

Stress: How We Can Help Ourselves!

Article developed for the National Parkinson's Foundation

Stress: an all encompassing word, so commonly used to depict a variety of modern anxieties and issues. Are the physical, mental, and emotional affects of stress real? Without a doubt, the side affects of modern-day stress are very real to those individuals that are currently living those stressors!

We all know that stress in itself may be a positive influence, helping to keep us alert and mentally prepared to live our daily lives whether at home or in the work environment. At the same time, stress can be a negative influence when a person is exposed to continuous challenges without some relief, relaxation, or means of over-coming the stress induced effects. The medical community believes that stress is linked to six of leading causes of death in the United States: heart disease, cancer, lung-aliments, accidents, cirrhosis of the liver, and suicide.

“Just Do It,” the well-known motto of the Nike Corporation or the locker-room advertisement of “Think Thin” are conceptually correct. However, the truth is, that when a person has the responsibility of taking care of an elderly parent, or is the care partner for someone with Cancer or Parkinson's disease and is also working outside the home – the waters muddy very quickly as to how to reduce their own level of stress and still take care of their loved one

Stressors come in a variety of physical, mental, and emotional issues that can manifest themselves in complex reactions. The complementary or alternative-medicine communities agree that the human body is designed to experience stress - if the individual has the means to negate the adverse affects. In my fifteen years of practice as a Holistic Health Practitioner, I rarely find a client that practices well-known methods of stress reduction such as Reiki, yoga, meditation, breathing techniques, Qigong, or some type of physical activity with any regularity.

I strongly believe that everyone can benefit from a few minutes of daily, conscious activities that are well-oriented to relax the body, clear the mind, and refresh the spirit. The concepts of Reiki, Mindfulness meditation, Yoga or Qigong are easy to acquire with minor cost and require small amounts of time – with great benefits!

“I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life and see if I could not learn what it had to teach and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived”

Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*

Henry David Thoreau was a proponent for learning to be quiet, for learning to listen to our bodies, to being mindful of the moment, to enjoy each moment as it came to us, of being present and not thinking of yesterday or tomorrow. These concepts of mindfulness meditation can be easily learned from a great meditation teacher Jon-Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D. and his book *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness*.

John Kabat-Zinn, in his most recent book, *Coming to Our Senses*, states “at the level of the individual person, we know from many studies in the field of mind-body medicine in the past 30 years that it is possible to come to some degree of peace within the body and mind and so find greater health, well-being, happiness, and clarity, even in the midst of great challenges and difficulties.”

The second aspect of self-care that I advocate is any style of Qigong - pronounced Chi gung. Qi (pronounced Chi) is the Chinese word for “life energy” and gong means “work” or benefits that are acquired through personal perseverance and practice.” Qigong is a very ancient system of gentle, self-healing exercises combined with breathing techniques that generates a meditative state of mind and is known to enhance and increase one’s personal energy fields. It is known as a system of slow exercises that involves movements, breathing exercises, various postures, and meditation. These combined aspects of Qigong help to increase our natural energy. My personal practice of Qigong revolves around those Qigong styles as taught by Teacher Li Jun Feng and found in the International Sheng Zhen Society at www.ShengZhen.org.

The third component is Reiki Jin Kei Do – which in fact includes both concepts of Mindfulness mediation and Qigong. Reiki is well known for helping to reduce pain and promote recovery from injuries, illness, disease, and depression. Reiki can also help to maintain a state of inner balance and wellness on all levels of the mind, body, spirit, and emotions. Additional information regarding Reiki Jin Kei Do can be found at www.ReikiJinKeiDo.org.

In briefly returning to the Nike adage “Just Do It” – what ever type of Reiki, meditation, Qigong, breathing exercises, or Yoga; has to be done on a regular basis in order to accumulate any major benefits. We all have an opportunity

to enhance our lives by simply acknowledging that we are deserving of taking a few minutes daily to refresh our mind, body, and spirit by some simple techniques. Good Luck!

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Additional resources:

Mindfulness in Plain English, Venerable Henepola Gunaratana
A Path with Heart, Jack Kornfield
The Way of Qigong, Kenneth S. Cohen