



Physical Exercise: Release the Kraken (Cortisol)!

Today's message is about giving yourself a time out to re-charge your body and mind defenses while social distancing. ***Exercise is essential for human health and well-being.*** Have you seen the picture circulating on Facebook of a giraffe with obesity? Stress and inactivity can make us eat more. Being home and being allowed to visit a grocery store as an essential outing brings food a new social meaning of connection to others. Coupled with stay at home restrictions resulting in inactivity, we risk having our stress hormones rule our bodies and minds!

Cortisol, a stress hormone released from the adrenal glands, degrades white blood cells in an effort to prepare for the fight or flight response to stress. Suppression of the immune system and an increase of cholesterol release to our blood stream occurs with increased cortisol levels. ***Cortisol is our Kraken!*** When released in large quantities, Cortisol can set us up for physical and psychological diseases.

Physical exercise in moderation is a relaxation technique. The more fit our bodies become, the less Cortisol we release in response to stress. Physiologic benefits of exercise include a decreased resting heart rate and blood pressure, better sleep quality, less muscle tension, increased resistance to colds and flu (!), a decreased rate of aging, and decreased body fat. Psychological benefits of habitual exercise include improved self-esteem, self-efficacy, mental alertness, and cognitive processing, as well as an increase in the perceptions of others, and a decreased feeling of isolation, depression, and anxiety with an overall decrease in general stress.

So, let's take a routine Time Out to Exercise! How do we do it? The recommended moderate workout includes both movement like walking or swimming (aerobic) and muscle stretch like isometrics or yoga (anaerobic). The duration of exercise should be about 30 minutes 3 times a week with a day off between days of routine exercise. The 30 minutes should include about 5 minutes to stretch and warm up, 20 minutes of activity, and about 5 minutes of cooling down to return to a resting heart rate.

Awesome Indoor Obstacle Course for Kids <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FKF6iPL3kTc>

Adult Obstacle Course-Exercise Fun at Home <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HgLYtVnySwI>

Fat Giraffe Picture <https://i.pinimg.com/originals/90/37/f9/9037f9b2500555e36f4487df44f8976f.jpg>

Thinking of you!

Daemen Nursing Department