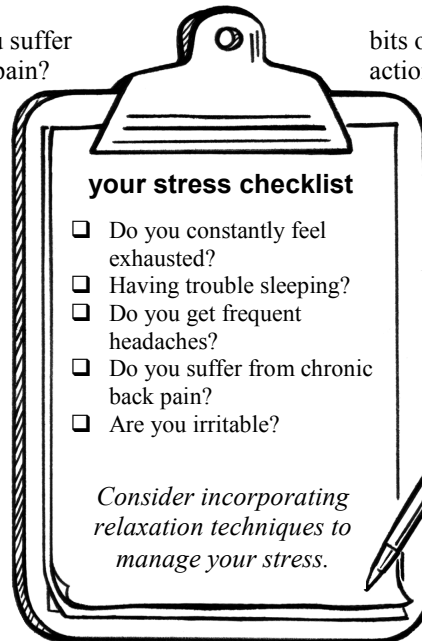


managing your stress

How is stress affecting your life? Do you suffer from chronic headaches, fatigue or back pain? Like it or not, we all have to deal with a little stress in our lives. But understanding your “stress triggers” and your “stress diffusers” are the keys to an effective stress management plan.

What most people characterize as “stress,” in today’s terms, usually relates to our perception of time. With our attention span shrinking daily and our general lack of patience for anything slow, we have created a time vacuum in which our mind creates an internal struggle: Can I get it done in time? How am I going to finish this? What’s taking so long? In it’s purest sense, stress focuses our mind on our environment. Our mind is able to process thousands of

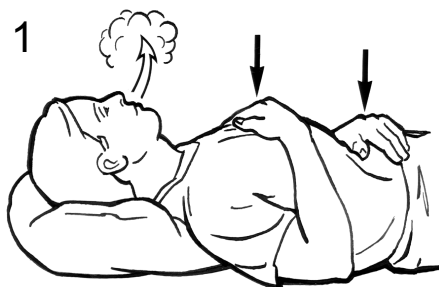


bits of external information and motivate our actions-particularly in the name of self preservation. Unfortunately, there is a price to pay for all of this data processing—our mind has a difficult time turning off the switch, leaving our body to suffer the consequences. We all know the symptoms, a really stiff shoulder that acts up, insomnia, a foggy mind. It’s important to not only recognize our reaction to time related issues, but to use our physical symptoms as a barometer of how we are reacting to our environment.

Relaxation practices such as meditation, massage or yoga aim to pull our mind’s focus inward. Calming the mind can have a dramatic effect on common stress related symptoms.

just breathe

Place one hand on your chest and the other on your abdomen and follow the instructions that accompany the illustrations. You can do this either sitting or lying. Focus on the sensations you are feeling in your body as you breathe. Repeat this sequence six to eight times. If you start to feel light headed stop immediately. Practice this several times a day. If you do this exercise when you are relaxed, it will be much easier to perform when you are feeling stressed.



1 Start by exhaling to completely empty the air from your lungs. Feel your chest drop first and then your belly.



2 Now inhale slowly directing the air into your abdomen. You should feel your belly start to rise.



3 As you continue to breathe in your chest will also rise. When your lungs are full, hold your breath for several seconds and then slowly exhale.

If you have specific health concerns consult your medical doctor. The information in this newsletter is educational only and is not intended to replace the advice of your personal health care providers.