

Community Newsletter

May/June 2018

5 Holistic Activities to Help You Manage Stress, While Managing It All

By: Lauren Maltese, MD

You're a mother, a caretaker, a provider and so much more. You're constantly surrounded by people who need your help, which leaves little time for you. In many ways, women are pushed into juggling multiple roles while trying to maintain a perfect work/life balance, and this is often what causes stress.

His Stress vs. Her Stress

Being Single Stress vs. Married Stress

Stress is defined as a state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or very demanding circumstances. We all experience stress, but what makes stress different for women? We're trying to do it all! In addition to our many roles, we have to deal with financial pressures and try to maintain interpersonal relationships while sustaining our sense of self. Women consistently report higher stress levels than men, and more women are likely to say their stress is on the rise, according to the Stress in America survey commissioned by the American Psychological Association.

The survey found that when asked to recall symptoms during the previous month, women were more likely than men to report physical and emotional symptoms of stress, such as having had a headache (41 percent vs. 30 percent), having felt as though they could cry (44 percent vs. 15 percent) or having had an upset stomach or indigestion (32 percent vs. 21 percent).^{*} Women are also more likely to believe that stress affects their eating habits, increases feelings of hostility or negativity and reduces quality of sleep. Typical complaints range from fatigue, headaches and poor memory to stomach pain, indigestion and lack of sleep.

^{*} <http://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/stress/2010/gender-stress.aspx>

Married women report higher levels of stress than single women, with 33 percent reporting that they have experienced a great deal of stress in the past month (8, 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale) compared 22 percent of single women.^{*} Stress often results in poor eating habits such as overeating, skipping meals and even just making poor food choices (choosing "comfort foods" or fast-food options over home-cooked meals). Elevated stress levels can impact mental health, resulting in anxiety, depression, anger, feelings of being overwhelmed and lack of motivation.

A Holistic Approach for Relieving Stress

So how can women start the process of coping with stress?

To begin, it's important to identify the key underlying aspects in your life that are causing stress and try to eliminate or minimize them. When you do feel stressed, there are some quick simple strategies that can help:

- 1. Deep breathing exercises** foster calmness. With square or "box" breathing, for example, breathe in slowly through your nose to a count of four, hold your breath for four seconds and exhale through your mouth as you count four. Meditation is also an excellent way to relax, and there are many guided meditation apps accessible for smart phones. Stress relief can also come from reading a book, listening to music or engaging in an enjoyable hobby.
- 2. Sleep!** Another important way to reduce stress is to get enough quality sleep, which can be accomplished by practicing better sleep habits (often called sleep hygiene). To help ensure uninterrupted sleep, don't drink too much liquid or

eat a large meal too close to bedtime. Late-night consumption of alcohol can also impact quality of sleep and stimulants such as nicotine and caffeine should be avoided 4-6 hours before bed. Allow sufficient time to unplug and wind down at the end of the day. Turn off all screens at least an hour before bed and refrain from working, emailing or texting where you sleep. Maintaining a "bedtime routine" and going to sleep and waking at the same time each day helps as well.

- 3. Exercise** not only relieves stress but also releases endorphins and supports cardiovascular and bone health. Every little bit counts, whether it's a simple walk around the block at lunchtime, or joining a class at your local gym.
- 4. Maintaining social relationships** can serve as a vital source of support. Sometimes it helps just to talk to someone. Remember that social networks require maintenance. Reach out to old friends. Make time to talk to the people you care about most. If possible, share your meals with others as often as you can.
- 5. Self-care** is vitally important. Prioritizing a sense of balance in your life will serve you well. Giving up self-care and stress management to squeeze a few more minutes of work into your day will be counter-productive in the long run. Taking care of yourself now will go a long way toward becoming the best version of you.



Lauren Maltese, MD

Dr. Maltese specializes in internal medicine. She sees patients at 362 North Broadway Sleepy Hollow, NY. To make an appointment, please call (914) 631-2070.



When Stress Takes its Toll: What I Lost and How I Fought to get it Back.

By: Heather Moore

Stress is something that affected me from a young age. As a gymnast, I remember not being able to eat before competitions because I was so nervous. As I got older, stress continued to insert itself in my life, causing general and social anxiety. What I originally thought were asthma attacks were actually panic attacks. Instead of eating more, I ate less. My stress and ways of controlling it became my new normal. As I ate less and lost more weight, it led to hospitalization after hospitalization for the treatment of and medical complications of anorexia and bulimia.

The stress affected my daily functioning and took a major toll on my health. In college, I was diagnosed with depression, panic attacks and an eating disorder, but I knew that all of these problems had actually started well before the diagnosis. That's the funny thing about stress, it takes on many different forms and becomes just a part of your daily routine. I had been running myself into the ground and didn't notice.

I first met Dr. Lauren Maltese, my current primary care physician, when I needed care for a bad sore throat. I knew stress was the underlying cause of many of my stomach issues, including lack of appetite and IBS-like symptoms. But when Dr. Maltese told me I had developed chronic viral tonsillitis, it became apparent to me that my immune system had been damaged by chronic stress.

Dr. Maltese has been my doctor for the past two years, helping me battle my debilitating eating disorder. Her holistic approach was what I needed. She has always seen me as a whole person and not just a patient with a medical condition that needed treatment. She helped me understand that stress is, in part, behind medical issues such as gastroparesis and IBS. It doesn't necessarily cause it, but it contributes to it. She has opened my eyes



to how my stress exacerbated my medical problems, making symptoms worse and complications more prevalent.

Today I am learning to cope with stress in a healthier and non-self-destructive manner. Dr. Maltese is part of a multidisciplinary treatment team. She works in sync with my dietitian, psychiatrist, therapist and any other person involved in my care. I have come a long way, but still have a long way to go. Dr. Maltese's support will continue to be paramount in helping me to find outlets and skills to cope with stress.

Treating Seasonal Allergies Holistically

It has been shown that seasonal allergies are a result of increased inflammation in the body, stemming from a weakened immune system. Ninety percent of your immune system's defenses originate in the intestine, so maintaining a healthy GI tract ultimately plays an important role in reducing the effects of allergens. One way to achieve this is to avoid medications such as antacids, NSAIDs and antibiotics, because they can weaken the intestinal wall's protective barrier.

If you're looking for holistic alternatives to a daily anti-histamine, following are some tips that are commonly recommended by holistic experts:

- **Eliminate dairy, gluten, baked flour products, packaged juices and sugar.** Reduce your exposure to known food and environmental triggers as much as possible.
- **Stinging Nettle:** Take 3-6 capsules daily. This is a safe, natural antihistamine that does not make you drowsy and reduces seasonal allergies very effectively.

The nettles have to be freeze-dried in capsules and can be found in local health food stores.

- **Quercetin:** Take 500 mg daily. Quercetin is an anti-inflammatory nutritional supplement that helps with gut repair and reduces the reactivity of mucus membranes. Do not use in pregnancy as there is conflicting safety data.
- **Zinc:** Take an age-appropriate dose one time daily, 5-10 mg/day for children 4-7 years, 10-20 mg/day for children age 8-12 and 25-40 mg/day for older children and adults.

- **Vitamin C (in the form of buffered Ascorbic Acid, which does not irritate the stomach):** Take up to 2,000 mg daily. This is an excellent anti-inflammatory and antioxidant. During pregnancy, check your prenatal vitamin to see how much Vitamin C is included to make sure your total daily dose does not exceed 2,000 mg.
- **Body work such as chiropractic care and acupuncture can help relieve pressure on sinuses and improve circulation.** These modalities also reduce stress, thereby decreasing inflammation. And they make you feel good, too!

Hopefully, the above recommendations will help you enjoy yourself more during allergy season! Feel free to make an appointment with Phelps Medical Associates Midwifery at Harrison for expert holistic care for treating common ailments.

Michelle Chiafulio, CNM, MS

*Additional Sources:
Aviva Romm, MD, www.avivaromm.com*

Fight the Fever!

Everything you need to know to prevent and treat hay fever



Allergic rhinitis, also known as hay fever, is caused by small airborne particles called allergens that trigger an immune reaction that causes a stuffy and runny nose, sneezing, sinus congestion and itchy watery eyes. Allergies often develop in childhood or early adulthood, but they may also appear for the first time in adults. Did you know that twenty percent of all people suffer from hay fever?

In the Northeast, seasonal allergies may extend over a period of about nine months. Tree pollen is prevalent from March through May, followed by grass allergens through July, and then mold spores and ragweed throughout the fall. If it seems to you that the allergy season lasts longer than it used to, you are right! Warmer average temperatures and increased precipitation over the past few years have resulted in longer pollen-production seasons.

Symptoms of hay fever are typically episodic and worse when outdoors. You may have a stuffy nose, a runny nose with clear mucus, sneezing, an itchy nose, post-nasal drip, a “tickle” in your throat, a hoarse voice or sinus pressure. Eyes may be red, watery, itchy or swollen. You may lose your sense of taste. Breathing through your mouth may interrupt sleep and lead to fatigue. Allergic rhinitis might actually trigger wheezing and shortness of breath in patients with underlying asthma. If you develop wheezing, shortness of breath, fever (greater than

100.5), sinus pain or heavy dark mucus, you should definitely see your primary care physician (PCP) for definitive care.

The best offense against the fever is a great defense! First, identify what causes your allergies, either by tracking what allergens you were exposed to when symptoms occurred, or by seeing your PCP to formulate a plan. **Did you know that your PCP can perform simple blood tests to identify what you are allergic to?**

Once you and your PCP know what’s causing your allergies, you can monitor daily pollen counts using an app on your phone! One such app is “Pollen” on Apple. When counts are high, stay inside as much as possible with windows closed. After spending time outdoors, shower to remove pollen from your hair and skin, and dress in fresh clothing. Also consider a nasal rinse like “Simply Saline,” which helps clear pollen and mucus from your nose. The “Simply Saline” product has a one-way valve that prevents the sprayer from getting contaminated with bacteria.

If despite your efforts, allergy symptoms worsen, consult your primary care physician about treatments that are best for you, which will depend on your symptoms and personal preferences. Possible medications include:

- **Nasal steroids** (e.g., *Flonase*, *Nasonex*) and nasal antihistamines (e.g., *Astelin*) reduce inflammation, stuffiness, sneezing, and itchy, runny nose. These agents are very effective with minimal side effects, and they are typically used daily throughout the allergy season.
- **Decongestants** (e.g., *Pseudophed*) shrink nasal tissues and blood vessels. These medications are meant for short-term, as-needed use. They may raise blood pressure or cause heart palpitations, and they are not recommended for people with glaucoma. AFRIN spray is a nasal decongestant that is NOT recommended,

because it typically makes congestion worse after just one day of use.

- **Antihistamines** (e.g. *OTC Claritin and others*) block histamine, which is released by the immune system in response to allergens, thus helping to prevent congestion, runny nose, itching and sneezing. They can be used on an as-needed basis, or daily, and can treat both nasal and ocular symptoms. Their use is limited by dry mouth, drowsiness and mental fogginess, and they need to be used cautiously in elderly patients and in men with enlarged prostate (BPH).
- **Antihistamine Eye drops** (e.g. *Pataday*) help relieve eye itchiness and watery eyes. They can be used daily throughout the allergy season or on an as-needed basis and are typically well tolerated.
- **Leukotriene inhibitors** (e.g. *Singulair*) block the leukotriene allergic pathway, thus preventing many allergy symptoms, both nasal and ocular. They can be added to other medications for severe symptoms. They must be taken daily throughout the season and cannot be used on an as-needed basis. Leukotriene inhibitors are generally well tolerated, except may cause occasional sleep disturbances.



William Boxer, MD, FACP is a board certified internist with over 18 years of experience in internal medicine and primary care. He is a Castle Connolly Top Doctor in internal medicine and

a *New York Magazine* Top Doctor in internal medicine. He is particularly interested in helping his patients achieve better quality of life by addressing such issues as allergic rhinitis, osteoporosis, smoking cessation, obesity, and osteoarthritis of the knees. Dr. Boxer sees both new and existing patients at the Northwell Health Physician Partners/Phelps Medical Associates location in Dobbs Ferry (914-269-1900).

May/June 2018 Calendar

Phelps Hospital offers the community a wide range of programs on health-related subjects as well as numerous health screenings and support groups. Most events are free and take place on the Phelps campus, 701 N. Broadway in Sleepy Hollow, unless otherwise noted.

Wednesday, May 30, 2018

Controlling the Pain of Arthritic Knees Without Surgery

Discussion about a non-surgical therapy that often helps people with arthritic knees maintain active lifestyles while postponing – or eliminating – the need for surgery. Learn how injections and exercise can enable reconditioning and reduce inflammation and pain.

J. Robert Seebacher, MD

Orthopedic surgeon

6:30 pm (Light refreshments at 6 pm)

Auditorium

Register on line at:

<https://arthriticknees.eventbrite.com>

or call 914-366-3470.

Tuesday, June 5, 2018

Elder Law Series: Don't Fear the Tax Man: Tax Considerations for Estate and Elder Law Planning

The program is designed to help people understand the tax consequences of estate and asset protection techniques. Estate, gift and income tax laws will be discussed as they relate to both estate and Medicaid qualification planning strategies.

6:00-7:30 pm

Phelps Auditorium

Call 914-366-3937 to register.

Wednesday, June 6, 2018

Men's Health Issues and How They Impact the Ones They Love

A discussion about important men's health issues such as erectile dysfunction; low testosterone; testicular, colon and prostate cancers; diet and exercise; and advance directives/living wills. Spouses, girlfriends and significant others are welcome.

Scott Kerstetter, DO, Family Medicine

6:00 pm

Auditorium

Register on line at:

<https://menshealthimpact.eventbrite.com>

or call 914-366-3470.

Tuesday, June 19, 2018

Skin Cancer Screenings

Free skin screenings.

8:30 – 11:30 am

Jeffrey Sturza, MD

Dermatologist

1:00 – 4:00 pm

Alison Stallings, MD

Dermatologist

Register on line at:

<https://skinscreening.eventbrite.com>

call 914-366-3470.

Vitality for Seniors

Friday, May 18, 2018

Senior Debate

Senior Debate is a lively, interactive discussion on *Whether Social Media and the Internet Bring More Harm than Good to Modern Society*. The audience-centered debate method used by the moderator is informal and relaxed. Audience members are not required to give comments or speeches.

10:00 am

Auditorium

Call 914-366-3937 to register.

Thursday, May 24, 2018

Vitality Day for Seniors

Vitality Day is a time to celebrate the contributions older adults make to our society. This year, the event will focus on memory care and keeping our hearts and minds young. Join us for stimulating activities, music, and memory-oriented presentations.

10:00am – 2:00pm

The James House at Phelps Hospital

Call 914-366-3937 to register.

Community Events

Saturday, May 19, 2018

Relay for Life

Join "Team Phelps" and walk with us at this year's Relay for Life, the American Cancer Society's signature fundraising walk.

6:00 pm – 6:00 am

Sleepy Hollow High School

Sleepy Hollow, NY

Register on line at:

<http://main.acsevents.org/goto/TEAMPHELPS>

TEAMPHELPS

Sunday, May 20, 2018

Northwell Health Walk

Become part of "Team Phelps" and walk with us to help ensure Northwell Health can keep our communities healthy.

8:30 am check-in, 10:00 am start

Franklin D. Roosevelt Park

Yorktown, NY

Register on line at:

www.northwellhealthwalk.com

Friday, June 8, 2018

Cancer Survivor's Day Celebration

Wherever you are on your cancer journey, joining us and bring your loved ones to celebrate your survival!

11:00 am – 1:00 pm

James House

(on the Phelps Hospital campus)

Register on line at:

<https://suvivorsday.eventbrite.com>

or call 366-3470.

Saturday, June 16, 2018

Lung Force Walk – Westchester

Join us to participate in the American Lung Association's Lung Force Walk to raise awareness and funds to defeat lung cancer and raise our voices for lung health.

9:30 am

Manhattanville College

Purchase, NY

Register on line at:

<http://action.lung.org/goto/PHELPS>



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