The mission of AIS is to improve the health of the community and the world by setting the standard of excellence of stress management in education, research, clinical care and the workplace. Diverse and inclusive, The American Institute of Stress educates medical practitioners, scientists, health care professionals and the public; conducts research; and provides information, training and techniques to prevent human illness related to stress.

AIS provides a diverse and inclusive environment that fosters intellectual discovery, creates and transmits innovative knowledge, improves human health, and provides leadership to the world on stress related topics.
Contentment is a quarterly newsletter published in March, June, September and December with news and advertising designed with the general public in mind. It appeals to all those interested in the myriad and complex interrelationships between stress and health because technical jargon is avoided and it is easy to understand. Contentment is archived online at stress.org. Information in this publication is carefully compiled to ensure accuracy.

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AIS Daily Life Stress Board

Chaired by Dr. Michel Woodbury-Farina, the role of this board is to develop initiatives and communications to serve the stress management needs of all people.

Michel Woodbury-Farina, MD, FAIS
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Heidi Hanna, PhD, FAIS
Sandra Thibaud, PhD, FAIS
David Sollars, MAC, LAc, HMC, DAIS
Daniel L. Kirsch, PhD, DAAPM, FAIS
Collected by Heidi Hanna, PhD, FAIS

_Dr. Heidi Hanna is a health and performance consultant, NY Times bestselling author, and global speaker on topics related to stress, brain health, and personal and organizational energy management._

Got stress news? Let us know @ais_stressnews

**Time Magazine:**

_Stress, too little sleep and the demands of modern life may be messing with your memory:_ [http://time.com/4473542/memory-multitasking-stress-sleep](http://time.com/4473542/memory-multitasking-stress-sleep)

**Forbes Magazine:**


**Business Wire:**

The Latest Headlines...

Science Direct:
Stress Contagion in the Classroom:

Other Research:
PTSD increases risk for metabolic syndrome, reduced cortical thickness:
http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.biopsych.2015.11.023

Over-expression of Corticotropin-Releasing Factor in primates leads to increased anxiety:
http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.biopsych.2016.01.010
Everyone has a unique physical comfort zone. Framing this zone is two “modes.” On one side, we find the mode in which we deliberately and deeply relax our bodies - releasing daily stress and tension. On the other side is the mode in which we exert our body and mind to the extreme - increasing personal efficiency, strength and endurance.

Your Daily Comfort Zone is the area located between your two extremes.

You probably have heard the term “muscle memory.” Every activity of your day is “logged” into your muscle memory – eventually adding to an existing behavior or habit.

For example, both good and bad postures are remembered behaviors. Good posture leads to better posture and poor posture will just get worse. The same is true for all body movements, lifestyle behaviors, ways of thinking and emotional attitudes we practice – in the end; we are always traveling down a road of our own creation.

Stress has been affecting us for years

Unless you have been practicing tension-releasing techniques since you were in grade school, most adults habitually store daily stress as internal muscular tension. As this tension accumulates, the muscles of our bodies have no choice but to adapt by incorporating this tension into static positions due to sedentary behaviors. In other words, the more tension stored the less flexible you become. Decreased flexibility decreases available energy, increases daily discomfort, closes your mind down and promotes the likelihood of injury. A body with an open energetic flow is much more adaptable to life than a rigid fixed body. The oak tree in a hurricane has much less chance of survival than the reed bending in the wind.

If you are not practicing relaxation techniques on a regular basis, your tension will build and the size of your comfort zone diminishes. Exercise is a good way of reducing stress; however, exercise only releases small degrees of the total amount of stored tension from daily stress.

Constant thinking: The payoff and the price

It is clear the state of our minds directly affects the state of our bodies and vice versa. For example, peaceful thinking leads to peaceful experiences. Angry thinking leads to angry experiences.

While type A-consistent-protracted-detailed-always-on-the-move-lifestyle-thinking is very effective for achieving results, maintaining structure and addressing problems, the price of this habitual thought pattern often results in tight bodies, unreleased accumulations of muscular tension, constant aches, chronic pains and eventually, “dis-ease.”

Constant thought is when we stay in our heads and have internal conversations with ourselves about our day, our work, what we don’t have, what we think we need, what we want, where we came from, or where we want to go.

The body, hearing all these demands, problems, unsolved situations, pressures and more automatically reverts to what it knows… the fight or flight state!
Fight or flight is a state designed to ensure survival. Blood pressure and heart rate increase as energy flows into the muscular system in preparation for action. The challenge of our modern world is that the actions of our day usually do not involve running or fighting. Instead, we spend the majority of our day in a low to high level of the fight or flight state. This level depends on how sensitive you are and how much stressors you have in your life. The problem is the state of storing tension is not overly obvious. This is because constant thinking prevents us from tuning into and feeling our body’s state. Constant thoughts also prevent us from being in the moment where life is happening.

**Practicing Relaxation**

To address the accumulation of stored tension in the body and mind requires an authentic desire to experience peace. Peace is an experience your body understands and desires. It desires it because all day long one of your body’s main activities is to return you to balance or homeostasis. Peace or physical and mental inactivity helps your body release its need to constantly process external information.

This practice involves making time each day to simply sit or lie down somewhere quiet without distractions and allow your body to breathe. You can follow these steps:

1. Get as comfortable as possible.
2. Close your eyes and begin breathing in and out through your nose.
3. Allow your breathing to be natural.
   a. Natural breathing means you are not trying to force it.
   b. Let your body breathe as it wants to breathe.
4. Let go of your exhale and allow it to leave your body without effort.
   a. When you let go of your exhale it provides a direct letting go experience.
   b. Practice letting go of your exhale and learn from this experience.
5. Each time you exhale, let your body relax into the support directly beneath you.
6. Let yourself settle into this support.
7. Keep doing this for as long as you can.

The more you practice this technique, the more the feelings of peace will enter into your life. The more you appreciate peace the more you will find you will make choices that support being peaceful which means less tension, more energy, greater clarity and overall health.

*Sheldon Ginsberg, B.S Exercise Science, Stress Healing Practitioner and Inventor*

Over 15 years ago, Sheldon developed DeStress Therapy to address the accumulation of tension caused by daily pressures, stresses, and responsibilities. He has found stored tension causes aches, pains, insomnia, digestive problems, heart conditions, anxieties, mental confusion, weight gain and more. DeStress Therapy provides a physical, mental and emotional reboot to empower your health and life.
Over the course of his career, Sheldon has been providing DeStress Therapy to 5-star resorts and country clubs such as Miami Beach Canyon Ranch, Zoetry’s Parisio de la Bonita 5-star resorts in Cancun, Thunderbird, Tradition, Ironwood and Trilogy in Palm Desert.

Sheldon has worked with people with emotional difficulties, sleep issues, family problems, career decisions, corporate stress, spinal cord injuries, patients recovering from strokes, clients with frozen shoulders, multiple sclerosis, emotional anxiety, cancer survivors, children with multiple handicaps and more.

His work helps them to relieve their physical ailments while empowering them to inhabit their bodies with compassion and self-understanding for deeper healing. In addition, his healing work relieves most types of pain and loss of function.

Sheldon has appeared on San Antonio’s Daytime at 9, Telemundo in Florida and Blog Talk radio, NewsTalk 920 and Savvy Divorced Chicks Radio Show. He has worked with such celebrities as Woody Johnson, philanthropist and owner of the Jets, Joan Severance, actress and supermodel and Clarissa and Edgar Bronfman Jr. previous CEO of Seagrams and Warner Music Group as well as vice-chairman of Vivendi Universal. He has lectured to guests at Canyon Ranch Miami Beach and at Zoetry’s Parisio de la Bonita. His articles have appeared in Dare Online Magazine and other health websites.

He currently resides in San Antonio and has a private practice. Sheldon has also written two books, The Holistic Guide to Fitness and Evolution’s Hero (both can be found on Amazon) and a screenplay called Imagination, Inc. Visit www.destresssanantonio.com or call 210-259-9338.
GET INSIDE OUR HEAD

It’s Not Our Credentials That Make AIS So Impressive, It’s the Fellows That Go with Them.

The American Institute of Stress is a non-profit organization established in 1978 at the request of Dr. Hans Selye (the Founder of the Stress Concept) to serve as a clearinghouse for information on all stress related subjects. AIS Founding Fellows include:

Paul Rosch  Linus Pauling  Alvin Toffler  Bob Hope  Michael DeBakey  Herbert Benson  Charles Spielberger

Join our prominent psychologists, physicians, other health care practitioners and health conscious individuals who are interested in exploring the multitudinous and varied effects of stress on our health and quality of life.

The American Institute of Stress invites YOU to enhance your credentials with FAIS and add your name to our Gallery of Distinguished Fellows.

Over the last 35 years, we’ve expanded our services and broadened our reach, but our dedication to science hasn’t changed a bit.

Our four focus areas include:

We produce three e-magazines focused on different stress related topics...

We are always looking for new contributors to our magazines. If you would like to submit an article, email your idea to editor@stress.org

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Expert Tips to Tame Stress

As we begin to ramp up for the fall, we thought it would be helpful to share some simple strategies from our fabulous AIS fellows. Practical tips you can put in your recharge tool kit so they’re handy when you feel yourself slipping into overwhelmed or running low on energy:

1. **Scrunch/Stretch.** Inhale and tighten up every muscle, as hard as you can—fingers, arms, shoulders, toes, cheeks, abs, face---squeeze! Now exhale and stretch every little part back out. Get long, tall, and refreshed. Feel the blood start to bring in fresh oxygen and take away stale tension. Have 10 min, do a full Progressive Relaxation with Dartmouth’s free guide.

2. **Write down your top 3 worries.** What would you tell your best friend to do if she/he faced these? Just naming them is helpful, but thinking about them from another perspective can help you find new possibilities or at least regain a little perspective.

3. **Find a little thing you can just dominate**—like tackling cleaning out one drawer with a vengeance. This gives you thought time and a sense of control of something! Check out the power of tidying up.

1. **Focus on gratitude.** Give your brain a break by shifting to thoughts of gratitude and appreciation for a few minutes. Write down 3 things you feel grateful for right now and why. Close your eyes and see if you can notice the physical sensations of experiencing gratitude, and hold the state of mind and body as if you were training a muscle. For an added brain boost, share what you appreciate with someone else and ask them to do the same.

2. **Find something funny.** Humor acts like a mini massage for the brain as it stimulates positive endorphins, reduces cortisol and inflammation, and allows us to think more creatively. Create a “Beyond Funny” folder on your computer with images and links to funny videos so that they’re easy to find when you’re in need of a humor fix. For more on the science of healthy humor, check out www.aath.org.

3. **Move.** Even short bursts of physical activity can help you get out of your head and into your body to recharge for a few minutes. By boosting blood flow, stress hormones are reduced while glucose and oxygen are circulated to increase energy. Take a few trips up and down the stairs, walk to the furthest bathroom in the building, or just shake it off to some good tunes.
Consider setting aside more time each day to mentally and physically recuperate. Nearly 60 percent of people take an hour a day or less to wind down and relax, according to the American Institute of Stress and Duraflame® survey, and more probably should. Try this quick, six second stress relief exercise, “The Quieting Reflex,” recommended by Dr. Daniel L. Kirsch, president of AIS:

1. **Smile inwardly** with your eyes and mouth, relaxing your facial muscles. Think of something heartwarming or amusing while you do this. This starts to counter stress immediately.

2. Next think of the expression: “Alert Mind, Calm Body” to counter negative thoughts.

3. **Slowly take a deep breath while visualizing** it as warm air coming in from pores, or holes opening up in the bottom of your feet and slowly moving up into your lungs.

4. **While you exhale, visualize a wave of warmth and relaxation** slowly flowing through your body exiting through your feet, like the spreading warmth you feel when sitting by the fireplace. You can’t control the seasons, but by being proactive, you can get back to enjoying your winters.

Do this at the very first sign of a stress reaction. For more on this technique which activates the parasympathic nervous system countering the stress response, see The Quieting Reflex by Charles Stroebel, MD, PhD.

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1. **Stop rushing.** Try spending just one day where you don’t rush. Get up early. Really enjoy a COMFORTABLE, early morning routine, where you take time to savor your morning coffee and enjoy your breakfast. As your day starts: build in extra time for things that take longer than you think. Plan your whole day like this, and see how good it feels, not to rush.

2. **Raise Awareness.** Become aware of your stress symptoms, don’t shy away from them and connect the dots between your symptoms of stress and your sources of stress.

3. **Change Your Tone.** In a stressful situation, notice how your self-talk tends to be overly negative. When you hear yourself thinking like this, argue back like an attorney in a court of law and see if you can make a case for a more rational, sane and less stressful outcome than the one you are assuming is going to happen.
1. **Step into Nature:** Whether it’s looking out an office window and focusing on the flight of a songbird or tracking the pendulum falling of leaves, use nature to nurture you during your most stressful moments. A little nature goes a long way.

2. **Decide What’s Important:** Stop overwhelm by listing 3 top priorities that will create the greatest leverage in your current stressful circumstances. Ask yourself, “What am I really trying to do?” Then choose one priority to act on immediately. Remember, giving yourself more choices and options to consider often makes overwhelm worse, so choose an action and finish it.

3. **Relax with a 4-7-8 Breath:** Stop stress build up fast with a simple sequence of breathing that has been incorporated into therapeutic exercises such as yoga and meditation. To prepare, simply sit up and place both feet on the floor in front of you and close your eyes or have a relaxed focus with your gaze. Next: breathe silently in through the nose for a count of 4. Hold your breath for a count of 7. Exhale slowly through your mouth for a count of 8. Repeat the cycle 3 more time for a total of 4 breaths. You can learn more about this simple, convenient and highly effective breathing exercise and others like it at breathing.com.

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**Take a deep sigh.** Sometimes we don’t realize that we have stopped breathing when we are anxious. Taking a deep sigh forces you to take in a deep breath of oxygen to feed the cells of the body and to exhale completely all of the carbon dioxide in your lungs.

2. **Scan your body by focusing your attention to it.** This is one of the techniques from my book, *The Art of Loving Life*. Begin with your head and move down to your feet. If you notice any tension, exhale and release the tension.

Consciously releasing tension from your body can give you an immediate feeling of relaxation and rejuvenation.

3. **Ask yourself, “Will I care about this 10 years from now?”** If the answer is yes, then go for it. However, too much stress can narrow your focus on challenges and make them seem bigger than they really are. This is what leads to poor decisions. Gaining perspective on a situation can modify its importance and allow you to see options you may not have seen before.
First we got your brain...

Now we need your heart.

The American Institute of Stress helps people learn to manage their stress every single day. We help veterans returning from war find a sense of normalcy again. We help students who are stressed about exams, busy schedules and bullies reach their fullest potential. And we help people like you deal with whatever life throws at you! With your ongoing support, we will continue to be there providing people with relief for today and hope for tomorrow.

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The American Institute of Stress is a qualified 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization.

ISSN # 108-148X