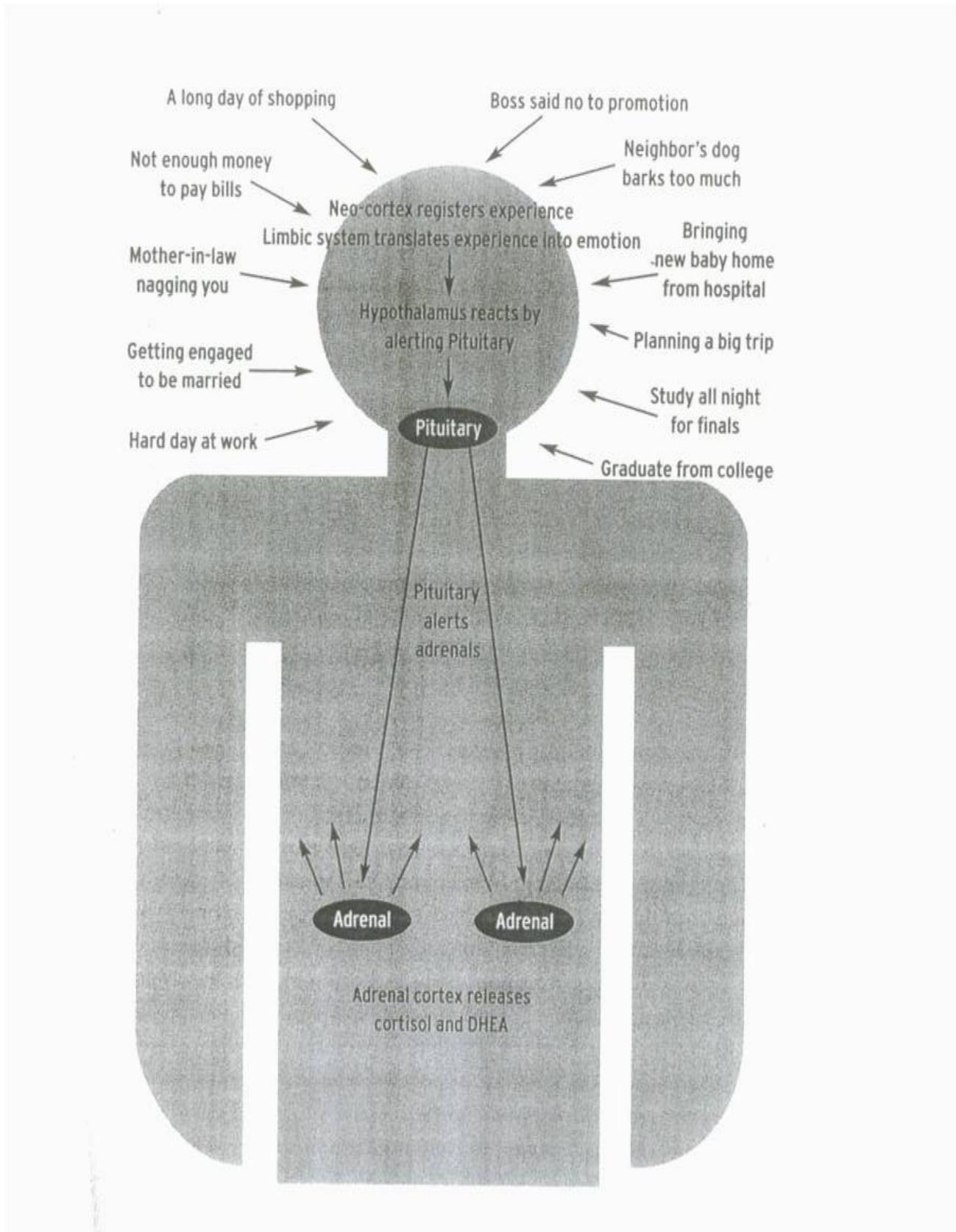


Empowered Living Program



YOU have control over your dietary choices and lifestyle!

Here are some healthy tips to get you started.

1. **Eat your Fruits and Vegetables.** We have all heard this before and the fact of the matter is, fruits are high in fibre, contain antioxidants, and are low in fat. They are also packed with vitamins and minerals which help the immune system, your metabolism, and protect you against disease. Canada's Food Guide recommends adults to consume between 7-8 servings and 7-10 servings per day for women and men respectively. Do you get enough?
2. **Ways to get more fruits and vegetables into your diet:**
 - Add fruit to your cereal or yogurt in the morning.
 - Top your pasta with vegetables or add them to your tomato sauce.
 - Decrease the amount of meat to the proper 3 oz portion size and try having a root vegetable in place of the larger portion of protein you used to have. Root vegetables are full of nutrients and are very filling.
3. **Eat a wide variety of foods.** Foods vary in their nutritional makeup, and the human body needs sufficient amounts of many different nutrients in order to function. Eating a variety of foods from all four food groups ensures that you will get all the essential nutrients and your diet will likely be more appealing. Try cooking with a new vegetable each week, or try a new fruit with your breakfast.
4. **Avoid too much refined sugar.** Refined sugar (white, brown, powdered, or liquid) is processed sugar and is found in pop, fruit juices, candies, baked goods, and many other processed foods. When high-sugar foods are eaten, your blood sugar levels rise quickly, and then fall just as quickly causing feelings of fatigue or irritability. Low blood sugar can also increase feelings of stress or depression. It is best to eat low glycemic foods to help control blood sugar levels. These foods are digested slowly and the sugar gets into the blood at a more even rate. Low glycemic foods are usually high in fibre and low in added sugars. Some examples of low glycemic foods are bran flakes, 100% whole grain foods, most fruits and vegetables, oatmeal and beans.
5. **Eat fiber-rich foods.** Complex carbohydrates are high in fibre and include beans, peas, nuts, seeds, fruits, vegetables, and whole-grain breads and cereals (much like the low glycemic foods). These foods provide the primary energy source for the body and protect against some cancers and heart disease. Fiber aids in digestion, helps lower cholesterol, and keeps you regular.
6. **Avoid eating too much saturated fat and cholesterol.** Most of us eat more fat and saturated fat than we need for a healthy diet. High fat diets have been linked to heart disease, cancer and other serious health risks. High blood cholesterol can clog blood vessels and increase the risk of high blood pressure, heart attack and stroke. Switching to low fat dairy products, eating less processed foods and choosing leaner meats such as chicken and turkey can help you cut out some of the saturated fat in your diet.
7. **Avoid too much salt (sodium).** Most of the salt in your diet comes from the salt added to packaged foods and the salt that you add to your food at the table. Sodium is an important mineral in the body, but most of us get way too much in our diet. Excess salt intake can lead to high blood pressure, which can cause other health problems. Try cutting down on the amount of salt you put on your foods, and stay away from processed and fast foods. Once you begin to cut back on salt your taste will adjust and you will notice when something is too high in salt.

8. **Drink alcohol in moderation.** Alcohol is often consumed socially, to provide relaxation or to reduce stress. At first it may seem like a good idea, but alcohol is a depressant, and after a few hours of drinking you may be worse off than before the first drink. Alcohol is also high in calories, has no food value and can damage your body. There have been some studies about some health benefits with alcohol, but that is only when it is consumed in moderation. One beer or one glass of red wine for women, or two glasses for men, can provide antioxidants; but stop at one or two drinks.
9. **Drink caffeine in moderation.** Caffeine is an addictive stimulant. High doses can cause rapid heart rate, high blood pressure, dehydration, insomnia, and other symptoms. Caffeine is not a stress reducer and can actually increase stress at times. A cup or two of coffee or other caffeinated beverages per day, however, is usually safe for most people. The important thing is not to drink or depend on caffeine too much. Stop at the one or two cups per day.

Lower Stress with Exercise

It's no secret that physical activity – whether it is a relaxing walk, a 10K run or a yoga class - does a body good. But do you know that virtually any form of exercise can decrease the production of stress hormones and decrease the body's natural stress response? Exercises that help prevent disease and build muscle will also help you better manage your stress.

How does exercise reduce stress?

1. Physical activity pumps up your endorphins. Exercise helps to increase the production of the brain's feel-good neurotransmitters, called endorphins. Anything from a run outside or on the treadmill to a brisk walk in the park can induce this effect. You will feel alert, happy, and energized as your stresses melt away.
2. Exercise is like meditation in movement. After a fast-paced game of squash or some laps in the pool, you'll often find that you've forgotten all the day's dilemmas and irritations and concentrated only on your body's movements. As you begin to regularly shed your tensions through exercise, by bringing your focus onto something other than your problems, you will have more energy and will remain calm and clear in everything you do.
3. It improves your mood. Regular exercise can increase self-confidence and lower the symptoms associated with mild depression and anxiety. This can ease your stress levels and give you a sense of command over your body and your life.
4. Overall health benefits. With regular exercise you experience many benefits that coincide with living a stress-free life. Physical activity decreases the risk for developing chronic diseases such as heart disease or diabetes, increases the body's immune system which will help fight off illness, helps prevent injury, and promotes restful sleep. With sufficient restful sleep, less illnesses and less injuries, your life is surely going to be less stressful.

Whatever you do, don't think of exercise as just more thing on your to-do list. Find an activity you enjoy – whether it's an active game of golf or a meditative walk down to a local park and back. Make it part of your regular routine. Any form of physical activity can help you unwind and become an important part of your approach to easing stress.

“Walk a mile every day and soon your stress will go away!!”

Physical Activity – are you getting enough?

Health Benefits of Exercise

- Reduces the risk of premature death: active individuals live longer with a better quality of life.
- Reduces the risk of developing heart disease: exercise strengthens the heart, cardiovascular system and respiratory system.
- Keeps resting blood pressure normal and can decrease resting heart rate.
- Decreases body fat: this in turn reduces the risk of life threatening diseases, such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes.
- Reduces depression and anxiety: you have more energy and exercise is a great stress reliever. It gets you mind off problems and worries and puts in you a positive state of mind.
- Strengthens bones: helps reduce the risk of osteoporosis and reduces the chance of injury and broken bones.
- Improves posture: develops strong abdominals and back for better posture and less chance of back pain.

Types of Exercise:

Resistance (weight bearing) Exercise: For every extra pound of muscle you put on, your body expends an extra 50 calories a day. In a recent study, researchers found that regular weight training boosts basal metabolic rate by about 15%. This is because muscle is 'metabolically active' and burns more calories than other body tissue even when you're not moving. After a weight training session muscles have been found to continue burning calories for as long as up to 24-48 hours after. Training with weights just **3 times a week for 20 minutes is enough to build muscle.**

Aerobic Exercise: You should do endurance activities 4-7 days a week. These activities help improve the function of your heart, lungs and circulatory system. Endurance activities include brisk walking, biking, swimming, dancing, jogging, aerobics, playing a sport. You want to aim to get about 30 minutes of aerobic exercise 4-7 days a week. You don't have to do it all at one time. You can do 10 minute bouts of exercise and add them up to the 30 minutes.

Flexibility: These are activities that include gentle reaching, bending and stretching your muscles to keep your joints mobile and to lengthen your muscles. Flexibility training helps prevent injuries and makes everyday activities easier. You want to do flexibility exercises at least 2-4 days a week, or after every time you exercise.

Ways to fit in exercise:

- Walk whenever you can! Use the stairs instead of the elevator, walk to work or go for a walk around your office building or to a nearby park at lunch.
- Do stretches or abdominal exercises while watching tv instead of sitting there eating!
- Commit to your exercise program and plan time into your schedule to make sure you can fit it in.
- Play actively with your kids. Get right in there with the activities and try to incorporate as much movement as you can.
- Try out a new physical activity class. You might really enjoy the dancing part of it or the resistance training. You can go to a nearby gym for a variety of different classes.
- Do the activities that you may already be doing now, more often.