

Don't panic!



learn to stress less and sleep more

We all stress at times! Assignments are due, exams are imminent, emails are out of control, kids are fighting, deadlines are looming, phones are running hot, the family is sick, dinner needs preparing ... the list goes on. **Caroline Robertson** discovers methods to help you mellow out.

Stress is essential to thrive and survive. It mobilises and motivates us to be more active, creative, competitive and productive. Just as pressure produces a diamond, stress can make us stronger, smarter and more successful. Stress isn't the enemy, our reaction to stress is. Stress is an alarm calling us to action. But false alarms or constant alarms are detrimental. Our ancient fright-flight mechanism summons cortisol, adrenalin and noradrenalin so we're ready to rock. It increases our heartbeat, blood pressure, respiration rate, blood sugar and sensory sharpness. Good stress or eustress keeps us alert, active, decisive and excited. It's essential for survival deciding the difference between life and death. Short-term stress doesn't take a toll on our health if we relax soon after. It's only when we over-react and continue to

react that stress destroys our health and happiness.

Getting stuck in stress is linked to serious symptoms including heart disease, depression, cancer and suicide. Chronic stress comes from situations we feel we can't control or have closure over. Imaginary or real repetitive stress drains us mentally and physically. Excess stress causes aches, anxiety, auto-immune disease, confusion, depression, dry mouth, fatigue, heartburn, IBS, insomnia, irritability, low libido, muscle tightness, palpitations, poor concentration, sweaty palms, rapid breathing and shakiness. Long-term stress contributes to premature ageing, diabetes, ulcers, osteoporosis and heart disease. In other words prolonged stress is not good for you and learning ways to minimise and manage your stress before it negatively impacts your health is critical.

Adrenal fatigue

When stress hormones are always elevated it causes adrenal exhaustion. The adrenals secrete stress hormones that shut down with overuse, leaving you unable to respond to stress. This depresses the mind, depletes energy and suppresses immunity. Nervous breakdowns and chronic fatigue result from adrenal exhaustion. If you're always on the run, always tired, feel weak, sick, jittery or moody, crave stimulants or struggle to get out of bed in the morning, then it's time to address your adrenal health.

Let it go

Scan your body for stress. Tight muscles, tense aching jaw, shallow breathing, heart racing and anxiety are all signals. When something happens to add to your stress, take time out to listen to your breathing – inhale and exhale deeply and slowly to let go of tension. Instead of pessimistically dwelling on a problem quickly switch to thinking about solutions. Every stress is solvable with an optimistic outlook.

Make friends with stress

Stress is a chance to be more conscious, calm and careful. We can exaggerate and see things as more catastrophic than they are. Question your assumptions and expectations – are they real, inevitable, true? When overwhelmed centre yourself with a deep breath and ask “Am I alright now?”, “How can I cope with this?” Encourage yourself saying, “I’m doing well” and “It’ll work out.” Remember things you’ve survived and thrived through.

Chill pills

Herbs that strengthen your stress resilience and response include adaptogens such as withania, Siberian ginseng, and rhodiola. All are calming to the nervous system, and are able to help the body's reaction to stress. Ayurvedic sacred basil helps

normalise stress hormones in the body and when combined with lemon balm helps to calm the body and the mind.

Kali phos is a great pick-me-up cell salt for fatigue and stress. It's a tried and proven remedy that's been used for decades as a nerve tonic. The chewable tablets are convenient and particularly useful for children.

Dose up on supplements that stress depletes including B-complex, vitamins A, C and E, manganese, magnesium and zinc.

Rescue Remedy is a saviour during severe stress. It is a blend of five Bach Flower remedies created by Dr Bach that helps you deal with emergencies and crises and gets you through stressful situations. It helps you relax, focus and stay calm. Pop it in your pocket, handbag, gym bag or backpack and administer as needed.

Tips to tranquillity

- Commence and complete your day with meditation
- Communicate with someone supportive
- Find serenity in nature or music
- Consume a clean diet to reduce toxic overload on organs
- Get at least six hours deep sleep
- Laugh and smile stress away
- Exercise, breathe and stretch regularly to release adrenalin
- Don't expect perfection
- Balance work, play and duties
- Simplify for a sane schedule
- Reduce electromagnetic stress, noise and driving
- Establish a regular routine for eating, exercising and sleeping
- Get organised and manage time to avoid rushing
- Avoid stimulants such as tobacco, caffeine, alcohol and sugar. ☒

Caroline Robertson is a passionate practitioner and teacher of natural therapies and First Aid. For consults, classes, treatments and retreats in Sydney or via skype. www.carolinerobertson.com.au



Sleep secrets

Sleep is essential for rest and renewal. Stress unsettles sleep, creating more stress. It's imperative to balance stress and sleep simultaneously. Try these tips for sound sleep.

- Exercise early.
- Avoid stimulants and brain stimulation in the evening.
- Eat and drink no later than three hours before bed.
- Prepare for the following day.
- Try a combination herbal supplement to promote restful sleep. Look for herbs that relieve insomnia and sleeplessness, while reducing the effects of mild anxiety and nervous tension such as ziziphus, magnolia bark, passionflower and California poppy.
- Try a lavender bath and foot massage before bed.
- On pillow spritz 15ml water with 2 drops lavender, 1 drop chamomile, 1 drop orange and 1 drop ylang ylang.
- Ensure your mattress and pillow are supportive and bedding isn't overheating you.
- Go to bed before 10pm in a dark, quiet room with no power points on. Switch off the Wi-Fi; consider earplugs and an eye mask.
- Progressively relax each body part as you lie in bed.



Withania



Ginseng



Rhodiola