

MASSAGE

You awaken on a Monday morning to the sounds of kids spilling...something... in the kitchen. You look at the clock and realize your alarm didn't go off and you're WAY late; and you forgot to start the dryer last night so your clothes are a soggy pile of defeat at the bottom of the laundry machine. At this point, your hypothalamus, the control tower in your brain, sends the message to release the stress hormones! These stress hormones are the same ones that trigger your "fight or flight" response where your blood rushes to your extremities, your breathing gets rapid and shallow, your digestive process shuts down, and you prepare to run for your life or start sweeping legs, Karate Kid-style. This response is designed to allow you to react quickly to emergency situations. But when it fires constantly, all day, every day, it puts your health at serious risk.

Constant stress can lead to many health problems, including headaches, depression, weight gain, weakened immune system, insomnia, risk of heart attack, high blood sugar, high blood pressure, fertility problems, digestive issues, chronic pain, ulcers, heart disease and many more, but I'm not trying to ruin your whole week. There is hope! All is not lost! There are many things you can do to combat stress. Exercise, meditation, green tea, Epsom salt baths, and supplements are among some of the suggestions doctors have been giving their stressed-out patients, but by far the most enjoyable (in my humble opinion) is MASSAGE.

Massage has long been thought of as a guilty pleasure or a treat, but what long-time massage devotees know is that it is truly one of the most beneficial, natural remedies you can do for yourself to achieve overall health and wellness.

Don't believe me?

Here's a list of some of the things massage does for your body:

- Alleviates chronic pain
 - Improves range of motion and flexibility
 - Bolsters the immune system
 - Improves the condition of the skin
 - Promotes tissue regeneration
 - Breaks up scar tissue
 - Improves circulation
 - Reduces post- surgery swelling & adhesions
 - Reduces spasms and cramping
 - Releases endorphins – the body's natural pain killer
- AND THE BIG ONE!
- Reduces stress, tension and anxiety!

Clearly, the list of benefits is long and impressive, but if it only did that ONE thing, reducing stress and anxiety, it would make a HUGE impact on your health, body, mind and spirit! If you've had a massage before, you know how relaxing it is just laying down on the table, not to mention the pure bliss of having your knots melt away during your massage. If you've never had one, the thought can be daunting. It's important to find a knowledgeable, experienced therapist who can tailor the massage to your needs and respect your comfort level. (You can start out by getting a massage in a chair, fully-clothed, if you want to take baby steps toward feeling better.)

The point is, stress can make your life miserable and shorten it by quite a bit. It's up to you to take the necessary steps to take care of the only body you have so that you can live a more relaxed, stress-free, pain-free life!

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