

Health

October 22, 2006

It is important to find a healthy release of stress

Every picture tells a story, and your body is no different. The way you stand, sit or move tells your life story. If you experience daily stress, that tension is held in your body, it changes the way you move through life, and it affects your health in a negative manner. Our body is strong, but it is still a fragile instrument that needs to be cared for and tuned like a delicate violin. Tension in the muscles and soft tissue not only causes pain, but it can also interfere with blood flow and nerve impulses that affect the functioning of all organs. It is important to learn how to release tension to prevent these problems from occurring.

In this modern age of technology, there are many reasons why people feel stressed. But one of the common causes of tension comes from “chronic, physical holding patterns” in our jobs. For example, people who work on computers for long periods of time rarely move their position. They become increasingly sedentary, hunch over their desks, and take breaks only to visit the bathroom. This intensity takes a huge physical toll. A major consequence is that the body begins to conform to the shape of the chair with some muscles shortening and pulling body parts out of alignment. We sit tensely at our desk, shoulders rolled forward and up toward our ears, jaws clenched, eyes squinting, chin and head forward like a turtle, and the muscles and connective tissue at the base of the head tight. Is it any wonder that we hurt by the end of the day? While all of this is happening, we are often unaware of how we are handling the stress and storing the tension in our bodies. We complain of headaches, tightness in the neck/shoulders/back/jaws/joints, and feel exhausted and confused about why we feel this way.

Learning how to release tension is crucial in order to prevent and reverse the damage sustained from chronic holding patterns. The sooner you recognize that you are holding tension in your muscles, the sooner you can release this tension. But learning how to relax and release tension means more than just sitting in front of the TV or going to a movie. It involves understanding what makes you stressed and how you hold tension. Everyone responds to different stresses in different ways. For example, some people experience tension in their upper body, or stomach, or they can't sleep at night, or they get angry and cry easily. You respond in your own particular manner to life events and it is important to select a relaxation method that works best for you, also. Learn to heed your early warning signals of stress and tension overload instead of waiting for your body to break down. Select a method of tension release today and then use it regularly.

The relaxation methods listed below are just a sampling- you can find many more methods if you go to the Web and search for “relaxation techniques”.

Exercise: aerobic, strength building, and stretching
Yoga/pilates/Tai Chi/Qigong
Meditation
Abdominal Breathing techniques
Massage/Body work
Laughter
Progressive relaxation
Acupuncture
Gardening

No matter what type of tension release you select, do something, and do it soon. And, remember, if you hold one major position all day long, make sure that you have good posture and make sure that you move your whole body frequently.