



Staying in Touch®

Happy New Year!

Are you ready for the coming year? One of the benefits of taking time for goal setting each year is to take stock of where you are now and to make sure you are headed in the direction that *you* want to go with your life. When you start your planning with your own goals and dreams, you can more easily see how your personal plans interconnect with those of your family, friends, and associates.

Surely, your health and well-being should be high on your list. After all, feeling your best makes everything else in life more rewarding.

The rest of this issue covers a very important aspect of maintaining your health—handling stress. The reason stress is so often mentioned in the media is because it affects so many of us. Learn a little more about this insidious threat to your health and happiness, and how you can lessen its negative effects.

I hope your year is off to a good start, and I look forward to helping you maintain your health in the coming weeks and months. Until then, take good care of yourself!

Make Your Plans for a Stress-Free Year

New year; new directions. To reach your goals for the year, you'll want to make sure you maintain your health and a positive outlook. One major obstacle that often isn't planned for—but really shouldn't be ignored—is stress.

We all hear how stressful modern life can be with so much to do and so many surprises that can crop up. In the words of a song, *"Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans ..."*

What would your life be like if you could eliminate all or most of your day-to-day stress levels? It must be a popular notion. An online "Google" search for the term "stress management" had just shy of 7-million search results, and a search for "stress relief" yielded over 5-million more.

The first point about stress is that it can be so subtle. An unexpected event alters your plans, you get behind schedule, you wonder if you'll finish a project on time ... Before you know it, you've got a list of concerns lingering in the back of your mind. Your neck gets tense, and maybe your head starts to hurt. And now you've got a serious bout of "stress."

The sad part is that the noticeable signs of stress—the tension and worry—are really just the tip of the iceberg. Left unhandled, stress quite often leads to illness.

So, what's the best way to reduce or eliminate stress from your mind and body? "Massage therapy is beneficial for almost all diseases. Eighty percent of disease is stress-related, and massage reduces stress," says Dr. Sandra McLanahan.

It can help to understand why stress shouldn't be ignored. What actually happens "behind the scenes" in your body when you continually carry all that stress around with you?



A sudden or unexpected stressor can activate your adrenal glands, which sends adrenaline and other hormones into your bloodstream. This brings about an increase in your breathing, heart rate, blood pressure, and blood flow to the muscles. This physical response was appropriate generations ago when it was needed for our very survival, but

today much of our stress is emotional. With the high number of mental stress incidents that we can experience each day, these repetitive physical responses can begin to wear out all of the body's intricate systems.

When your stress is chronic, your body releases cortisol, a hormone designed to help the body handle a period of prolonged physical stress. This hormone is hard for the body to metabolize and consequently can lead to an immune system that becomes heavily suppressed, a damaged cardiovascular system, and a worn out endocrine system (the system responsible for handling stressful conditions). Yikes!

Stress may take its greatest toll on the nervous system. Massage can address the imbalances that stress causes in your body by stimulating the sensory receptors that interconnect and harmonize all areas of your body, bringing it back into proper balance. This brings about that sense of (see *Stress-Free Year...* on back page)

Stress-Free Year ...

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well-being you experience that goes far beyond the release of tense muscles.

Studies from the Touch Research Institute in Miami indicate that stress hormones consistently fall after massage, no matter what the age of the client. Workers receiving massages showed brain waves that reflect greater mental alertness, and their feelings of job stress were markedly reduced. Nighttime sleep patterns also improved. Tiffany Field, director of TRI, summarizes: "People think massage is just running hands over the surface of the body. But in stimulating the skin, we're showing you're overhauling the nervous system."

When you take into account the great expense of medical care and lost time for treating illness, it makes a lot more sense to do all you can to stay healthy. And one the best ways to do that is through regular massage. Investing a little each month to rid your body of the effects of stress may well be the most pleasant way possible to stay at your best. Then, you'll be better prepared to pursue all the plans you've made for the coming months. See you soon!

New survey reflects growing stress levels now being felt globally ...

Stress Propels Americans to Massage Therapy for Relief— Fifty-nine percent of Americans reported they are more stressed this year than they were a year ago, according to a survey sponsored by the American Massage Therapy Association® (AMTA®).

The current economic situation, or other factors, was found to be a source of great stress for 45 percent of Americans. Younger Americans and women have felt stressed out due to the economy or other factors. Fifty-five percent of those ages 25-34 say they are greatly stressed by the economic situation, and 51 percent of all females agree.

Massage therapy for stress reduction— People are using massage for relaxation/stress reduction more than in the past. The number one reason people say they got their last massage is relaxation/stress reduction.

This past year, 36 percent of Americans said they got a massage for stress and/or relaxation in the last five years; compared to 22 percent the previous year. Thirty-eight percent of Americans say they have considered massage to manage stress.

Valentine's Day is right around the corner. Make that special someone's day with a massage gift certificate! Call to order ...



Each new day is a blank page in the diary of your life. The secret of success is in turning that diary into the best story you possibly can. —Douglas Pagels

The content of this newsletter is not intended to replace professional medical advice. If you're ill, please consult a physician.
