

TIME TO STOP THE STRESS!

Three surprising (and surprisingly easy) ways to unwind

By JOAN FOX ROSE

We invite the onset of chronic stress by eating on the run, not taking time for exercise,

rest or relaxation, and feeling guilty when we can't fix circumstances beyond our control. I learned recently that through some simple, natural techniques, we can reduce our stress and rejuvenate our well-being.

My husband, Jack, has end stage kidney disease that requires treatment with an artificial kidney machine three times a week at home. I have been my husband's nurse throughout his medical ordeal for years, and the stress and worry have taken their toll. I realized it was time for change.

On a day when I felt particularly nervous and tired I happened to talk with James J. Crowley, a Nyack-based Reiki Master. During this telephone interview he suggested I try a long-distance Reiki session, which works on the same premise as hands-on Reiki (to learn more about Reiki, visit excitingread.com). Although I had a million things to do, I decided to give Reiki a try.

Crowley advised me to sit or lie down and focus on my breathing. In the meantime, he concentrated on rebalancing my energy system by focusing his energies to the task for a half-hour. He promised to call when the session was over.

At the same time Crowley was sending energy to me, I stretched out on my bed and focused on long, slow breaths in and out, while trying to block any ideas or thoughts from entering my conscious mind. Many of the thoughts that passed through my mind were anxious ones, as I am always on the alert for something untoward to happen to Jack. I realized my feelings of helplessness and anger



Do you have “energetic clutter”?
Reiki, deep breathing and aromatherapy can help clear out those energies and allows you to feel more stress-free.

at my husband's disease were probably blocking my energy system from flowing freely. I kept my eyes closed and concentrated on my breathing.

Soon colors began to appear behind my closed eyes and I saw a circle filled with emerald green and deep blue colors. I'd learned earlier that green signaled my ongoing fear. So, as I breathed in and out, I told myself I am becoming a fearless person. As I repeated this message the green color subsided and the blue – a spiritual color, I have been told – grew larger. I began to stretch my whole body very slowly and, as I did, I yawned. I'd set the clock for a half-hour and when the alarm rang, I opened my eyes and felt like I had just had a good night's sleep.

Just then the phone rang and it

was James Crowley. During our after-session talk I explained my experience. My tired feeling was gone. I asked if I may be taking on too much positive or negative energy from others.

“Taking on other people's energies happens to a lot of people,” Crowley said. “As a result, they could pick up more energy than their bodies can handle, or maybe it's energy that isn't conducive for their energetic body's optimal performance. Either way it's considered ‘energetic clutter.’ Reiki clears out those energies and allows you to think and react more clearly, and thus feel more stress-free.”

Long-distance Reiki is usually done when a Master has a photo of the person to be helped. “I look at the photo and see the person in my mind's eye so that I can visually concentrate on where the ener-

gy needs to go,” Crowley explained. “Energy is called Universal Life Force Energy, the substance of everything in the universe. Reiki Masters are channels for this energy,” he said. “Energy comes through us, out of our hands and into clients where it is needed. When energy is blocked it could cause anxiety and stress, which eventually could lead to physical problems. When these problems are not corrected to allow energy to flow freely, illness can be a result.”

For some of us, Reiki may sound too far out. Chronic stress can also be reduced through proper breathing exercises and aromatherapy.

Breathing techniques can be done at any time or anyplace, according to Alice Madhury Velky, LMT, RYT, a massage therapist in New Paltz. “It’s important to do mindful breathing,” she says. “What you need to do is take deep breaths into your belly and let them out very slowly. This type of breathing helps you to relax and center yourself.”

Aromatherapy is significant for healing because the sense of smell is the only sense that reaches the brain, explains Kingston aromatherapist Joan Apter, LMT. “During stressful times it’s a good idea to use certain essential oils every day because they boost oxygen availability in the bloodstream by 35 percent. Reducing stress is critical to a state of wellness because when stress issues are not resolved, the body’s electrical impulses break down and illness can occur,” she points out. “When feeling very stressed put 10 drops of essential oils like lavender, rose or sandalwood into your bath and soak for 15 minutes.”

Give it a try, you know deserve it!

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