



In the Balance

Massage news and tips for your good health

Sojourn Therapeutic Massage

815-741-9741

Winter Issue

stress relief

**reduced
muscle
tension**

pain relief

**more restful
sleep**

**improved
circulation**

**healthier
joints**

**improved
posture**

**quicker
recovery
from illness
and injury**

**fewer
headaches**

**restored
humor**

**increased
energy**

**improved
outlook on
life**

Are you approaching burnout?

Take this quiz

Nearly half of all American workers suffer from symptoms of burnout, a reaction to stress that can be disabling. Stress is said to be responsible for more than half of 500 million lost workdays per year.

If you get massage, you're already doing something to counteract the effects of burnout. Another important step you can take is to recognize when it's affecting you. Here are some questions to determine if burnout is encroaching on your life. Do you...

- Work irregular hours?
- Often call in sick?
- Have little control over your work responsibilities or home life?
- Complain about your job?
- Feel pressured by your loved ones?
- Feel that you can't keep up?
- Find your job boring?
- Feel like a failure?
- Get upset when you're left waiting?
- Feel guilty when you have time to relax?
- Find it hard to exercise or make other time for yourself?
- Procrastinate?
- Rely on caffeine and/or sugar to get through your day?
- Spend your time replaying the past?
- Feel lonely or depressed?
- Feel no one really understands you?



Awareness is the first step in counteracting the effects of burnout.

If you answered yes to more than five of these questions, you may want to take steps to counteract burnout.

Consider coming in for massage more often, even if you have to come for shorter appointments. Regular massage sessions can pay off in preventing work injuries, reducing lost workdays, and increasing body awareness. Becoming more aware can help you recognize the need to take a break before burnout overwhelms you. ~

Breathing for relaxation

When you're feeling stressed, try this

Dr. Andrew Weil, author of *Spontaneous Healing*, says breathing is one of the most powerful relaxation methods he knows. In this exercise you will inhale through your nose and exhale (noisily!) through your mouth.

- 1) Inhale quietly through your nose to the count of four, then hold your breath for a count of seven.
- 2) Purse your lips and exhale with a whooshing noise for a count of eight.
- 3) Repeat for a total of four breath cycles, remembering to exhale slowly.

Try this when you feel anxious or after you get in bed to help you fall asleep. ~

How do you deal with too much stress?

Are you a confronter or an escaper?

There are at least two ways you can cope with the stress in your life. You may be a “confronter,” someone who needs to know everything—preparing, fretting, asking lots of questions. You want to resolve the problem and you can’t relax until you do. Or you may be an “escaper,” a person who wants to think about pleasant things instead of your problems. Neither way is right or wrong, and you may be a little bit of both. But knowing which coping style you tend to use may help you choose new ways to deal with excess stress.

If you are an escaper ...

If you tend to be an escaper, you find it easy to relax and forget about the things that need attention in your life. Because of that, Swedish massage, yoga, running or walking, and hot baths are easy stress reduction methods for you. On the other hand, it may help you to pay more attention when your body is experiencing the effects of stress. Biofeedback or meditation techniques that require you to focus on body sensations can help you recognize your body’s signals. You may even want to look to psychological counseling if you need help in facing a trauma that’s making you feel burned out or depressed.

If you are a confronter ...

Confronters often experience more anxiety than escapers, and may have a hard time letting go of control when situations call for it. You may try writing down your worries, then setting them aside. Assign a time to “fret,” giving yourself a limited time to think about the problem and possible solutions. You already may be aware of the knots in your stomach or neck, so activities like racket sports or painting where focused concentration is needed may be better for you than meditative activities like running or yoga. Deeper and more focused types of bodywork may work better for you than an overall full-body massage. ~



Racket sports requiring focused concentration may help give confronters a break from stress and worry.

Strategies for burnout

Eight ways to relax and revive

1. Seek out and talk to people who always support you.
2. Provide time and space for relaxation. If you can’t take a big chunk out of your day, take short breaks to be alone or with a trusted friend or a humorous or inspiring book.
3. Engage in convenient and vigorous exercise. If you find it hard to get started, find a partner to go with you.
4. Get to bed at a reasonable hour, and avoid the use of sleeping pills. Focus on relaxing even if you can’t sleep. Try getting a massage in the evening every 2 or 3 weeks in order to go to bed relaxed.
5. If possible, take action to change situations which continue to trouble you over time.
6. Review your responsibilities. If some don’t feel right any longer, take steps to relieve yourself of them.
7. Try new things. If that seems risky, take small steps. Try eating something new, tofu or Swiss chard, for example. Or try a new type of bodywork like reflexology or Shiatsu.
8. If it seems too hard to take the above steps, consider seeing a professional counselor. Ask for referrals and interview people until you find someone you feel comfortable with. ~



Talking with supportive friends and family members can be a successful strategy in coping with burnout.

Yoga for relaxation

Prevent injuries, increase strength and flexibility

The following stretches are modified yoga postures. Yoga has a long history of helping people build strong bodies that can withstand the stress of daily living.

Deep breathing is vital to yoga and the postures often make use of the breath to help the body stretch. Exhaling completely allows us to inhale

fully, expanding our lungs both in front and back. Complete breathing improves oxygen flow to our muscles and our brain, helping us to relax further and become more alert and clear-minded.

If you enjoy these stretches and would like to know more, you may want to attend classes given by a qualified and experienced yoga instructor.

1. **Relax your back.** Lie on your back with your feet flat on the floor. Place a hand on each knee. Exhale and draw the knees in, pressing your low back into the floor. Inhale, and let your knees pull away from you until your arms are straight. Exhale and again pull the knees back into your chest. Repeat several times. End with your feet back on the floor.



2. **Roll your spine.** Stand with your arms and shoulders relaxed. Exhale and begin to bend forward, starting by tucking your chin. Think of rolling down your spine, one vertebra at a time. Go slowly, taking 3 to 5 slow breaths to reach the point of a comfortable stretch. Hold the stretch for 2 or 3 relaxed breaths. Inhale and start rolling up, one vertebra at a time, taking 3 to 5 breaths as you return to starting position. If it's more comfortable for you, bend your knees slightly throughout the stretch. Repeat several times.



3. **Stretch your spine.** Sit straight in your chair. Exhale and turn slowly to the right, reaching your left hand across your body and behind you. Look toward the back wall, twisting easily as far as is comfortable. Don't strain. Hold for several seconds, and inhale as you return to the starting position. Repeat on the other side. To increase spine flexibility, repeat from 20-50 times, up to 3 times a day. ~



Rebecca Tokarz
1623 Oneida Street
Joliet, IL 60435
sojourntm@aol.com

Your newsletter on massage! See inside:

- Are you burned out?
- Breathing for relaxation
- How do you deal with stress?
- Strategies for burnout
- Stretching for relaxation

*Relax ...
Refresh ...
Revive!*



*Give the gift of Massage
for a great mini-vacation
any time of year!*

Research shows massage reduces stress, improves health

Researchers at the New Jersey Medical School conducted a study in which medical students were given a full-body massage before a stressful exam. Results showed both an increase in immune system function and a decrease in anxiety before and during the exam! ~

*One of the services that massage therapists offer people is to point out to them the physiologic signs in their bodies that people are showing when they're stressed.
—Dr. Dan Shapiro, University of Arizona
Department of Integrative Medicine*