



strength * spirit * solace

Newsletter

February 2006

Dear friend...

Recent studies suggest that severe cases of stress may accelerate the aging process, leaving people susceptible to various diseases. To determine exactly how stress affects people on a cellular level, some researchers have analyzed the cells of *mothers caring for critically sick children*. The goal of one particular study was to discover if stress affected a key part of the chromosome known as a telomere, thought to be markers of aging. As people begin to age, telomeres dwindle down. Disease steps in when the telomere gets too short to work effectively and cells all over the body begin to die. The study found that *the longer women cared for sick children, the shorter the telomere became*.

True, we cannot eliminate stress entirely, but we can provide our bodies with tools to compensate for it. The key is not getting rid of the stress itself but adjusting your body's ability to tolerate the stress. Meditation is an effective strategy to address stress. Take a deliberate break from the stream of thoughts that are constantly flowing in and out of your mind, by simply freeing your mind of all its conscious thoughts and focus on the sounds you are hearing, including the sound of your breathing. We are constantly stimulated in our daily lives – visually, mentally, emotionally and physically. Not surprisingly, taking a break from this stimulation can actually improve our health.

Keep up the great work and let your light shine on!

Namasté,

Sara

Meditation

There are times when life urges us to seek more. Small changes to our comfort zone may fail to alleviate any sense of stagnancy or frustration, and we may need to examine our lives and ourselves more deeply to find the right place to start. Everything we need for success and joy lies within. But so often, life's debris accumulates, building layers around our core that makes it difficult to access the truth that resides within. To reach the depth we wish to access, we must dive below these layers to the deepest parts of ourselves.

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Poses You Can Do at Home

Simhasana (Lion Pose)



Benefit - Relieves tension in the chest and face. A great stress reliever!

Contraindications

If you have a knee injury, always be cautious in flexed-knee sitting positions and, if necessary, sit on a chair to do the pose.

Step by Step

1. Kneel on the floor and cross the front of the right ankle over the back of the left. The feet will point out to the sides. Sit back so the perineum snuggles down onto the top (right) heel.
2. Press your palms firmly against your knees. Fan the palms and splay your fingers like the sharpened claws of a large feline.
3. Take a deep inhalation through the nose. Then simultaneously open your mouth wide and stretch your tongue out, curling its tip down toward the chin, open your eyes wide, contract the muscles on the front of your throat, and exhale the breath slowly out through your mouth with a distinct "ha" sound. The breath should pass over the back of the throat.
4. Some texts instruct us to set our gaze (*drishti*) at the spot between the eyebrows. This is called "mid-brow gazing" (*bhru-madhya-drishti*; *bhru* = the brow; *madhya* =

middle). Other texts direct the eyes to the tip of the nose (*nasa-agra-drishti*; *nasa* = nose; *agra* = foremost point or part, i.e., tip).

5. You can roar two or three times. Then change the cross of the legs and repeat for the same number of times.

Modifications & Props

If you find the leg position described above to be uncomfortable, simply sit in Virasana. Sit on a block positioned between your feet.

Partnering

Nobody wants to partner with a lion. ☺

** Poses You Can Do at Home are from Yoga Journal.*

Nutrition – Help for PMS sufferers

Research has proven that, in many cases, diet and exercise alone can control some PMS symptoms. The goal of the dietary management of PMS is to reduce PMS symptoms, maintain serotonin and endorphin levels to avoid depression, regulate blood sugar, maintain energy levels and avoid feelings of fatigue during the last 14 days of the menstrual cycle. Along with eating to reduce the PMS, supplementation of certain nutrients is known to be beneficial for correcting and alleviating PMS associated symptoms. Reduced symptoms may not be noticed immediately when beginning a regime of daily dietary supplementation but should be apparent in 1 to 3 cycles. Aerobic exercise 45 minutes 3-4 times a week is of major importance for maintaining energy, elevating endorphins and maintaining mood (sanity for some).

Dietary Management:

- Choose a variety of foods that are moderate to low Glycemic foods and rich in fiber to avoid low blood sugar and fatigue.
- Reduce the intake of refined processed foods, sugar and salt in the diet to manage blood sugar, serotonin, and bloating.
- Calorie breakdown: 40% complex carbohydrate, 30% protein, and 30% fat (from poly and mono unsaturated or plant sources).
- Eat 4-6 small meals daily to maintain energy and blood glucose throughout the day. This will also prevent bloating and lethargic feelings associated with overeating.
- Eat a substantial breakfast consisting of whole grains and lean protein to help stabilize blood sugar early in the day.

Supplements that can help:

- A multivitamin consisting of 300 micrograms chromium and 400 milligrams magnesium helps to manage blood sugar, reduce sugar cravings and reduce menstrual cramps.

- Omega-3 fatty acids (12 gms /1 teaspoon of flaxseed oil or essential fatty acid supplement) will help manage cramping, inflammation, and depression.
- Calcium supplements are for those who do not get good sources of calcium in the diet. A calcium/magnesium supplement can be taken to get both calcium and magnesium. It is suggested to take 1,200 mg of calcium in supplement form.
- Pyridoxine or Vitamin B6 has been used to help manage some of the nervousness and moodiness some women experience with pre-menstrual syndrome. Therapeutic range for Vitamin B6 (Pyridoxine) is 30-250 mg/day.

Your Questions Answered!

Do you have a question? Email it to me at sara@saradelaney.com.

Q: *I thought you could answer a question for me about the importance of organic produce. I only buy organic meats and dairy, but I feel like organic fruits and veggies aren't as important (when weighed with their cost). I feel like the hormones and additives in meat and dairy are worse than the veggies...true or false?*

A:

You are right to purchase organic meats and dairy. Range-raised cattle are naturally lean. The fats found in the meat of a cow that's grazed in open pasture are stable, saturated fats, while the meat of cattle raised in factory farms contains a conglomeration of polyunsaturated and saturated fats, chemicals and other hormones. Factory-farmed meat may come from cattle that are fed a mishmash of oils, grains, wastes from chemically fertilized crops, old newspapers urinated on by other cattle, and even unsalable parts of their slaughtered brethren. If you are what you eat, you're also what whatever you eat eats.

Many beef cattle are routinely injected with estrogen to fatten them up for market. This estrogen is still in the meat when it gets to your table in measurable quantities. Conventional dairy cows are forced to exist in intolerably unhealthy conditions and are loaded up with antibiotics and other drugs to compensate. When you drink milk or eat other dairy products, you're getting dosed with these drugs. Bovine growth hormone (BGH) or recombinant bovine growth hormone (rBGH) increases milk production in dairy cows. BGH-treated milk contains higher levels of insulin-like growth factor 1, which is identical in humans and cows. IGF-1 is a growth promoter that interacts with estrogen to make it more potent, and research is increasingly showing us that it could increase breast and colon cancer risk. Most dairy farmers use BGH or r-BGH, so I recommend using organic dairy products because they do not contain hormones, antibiotics or BGH/r-BGH. Meat and eggs from conventionally raised chickens contain the antibiotics and petrochemical xenohormones (pesticides) they are fed. Many of these toxins are concentrated in the fatty tissues of animal products, which means you're getting a far more potent dose with these foods than with vegetables.

So, why buy organic produce? Non-organic farming leaves soil fallow, depleted of the minerals it needs to produce healthy, pest-resistant crops. Whatever plants can be eked

out of this used-up soil need plenty of harsh fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides to survive to market. The hybridization of crops – which is what makes those uniformly large, flawless looking and tasteless veggies you see in the supermarket produce section – means further exhaustion of nutrient content. Fruits and vegetables that are conventionally grown are low in nutrients, hybridized, sprayed and fertilized with all manner of poisonous compounds, many of them with estrogenic properties (meaning they mimic estrogens in the body), and they don't taste as good as organically grown produce. The pesticide residues left on that nice red apple may be small, but if you add them to all the other pesticides you're exposed to, the toxic load may be too much.

Many pesticides approved for use by the EPA were registered before extensive research linking these chemicals to cancer and other diseases was established. Now the EPA considers that 60 percent of all herbicides, 90 percent of all fungicides and 30 percent of all insecticides are carcinogenic. A 1987 National Academy of Sciences report estimated that pesticides might cause an extra 1.4 million cancer cases among Americans over their lifetimes. The bottom line is – pesticides are poisons designed to kill or damage living organisms, including humans. In addition to cancer, pesticides are implicated in birth defects, nerve damage and genetic mutation.

A final note about why organic food is better for our bodies' health. Xenohormones are substances (pollutants) originating outside the body that have hormone-like and estrogen-like activities. Exposure to xenohormones are responsible for hormonal imbalances and reproductive abnormalities that are approaching epidemic proportions. The potential consequences of these exposures are overwhelming, especially since we are passing these genetic mutations on to our children. Why not limit your exposure to these pollutants as much as possible? The bottom line is that you and your family are much better off eating organic, but if you are on a tight budget and can afford to buy only some organic foods, these are the ones you should choose: free-range, hormone-free eggs, dairy, beef and chicken.

Contemplate...

Not long after disclosing that its French fries contain more trans fat than thought, McDonald's Corporation said Monday, February 13 that wheat and dairy ingredients are used to flavor their French fries – an acknowledgment it had not previously made. The presence of those substances can severe cause allergic or other medical reactions in food-sensitive consumers, such as those individuals with celiac disease. Buyer beware.



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*"When you come to the edge of all that you know, you must believe one of two things:
There will be earth upon which to stand, or you will be given wings to fly."*

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