



The Greater Smithtown

Chamber of Commerce

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In This Economy, The Best Investment Is Your Health



Turn on the news right now and most likely you'll feel a little anxiety with the mention of the current economic situation. Some people are understandably experiencing full blown panic attacks. The bottom line is we as a nation are stressed out.

Being stressed is more than experiencing emotions like anxiety. Stress causes our immune systems to run on high. Our immune systems protect us from infection by causing our bodies to release chemicals that cause inflammation. Inflammation is the first stage in the healing process; it is a normal response to damage or stress. If it does not subside, then it becomes abnormal and can damage our cells. This "chronic inflammation" is now thought to be behind diseases such as heart disease, cancer, and even Alzheimer's.

A good start to reducing stress is being aware of our negative thoughts which can create tension -- even when there is nothing actually going on in front of us. Being aware of the here and now actually minimizes tension, stress, and inflammation because it reduces worry about the past and anxiety over the future. Pause when you're agitated; be aware of your breathing. Studies show taking deep breaths lowers blood pressure.

It is well known that diet can cause inflammation. Avoid eating to reduce stress. "Comfort foods" are rarely beneficial and can be an inflammation trigger. Follow an anti-inflammatory diet -- lots of fruit (i.e. blueberries which help to regulate blood sugar levels), vegetables (broccoli or other green veggies that contain vitamins which actually replenish our bodies when we feel stressed), and organic poultry and beef (which have good fats that help reduce chronic inflammation). Multi-vitamins and fish oil are also good supplements, but always consult with your doctor first.

These are but a few ways to reduce stress. Yoga, Pilates, Tai Chi, and other stress-reducing activities are excellent for the body and mind. Investing in stress reduction can help to reduce chronic inflammation in this economic downturn, improve your quality of life, and possibly prevent life threatening illnesses.

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