



Work Smart Live Smart

Stress And Relaxation Techniques

**Interview With
Beverly Beuermann-King,
CSP, Stress and Wellness Specialist**

"How can meditation help mend the mind?"

Our minds can not operate on 'full throttle' all day long. Focused meditation helps to clear the mind of racing, cluttered thoughts by focusing your energies on a particular image or thought. Gradually distracting thoughts will decrease during meditation. This strategy helps to restore mental balance by providing a break in our hectic day. By allowing our mind to slow down it is better able to focus when we return to our tasks at hand.

All that is needed is a quiet environment, a comfortable position, a mental image or positive thought in which to focus on and an attitude that will permit relaxation to happen. Mediating or focusing on music or a relaxing video can give the mind a needed break from stressful events such as conflict, problem-solving, and high energy output.

Guided imagery is a visualization technique that goes one step further than mediation by actually engaging the senses within the body to deliver a variety of messages. It can be used to reduce blood pressure, lower cholesterol, heighten short-term immune cell activity, reduce muscle tension, lessen headaches and pain, increase skill and enhance performance, reduce anxiety, and increase energy. Your body responds to these positive images in the same way it would if the image was 'real'.

How is massage an important component to mental health?

Stress causes the blood vessels to constrict and reduce circulation and the muscles to become tense. This decreased circulation to our brain hinders our ability to focus, problem-solve and be productive. When our muscles are tense, our bodies become tight and sore. Massage can increase circulation by manually applying pressure and movement, it stimulates nerve receptors causing the blood vessels to dilate, it increase oxygen capacity, loosens muscles, and increases body's secretions. All of this is great for promoting the body's relaxation response.

The other benefit is that it takes you out of the hectic pace and forces you to be still and to let your mind wander for a period of time. When our mind is allowed to relax it is better able to focus when we need it to after the massage.

How does yoga assists in the maintenance of mental health?

The stretching component of yoga helps to release the pressure in our muscles that builds up from inactivity such as prolonged sitting, and increases mobility in the joints. Tense muscles cause blood to be squeezed out of the tissue, resulting in oxygen and nutrient depletion. Stretching should move us in opposite ways from the positions that we spend the most time in. We especially need to focus on our necks, shoulders, backs and hips as they can be a significant source of irritation. Stretching loosens and relaxes the body, which has a calming and relaxing effect on the mind.

Yoga can also make use of visualization, meditation, and spirituality. All of these provide a necessary 'down-time' for the mind and allows us to have more energy and focus.

Any other tips you might offer on "slowing down a fast-paced lifestyle"?

The key to succeeding in a fast-paced lifestyle is to know what your values and goals are and work towards them. Unfortunately, many people do not work consistently with their values and goals in mind. One of the key areas that we neglect is time for ourself. Yet if we do not take care of our physical and mental needs, we will not be in a position to achieve our goals.

One of the quotes that I love to use is 'How thin can I spread myself before I no longer exist?' If we do not make our health a priority we are not in a position to achieve our current goals, look after those who are depending on us, or live the life we see for ourselves in our future. We need to maintain a healthy rhythm to our life and we can do that by finding ways to ensure our physical needs for food, sleep, water, and exercise our met. Then we need to find ways to alternate the stress in our life with some relaxation or down-time.

We can not get rid of all of our stress, nor do we want to. What we want to do is to reduce our negative reactions to stress so that we don't become sick, worn down, and worn out.

Stress and wellness specialist, **Beverly Beuermann-King** translates current research and best practices information into a realistic, accessible and practical approach through her dynamic stress and wellness workshops, on-line articles, e-newsletters and media interviews and through a collaboration called *Awakening The Workplace*. Visit www.WorkSmartLiveSmart.com for more on Beverly and her wellness work.

©Articles available for reprint – please include source as Beverly Beuermann-King, www.WorkSmartLiveSmart.com

**Bring one of these related workshops to your team -
Thriving With Stress or
Harnessing Your Energy – Bust Your Stress**

Call Beverly at 705-786-0437 or
Visit **Presentations & Keynotes** at www.WorkSmartLiveSmart.com
for presentation descriptions and outlines.