

Purpose Passion Peace

With Joanne Sumner

Beat Stress so it doesn't beat you!

Effects of stress

The first thing to say about stress is that not all stress is bad. A short burst of stress – the chemical and physical readiness of the body and mind to face an imminent challenge – can be incredibly useful. It helps us be more alert, it makes us stronger and faster, it gives us energy and helps us protect ourselves. When we are threatened, we go into fight-flight-freeze. Our bodies are flooded with adrenalin, cortisol and other chemicals that enable us to deal with threat – by running, fighting or hiding. As the brain doesn't distinguish between real or only perceived threats, worries and negative thoughts can trigger this response many times a day. And inevitably this begins to take a toll, as the

body is not built to sustain an all-systems-alert all the time.

Research shows that prolonged stress contributes to illnesses like IBS, asthma, and insomnia. It leads to more frequent colds and makes chronic conditions like eczema or colitis worse. In the worst case scenario, it even increases the risk of heart attack and stroke.

Recognising when you're stressed

So, how do you recognise the signs of stress? Take a moment and think about what you experience? Do you get tight shoulders? Short of breath? Does your heart race or flutter? Are you more irritable or weepy than normal? Is it difficult to concentrate or to sleep? If you think about it, there are probably many signs of how stress

affects you. And it is worth getting to know them, because your body's response may be the first warning you get that a situation or person is not healthy for you.

Build up an understanding of what triggers stress reactions in you, so that you can begin to anticipate and plan for those situations or people. If getting the kids to school on time is always a complete nightmare, then think about what you can do to make the morning easier... could you set out their clothes, or yours, the night before? Are their bags ready, shoes and coats by the door? How can you make the process more fun for them so they are excited to get up and out? Small changes are often all it takes.

The Importance of Relaxing...

The importance of relaxing

To counteract stress, you need to trigger the relaxation response. This is the name given to the physiological changes that occur in the body when we relax deeply.

It reduces the heart rate, calms and slows the breath, releases muscle tension, and reduces blood pressure. This calms the mind and improves concentration and focus. It promotes improved energy levels, better sleep and immune response. It can even numb pain.

The relaxation response releases the whole system and allows the body to recuperate. Taking relaxation seriously can do wonders for your health and happiness, and for your productivity.

Plus it will just be more fun!

How to relax?

Luckily, there are as many ways you can relax and begin to release endorphins – the natural morphine or 'pleasure' hormone released by the brain – as there are things you like to do. Get a pen and paper, and give yourself two minutes right now to write down all the things that you already do to relax – whether consciously or unconsciously. Do you run, sing, dance, knit, talk, see a film, eat out, watch football or Sex in the City...?!

Knowing your strategies for relaxation will mean that you can change your state quickly and effectively, at will. Look at your list regularly and start to think about how you could introduce more of these relaxing activities into your schedule, especially when you know you will be in stressful situations.

Ideas to help you relax

Stay present

One key to relaxation is to give up going over the past or worrying about the future. Enjoy the present instead. It is often wonderful, and rarely as bad as we have imagined it!

Connecting with your senses

Sit down for just a few minutes each day and do nothing more than connect with your senses. Feel your weight in the chair or on the floor, smell the scents, taste the tastes, see the sights and listen to the sounds. Connecting with your body is one of the best ways to let go of worries and just enjoy being here, being you.



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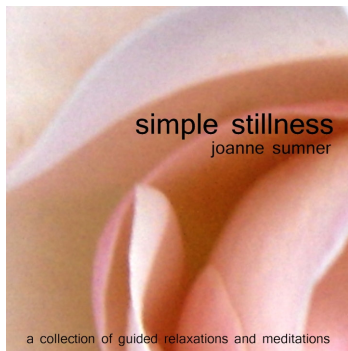
Beat Stress

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Simple Stillness...

Joanne's first CD, Simple Stillness, is released this month. These guided relaxations and meditations will help you relax and take time out for yourself



Overcoming Overwhelm

If you're feeling overwhelmed by the amount you've got to do, use the 10 minute:2 minute technique – pick the most urgent task and go for it as fast as you can for 10 minutes, then take a break for 2 minutes. **TIME YOURSELF!** You'll be amazed how much you clear in an hour. If the problem is getting started, then take a combination of Hornbeam and Larch flower essences for that 'Monday morning' feeling and to boost your confidence.

Ditch Little Miss Perfect! And finally, I strongly recommend giving up on perfection! Challenge yourself – what does GOOD ENOUGH look like here? Is there really anything to be gained from doing this perfectly? Will I actually just spend more time on this than I want to? Am I actually in control of all the variables anyway?

For more tips on how to look after your health and wellbeing, call me on 020 8567 0293, email me at jo@joannesummer.com, or come to one of my events, below.

Classes & Events - October 2008

Meditation and Relaxation Classes

Meditation is a simple and effective way to improve your health and wellbeing. It also increases creativity and positivity, and improves your ability to focus. Try our local drop-in classes to experience the benefits for yourself. Price: £6 per class.

Mondays, 7-8pm,

The Hobbayne Centre, Lower Boston Road,
Hanwell W7

Wednesdays, 6-7pm, Northfields
Community Centre (Room 5),
71a Northcroft Road, W13

What if you could...? 5 October

This creative coaching event, co-facilitated with Ann-Marie O'Donnell, challenges you to ask: If fear wasn't a factor, what would I do? Where would I go? Who would I be? We will help you define your dream, believe it is possible, and find the courage to go for it, whatever 'it' is! This is a fun, practical day that will really give you a boost, and the 5 October is the last date on which it will be available this year. Don't miss out on what has been described as a "truly inspirational experience".

10.30-5.30, £70 pp, Earthlife, Kew Bridge
Arches, TW9.

Visualisation and Affirmation Masterclass, 19 October

What do sports stars, successful business women, and meditation masters have in common? They all use the simple techniques of visualization and affirmation to create the life they want to live. Whatever goal you want to achieve, these easy-to-apply exercises will make a real difference.

2-4pm, £30 pp. The Hobbayne Centre, Lower
Boston Road, W7.

A Journey through the Chakras, 9 November

Tuesday McNeill, Vena Ramphal and Joanne Sumner bring together their combined expertise in yoga, dance, energy work, coaching and meditation to guide you on this journey of self-discovery. You will learn how to tune in to your chakras (major energy centres that link our physical, emotional and spiritual selves) and to restore balance where needed. You will experience the beauty and immediacy of your own body as a creative and reflective tool. And you will leave with an action plan to help ensure your ongoing health and happiness.

11-5, £60pp. Welcare, 26 The Green,
Twickenham, TW2.

*"The greatest gift
you can give
yourself, is a little
bit of your own
attention..."*

Anthony J. D'Angelo

About Me...



Hi, I'm Joanne Sumner, and I help people, in particular women, rediscover the purpose, passion and peace in their lives. I run a holistic creative coaching business focusing around providing natural tools for health and happiness. My aim is to show busy and all too often stressed women how making small changes in the way they live can have a significant impact on their wellbeing and that of their family and organisation. I do this

through combining my experience of meditation, Bach Flower essences, corporate training, and creative coaching to provide simple and effective solutions that really make a difference. If you are or know a woman who would like to experience a little more harmony and balance in her life, then please do get in touch. You can reach me on 07786 273 826 or 020 8567 0293, or by email at jo@joannesummer.com.

Jo xx