



Nuts and Bolts of Stress Management

BY EVA HENRY, M.D. | AGEWELL BRAIN CENTER

In the November issue, I discussed the detrimental effects of chronically elevated cortisol on your Hypothalamic-Pituitary-Adrenal axis (HPA axis) and your brain. According to the American Psychiatry Association, 50-58 percent of U.S. adults suffer from high stress. Chronic stress really has become an epidemic!

To choose the best strategy and treatment plan, we need to first understand your baseline. Cortisol levels in the saliva taken at four different time points during the day is the best way to assess how your brain and your adrenals are doing at coping with chronic stress.

Even at the early stage of malfunction, the HPA axis is in overdrive. You may feel bursts of anxiety and mood swings during the day, feeling “tired but wired” when it’s time for bed and experience fragmented sleep. When the brain is compromised and starts to down-regulate the HPA axis, a person experiences chronic fatigue, brain fog and begins feeling overwhelmed and depressed because nothing seems to lift him or her up.

HOW YOUR DOCTOR CAN HELP.

One way to modify your stress response is by taking the right kinds of adaptogenic herbs. Many adaptogens have calming effects: rhodiola, lavender and valerian roots are just a few

examples. Others like Korean ginseng have more energy enhancing effects.

I also frequently recommend some essential brain-based nutrients and supplements for mitochondrial support. Mitochondria are the energy generating organelles in every one of your cells. Your brain has the highest concentration of mitochondria to meet its demand of being the most important organ in the body. Boosting mitochondria helps your resilience during times of high stress.

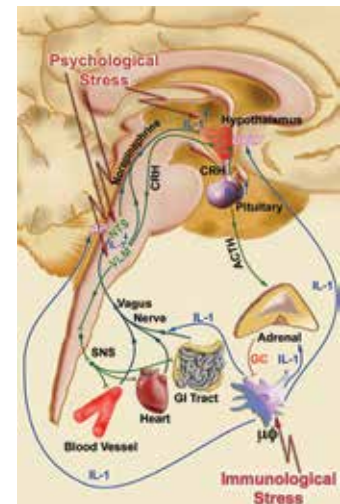
There is no one way to treat everyone — stress management is highly individualized. There are, however, general strategies that we can all use to enhance our mitochondrial functioning and improve brain function!

SOMETHING YOU CAN DO STARTING TODAY: SET BOUNDARIES.

This is an important skill which, when placed well, would instantly free you up emotionally and physically, reducing your stress immensely. Healthy boundary setting is not easy. It requires practice to do it respectfully and assertively, however it’s absolutely critical for your wellbeing. I often tell my clients (as well as myself), that healthy boundary setting equals “self-care” which encompasses much more than simply eating right, exercising or

taking the right supplements. Self-care expands to finding enjoyment, balance and peace in your life.

People who have high stress often have difficulty setting boundaries. Healthy people set boundaries every day. Just remember, you are only responsible for your self-care and are not responsible for other people’s negative emotions when their needs are unmet. While it’s understandable, it is important to not feel guilty when someone gets upset with you for setting boundaries. This typically means he or she has some underlying issues with recognizing healthy boundaries, and you are not responsible for another person’s psychopathologies (it’s their problem to own, not yours).



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Eva Henry, M.D. | 10111 E. 21st. N. Ste. 105 | (316) 260-5001 | www.AgeWellBrainCenter.com