

Stop *toxic* stress!



Include regular exercise in your daily life.

Are you constantly stressed and starting to feel the consequences stress is having on your wellbeing and sanity? **NALISH PATEL** lets you in, on how to de-stress.

Do you treat yourself to a massage once every three months or take a break one day a week as a “fix” for your constant overload?

Well, this may not be the most effective way to combat chronic stress. To experience real wellbeing and to buffer the effects of stress on the body and mind, you may need to find ways to relax and de-stress every day to have a positive impact on your health and wellbeing.

Of course we can't completely rid ourselves of stress, but we need to look at ways to cope with it. Stress can be a good thing in moderation as it acts to propel us forward, but too much is detrimental.

So when does stress turn into toxic stress? Toxic stress is best identified if you are starting to lose clarity, focus and motivation to pursue your goals. You'll find when you are chronically stressed that you make mistakes on simple tasks, you become forgetful and your sleep and moods are affected.

We need to be wary as toxic stress doesn't just dissipate on its own. It builds up over time and can have detrimental effects on our health. The biggest stress in this modern day is work for many of us. The fine line between work and home is now fuzzy due to the technological advances that make it hard for us to be non-contactable.

Toxic stress starts to manifest itself in daily headaches upon waking, stiff neck and shoulder muscles; it can weaken our immune function, making us vulnerable to flus and viruses. Ultimately, toxic stress could potentially lead to heart attacks and cancer.

A few simple changes to the structure of your day can be enough to change toxic stress into manageable stress. We need to feel in control of our day to feel relaxed.

Create a “corner of calm” every day to buffer yourself against the effects of daily stress.

Here are a few simple changes that can be easily implemented into your day:

Stop delaying exercise

If you are continuing to put off starting an exercise programme until you find the "time" to exercise, you may be in for a long wait. Decide today to create a plan of action and the times you can realistically work out.

Action task: Pull out your diary and schedule times in each day to do some form of exercise. Create the appointment with yourself and stick to it as you would any other important appointment. Before you know it, exercise will become a habit!

Take a break at 4.30pm each day

You are probably starting to wilt as the day is nearing a close. You may feel stressed as you realise how little you have accomplished that day! I recommend clients to do the Sun Salute, a series of yoga poses at this time of day to help ease tension and create a surge in energy.

Action task: Try taking a short walk or doing stretches to break up the routine of what you had been working on. This will help regulate your mood for the later half of the day so you feel a bit more perked up and relaxed for after work.

Nip worry in the bud

If you are worrying over a work or personal issue and it is starting to spiral out of control, it is time to get it on paper. This alone will free up your mental space and physically relieve tension.

Action task: Keep a "worry journal" and each day at regular intervals, jot down anything that is weighing on your mind. It may be an

item to be added to your "to do" list or it may be an ongoing niggler that is refusing to budge.

By emptying our head of the worry, we literally free up our mind and create more energy.

It is the small constant worries that do the most damage on our wellbeing, so off load your brain and stresses regularly everyday.

I had one client who literally had a jump in energy levels from this one task alone!

Create a de-stress list

Include places, activities, or objects that give you peace on a de-stress list.

Create a personalised plan of things you can realistically incorporate into your day, month and year that brings you pleasure and reduces your stress.

Action Task: Include regular exercise on the list and the benefits will follow. Choose activities you enjoy, rather than ones you think you should enjoy. Meditation may be great for some people but boring for others! Make it personal and create a "corner of calm" everyday. Life is happening now. There's no point in waiting until you are less stressed to start enjoying it. You may be waiting a long time.

▲ *Nalisha Patel of HealthMastery specialises in mobile personal training in home or office, with 12-week challenges for health and fitness, weight-loss and a healthy mindset. Ph 09 266 3662, www.healthmastery.co.nz*

