

Miranda Castro's Homeopathic Guide to **STRESS**

Safe and effective
natural ways to alleviate
physical and emotional stress

- Anxiety ■ Guilt ■ Shame ■ Depression ■ Loss ■ Illness and injury
- Negative effects of the environment ■ Children's concerns



HOMEOPATHIC GUIDE TO STRESS

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Note from the Publisher
Any information given in this book is not intended to be taken as a replacement for medical advice. Any person with a condition requiring medical attention should consult a qualified practitioner or therapist.

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The stress of writing books in addition to being a homeopath, a single parent and human being have stretched me, at times, to my limits. I joined a town choir and found that singing twice a week released some of that strain, and created more physical relaxation, more inner joy and more peace than ten hot baths or a day on the Yorkshire moors. It took me forty-two years to find a way to sing the notes that rattled around in my head! Because my life is (willingly) rather stressful, singing is the first place I look to when I become over-stressed or need a massage for my body *and* my soul.

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INTRODUCTION

The maintenance of our general physical health is dependent on many factors: the old axiom 'You are what you eat' is simply not true, as it stands. Each person is a complex package shaped only in part by what they eat. While an adequate diet is important, so too are our needs for exercise, rest, relaxation and sleep. A poor diet and lack of sleep can and will affect our health, but so can other physical stresses such as chemicals (from the environment, medications and food) and external factors such as the weather, physical injury and illness.

When stress became popular as an emotional concept, physical stress faded into the background. In our excitement over a new way to understand disease some forgot about the basics. Just as it is a mistake to ignore or discount emotional or mental stresses (including those that occurred a long time ago), it is also a mistake to ignore or dismiss physical stresses when you are assessing your stress load and looking at ways to deal with it.

Some of the case histories in this book deal with complaints that are the result of physical stress alone: a baby who suffers from difficult teething (page 48); an infant who is unwell after a fall on the head (page 49); a child who is vulnerable to cold, wet weather (page 50); the effects of pollution on one man's lungs (page 55); mercury poisoning from dental treatment (page 58) and a fracture in an elderly woman (page 70). Some stories bring to life situations where emotional and physical stresses are intertwined: the emotional *and* hormonal changes of adolescence (page 53) or menopause (page 62) and exhaustion from the emotional *and* physical demands of a young family (page 60).

There is so much advice now on how to live a 'stress-free life', so many books, so many things to *do*, it is easy to become overwhelmed, to feel there simply isn't time to do it all, to fit it in. It is important to put this advice in perspective. We can avoid or eliminate some

stresses like unnecessary medication, coffee and alcohol, but we may be stuck with others – with pollution, for example, if we are living in a city, or even the weather! In these instances we need to work out ways to minimize their impact on our health.

In this section there is a lot of common sense advice for you to pick and choose from, to experiment with integrating into your life. It may be helpful if you think of all these words as a buffet rather than as a complete meal – a buffet that you can keep coming back to. If you try something and like it, then keep it on your menu. But if it doesn't taste right, you don't have to have it again!

I know a woman who swims for an hour every morning. The rest of her life is filled virtually to the brim with work and family. She says that she could feel guilty that she doesn't do more for herself, but swimming means a lot to her: she has a blissful hour every morning to herself. This balances out the demands of her family; her physical body feels wonderful after the exercise (which is important because her job is sedentary) and she has found her own way to relax and meditate as she swims, thereby helping her to get in touch with herself, to solve problems and give her mind the relaxation it needs to do a mentally demanding job.

ENVIRONMENTAL STRESSES

We live in an increasingly complex world where, if you believe everything you read, hear, or see on TV, you are vulnerable to attack from a vast, invisible army of chemicals contaminating the air you breathe, the water you drink and the food you eat.

Individual susceptibility to these stresses varies enormously. A strong immune system (a healthy vital force) can handle exposure to most environmental stresses, but some people can become sensitive to a particular stress through a prolonged exposure. Those with poor health, with inherited weaknesses or chronic complaints – especially those on orthodox medication – are more vulnerable to environmental stresses. Many people with a subtle low-grade poisoning experience a lowered level of vitality with non-specific symptoms of weakness, fatigue and general malaise as well as an increased susceptibility to acute and/or chronic illness.

Chemicals

Runaway technology has meant that industrial chemicals are flooding our environment at an alarming rate which is increasing each year. The majority of these chemicals are not tested for either ecological or health effects and are being increasingly implicated in the rise of chronic diseases. The chemical industry produces toxic products, by-products and waste, all of which need manufacturing, transporting, using and disposal. All of these activities involve people.

Poisonous dioxins, phenol compounds and organochlorines are spreading through the environment at a worrying rate. Chemicals in cosmetics, toiletries, paints, cleaning materials, glues, clothing, household and garden insecticides, and fumes from plastics, rubbers, foam rubber mattresses, pillows and carpet underlays are causing a variety of side effects for some of the humans who use them – from skin complaints and asthma, to infertility and cancer.

Many fabrics are treated with chemicals to be fire, moth and mould resistant as well as shower and wrinkle proof. Some of these chemicals, such as dieldrin which is used to moth-proof woollens, are highly toxic and are known to affect the liver and nervous system. People who experience headaches and exhaustion when shopping (and/or a sense of disorientation) aren't necessarily stressed out at the thought of spending money!

Cosmetics and toiletries

The skin is our largest organ and we need to treat it with special care and respect. Our lungs have a surface area the size of a tennis court which makes them particularly vulnerable to fumes and sprays. In addition, the wisdom of some of our so-called modern toiletries needs questioning.

Antiperspirants (for armpits or feet) block the pores of our skin and inhibit one of the natural cleansing processes of the body. Perspiration is one of the body's ways of eliminating waste and cooling down. Simply blocking off the problem from the outside can create another problem for our inner organs to deal with. Deodorants (which don't stop you sweating, they just cover up the smell) are a more sensible option together with more frequent washing.

Suntan lotions and sunscreens protect against sunburn, and skin cancer, but need using discriminately as the chemicals are absorbed into the body (where they are transported to the liver for disposal – or more worryingly, for storage). They also enable us to endure something we ordinarily could not do and recent statistics show a higher incidence of certain skin cancers in those who are staying in the sun by using masses of sunscreen creams. It is more sensible to use adequate clothing and a hat as a protective measure – and to avoid the sun altogether during the hottest parts of the day.

Cosmetics are a minefield! Make-up can irritate the eyes, nose and skin. Nail varnishes and nail polish removers, many hair sprays, dyes and perms give off toxic fumes and other toxic chemicals which are absorbed through the skin. Formaldehyde is added to many air-fresheners, spray starch and mothballs as well as many cosmetics and toiletries. Petroleum-based products (which can cause skin irritation and rashes) are added to many cosmetics, deodorants, soaps, bubble baths and shampoos. Colognes can burn the skin if worn outside for prolonged periods in bright sunshine and some perfumes and eaux de toilettes can actually cause sensitive people's throats to close up.

Our buildings

Buildings that are centrally-heated, draught-proofed, with blocked-up chimneys and double-glazed windows that are rarely opened can cause gases such as formaldehyde and carbon monoxide to build up. Many office buildings and shops (including supermarkets and shopping malls) have the added problems of poor lighting, exposure to chemicals from asbestos (some older buildings), plastics, fabrics, flooring and cleaning materials, flickering fluorescent bulbs, static electricity and air-conditioning which causes moulds, dust, chemicals and bacteria to be continuously recirculated. This can stress the healthiest immune system.

Tinted glass and low frequency fluorescent lighting can increase feelings of tiredness and may cause headaches. Normal fluorescent lighting does not have the same light spectrum as daylight and it will not, therefore, help your body clock to set itself. If you are working only in fluorescent lighting during daylight hours you can end up in a permanent state of jet lag. If you cannot work by a window or do