

Soul Healing...

Bridging the mental and physical health gap

By **Genn Shaughnessy**

Please, someone tell me how to heal this stress? My Magazine deadline is tomorrow, my daughter is sick, my bills are due and my invoices from previous clients are outstanding. Consumed with the stress of work, life and home without the relief of balance. I feel like the living dead, not enough sleep, too much caffeine and no quality time to speak of with my spouse. Tension is high, fighting has become more frequent and in no way can I let this destroy my family, let alone my health.

Sound at all familiar? Like most of the general population, I suffer from stress. Suffer being the key word, it's not just an emotion anymore, it's a disease and I am riddled with it. My bones hurt, my back hurts, my jaw feels like it's wired shut sometimes and I am horrified at there being no end in sight.

Once I began to to accept the fact that this was a problem and I needed help, somehow an angel from cyberspace appeared and my healing began.

“meditation bridges the mental and physical health gap”

According to **Brian Mahan** LMT, SEP and CEO of **Enlightened Concierge**...“It would be simple to say that our level of stress is directly proportionate to the degree to which we are not accepting the present moment. However, it is imperative to look at past traumatic events as well, as they can leave our autonomic nervous systems unregulated with long lasting effects, thus adding to our overall sense of stress. Ultimately, meditation is a tool for self-regulating the way that we feel, much the same way that we use food, sex, drugs and rock and roll as a way to dissociate and disconnect from our current circumstances. Most of us are in a constant state of trying NOT to FEEL, so we look outside of ourselves for anything that will change the way that we feel inside. That being said, if we don't go within then we go without. “

meditation comes in many forms and disciplines, all of which can seem elusive at best. most of us have preconceived notions of what meditation is suppose to be: a blissful experience of being without thought. in it's simplest form, meditation is time to be still and quiet. but, if we are in survival mode, trying to overcome

whatever it is that we are finding to be threatening, then being still and quiet seems counter-intuitive. however, meditation can use the intellect's problem solving skills in a more healthful way by giving it a new set of problems to solve: what am i currently FEELING. With the mind pre-occupied on non-threatening experiences, the physiology of stress can unwind and release. it is also the perfect way to "get here now" or, in other words: to be fully present in the moment.

How does stress affect the mind and body?

What are some warning signs that your brain is in overload?

"That's a good question, because it highlights our greatest stressor - our thoughts. The body responds physiologically to real threats (staring down the barrel of a gun, an animal baring its teeth, or being in a car wreck) the same way that it does to perceived threats (future-based thoughts, losing a job, disharmony in a relationship, or an imbalance in the amount of time that we have and our never-ending laundry lists). The body is the common denominator of all of our experiences perceived and real. So, in truth, we should be more focused on our body's clues that it is overloaded, more so, than our brains being overloaded."

What symptoms are common in those that are over-stressed?

"That's a pretty long list, as stress rears its ugly head in a plethora of ways. Here are a few:

- 0. *Base emotions (anger, fear, sadness, despondency)*
- 0. *High startle response*
- 0. *Obsessive thoughts (cyclical thinking)*
- 0. *Muscular tension (wearing our shoulders like earrings, muscle aches)*
- 0. *Constriction across the chest*
- 0. *Short, shallow breath*
- 0. *Trembling hands"*

How do I begin meditating?

One way to calm the mind is refocus your attention on the external and internal environments. We do this, once again, sensorially. What do I currently see, hear, taste, feel, and smell? Practice consciously orienting to the things in the immediate external environment that provide a sense of resource. When not under current and impending threat, inventory anything that may seem threatening and rationally consider its potential. Basically, what looks, smells, sounds, tastes and/or feels good in the present moment.

A great meditation is to then turn the attention inwards, now that you know that

you are in a safe environment. guide your awareness into the internal environment by closing your eyes and asking yourself some of the following questions: what feels good in the body? can you hear your heart beat, your breath, your stomach gurgling? what can you smell? can you picture in your mind's-eye the bones, muscles, organs? do you see colors, shapes, textures? can you taste the difference between the tip of your tongue, the back, the sides, the top and bottom? can you feel the air entering the body? how does the body respond? What do you notice about temperature throughout the body? etc. etc. etc. in short, become an explorer of your internal landscape and listen to the sensations like of the body. sensations are the language of the lower brain.

What is detox and cleansing?

“This too comes in many forms and purposes...

The general idea is give the body a break from the near constant onslaught of toxins, chemicals and foods that are not in our bodies best interest, while taking steps to support the body with healthful foods, herbs and supplements.

The most popular cleanses involve dietary restriction (only raw fruits and vegetables) and herbal supplementation. there are several good cleanses-in-a-box on the market. there are many individuals that offer assistance (food preparation or delivery of juice fasts, raw food meals of cold soups and smoothies), often times providing additional supplements to aid in ridding the body of toxins.”

What is poisonous not only for the body, but the environment as well?

“Anything that is bad for the environment is bad for our bodies. Disease is caused by negative thoughts, negative emotions and what we put into and on our bodies.”

What small changes can we do to make us and our world better?

“Add more raw fruits and vegetables into your diet. In a perfect world, this would mean shopping and eating only the food that you purchase at a local farmers' market. Unfortunately, this is not a possibility for most americans, who should shop the perimeters (along the four walls) of the highest quality market that they can afford. Avoid the center aisles, as that is where the processed foods are displayed. Read the ingredients and nutrition labels, if you can't

pronounce it, don't eat it!"

Some eco-conscious tips to live by...

1. Be hyper-conscious of all of the goods and services that you consume.
2. Buy locally produced items when possible (support your community).
3. Curtail consumerism: reduce, re-use, re-purpose, recycle
4. Move your body.
5. Use earth-friendly cleaning supplies
6. Rid your body and your home of chemicals

Brian concludes by adding some eco-friendly shopping advice. "There are so many amazing natural and eco-conscious products on the market. You can even purchase most on-line and they are no longer cost prohibitive."