

Taking Care of Yourself Inside and Out

Nourishing Your Mind, Body and Heart

We all know the fundamental self-care tips: quality sleep, nourishment with fresh life-sustaining foods, exercise, laughter, self-reflection, meditation, alone time, and surrounding ourselves with positive people. However, there seems to be a disconnect between what we know, what we do with what we know and our ability to “be” (e.g. present, open, clear, vulnerable.) Part of the reason for this Know-Do-disconnect is that many of us feel too overwhelmed and don’t give ourselves permission to take the time for self-care and allow ourselves to just “be.”

When self-care is neglected the body moves into the stress response. The body’s stress response includes over 1,400 physical and chemical reactions and over 30 different hormones and neurotransmitters. These remain high hours and even days after a stressful event is over if not released (Childre & Martin, 1999).

Following are some quick tips to assist you when you feel stressed out.

A simple five-step process to feel energized and healthy throughout the day and begin to slow and stop the chain reaction of stress in the body.

STOP: The first thing you need to do when you are feeling overwhelmed or stressed is literally, stop.

Stop everything you are doing and get connected by placing your feet on the floor or sit in your chair and lengthen your spine. Slow your breathing. When you take twelve deep diaphragmatic breaths you activate the relaxation response.

SIGH: Sighing is the body’s natural way of releasing stress. Take a nice deep breath in, exhale a vocal *ahhh*. Try this three times in a row. As you sigh allow yourself to let go of something that is not serving you. Connect that thought to the exhale and release.

STRETCH: Everyday move your spine in six directions:
Front/Back (arms up over head and forward fold the body. Then place hands on lower back and lift heart to the sky for a easy back bend.)

Side to Side (lift arms over head and move the torso laterally. Do both sides two times-Breathe deeply)

Twist (Sit tall in a chair with feet on the floor. Take right hand to outside of left knee and left hand on top of chair. Take a breath in and lengthen the spine, exhale and look over your left shoulder. Switch sides).

SHAKE: Shaking is another way of getting rid of stress in the body. Start standing. Gently start to shake your arms, your legs, your hands etc. Try to shake for two to five minutes. The gently stop and close your eyes.

SMILE: Smile at five people each day (especially the ones who are challenging.) Smiling triggers scientifically measureable activity in the left frontal cortex, the area of the brain where happiness is registered. If you want to release more stress add laughter. Laughter lowers blood pressure, increases your attentiveness and energy levels. You can fake your smile and your laughter and get the same effects. **“So fake it, till you make it.”**

Most importantly when you feel overwhelmed pause and breathe. Find yourself in the present moment. Trust you did your best today.

