

## Understanding the Effects of Stress and How Complementary and Alternative Medicine can Help!

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Stress: Stress occurs when a situation or event (i.e., a stressor) is appraised as exceeding one's ability to effectively cope (Lazarus, 1986).

### Types of Stress

- Acute Stress
- Persistent or chronic stress
- Psychological stress
- Physiological stress

### Types of Stressors

- Major life events (e.g., divorce)
- Daily hassles (misplacing keys or being stuck in traffic)

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## American Psychological Association: Stress in America Report

### Findings:

- Average reported stress level was 4.9 on a 10-point scale in 2014.
- 3.7 was considered healthy stress.
- 22% were not doing enough to manage their stress

### Who was stressed the most?

- Women
- Younger adults
- Lower incomes

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Can stress kill you?

Yes



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### Stress Related Diseases:

Stress

Heart disease    Cancer    Autoimmune disease    Diabetes    Depression    Irritable bowel syndrome    Osteoporosis

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### Psychoneuroimmunology (PNI)

Q: What is PNI?

A: PNI examines the biological and neurological links between our thoughts, emotions, behaviors, and immune system.

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### Hypothalamic-Pituitary Adrenal Axis (HPA-Axis):



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### Fight or Flight!

- Increase in blood flow to large muscles
- Pupils dilate
- Slow digestion
- Cessation of desire to go to the restroom
- Emotional memories imprint on the amygdala and hippocampus

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### Endocrine Activation is Expensive!

**Allostasis**  
(adaptation and recovery)

**Allostatic Load**  
(consequence)

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## Prolonged high levels of cortisol can...

- Influence the growth of subcutaneous fat
- Increase risk for diabetes mellitus
- Deplete important vitamins and minerals
- Change the structure and function of the brain

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## Prolonged high levels of cortisol can...(continued)

- Increase risk of heart disease
- Slow down the healing process of a wound or recovery from surgery
- Antibody (T-lymphocytes and B-lymphocytes) production decreases
- Scramble our appetite-control chemicals

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## Stress and the Immune System

Q.: Does stress suppress or ramp up the immune system?

A.: Chronic stress ramps it up, according to *The Pittsburgh Influenza Study (1998)*.

Sample: Ages 18 to 55 injected with a virus (inoculation)

Findings: Inoculation increased with greater levels of psychological stress

Theory: As perception of stress increases, pro-inflammatory cytokines become overactive, and function of glucocorticoids decreases.



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## Depletion of Important Vitamins and Minerals: Magnesium

Cortisol

Magnesium (helps to regulate adrenal glands)

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## Magnesium depletion in women contributes to...

Symptoms:

Tiredness      Aches      Insomnia  
Edginess      Weight Gain

70 to 80% of Women are Magnesium Deficient

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## Unchecked Cortisol

High Cortisol      High Insulin      Store Fat

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## Unchecked Cortisol

Low Mag-  
nesium

Belly Fat

Diabetes

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## Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM)

National Institute of Health

National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine  
(NCCAM) or

National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health  
(NCCIH)

<https://nccih.nih.gov>

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## Q. What is CAM?

A.: "...all such practices and ideas which are outside the domain of conventional medicine...by its users as preventing or treating illness or promoting health and well being" (as cited in Marks, Murray, Evans, & Estacio, 2011).

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## Examples of CAM:

- Acupuncture
- Aromatherapy
- Art therapy
- Ayurvedic medicine
- Biofeedback
- Chiropractic
- Prayer
- Hypnosis
- Massage
- Yoga
- Qigong
- Meditation
- Dietary and nutritional therapies
- Reiki

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## Autonomic Nervous System

Sympathetic Nervous System  
Parasympathetic Nervous System

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## Yoga (mind-body-spirit)

*History:* Ancient Hindu tradition

*Premise:*

1. Persistent stress obstructs the *koshas* or 5 layers of body-mind energy (physical, mental, breath, wisdom, and bliss).
1. Clear the obstruction by focusing on the breath and the movement in space.

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## Yoga Breathing

1. Get in a comfortable position.
2. Place your left hand over your heart (heart chakra)
3. Place your right hand on your stomach (sacral chakra)
4. Draw your attention to the rhythm of your breath
5. Close your eyes and focus on the rhythm of your breath

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## Meditation

*History:* Ancient. Roots in Buddhism, but much older.

*Premise:*

1. *To focus* on a mantra ("Om, shanti, shanti, shanti), movement (walking meditation or yoga), sound, or simply a spot on the ground.
2. The present moment is a gift
3. Transform the mind to peacefulness and how we interact with the world

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## Meditation: The Research

- Helps calm the amygdala
- Lowers blood pressure
- Lowers anxiety
- Improves communication skills
- Reduces inflammation
- Improves anterior cingulate cortex (the decision-making part of the brain)
- Reduction in mood disturbance in cancer patients

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## How to Meditate:

1. Get in a comfortable position
2. Make sure your back is straight, but not rigid
3. Place tongue on roof of your mouth
4. Choose something to focus on (mantra, sound, etc.)
5. Leave eyes slightly open while looking two feet out in front of you
6. Gently bring your attention back to the present moment when your mind wanders. It will wonder!
7. Breathing should be slow and deep.
8. Start with 2-3 minutes of meditation then go longer

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## Qigong

“Qi” (chi) means life force or vital energy that permeates all things in the universe.

“gong” means “skill that is cultivated through steady practice” (*National Qigong Association, 2015*).

*History:* China

*Premise:* Integration of physical postures, breathing technique, and focused intension.

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## Qigong

### Research

- Enhances the immune system
- Reduces hypertension
- Lymphatic and digestive function
- Enhances vitality
- Builds stamina
- Reduces stress

### Subjective

- Calms the mind
- Releases blocked energy
- Reconnect with spirit
- Harmonious or balanced life style

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Qigong Exercise:

Feet shoulder width apart.  
Knees slightly bent.  
Raise your arms in front of your chest, with your hands at eye level, palms facing each other and fingers spread.  
Maintain a straight back, "sit" in a shallow stance.  
Keep your eyes open, gazing through your fingers.  
Keep mouth closed with tongue on roof of mouth.  
Focus on your breath.  
Hold for 3 to 5 minutes.



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## Reiki (energy healing)

"Rei" means higher power

"Ki" means *chi* or life force

*History:* Ancient esoteric ("hidden" or "further within") healing. The traditional Reiki story began in the 1800's with Mikao Usui in Japan.

*Premise:* Suffering, dis-ease, and stress causes chi to become blocked in various parts of the body. Blocked energy is at the root of physical and mental illnesses.

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## Reiki

- The practitioner uses a gentle hands-on touch to allow the divine guided energy to flow through his/her body and into the client. The healing energy goes where it needs to go in order to clear away the blocked energy.
- A Reiki session may last 60 to 90 minutes.
- Research: Reduction in depression, hopelessness, and stress

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## Nutrition and Dietary Supplements

*Recap:* Stress-induced magnesium deficiency raises cortisol levels, escalates the stress response, and causes stress-related depression and irritability.

*American College of Nutrition* recommend people supplement with magnesium during times of stress.

64% less likely to suffer from metabolic syndrome when take magnesium supplements.

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## Magnesium Stress Buster

Typical multivitamin has 40 mg of magnesium, which is not enough for women.

Recommendation for women:

1. 400 – 600 mg
1. Must have right amount of calcium in order to improve absorption. *Natural Calm Magnesium Powder*
2. Take 30 minutes before bed to help with sleep

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## Magnesium Stress Buster!

### Body

- Belly fat goes down
- Reduction in menstrual pain
- Reduction in frequency in hot flashes
- Reduction in risk of heart disease
- Naturally loosens stools
- Weight loss

### Mind

- Reduction in risk of depression
- Reduction in stress
- Reduction in menstrual mood swings
- Sharpens brain power

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## Magnesium Booster Recipes!

### Trail mix

- Pumpkin seeds
- Peanuts
- Sunflower seeds
- Walnuts
- Raisins
- Chocolate chips

### Salad

- 2 cups of kale
- Raw broccoli
- Black beans or chickpeas
- Handful of chopped walnuts
- 1/3 cup sliced green apples
- Drizzle with extra virgin olive oil and balsamic vinegar.

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## Putting it all together!

1. Abandon the notion that living a stressful life is heroic.
2. Explore your beliefs – philosophical congruency
3. Choose the middle path: Don't be afraid to combine conventional medicine with CAM.
4. Think holistically: Mind, body, and spirit
5. Carve out at least 5 to 10 minutes a day to nurture yourself

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## Stress Management: Ethical Considerations when Combining CAM with Counseling:

1. Research ethical considerations in your state
2. Be aware of dual roles
3. Hands-on (e.g., Reiki) may not be appropriate
4. Get the proper training
5. Ask clients what they have tried in the past, how well did it work, and what they have been thinking about trying
6. Stay within your realm of expertise
7. Put together the plan

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**Thank you!**

I honor the place in you that is the same in me.  
I honor the place in you where the whole universe resides.  
I honor the place in you of love, of light, of peace, and of truth.  
I honor the place in you that is the same in me.  
There is but one

Namaste'

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