



## **Hello and welcome to my first newsletter!**

I have now been practising reflexology for 16 months – I can't believe it!

I have noticed many of my clients are suffering, in different ways, with the effects of chronic stress so I thought I would share some information about how stress works and how we can help ourselves!

Just a reminder that you can find my website at [www.clare-elizabeth-reflexology.com](http://www.clare-elizabeth-reflexology.com)

And you can follow me on Instagram – [www.instagram.com/clare\\_elizabeth\\_reflexology](http://www.instagram.com/clare_elizabeth_reflexology)

There is also the opportunity now to leave me a review on Google! Why not be the first?! Google 'clare elizabeth reflexology'.

## **Reflexology and Stress**

### **What is stress?**

There are two forms of stress - acute and chronic.

Acute stress is the body's immediate response to potential danger.

Chronic stress happens when our bodies are in a constant state of high alert.

### **What causes acute stress?**

The sympathetic nervous system is primed for 'fight, flight or freeze'.

At the first sign of perceived threat the amygdala, in the primitive part of our nervous system involved in emotion and memory, triggers the adrenal glands to produce epinephrine (adrenaline) and norepinephrine (noradrenaline). These hormones increase breathing rate and the heart rate and prime the muscles to move quickly. If the threat remains the hypothalamus responds to the amygdala to produce a hormone CRH which tells the pituitary gland to produce ACTH which in turn tells the adrenal glands to produce cortisol – the stress hormone.

Cortisol works to give the body the energy it needs to stay on high alert to tackle the danger. This affects the liver and pancreas and other body tissues and leads to an increase in blood glucose levels. Whilst all this happens, to preserve energy, there is a suppression of the digestive and reproductive systems.

When the danger has passed the body may take 20 to 30 minutes to return to normal function.

### **What happens if stress becomes chronic?**

Chronic stress is the scourge of modern life due to the many pressures of today's society. Among other things, this can be due to financial worries, relationship problems, family troubles, housing situations, a stressful job, climate anxiety, traumatic events (past or present). Symptoms can vary from racing heart, butterflies, nausea, stomach cramps, breathlessness, tight chest to panic attacks. In the long term this can have detrimental physical and psychological consequences leading to heart disease, diabetes, cancer, anxiety, depression, liver disease, pain, skin conditions and obesity among others.

### **So how can reflexology help?**

Reflexology can deeply relax the body and mind. When the body is relaxed the parasympathetic nervous system can be primed for 'rest, digest and repair'.

If you have chosen to have a reflexology treatment you have taken the first step to better health by taking an hour out of your routine for yourself.

The reflexology room is comfortable, calm with soothing music causing alpha brainwaves inducing relaxation.

Reflexology is a non-invasive gentle touch therapy. The body may respond to gentle touch by producing endorphins, the feel-good hormones.

The aim of reflexology is to achieve homeostasis – to balance hormones and the nervous system - and this can be achieved by gently applying pressure to the reflexes on the feet, hands, face, or ears.

So, reflexology can induce relaxation, lift your mood, help you to sleep thereby allowing the body to begin to heal itself. Together with other lifestyle changes you can further improve your physical and mental health!

### **What else can I do to reduce the effects of chronic stress?**

Since practising reflexology, I have become even more aware of what a difference I can make to my own physical and mental wellbeing through nutrition, exercise, sleep, relaxation and having a sense of purpose.

With current pressure on the NHS it is even more important to take responsibility, where we can, for our own health.

I have taken small steps to try to achieve the best in these areas and it is surprising how quickly the momentum gathers. I recently challenged myself to eat 30 different plants a week to improve my gut biome!

I also slip back quite often but with small steps again (and not being hard on myself) I can soon get back on track. I'm currently working on my sleep routine!



'Eating the rainbow'



Bike ride to Fleetwood



Getting creative in my yard!

Try making a small change to these areas of your life.

In future newsletters and on my Instagram page I want to offer suggestions so you can start with one change and gradually build on it.

## SMART goals!

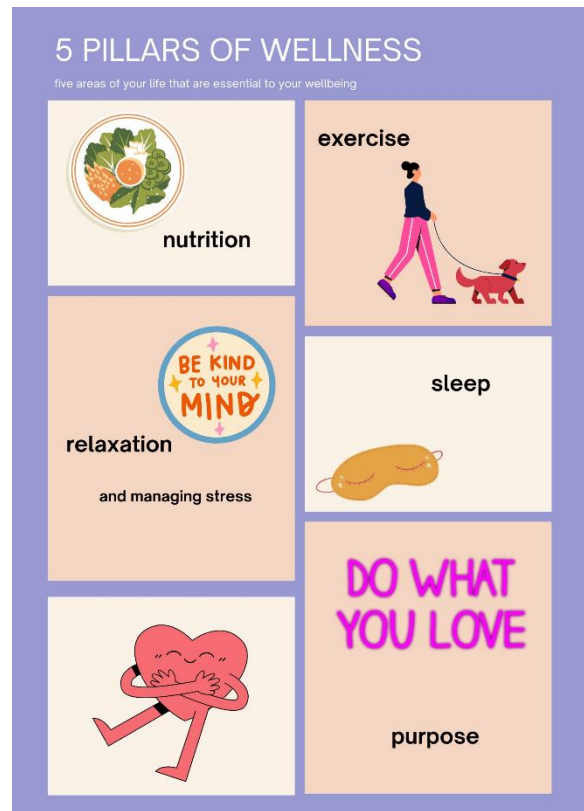
Specific

Measurable

Achievable

Relevant

Time-bound



**NUTRITION** – introduce a portion of a different fruit or vegetable into your diet each day – for example, if you haven't eaten a carrot by Wednesday, have one on Thursday!

<https://joinzoe.com/learn/gut-brain-connection>

**EXERCISE** – begin each day with a full body stretch reaching your hands high above your head and pointing your toes away from you. You can do this before you even get out of bed!

**SLEEP** - switch off your phone screen an hour before you go to bed.

<https://thesleepcharity.org.uk/information-support/adults/sleep-hub/blue-light-and-sleep/>

**RELAXATION** – focus on your breath and take 6 slow, deep breaths, in and out – imagine the breath travelling down to your fingers and your toes and as you exhale you are breathing out the tension.

**PURPOSE** – do one thing each day that you enjoy – it could be as simple as mindfully drinking a cup of tea, make a card for a friend, call someone you haven't spoken to for a while.

And lastly here's a link to a video to show you how you can massage the reflexes on your hands to help yourself. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lk0LgNFQuas>

Feel free to forward this newsletter to any friends you think may benefit – from reflexology and addressing stress symptoms.

Go well!

*Clare*