



*Balance by Brooks*

# DITCH THE STRESS WORKBOOK

BY DR. MICHELE BROOKS RN

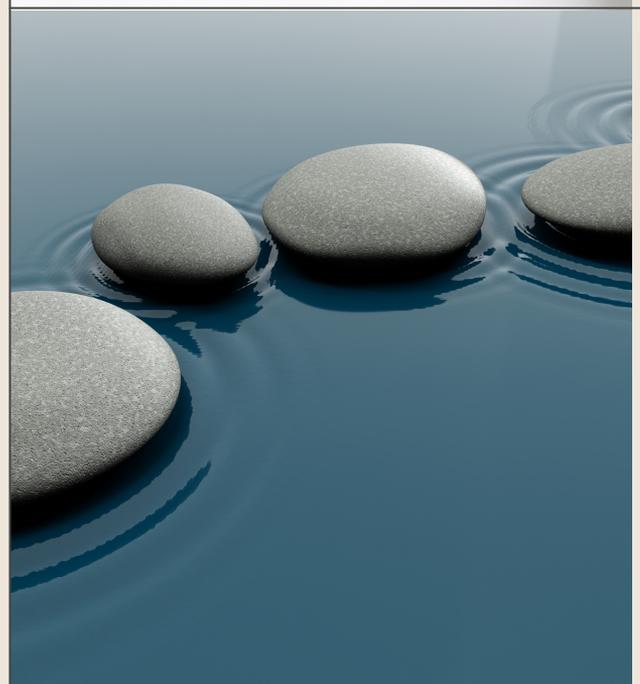


# *DITCH THE STRESS* OBJECTIVES

I. LEARNERS WILL BE ABLE TO IDENTIFY THREE WAYS THAT CHRONIC STRESS IMPACTS THEIR LIVES.

II. LEARNERS WILL BE ABLE TO RECALL AT LEAST THREE STRESS MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES.

III. LEARNERS WILL BE ABLE TO DESIGN A SCHEDULE THAT INCLUDES DAILY STRESS MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES.



# NATURAL STRESS RESPONSE

## THE NATURAL STRESS RESPONSE

IMAGINE YOU ARE TAKING A WALK AND ALL OF A SUDDEN A LARGE DOG COMES BOUNDING TOWARD YOU, BARKING LOUDLY, AND TEETH FLASHING. HOW DOES THIS MAKE YOU FEEL? IF YOU ARE ANY SHADE OF NORMAL, THIS SIGHT SHOULD SET OFF A REACTION WHERE YOU CAN FEEL YOUR HEART BEATING IN YOUR CHEST, YOU MAY STOP IN YOUR TRACKS, YOU MAY TURN AND START RUNNING, AND OFTEN IT IS DIFFICULT TO THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU SHOULD DO. OFTEN IN THIS SITUATION WE JUST ACT ON INSTINCT.

THIS REACTION (WE CALL IT THE FIGHT OR FLIGHT) STARTS IN THE HYPOTHALAMUS, A TINY LITTLE AREA IN THE BASE OF YOUR BRAIN THAT SENDS OUT HORMONE AND NERVE SIGNALS TO THE ADRENAL GLANDS. THESE ADRENAL GLANDS SIT ON TOP OF YOUR KIDNEYS. WHEN THEY ARE SIGNALLED, AND THEY RELEASE HORMONES, CALLED ADRENALINE AND CORTISOL.

THE ADRENALINE IS WHAT YOU FEEL WHEN YOU GET SCARED AND FEEL YOUR HEART BEAT FASTER. IT MAY MAKE YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE HIGHER, AND IS USUALLY WHAT GIVES US THE ABILITY TO OFTEN OUTFRAN WHAT IS CHASING US, OR GIVE US THAT INCREASED STRENGTH FOR THE MOMENT.



# NATURAL STRESS RESPONSE

THE NATURAL STRESS RESPONSE, CONTINUED.

DURING THIS REACTION, SUGAR (OR GLUCOSE) IS RELEASED INTO YOUR BLOODSTREAM BY CORTISOL. IF YOU HAVE NOT HEARD OF CORTISOL, YOU WILL WANT TO KNOW SPECIFICALLY THAT THIS IS KNOWN AS THE PRIMARY STRESS HORMONE. NOW THERE IS A PURPOSE OF THE SUGAR DUMP INTO YOUR BLOODSTREAM BECAUSE THIS IS WHAT HELPS NOURISH YOUR BRAIN BY USING GLUCOSE MORE EFFECTIVELY, AND IT ALSO PROMOTES TISSUE REPAIR AS IT WORKS TO MAKE AVAILABLE THOSE SUBSTANCES THAT HELP WITH REPAIR.

CORTISOL IS THE HORMONE THAT ENSURES THE BODY DOES NOT WASTE ANY ENERGY OR FOCUS ON AREAS THAT ARE NOT DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN THE NEED FOR SURVIVAL. IT ALSO MAKES SURE THAT THE BODY IS NOT INVOLVED IN ANY PROCESS THAT WOULD BE HARMFUL TO THE RESPONSE. BODY SYSTEMS THAT ARE AFFECTED ARE THE IMMUNE SYSTEM, DIGESTIVE AND REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEMS, AND THOSE PROCESSES RELATED TO GROWTH.

THIS BEING KNOWN, IT WOULD MAKE SENSE THAT THE STRESS RESPONSE IS A COMMUNICATION SYSTEM INVOLVING BRAIN FUNCTIONS FOR MOOD, MOTIVATION, AND FEAR.

# WHEN STRESS STAYS...

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN STRESS HANGS AROUND TOO LONG?

AFTER THE OWNER COMES OUT AND CALLS BACK THEIR DOG, THE PERCEIVED THREAT IS OVER AND THE ALARM SYSTEM RESPONSE WILL DISSIPATE WITH THE HORMONE LEVELS RETURNING TO NORMAL.

AS THE HORMONES RETURN TO BASELINE, THE HEART RATE AND BLOOD PRESSURE WILL ALSO DROP BACK TO BASELINE AND ANY SYSTEMS THAT WERE PUT ON HOLD, WILL START BACK UP.

WHAT HAPPENS THOUGH WHEN THE "DOG" IS ALWAYS THERE, YOU WORK A 12 HOUR SHIFT THAT IS SHORT-STAFFED AND HAVE NO HELP, YOU ARE A NURSE AND HAVE A HEAVY PATIENT ASSIGNMENT, YOU ARE UP EVERY NIGHT WITH A CHILD THAT WAKES EVERY NIGHT AT MIDNIGHT AND SCREAMS FOR HOURS? WHEN THESE STRESSORS REMAIN PRESENT AND YOUR FIGHT OR FLIGHT IS PERPETUALLY ENGAGED, YOU BEGIN TO HAVE OVEREXPOSURE OF THE STRESS HORMONES LIKE CORTISOL. IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT WHEN THIS HAPPENS, THERE IS INTERFERENCE WITH ALMOST EVERY PROCESS WITHIN YOUR BODY.

LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT THE PROBLEMS THIS CAN CAUSE:

# CHRONIC STRESS PROBLEMS

PROLONGED CORTISOL LEVELS AND LEVELS OF OTHER STRESS HORMONES CAN LEAD TO THE FOLLOWING COMPLAINTS:

- ANXIETY & DEPRESSION
- DIGESTIVE PROBLEMS
- HEADACHES
- MUSCLE TENSION/PAIN
- CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE; HEART DISEASE, HEART ATTACK, HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE AND STROKE
- SLEEP PROBLEMS
- WEIGHT GAIN
- MEMORY AND CONCENTRATION IMPAIRMENT

MOST PEOPLE CAN RECOGNIZE AT LEAST OF FEW OF THESE. WHEN I LEARNED THAT CHRONIC STRESS WILL LEAD TO HEART ATTACK AND STROKE ... INDEPENDENT OF YOUR HEALTHY DIET, I KNEW THAT I HAD TO TAKE STRESS MANAGEMENT MORE SERIOUSLY. I ALSO KNEW I NEEDED TO HELP OTHERS DO THE SAME.



# MANAGING CHRONIC STRESS

WE HAVE COVERED WHY CHRONIC STRESS IS BAD, NOW WE WILL LOOK AT SEVERAL WAYS TO MANAGE YOUR CHRONIC STRESS. MANY OF THESE YOU HAVE PROBABLY HEARD BEFORE, BUT I HOPE TO ENCOURAGE YOU BY LOOKING AT THE CAUSE AND EFFECT OF STRESS, IT WILL HELP SET AN URGENCY TO ACTUALLY MAKE THE COMMITMENT TO CHANGE.

TAKE A FEW MINUTES NOW AND FILL OUT THE THREE BOXES TO THE RIGHT.

WRITE WHAT YOU  
CURRENTLY DO TO MANAGE  
STRESS:

DO YOU GET ANY RESULTS  
FROM THIS?

WHAT MAKES YOUR STRESS  
BETTER?

## *SEVERAL APPROACHES*

RELAXATION TECHNIQUES: THESE WORK TO STOP THE CHEMICAL RESPONSE TO STRESS, SUCH AS MUSCLE RELAXATION, BREATHING EXERCISES, TAI CHI, MASSAGE, AND ACUPUNCTURE.

MINDFULNESS: HERE WE LOOK AT WHAT THE STRESSORS ARE, AND TAKE AN EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT APPROACH.

USING MINDFULNESS TECHNIQUES WE CAN INCREASE OUR AWARENESS OF WHAT THESE STRESSORS ARE AND HOW WE REACT, AND WE CAN WORK TO ACHIEVE A NONJUDGMENTAL APPROACH REDUCING THE POWER THEY HAVE IN INVOKING A RESPONSE.

COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY (CBT): THIS APPROACH HELPS CHANGE THE WAY WE THINK ABOUT STRESSORS, AND HELPS US BUILD UP COPING MECHANISMS. IT ALSO WORKS TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION AND ENCOURAGES BUILDING SOCIAL SUPPORT.



## RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

1. BREATH WORK - DEEP BREATH IN AND OUT, HANDS ON YOUR BELLY AND ATTEMPTING TO RAISE YOUR HAND AND LOWER OFF OF YOUR ABDOMEN
2. BODY SCAN - THIS CAN BE USED WITH BREATH WORK AND FOCUS ON AREAS OF YOUR BODY RELEASING TENSION AS YOU BREATHE OUT
3. GUIDED IMAGERY - YOU CAN USE A NUMBER OF APPS FOR THIS OR SPOTIFY ALSO HAS SESSIONS AS WELL.
4. TAI CHI - SERIES OF MANY MOVES, CAN TAKE A LONG TIME TO LEARN

NOTE: TO BE SAFE, PREGNANT WOMEN AND ANYONE WITH A CHRONIC MEDICAL CONDITION THAT COULD HAVE RESTRICTIONS ON CERTAIN EXERCISES AND BODY MOVEMENTS SHOULD CHECK WITH THEIR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER BEFORE STARTING A NEW PHYSICAL PRACTICE.

# MINDFULNESS TECHNIQUES



- SWIMMING – OR FLOATING IN WATER USES THE ENTIRE BODY WITHOUT STRESSING THE JOINTS, RELEASING STRESS, INCREASING MOBILITY, AND BRINGING MORE OXYGEN TO THE MUSCLES. IT CAN BE RHYTHMIC; GOING UNDER WATER CAN IMPROVE MINDFULNESS BLOCKING OUT DISTRACTION,
- CORE WALKING: CORE WALKING REMOVES THE FORWARD MOMENTUM, SLOWING DOWN THE MOVEMENT, USING OUR STABILIZING MUSCLES IN ORDER TO STAY UPRIGHT. TIGHTEN THE SMALLER MUSCLES IN THE CORE, THIS HAS HELPED EASE BODY PAIN IN THE LONG RUN AND IMPROVED BALANCE.
- DURING MEDITATIVE WALKING, PRACTICE KEEPING YOUR BREATH RELAXED OR PUTTING AN EVEN AMOUNT OF WEIGHT ON EACH LEG, OR FOCUS ON NOT BOUNCING UP AND DOWN BUT KEEPING YOUR SHOULDERS MOVING IN A RELAXED MANNER. THE FLUID MOTION IS A GOOD SIGN YOU ARE ABDOMINAL BREATHING, RATHER THAN SHALLOW CHEST BREATHING.
- SUGGESTED SURFACES AND PLACES TO TRY WALKING MEDITATION: FLAT BEACH, HALLWAY OR EVEN A FEW LAPS AROUND A ROOM IN YOUR HOME, AS LONG AS YOU ELIMINATE DISTRACTIONS.



- ALMOST ANY ACTIVITY CAN BECOME A MINDFULNESS EXERCISE, SUCH AS DRINKING A CUP OF TEA. TAKE THE TIME TO ENJOY THE PROCESS OF MAKING THE TEA FROM HEATING THE WATER TO POURING, FOCUSING ON THE STEEPING, AND SMELLING THE AROMA. FOCUS ON YOUR BODY AS IT GOES THROUGH ALL THE MOTIONS, THE RUNNING OF THE WATER, POURING, ALL THE ACTIONS YOUR ARMS GO THROUGH, YOUR LEGS HOLDING UP YOUR BODY AS YOU STAND NEAR THE STOVE.
- HOW DOES THE TEA FEEL AS IT TOUCHES YOUR LIPS, WHAT IS THE TEMPERATURE? IS IT BITTER OR SWEET? SLOW DOWN THIS PROCESS AND BECOME MORE PRESENT WITH EVERY MOVEMENT AND PURPOSE.
- HIKING IN NATURE. CONNECT WITH THE SOUNDS OF BIRDS, SMELLS OF THE EARTH, TOUCH OF THE WIND AND BRUSH AS YOU PASS THROUGH. ADMIRE ANY POPS OF COLOR, UNPLUG FROM TECHNOLOGY, AND BE PRESENT IN YOUR WALK.
- GAZING MEDITATION: FOCUS ON A CANDLE FLAME, CAMPFIRE,

# MINDFULNESS TECHNIQUES

STRETCHING: STRETCH IN A WAY THAT ALLOWS YOUR BODY TO TAKE IN MORE OXYGEN, RATHER THAN RESTRICT YOUR BREATHING. FOR EXAMPLE, DEEP BREATH IN WHILE RAISING YOUR ARMS. STRETCH FROM WITHIN TRYING TO CREATE MORE SPACE INTERNALLY TO TAKE IN A BIGGER BREATH. YOU CAN STRETCH IN OTHER WAYS AS WELL, SUCH AS THE NECK, DROPPING YOUR EAR TOWARD YOUR SHOULDER, TAKING IN A DEEP BREATH AND VISUALIZE IT FLOWING TO ANY TIGHT AREAS IN YOUR NECK AND SHOULDER. EACH BREATH FOCUS ON A NEW TIGHTNESS. YOU CAN ADD COUNTS TO YOUR BREATH HERE, SUCH AS IN-2-3-4 OUT-2-3-4.

BY FOCUSING ON THE BREATH, AND MAKING THEM BIGGER AND DEEPER, YOUR BREATHING WILL SIGNAL THE PART OF THE NERVOUS SYSTEM THAT SLOWS DOWN MESSAGING AND EXCITEMENT, THE PARASYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM. THIS TELLS YOUR BODY TO RELAX.

AS YOU FIND YOURSELF GETTING DISTRACTED, CONTINUE PULLING YOURSELF BACK TO YOUR RELAXATION TECHNIQUE AND DON'T FEEL GUILTY, IT IS COMPLETELY NATURAL

CHOOSE ONE OF THESE THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO TRY. BE SURE IT IS SOMETHING YOU CAN FIND SOME QUIET SPACE TO TRY.

# *UNDERSTANDING*

# GOALS

ACHIEVING OUR GOALS IS DEPENDENT ON WHETHER WE TAKE ACTION.  
USE THE TABLE BELOW TO UNDERSTAND THE "WHY" OF YOUR GOALS.

GOAL:

WHAT WILL THIS GIVE YOU?



AND WHAT WILL THIS GIVE YOU?



AND WHAT WILL THIS GIVE YOU?



AND WHAT WILL THIS GIVE YOU?



SO, WHY IS THIS GOAL IMPORTANT?



**STRESS MANAGEMENT**

# INTERVENTIONS<sup>R</sup>

WEEK OF: \_\_\_\_\_

	INTERVENTION	MY FEELINGS	DONE
MON			<input type="radio"/>
TUE			<input type="radio"/>
WED			<input type="radio"/>
THU			<input type="radio"/>
FRI			<input type="radio"/>
SAT			<input type="radio"/>
SUN			<input type="radio"/>





LET'S CHECK OUR OBJECTIVES:

1. IDENTIFY THREE WAYS CHRONIC STRESS IMPACTS YOUR LIFE.
2. WHAT ARE THREE STRESS MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES?
3. DESIGN A PLAN OR INCORPORATE ONE OF THESE TECHNIQUES INTO YOUR SCHEDULE.

ANY FURTHER QUESTIONS?