

## From Stress to Bliss

Written by Shubra Krishan

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Stress, said a wise man, is the common cold of the psyche. How true!

Only, while the common cold strikes twice—or at the most, thrice—a year, stress has become a constant presence in our minds and bodies.

How deeply stress has penetrated our psyches is evident when you consider this image. Imagine yourself standing eyeball to red eyeball with a giant Rottweiler dog.

Psychology tells us that in life-and death moments like these, the body prepares for a “fight or flight” response. In just about thirty seconds of panic, look what happens to your body. Your palms tingle. Your hair stands on end. Your temples start to sweat. You break out in gooseflesh. Your spine shivers. Your eyes dilate. Your heartbeat quickens. Your blood pressure rises. Your stomach turns an angry red, and digestion switches off. Your bladder loosens. A prominent nerve stands out on your forehead. The blood drains from your face. Your body releases dozens of emergency chemicals to deal with the situation.

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**HOLISTIC WELLNESS**

# From Stress to Bliss

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Only, while the common cold strikes twice—or at the most, three—a year, stress has become a constant presence in our minds and bodies.

How deeply stress has penetrated our psyche is evident when you consider this image. Imagine yourself standing next to a red eyeball with a giant butterfly dog.

Psychology tells us that in life-and-death moments like these, the body prepares for a "fight or flight" response. In just about thirty seconds of panic, look what happens to your body: Your palms tingle, your hair stands on end, your temples start to sweat, you sweat out in your forehead, your spine shivers, your eyes dilate, your heartbeat quickens, your blood pressure rises, your stomach turns as angry red, and digestion switches off. Your bladder contracts. A prominent nerve stands out on your forehead. The blood drains from your face. Your body releases dozens of emergency chemicals to deal with the situation.

Now imagine something even more frightening. Imagine your mind trapped in this situation for a whole waking day. Hour after hour, day after day, year after year throughout your lifetime. The fight-or-flight reaction

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developed as a sudden response to a life-threatening situation, not a constant state of mind—and body. But unfortunately, that is just what is happening in the modern world.

**How Ayurveda Looks at Stress**

Ayurveda, the 3000-year-old system of healing that originated in India, advocates some very common-sense ways of dealing with stress. To treat stress, an Ayurvedic physician, known as a *vaidya* (and translation, one who knows), will first try to get to the root cause of your stress. This he will do by asking you questions about your diet, sleep habits, and general lifestyle. *Vaidyas* are trained in subtle diagnosis—just one minute of closely holding your wrist and they can glean a wealth of information about the inside story of your body, and mind.

Ayurveda believes that every individual is a unique combination of three doshas or body types: Vata, Pitta and Kapha. Though *vaidyas* recommend stress-busting measures based on your individual body type, there are some general guidelines that will benefit just anyone, irrespective of body type.

**Start Your Day Right**

Even if you are terribly rushed, don't miss breakfast. Make it a habit to eat a steamed apple every morning. Here's how to steam it: Slice and quarter an apple. Then stab a clove into each section, and lightly cook the apple in cinnamon-flavored water. Discard the cloves and eat the apple. Cooked this way, an apple a day can keep Mr. Stress away, say *vaidyas*.

**Don't Go Hungry**

As always, this is in, and stress is out. But in your zeal to shed weight, don't go empty-stomach. A hungry body leads to all sorts of problems: disturbed digestion, restless sleep, mental fatigue. In fact, eating your meals on time is a must, say Ayurvedic *vaidyas*. Stress does slow down the digestive fires, but if you persist in your efforts to keep to regular meal-times, your system will be back on track. Lunch, say *vaidyas*, should be the main meal of the day, for that is when the body's digestive fires are at their peak.

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