that remind us to slow down. Tight neck or jaw, difficulty sleeping, over-reacting to other drivers, yelling at the kids, developing a headache or stomach ache, repeatedly losing ones keys, are just a few common signs of stress. Most people experience one or more stress warning sign. Become familiar with yours and take note, slow down before your engine seriously overheats. This awareness of stress warning signs is the first and biggest step in learning to manage stress.

Stress Signs	My Check List √ all that apply	Rate each checked sign from 1 (least effect) to 5 (most)
Headaches		
Anger		
Trouble falling asleep		
Anxiety		
Feeling overwhelmed		
Tight neck/shoulders		
Nausea		
Trouble thinking clearly		
Racing heart		
Tiredness		
No sense of humor		
Back pain		
Indigestion		
Dizziness		
Constant worry		
Biting nails/fingers		
Yelling or swearing		
Indecision		
Crying easily		
Other:		
Other:		

My main stress signs are:

Two Simple Tools

Using a Word to Find Peace

Choose a word that helps you feel peaceful: peace, shalom (Hebrew), salaam (Arabic), or any word that connects you with peace.

Sit comfortably with your spine straight but relaxed.

Close your eyes - exhale deeply - let go worries - allow your body to relax and be supported by the chair.

As you inhale repeat the word - imagine entering an inner space filled with peace. As you exhale repeat the word - feeling that peacefulness growing.

Move deeper with each in-breath - expanding peace with each out-breath.

Continue for several minutes - notice as your mind wanders and gently bring it back to the word and your breath.

When you are ready, bring your awareness back to the room - feel the chair you are sitting on - feel your feet firmly on the ground.

Imagery to Recharge Energy:

During the business of everyday life it is easy to forget our connection with the ground under our feet, the earth that supports and feeds us. Focusing on that connection can help recharge our energy. Try imagining you are like a tree with roots going from your feet deep into the earth. As you breathe out imagine that any stress and tension drains down into the ground through those roots, then as you breathe in imagine that you are drawing new energy back up from the ground into your body, recharging your "battery". This works well while waiting in line at the bank or grocery store!