



by Elizabeth Beetham BSc

STRESS

# The Stressless Way

*Elizabeth Beetham BSc Holistic Nutritionist, Natural Health Journalist and Wellbeing Expert shows us the Stressless Way to De-stress*

We all know we live in a stressful world. The pace of life has increased and every day we face new challenges. Mobile phones, social media, and emails all steal our time and there is no shortage of things to worry about. Not least the present state of the European economy which appears to be teetering on the brink of disaster. Feeling stressed, tense, anxious and frustrated is a normal part of everyday life today.

Stress is dangerous for our health and is responsible for many of today's illnesses. It has been stated that stress related disorders and ailments are the reason 75-95% of people visit their doctor. Stress has been linked to such diverse conditions as cancer, weight gain, diabetes, immune system breakdown, alcohol and substance abuse, cardiovascular disease, stomach problems, lung ailments, depression and more. How to avoid stress is an important issue. What can we do to alleviate the dangers of becoming too stressed in this frenetic environment?

My best de-stress advice is to plan ahead. Have a strategy for your work day. Forward planning and being organised does make a huge difference to how we feel and will certainly reduce the stress that results from dashing around at the last minute. Write down your actions and prioritise your list so the important stuff gets done first. It feels good to tick off those you manage to complete and then just forward the unfinished tasks for the next day. Do not beat yourself up if you don't manage to get everything done - no one finishes everything. When we write things down it automatically relaxes the mind.

Breathe - sounds silly but most of us don't breathe correctly. Breathing deeply and concentrating

on the breathe is a very quick way of relaxing the body and has an enormous beneficial affect on our health. Meditation and yoga practice teach the importance of this form of relaxation and are highly recommended for de-stressing the body and mind.

Exercise is one of the best stress busters. Make it part of your life like cleaning your teeth! As I always say, "Move that Body!" Find a form of exercise that you enjoy, take pleasure in feeling fitter and healthier. Exercise should not be something you dread but a way of relaxing. Just get outside in this wonderful countryside. Brisk walking is perfect and does not put a strain on your joints.

Recent research indicates the importance of adequate amounts of sleep both for improving our general health but also for reducing stress. Make sure you get plenty of rest at least seven hours each night for a few weeks and notice the improvement in your stress levels. You will look and feel so much better.

When we are stressed we should avoid caffeine which creates a stress reaction in the body - sorry to all those coffee addicts! You could at least try to reduce your coffee intake to one a day for a while, just to see the difference it can make. Have a coffee as a treat not a habit. Also alcohol which is really a depressant that reduces brain activity and may increase levels of anxiety.

Eat a healthy diet and the good news is that certain foods can really help reduce our stress levels and improve our mood so just include some of the following:

## 1. Poultry and meat

Chicken, turkey and red meat contain tryptophan, an amino acid which boosts serotonin levels in the brain to make us feel happier, more relaxed and less stressed.

## 2. Wholegrains

When our blood sugar levels are low we feel tired and irritable. We lack energy and concentration which can increase our stress levels. Wholewheat pasta, wholegrain rice, wholemeal bread and wholegrain cereals and oats all provide a steady release of energy and prevent blood sugar dips.

## 3. Nuts and seeds

These contain excellent supplies of vitamins and minerals needed to fight stress. They are a good source of magnesium which is the mineral that relaxes muscles and promotes sleep.

## 4. Fruit and vegetables

When under stress our adrenal glands work very hard and they need lots of Vitamin C. Eat plenty of fruit including berries, pears, kiwi fruit, papayas and oranges, also vegetables including green, red and yellow peppers, broccoli and all dark-green leafy varieties.

## 5. B Vitamins

We also need extra supplies of the B vitamins to fight fatigue and support the nervous system which is depleted during periods of stress. Include wheat germ, chickpeas, oranges, apples and spinach which are good sources of vitamin B. I take and recommend a vitamin B supplement every day as of course you may already have guessed I get stressed too.