



## S~t~r~e~s~s Relief for Our Modern Life

Stress is the body's natural reaction to events or situations that confuse, frighten, excite, anger, please, or surprise us. We may find stress pleasant or distressing, depending on how the event or situation is interpreted. Negative stress typically triggers the "fight or flight" syndrome. We have all experienced the stress reaction. Under stress, we tense our muscles and our rate of breathing, our heart rate, and blood pressure all increases as adrenaline and cortisol (a glucocorticoid released by the adrenal glands) surge through our bodies, to help us prepare for coping with the situation at hand.

This response is helpful when the threat is real and temporary. If we are attacked by a wild animal, the stress response improves our chances of survival by giving us extra strength to flee if we can or fight if we must. The rapid pace of modern life, however, has resulted in a wide variety of stressful situations—*stressors*—from which we have too few opportunities to escape. The problem is that the stress response uses inner resources (physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual) at an accelerated rate, which reduces the resources available for growth and healing.

For the past 50 years or so, the correlation between certain kinds of stress and illness have been well-documented. We require a certain amount of stress in our lives, of course, to remain active. Too much stress—especially when we think that the factors causing the stress are beyond our control—can cause a wide-variety of physical, emotional, and mental problems. The relationship between stress and illness is, in fact one of the foundational concepts of psychosomatic medicine. [See "Stress and Psychosomatic Phenomena" in Rossi (1993), *The Psychobiology of Mind-body Healing*.]

In recent years, the accumulation of stress has been tied to a wide variety of individual and social problems. For the individual, stress has been tied to cancer, heart disease, and psychological problems as well as to a variety of less serious illnesses, such as colds and flu. Prolonged periods of stress suppress the immune system, so it is easy to see why this is true. On a social scale, accumulated stress has also been tied to both domestic and workplace violence, road rage, and similar sorts of antisocial behavior.

### Stress Reduction

Health practitioners and many organizations now recognize the importance of stress reduction to avoid the kinds of problems associated with accumulated stress. Stress sets off an alarm in the brain, arousing the nervous system in what is called the fight or flight response. Muscles tense, and stress hormones are produced. Research indicates that stress plays an important role in several types of chronic health problems—especially cardiovascular disease, musculoskeletal disease, such as back and upper-extremity problems, and psychological disorders, including depression and burnout.

In the workplace, stress-related problems account for a tremendous loss in productivity as well as higher rates of absenteeism and employee turnover. The *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* reports that health care expenditures are nearly 50% greater for workers who report high levels of stress.

According to National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), developing such self-protection strategies as relaxation methods and improved health behaviors is critical. A regular program of exercise, getting extra rest (taking naps or sleeping longer at night), an improved diet (drinking clean water, reducing alcohol, eliminating caffeine and tobacco; and increasing the amount of fruits, vegetables and whole grains) meditation, self-hypnosis, and soaking in a hot tub are all well-known ways of reducing stress or counteracting its effects. Almost anything that allows you to relax and gives you pleasure will help reduce your level of stress.

Two of the most effective yet often overlooked methods of reducing stress to promote health and well-being are bodywork (massage) and work on the energy system. Bodywork and energy-based approaches are not, of course, mutually exclusive. Some bodyworkers have a good sense of the energy system and deliberately include energy work along with the work on the body, and some therapist who specialize in work on the energy system also include massage, especially work on the meridians.

### **Bodywork: Massage Therapy**

Massage is an ancient form of hands-on therapy. Currently, about 100 different methods have been classified as massage therapy, and even a simple back rub can be therapeutic. The primary goal of all forms of body work is to encourage relaxation, health, and a sense of well-being through touch. Bodywork usually (but not always) feels good and has been shown to reduce stress and improve the functioning of the immune system. Bodywork is designed to release tension that accumulates in muscle tissue allowing the muscles and associated organs to return to normal functioning.

The following are the most common forms of bodywork:

- **Swedish Massage.** Swedish massage is often called “deep tissue” massage because it includes kneading, a form of penetrating pressure, the muscles. Developed by a Swedish doctor, Per Henrick Ling, it is the best known and most widely available form of massage therapy. It has been shown to be effective for almost any condition and is especially useful to improve circulation; to relieve muscle tension, back, and neck pain; and to promote general relaxation while reducing stress.
- **Acupressure.** Acupressure, a noninvasive precursor of acupuncture, stimulates the flow of energy (*chi*) circulating along the body’s meridians by applying pressure with the thumbs and fingertips. It has been shown to be highly effective for managing stress and treating sciatica, arthritis, headaches, fatigue, and general irritability.

- **Reflexology.** Reflexology affects the internal organs and glands by stimulating reflex points in the hands and feet that are believed to correspond to every part of the body. Reflexology evolved out of an earlier European system known as *Zone Therapy*, and was first introduced to America by Wm. Fitzgerald, M.D. Research on the study of reflexology indicate that it is helpful for premenstrual syndrome (PMS), hypertension, anxiety, or and other painful conditions.
- **Myofascial Release.** Myofascial release is designed to help muscles in spasm to relax by applying gentle pressure to connective tissues or fascia. As normal alignment and function are restored, the pain of the spasm is eliminated. Myofascial release is typically used to treat neck and back pain, headaches, and recurring sports injuries.
- **Polarity.** Polarity is a form of massage that uses both hands (one is considered positive and the other is thought to be negative) to release energy blocks in the body by holding specific pressure points. Because of its use of energy, Polarity therapy (developed by Randolph Stone, D.C., D.O., N.D.) promotes changes on the physical, mental, and emotional levels and helps clients achieve a heightened sense of well-being.
- **CranioSacral Therapy.** The craniosacral system includes the brain, spinal cord, meninges, cranial bones and sacrum (the lower end of the spinal column, the “tail bone”). By using a light touch, practitioners evaluate and treat malfunctions in the craniosacral system. The term CranioSacral Therapy was coined by Dr. John Upledger, an osteopathic physician and researcher. It is effective in treating chronic pain, eye difficulties, scoliosis, motor-coordination impairments, learning disabilities, and other health challenges.
- **Shiatsu.** Shiatsu is an ancient and widely practiced Japanese form of acupressure in which the practitioner applies rhythmic pressure on specific points along the body’s meridians using his or her fingers, hands, elbows, knees and even feet. Shiatsu is designed to treat the whole body, but can also be effective for specific ailments, by relieving stiffness and improving muscle tone and circulation.
- **Rolfing.** Rolfing is the popular name for *Structural Integration* because it was developed by biochemist Ida P. Rolf. Rolfers use pressure applied with the fingers, knuckles, and elbows to release fascial adhesion. Rolfing is perhaps the deepest of “deep tissue” forms of massage, and it can be painful. It is useful in correcting long-term imbalances in the musculoskeletal system.

## Energy-based Stress Reduction

The most common of the energy-based therapies are acupuncture, Therapeutic Touch™, Reiki, Jin Shin Jyutsu, and Healing Touch™. Although practitioners of the energy based systems may include some form of physical touch or massage in their work, the main focus of energy work is on the human energy system. When it is healthy, energy flows in, through, and out the body.

A growing body of research, such as that being conducted at the University of Arizona's Integrative Medicine Clinic, has shown that these methods help to induce relaxation, relieve pain, speed the healing of wounds, and boost immune function. These therapies are also effective in treating stress related conditions, such as gastrointestinal problems and skin disorders and are increasingly being offered in hospitals and other health-care settings as adjuncts to conventional care.

- **Acupuncture.** Acupuncture is the art of using extremely fine needles at certain points (called *acupoints*) on the meridians to produce healing. Although Western medical practitioners had initially been reluctant to accept acupuncture as a legitimate therapy, it has demonstrated such a high success rate that even the most skeptical health practitioners are beginning to acknowledge its success in reducing stress and promoting health and well-being. The turning point for acceptance came in the 1970s when acupuncture was demonstrated to provide relief from chronic pain and to serve as anesthesia during general surgery. It is currently the best-accepted form of energy-based medicine.

Acupuncture is thought to work by stimulating the flow of *chi* along the meridians, helping produce greater balance in the energy system. Research into exactly how acupuncture works continues. Nevertheless, for most people, the critical factor is that it does work and is an effective treatment for relieving stress and chronic pain and for improving health in a wide variety of ways.

- **EFT.** Emotional Freedom Technique (often called just EFT or "tapping") is the process of tapping along the meridians while focusing on a particular issue (upsetting memories from childhood, current challenges, physical or emotional pain, worry, anxiety, guilt or shame) to retrain the amygdala response the body had previously experienced.

While you cannot unhappen history, research has shown that by tapping you are actually altering limiting pathways (neuronal patterns) in your brain, and changing your biology. EFT is safe and easy to apply to yourself and others.

- **Therapeutic Touch™.** Therapeutic Touch was developed in the early 1970's by Dolores Krieger, Ph.D., R.N., a Professor of Nursing at New York University, and her mentor, Dora Kunz, a well-respected "natural" healer. It was first conceived as an extension of professional nursing care.

Practitioners of Therapeutic Touch™ use their hands to clean (or *unruffle*) the Human Energy Field, to drain pain from injured tissues, and to help the body reestablish a healthy energy flow. In recent years, Therapeutic Touch™ has come under attack because it is difficult to measure the Human Energy Field with current instruments and practitioners are not always able to detect the presence of an in Human Energy Field laboratory settings.

Because the detection of the Human Energy Field depends on the intent of the practitioner, however, and intent—like the field itself—is difficult to measure, detecting the field in a laboratory setting is different from detecting it in a therapeutic setting. Ample evidence exists to show that Therapeutic Touch™ has measurable effect on those receiving it, even when the placebo effect is taken into account. The exchange of energy between therapist and client has, for example, been shown to significantly increase the client's blood-hemoglobin levels, indicating that the blood is carrying more oxygen (see Gerber, p. 304).

- **Reiki.** Reiki (pronounced *ray-key*) was developed in Japan in the mid-1800's by Mikao Usui and came to the United States in the late 1930's. It is one of the more widely known forms of healing through direct application of *chi*. The goal is to balance and enhance the individual's energy to promote optimum health. In a typical Reiki session, the therapist places one or both of his or her hands on the client's body, usually in the general area of the problem.

Because the energy is thought to have its own wisdom, the specific placement is not considered critical. Practitioners believe that the energy will locate areas where more energy is needed and provide it and, at the same time, find areas where too much energy is present and drain the excess off.

Reiki is often used as an adjunct treatment for acute or chronic pain. Reiki practitioners do not, however, usually think of themselves as *curing* disease or injuries. Rather, they think of themselves as assisting the client achieve his or her ideal form. University of Michigan researchers are currently investigating the effectiveness of Reiki in managing pain caused by diabetic neuropathy.

- **Jin Shin Jyutsu.** Jin Shin Jyutsu (pronounced *gin shin jit-su*) is a natural art of healing that is able to restore an individual's physical, mental, emotional and spiritual balance. Literally translated, it means "Art of the Creator through compassionate and knowing man." This powerful healing art was rediscovered in Japan in the beginning of this century by Jiro Murai.

As is true in many forms of Oriental medicine, the practitioner listens carefully to the client's pulse for information about energy flow. The belief is that disease begins with blockages of energy, and the pulse indicates the specific energy points that need to be held to restore the harmonious flow of energy. The treatment consists of gently holding points in various combinations until the harmony of energy is re-established. The practitioner uses his or her hands as conduits for the energy, enabling universal energy to flow through the client's body and reawaken its natural healing ability.

- **Healing Touch™.** Like the other forms of energy-based healing, Healing Touch™ is based on a connection between the energy fields of two or more persons, using a centered or intentional state of consciousness that has as its focus the natural dynamics of the client's Human Energy Field.

Janet Mentgen, RN, BSN, incorporated the work of many hands-on healers in developing Healing Touch™, which accounts for its versatility. Healing Touch™ uses hands-on and energy-based techniques to balance and align the energy field, addressing the needs of the body, emotions, mind, and spirit.

Healing Touch™ practitioners believe that all healing is self-healing and that individuals should be empowered to participate fully in their own healing. Healing Touch™ not only promotes relaxation and reduces stress, but also is helpful in treating a wide variety of physical and psychological disorders.

Yoga and Tai Chi are forms of energy-based exercise that have been shown to be effective in reducing stress and promoting health. Both yoga and Tai Chi combine exercise, breathing, and specific postures and movements to improve the flow of energy throughout the body.

All of these, and other meditation and relaxation techniques have one thing in common—they produce altered states and include some form of hypnosis and trance.

### **Altered States: Hypnosis and Trance**

The word *hypnosis* refers to both the process by which one is hypnotized and the state one enters after having been hypnotized. When most people think about hypnosis and hypnotic trance, the image that comes to mind is often that of the stage hypnotist and his or her subject, who barks like a dog on command.

Hypnosis is, however, a normal state of mind, one that everyone experiences every day. We experience states similar to hypnosis while falling asleep (the *hypnagogic* state) and waking up (the *hypnopompic* state), and throughout the day we experience a number of trance-like states of varying duration. Such everyday trances are often easier to

observe in others than they are in ourselves. You may, for example, have been behind someone at a stoplight when the person was absorbed in thought and failed to notice that the light had changed. Or you may have observed someone staring at the number of options on a grocery store shelf, seemingly in suspended animation. Or you may have even found yourself several miles past your turnoff on the freeway, not knowing for sure how you happened to miss it. Such phenomena are also aspects of what is called *hypnosis*.

The term *hypnosis* itself is difficult to define. Milton Erickson, a hypnotherapist of remarkable skill, on at least one occasion defined it as “a reduction in the multiplicity of the foci of attention.” Elsewhere he defined it as “A state of intensified attention and receptiveness, and an increased responsiveness to an idea or set of ideas.” Ernest Rossi, who worked with Erickson for many years, says “No definition or empirical test has ever been devised to accurately assess whether or not a hypnotic state even exists” (see *The Psychobiology of Mind-Body Healing*, p. xvii).

Hypnosis is often called an **altered state** because it is clearly different from what most people consider their normal waking (conscious) state. Those who are in a hypnotic trance are, in fact, *entranced*, with their attention focused on a limited number of objects. In the normal state of consciousness, the rational left brain usually plays the dominant role. In hypnosis, the right brain typically dominates.

The well-known **placebo effect** is a form of hypnosis in which the belief in the efficacy of a medication or other health procedure influences the outcome. Recent studies have shown that in trials of new medications, people respond better to medications with strong, unpleasant side effects because they know that placebos do not have side effects. The assumption is that if they are **not** having unpleasant side effects, they must be taking the placebo instead of the “real” medication.

In fact, *all* strong beliefs are a form of trance in which an individual focuses his or her attention on what a particular belief makes possible. The limiting beliefs that Monday is the worst day of the week or that you can’t remember names, for example, are actually hypnotic trances. If you have such a belief, you may have hypnotized yourself into having that belief, or someone else—probably unintentionally—hypnotized you into having it.

Hypnosis can, of course, help you undo the effects of such trances and develop new trances that will better serve your purposes (Bowman and Basham, *Healing with Language*). Guided imagery is a form of story telling that allows the listener to enter a profound state of relaxation—an **altered state** of consciousness—in which her or his body’s own natural healing mechanisms can be activated and enhanced. Although the resulting state is a form of hypnosis—as is true for all hypnotic states—the individual remains sufficiently aware to be able to respond to questions and to make choices about her or his process of healing.

Like all forms of hypnosis, the *trance* or *altered state* that occurs during guided imagery has a number of well-known characteristics:

- **Trance is self-generated.** Hypnosis is *not* something done *to you* by a hypnotist but is rather a state *you choose* to enter.
- **The person in trance retains control.** The popular conception is that when people are hypnotized, they surrender their will to that of the hypnotist, but that is actually not the case. When in trance, you retain full ability to judge which suggestions to accept and which to reject.
- **The person relaxes.** Although not all trances are characterized by increased relaxation, those used in therapy typically promote relaxation. Your breathing deepens, your heart rate slows, the levels of stress hormones in your body decrease, and your sense of well-being increases. This state, even without specific suggestions, promotes health and wellbeing.
- **Brain waves change.** The rhythm of the brain drops from about 14 cycles per second (cps) and above (known as *Beta*, the “normal” waking state) to about 7 to 14 cps (known as *Alpha*, a trance-like state). Mental activity also tends to shift from the left hemisphere of the brain to the right hemisphere.

This is basically a shift from what’s usually called consciousness (or “normal” waking state) to *unconscious, subconscious* or *other-than-conscious* mental activity. This change often entails a shift in mental activity from the analytical left brain to the more holistic right brain. It is similar to the *hypnopompic* state between sleeping and waking up and the *hypnagogic* state between being awake and falling asleep.

- **The focus of mental activity turns inward.** Instead of focusing on the external environment, the individual turns his or her attention inward, often creating images (visualizations) that accompany and illustrate what the therapist is saying. Similar visualization also happens during what is considered the “normal” waking state, but the individual may have less conscious awareness of the imagery.
- **Trance facilitates change.** Habits are ingrained below the level of conscious awareness, and the conscious mind tends to protect what is already ingrained and to resist change. People typically seek therapy because they have not been able to achieve the desired change through a conscious, rational decision. Trance helps bypass conscious resistance to address needs and desires that lie below the level of conscious awareness.



Remember that the trance resulting from using guided imagery or hypnosis is really no different from the altered state someone enters when watching a movie or an engaging TV show. If you enjoy reading novels, for example, you may enter an altered state in which your imagination allows you to identify with the characters, time, and place of the novel. When the hero or heroine is in trouble, your heart beats faster, and when the hero or heroine is finally able to relax and rest, your heart and respiratory rates also drop, and you allow yourself to relax and rest as well.

This kind of story-telling is actually very old, going back to the days when early humans would sit around campfires in the evening and listen to the tribal elders tell stories. The elders would pass the wisdom of the tribe from generation to generation, covering beliefs about the nature of the universe, how their tribe came to be, and the feats of ancestral hunters and warriors.

Myths, nursery rhymes, and most of what we think of as “literature” are stories that create the same kind of altered state that, when used by a skilled practitioner, can be of significant therapeutic value. The same techniques that help someone tell a good story for entertainment purposes help with the delivery of guided imagery for therapeutic purposes. (For more about how you can benefit from using guided imagery, see *Imagine Healing: Guided Imagery to Help You Heal*, Basham and Bowman.)

When you’re hypnotized, you can concentrate intensely on a specific thought, memory, feeling or sensation while blocking out distractions. You’re more open than usual to suggestions, and this can be used to change your behavior and thereby improve your health and well-being. Who is hypnosis for? Hypnotherapy has the potential to help relieve the symptoms of a wide variety of diseases and conditions. It can be used independently or along with other treatments.

Hypnosis is one of several relaxation methods for treating chronic pain that has been approved by an independent panel convened by the National Institutes of Health ([www.mayoclinic.com/health/hypnosis/SA00084](http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/hypnosis/SA00084)).

### **Easy Tools for Relieving Stress**

Enjoy discovering which of the following easy tools for relieving stress you enjoy most.

**Aroma:** According to Wikipedia, the Greeks, Romans and ancient Egyptians all used fragrant oils. The word aromatherapy was first used by French chemist René-Maurice Gattefossé who accidentally discovered the healing property of lavender oil. Following his dramatic healing from a burn with minimal discomfort and no scarring he devoted his life to studying the healing properties of essential oils.

**Art Therapy:** Art therapy and expressive art has been shown to positively influence brain wave patterns and brain chemistry. Creative activity allows healthy expression of emotions, can reduce stress, and lessen fear and anxiety.

**Bathing:** A relaxing soak in the tub can be even more therapeutic with herbs or sea salts. Dr. Singha's Mustard Bath is designed to remove toxins. Epsom salt is readily available. Sea salts contain many minerals beneficial to the body: magnesium, calcium, potassium, bromides and can do much more for you than simply relax your muscles.

**Biofeedback:** Biofeedback is an important, painless, non-drug therapy in the treatment of headaches and migraines. It is painless, and it does not use drugs. Patients are able to learn to control bodily functions, including muscle tension, heart rate, and blood pressure.

**Conscious Breathing:** Conscious breathing and relaxation techniques are used at University of Texas M. D. Anderson Cancer Center as part of the non-drug treatments for pain management.

**Crafts:** Crafts are an ancient, nonverbal method for integrating and healing. The words "heal" and "healthy" have the same root as "whole," so to heal is to make whole.

**Color:** Although wide-spread research on color and healing is still limited, personal experience of elevated mood based on color exposure is widely recognized. Although some think a specific color is restful and others are stimulating, notice how you experience bringing more color in your life.

**Exercise:** Exercise helps boost your sense of well-being. Levels of beneficial neurotransmitters such as dopamine, serotonin and norepinephrine are higher in those who exercise—the same ones elevated by many antidepressants. These, in turn, may help reduce depression, elevate mood and help you focus better. Dean Ornish, M.D.

**Gardening:** "To own a bit of ground, to scratch it with a hoe, to plant seeds and watch their renewal of life—this is the commonest delight of the race, the most satisfactory thing a man can do."...Charles Dudley Warner, author, editor, publisher (1829 - 1900)  
Gail Dubinsky, M.D., an Orthopedic doctor who specializes in relief from repetitive stress injuries has two great DVDs – "RSI – RX Yoga" and "Yoga for Gardeners." She received her medical degree in 1979 and has been in private practice since 1983, initially in general medicine and since 1988 specializing in soft tissue neuro-orthopedic injuries, combining conventional and alternative therapies for a truly complementary approach.

**Laughter:** Just in psychological terms, laughter provides great benefit. Research shows that hearty laughter stimulates internal organs, improves immune function, lowers cortisol levels, as well as increasing confidence and well-being.

**Lighting:** Light is an environmental stimulus and regulates our natural rhythms and cycles. Using an electrocardiogram (ECG), research has shown that there was a change in heart rate when participants were exposed to different color and light conditions. Sufficient exposure to natural sunlight has been shown to improve immune function.

**Movement:** The Cancer Center of University of Virginia Health System reports that “the physical benefits of dance therapy as exercise are well documented. Experts have shown that physical activity is known to increase special neurotransmitter substances in the brain (endorphins), which create a state of well-being. And total body movement such as dance enhances the functions of other body systems, such as circulatory, respiratory, skeletal, and muscular systems. Dance therapy can help you stay physically fit and enjoy the pleasure of creating rhythmic motions with your body.” Walking and Tai Chi are other forms of movement that have clinically been shown to provide benefit emotionally as well as physically.

**Music:** Barry Bittman, M.D., is author of an article: “Take Two Music Lessons in the Golden Years: And Call Me in the Morning.” Dr. Bittman and Dr. Bernie Seigel, author of *Love, Medicine, and Miracles*, have done research on the physiological benefits of drumming. *The Mozart Effect: Tapping the Power of Music to Heal the Body, Strengthen the Mind, and Unlock the Creative Spirit*, by Don Campbell, and *This is Your Brain on Music*, by Daniel J. Levitin provide the science to support all this.

**Poetry:** Freud reportedly said that the mind is a poetry making organ. Ancient cultures around the world have used chants and rhythms and rhymes as part of the healing rituals. Surely the intimacy and passion of our lives is captured within poetry. One does not have to be a poet to unlock heart and soul with pen.

**Pottery:** Bringing the elements of color and texture together with coordination and focusing, working with clay is one of the oldest and most widespread practical arts.

**Sound:** A dish fountain, wind chimes, aquarium, or a rain stick are some simple ways to bring the therapeutic benefit of sound into your home.

**Visualization:** According to Cleveland Clinic Heart and Vascular Institute, guided imagery is a “mental escape” and provides benefits in numerous physical and emotional and mental problems. Nature itself is a great rejuvenator, and images of nature have similar positive effects as a walk in the woods or a trip to the beach. Enjoying a kaleidoscope can teach your brain to create images easily while it provides a wonderful visual stimulation.

**Writing:** Keeping a journal, writing your story, or writing notes or letters can be a way to express and discover more of who you really are. Here are some helpful tips to begin a practice of journal writing:

- Purchase a blank book, or notebook to be use exclusively for your journaling, and provide a page or two for each of the following sections:
  1. Record childhood losses. Include how you felt. What helped you then? What made it more difficult? How much better do you feel about those losses now?
  2. Record any losses during adolescence. Answer the same questions.
  3. Record losses in your adult life. Again ask how you felt and now feel.
  4. Visualize your ideal future. Put in as much detail as you can create.
  5. Write a letter to your body or to a loved one who has died. Express your needs and desires. Shift gears, and imagine what your body or your loved one would write back to you.
- Plan to write in your notebook every day, and when beginning, restrict yourself to one page. Every day open to the next blank sheet of paper, write the same first word: *Yesterday*.
- Write a paragraph or two recounting yesterday's events, sort of a post-game analysis. Write whatever you want - perhaps a little description of the people you interacted with, your appointments, decisions, thoughts, feelings, high points, low points, frustrations, what you were planning to do and didn't.

### Essential Elements of Self-Care

While self-care has some essential elements, those will need to be customized to fit you. In the same way that prolonged stress has a detrimental effect, doing things that are good for you can lead to positive change. If you raise the anchor, the boat can go forward. The same is true for your self-care. When you remove blocks and correct problems, you enable yourself to go forward with a greater sense of health, happiness, and well-being.

Generative change, however, makes removing the anchor unnecessary. It makes the anchor irrelevant. What was a block is no more, not because you spend time removing it, but because you have done something good for you enough that the anchor simply no longer exists. You are more in tune with the state of well-being you want to have.

When you think in terms of correcting problems, you are setting your conscious intent on remedial change. When you think in terms of allowing yourselves to be balanced and in harmony, you are setting your conscious intent on generative change.

Here is an easy way for you to remember the essential elements of self-care:

**S** — Silence  
**E** — Exercise  
**L** — Laughter

- F — Fun
- C — Creativity
- A — Awareness
- R — Rest and Relaxation
- E — Eating nutritious foods

The effect of both stress and relaxation is cumulative. Your learning to relax is one of the greatest gifts you can give to yourself. Immune function, memory, and cognition can improve. The link between our emotions and our physical health has been proven.

One of our responsibilities as living creatures is to build and maintain healthy-minded consciousness that supports the natural healing and renewal process of your life. You can see how your enjoying the process of discovering the specific essential elements of self-care that are right for you helps you live a healthier life now. Health is your natural state. In a real sense, it is always true that you are whole.

### **Additional Resources**

Research about emotions, beliefs, attitudes—about brain function—and immune response is proving to us that, in fact, being able to imagine is key! Because humans process their subjective experience, in part, as pictures, when someone says, “I just cannot see how I will get through all of this,” according to Dr. Emmett E. Miller, author of *Deep Healing: The Essence of Mind/Body Medicine*, we are not just hearing words, we may well be witnessing destiny. Miller’s work shows clearly how beliefs and images become actual physical events in the body.

You will have a comprehensive understanding of the importance of the use of guided imagery, along with proven techniques for both general and specific applications, and directed practice using guided imagery for surgical support and other medical procedures. Step-by-step instructions are available at <http://ImagineHealing.info>.

“Current research suggests that the speed of this natural recovery could be impeded or hastened by the state of the patient’s mind. If the patient is under emotional stress, believes that recovery is unlikely, or is otherwise in the grip of negative emotions, healing can be delayed or blocked. In contrast, if the patient enjoys a calm and positive mental state, natural recovery might take place more quickly.”

*Relaxation REVOLUTION: Enhancing Your Personal Health Through the Science and Genetics of Mind Body Healing* by Herbert Benson, M.D., and William Proctor, J.D.

Those involved in health care will be interested in *Using Guided Imagery for Surgical Support: A Comprehensive Guide*. Details are available at <http://SurgicalSupport.info>.

Debra's Guided imagery CDs, including *Freedom from Pain*, *Welcome Baby!*, *Enjoying Your Ideal Weight*, *Everlasting Peace*, *Remembering Perfect Health*, and many others, are available at <http://www.scs-matters.com/products.shtml>. These same titles in audio downloads (more environmentally friendly) are available at [http://www.scs-matters.com/products\\_download.shtml](http://www.scs-matters.com/products_download.shtml). You can sample listen before you buy.

Weekly tips for well-being are online at <http://www.scs-matters.com/Debra-blog.shtml>.

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