

Reduce stress and become more productive, simply by following your body's natural rhythm.

Research suggests that stress now accounts for more sick days than anything else. The media convinces us that we live in an increasingly stressful society, but is it true?

Well, we certainly live at a time when many employers are really wanting their pound of flesh, yet compared with the middle ages, or even as recently as 100 years ago, we have it easy. We know this to be true because we are living so much longer. Good food and better healthcare is not enough to account for this.

So why do I feel more stressed and what can I do about it?

Well, there's no doubt that we live in a society that bombards us with information. We have almost constant mental stimulation - from television, radio, billboards, telephones, computers etc. And this gives us our first clue to reducing stress. **Try to create some downtime.** Interestingly, research into the Ultradian Rhythm tells us that we don't need to have hours of time alone.

What is the Ultradian Rhythm?

The Ultradian Rhythm is a natural human cycle which occurs throughout the day. Once we wake in the morning we have between 90 and 120 minutes where we can concentrate and work with sustained energy. We then need a break - not long, 15-20 minutes will do.

During this 20 minute period of 'downtime' you are more likely to feel sleepy or unfocused. You will notice your concentration has declined. You might grab a coffee to try to push through this sleepy time, but long term this doesn't work - it merely increases your stress levels.

We now know that respecting this natural rhythm and working with it will have a powerful effect on our levels of physical and mental health - and also on our productivity. Therefore one of the major ways to reduce stress is to follow your body's natural Ultradian rhythm.

How to utilise the Ultradian Rhythm.

The important thing about this break is that we don't talk or think about the task we were engaged on - that isn't a break. Hypnosis relaxation can be a powerful way to do this and you might like to purchase a twenty minute relaxation CD to help with this.

We can also use self-hypnosis (see below). But in fact, any gentle change will do the trick, so long as we really take a complete break. Do something completely different, perhaps take a walk, have a friendly chat with someone, take a jog. The important thing is not to talk or think about the task you are working on. This complete break will have you returning to your work, revitalised and calm, ready to take on the next piece of work with a refreshed mind and lowered blood pressure.

Remember that this rhythm recurs throughout the day.

Self-hypnosis for Relaxation

Firstly move yourself away from your work area and find somewhere comfortable to sit.

Begin by thinking your way down your body, imagining and feeling the tension leaving each area in turn. If it helps, picture how your body would look to someone watching you as you become increasingly relaxed.

Now in your mind create a detailed image of a place where you feel completely safe. It might be an actual place, e.g. your bed or a garden you know. It can be imaginary – a deserted sandy beach on a summer's day, the inside of a hollow tree, a sailing ship in the middle of an ocean, the top of a mountain. It doesn't matter where you choose, but it is important to create the image in enormous detail. Think about what you can see. Notice the surrounding temperature, the texture and feel of your surroundings. What can you smell and hear? Are there any people, any other living creatures?

Once you have created this image in great detail, tell yourself that you will stay here for 15 minutes. Your mind will monitor the time and you will start to feel restless when the time is up. Once you notice this, imagine yourself coming back to full awareness and bouncing to your feet, feeling so good and full of energy.

Judith Goldsmith, June 2010