

# “Stress management” doesn’t just happen



Both the Centers for Disease Control and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, in their studies on stress have found that stress-related depression is predicted to be the leading occupational disease of the 21st century, and that about \$300 billion, or \$7,500 per employee, is spent annually in the U.S. on stress-related compensation claims, reduced productivity, absenteeism, and increased health insurance costs and medical expenses. Wow - that does sound stressful!

Stress is a normal part of life, we can't avoid it completely, and it can be a positive motivator to enhance our performance, but prolonged stress can have many negative effects on the body and one's sense of wellbeing. It affects mood and energy levels, lowers immunity to infection, accelerates the aging process and inflammation in the body, increases the risk of stroke and heart-attack, stomach ulcers, osteoporosis and can lead to unhealthy lifestyle behavior such as poor diet, increased alcohol and medication consumption and cigarette smoking. In addition many stress-affected people find themselves gaining weight, particularly around the middle, despite trying to cut back on calories and increasing exercise – which are helpful counter-measures, but may not be enough to offset the hormonal changes affecting the body's metabolism.

“Stress management” doesn’t just happen - it requires us to consciously seek time, space and activities that allow us to detach from the frenetic pace and sensory overload we find ourselves dealing with each day. It takes our bodies time to relax, and we need to give ourselves time to benefit from the relaxation, as often as possible. A relaxing space may be found out in nature, in the garden, resting, listening to guided imagery or music, deep breathing or meditation. Switch off the phone, TV, radio, and step away from your computer! Give your mind a chance to settle down and “tune in” to your body and your inner feelings. Exercise helps to relieve stress by releasing the pent up energy in our muscles, promotes deep breathing and causes our brains to release “feel-good” chemicals called endorphins. Mindful exercises like Tai Chi, Qi Gong, Yoga and walking, can help to strengthen our internal ability to manage our reactions to stressful situations. Playing with children, pets, hugging a loved one or friend and finding the humor in life, can do wonders for a stressed person's soul! Bowenwork, massage, acupressure and other gentle forms of bodywork, can help to relax our whole body, reminding us of what it's like to feel calm again.

What's Bowenwork? It's a soft-tissue relaxation technique, named after Mr. Tom Bowen of Australia. Bowenwork is a gentle bodywork technique that resets dysfunctional tension patterns in muscles and nerves that are causing discomfort and pain. It relaxes the whole body in a very profound way and facilitates the body to start healing itself -however you do not need to be sick or in pain to benefit from Bowenwork - everybody is better with Bowenwork! For more information on how I use Bowenwork to help my clients optimize their health, please visit my website.

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