

Leora Sharp DipMTI
Holistic Massage and Bodywork

it's all about you

07887 612 242

www.freemyself.net

leora@freemyself.net



The effects and management of stress

Just say NO!!

Many years ago when I was working as a web designer I went to talk with my Account Manager. I was stressed out about something. He waved his finger at me and said, "Leora, I don't do stress", to which I laughed and have adopted that philosophy since.

Stress combating tips follow after the very important...

Effects of chronic stress on your health

Cortisol is an essential fight or flight hormone released when your body is under stress. It prepares your body for action.

Under normal circumstances, cortisol does its job and goes away, allowing the body to return to normal (homeostasis). But when you are under constant stress, your cortisol levels can be continuously raised.

This has serious implications for the health of the body. Continuously raised levels of cortisol can cause insomnia, lowered immunity, high blood pressure and heart disease, depression and weak bones and muscles.

Insomnia

Normally, cortisol levels rise in the early hours of the morning and this causes you to wake up. When levels of cortisol are permanently raised, you can find it hard to get to sleep and to stay asleep.

Immunity

In the short term cortisol aids your body in turning off the immune reactions like allergy and inflammation, while this is helpful in an emergency, longer term chronic cortisol exposure results in suppressed immunity and vulnerability to infections.

Cardiovascular disease (*class of diseases that involve the heart or blood vessels*)

Cortisol increases blood pressure, places strain on the heart and increases the deposit of fatty acids on the artery walls. Over time, this leads to cardiovascular disease.

Depression

Cortisol depresses brain activity, interferes with concentration, rational thought and memory, leading to mental fatigue, depression and poor self esteem.

Muscles and bones

Cortisol stimulates the breakdown of muscle and bone to supply your body with the minerals and energy needed for fight or flight reactions. In the long term, bone and muscle can be broken down faster than it can be replaced leading to osteoporosis (a disease of bone that leads to an increased risk of fracture) and weak muscles.

~~~~~

## **How can we manage our stress?**

### **“I don’t do stress”**

That’s my number one tip! Just say NO! Eckhart Tolle says this about putting an end to negativity: “drop the negativity like you would drop a hot coal burning your hand.”

Try that same tactic to combat your stress.

### **Mobilise your ‘Breath Soldiers’**

When you are conscious of your breath i.e. when you focus on breathing, you can reverse the effects of stress. Breathing activates the [Vagus Nerve](#) which is responsible for switching on your [Parasympathetic nervous system](#), your relaxation system; your own built in ‘anti stress’ army.

**TOP TIP:** Find periods during your day when you can take a few deep breaths and really concentrate on them. e.g. at a traffic light, on the toilet, waiting for the kettle to boil, every time you put the phone down, when you walk from one room to the next, when you’re brushing your hair. The options are endless. BREATHE.

### **Relax! Every day!**

Find just 15 minutes (and of course more if you can) everyday to just chill. Listen to a relaxation CD or any CD for that matter. Put your favourite tunes on and just listen to them and don’t do anything else. Meditate, stare at the trees, do a puzzle, paint, do some desk yoga, beat yourself at a game of backgammon....anything!

**TOP TIP:** Just do things that SUIT YOU and vary them if you’re someone that gets

bored or doing the same thing quickly. This is also a great time to mobilise your 'breath soldiers' for longer than a minute.

### **Whistle while you walk.**

Just as you need to turn your computer off so it functions better when you restart it, you need to stop your brain from thinking too much so when you need it, it's running at its optimum. By obsessively thinking all the time we can create further stress. Steal some time out from your brain by turning it off throughout the day when it's not needed. Whistle while you're on route from A to B, sing, hum, tell yourself how wonderful you are repeatedly. Do anything that will stop your brain from thinking.

**TOP TIP:** Mantras and affirmations work well for this purpose. Saying something positive and saying it repeatedly puts you in a better frame of mind and removed you from situation.

### **Get your body moving.**

Doing something physical reduces the adrenalin that is released in your body when you are stressed. So, do something physical as often as possible. Exercise every other day would be ideal.

**TOP TIP:** When you're in a stressful situation, say NO! and remove yourself for a while by going to a walk around that block...perhaps find a park and do some star jumps or cartwheels.

### **Listen to your body.**

When you're tired, hungry or thirsty, listen to your body and do something about it.

**TOP TIP:** Your work CAN wait! Stop and attend to your body.

### **Book regular massage appointments months in advance.**

Life carries us away and we're constantly thinking, oh, I must do this or I must do that. All too often when it comes to organising something that is beneficial to our health and wellbeing, we put the action on the back burner and never get round to doing it.

**TOP TIP:** Book time out sessions 6 months in advance. This way you put an end to several weeks of 'trying to get round to booking that appointment' and never getting to it. Or ask your practitioner to call you if they haven't heard from you for X amount of time so they can book you in.

For more information visit [stress.org.uk](http://stress.org.uk)