



Scotland Massage Therapy

Necessary Stress?

When we think of stress, it always has a negative connotation, something to be avoided at all costs. You actually need some stress in your life. Research has shown that the healthiest, most productive people are those that have learned to manage their stress. Stress stimulates you physically and mentally, and after all, it is nearly unavoidable, especially in today's world, so strive to keep it at a manageable level and view it as a positive influence.

Our bodies use the well-known Fight or Flight response to stress which prepares your body for action with tensed muscles, an increase in heart rate and blood pressure to provide more blood to muscles, an increase in breathing to deliver oxygen to muscles. Fats, hormones, sugars are sent into the blood for energy and to keep you alert. Because most of our stress today is not of a physical nature, and we don't respond with action, our bodies don't feel as though the problem is resolved and continue to store the stress in anticipation for action. This can lead to a vicious cycle of stress and resulting tension in your body which can turn into chronic headaches, back pain, difficulty sleeping, leading to lethargy and little desire to take the actions to renew your body with things like exercise and pleasurable pursuits.

Massage can be a fast and effective way of breaking the stress cycle. Massage actually causes physiological changes in the body increasing your Parasympathetic Nervous System (your 'Rest and Digest' functions), and decreasing your Sympathetic Nervous System (your 'Fight or Flight' response). Towards the end of a massage it is very common for the client's stomach to start rumbling. I notice this consistently when people turn onto their back after a relaxing treatment. Massage deepens your breathing providing more oxygen to your body, decreases your heart rate and blood pressure, and muscles relax. Studies show that anxiety and depression decrease, helping to break the cycle of mental distress.

The best benefits of massage are when it is utilized on a regular basis. Research has shown that as your experience with massage increases, the effects become more pronounced and long lasting. Bodywork can also help you become more in tune with your body. You may now be listening to its cries for help instead of ignoring them. It can help you notice things you may previously have ignored, and take action to control your stress and take time for yourself before things get to a breaking point, either physically or mentally. Many people view massage as a luxury or a special treat, but it does have profound benefits and can be used preventatively as part of your self-care and overall health program. Massage is great for both your body and mind! In the next article, I will explain an easy breathing technique that can reduce stress, and help manage pain.

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