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Winning the Fight Against Stress

by Mary Wojciechowski

Stress can be the most devious, destructive adversary to health and well-being. It affects every level of existence, including emotional, physical, environmental, subconscious, cellular and digestive. Sandra Miceli is a champion in fighting stress and alleviating the many diseases it causes.

Miceli, family nurse practitioner and owner of Surviving Naturally, located in Webster, specializes in integrative health. Many of her patients come to her when mainstream medicine has failed, bringing with them a laundry list of symptoms, diseases and prescription drugs. Her practice centers on providing her patients with natural solutions to the many imbalances and stresses that cause illness and disease.

One of the most powerful aspects of Miceli's work is combatting stress. Stress, in its various forms, is often the root cause of many illnesses and a complicating factor in countless more. Miceli has made understanding and addressing stress a basic component of her practice.

Stress Defined

While many define stress as daily aggravation and worry, this description only fits emotional stress. Stress, according to Miceli, is any factor that interferes with the body's healthy functioning.

Environmental stress includes pollution, changes of temperature and lack of sunlight. Subconscious stress, Miceli explains, consists of the brain's ability to constantly evaluate the surroundings for danger. "Ninety percent of our thoughts are subconscious," Miceli says.

Toxic and digestive stresses can occur when the body comes into contact the pesticides, antibiotics and toxins that kill its healthy microflora—the microorganisms that inhabit our bodies and assist in an array of functions, specifically in the digestive tract and immune system. Stress occurs when the microflora are compromised by pesticides and antibiotics present in many food and animal products. "Every time you consume a pesticide, or you consume chlorine, or you use anti-bacterial soap, you're killing off your microflora and you're allowing more antibiotic-resistant bugs to flourish," explains Miceli.

Cellular stress, according to Miceli, is the stress that is recorded in our cells from both our past experiences and past generations. University of California research has shown that our bodies can retain memories on a cellular level independently of the brain, including memories of trauma. Research from the University of London has proven the possibility for past generations to pass on phobias and anxieties through a form of cellular and genetic memory. Our bodies, therefore, are a physical record of our stress.

Handling Stress

With so many stresses assailing the body, the idea of addressing them can be daunting. Sandra Miceli, however, has made it her purpose to lessen stress and also reverse the diseases and illnesses it causes. Focusing on the body-mind connection, Miceli uses modern advancements and breakthroughs in nutritional, herbal and emotional treatments to heal illnesses and their stress-related root causes.

While there are countless ways to fight the effects of stress, Miceli's top three recommendations are:

Address the stress: Miceli's first recommendation is to know the enemy. Without evaluating what kinds of stresses are causing the most havoc, it's nearly impossible to know which remedies will be most beneficial. An initial office visit to Miceli usually takes one to two hours, in which she delves into the patient's family history, medical background, prescription list, emotional state and personal history. Evaluating the patient's skin, nails, mouth and blood work, she forms a clear picture of the patient's deficiencies and illnesses and which stresses are causing them.

Eat real food: Since nutritional healing is a major component of her practice, Miceli emphasizes the importance of a diet of unprocessed foods, free of pesticides and toxins. She recommends choosing whole and organic foods when possible. She especially urges her patients to eat fermented vegetables like sauerkraut and kimchi that help replenish important digestive microflora. Though many may cringe at the thought of fermented vegetables, making healthy changes, she says, takes work.

Take time for oneself: Miceli recommends taking time for stress-relieving activities that soothe the body and mind. An Epsom salt bath has tremendous benefits, including calming the mind, detoxing the body and replenishing the body's magnesium levels through skin absorption. Self-care can include an act as simple as taking a deep breath, which can reduce blood pressure, restore the body's pH balance and help decrease an agitated heart rate.

In fighting stress, Miceli uses an array of natural treatments from detoxification protocols to herbal supplements, but more importantly she takes a creative approach to ensure success. She treats each of her patients uniquely, working with their own set of inclinations and dispositions to find the right solutions. "Be creative," she says. "There are no cookie cutter solutions."

Miceli's most cherished reward for her hard work and study is seeing her patients' health and well-being blossom and grow. "If I could do my job for free, I would. I love what I do."