

STRESS

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Today we are going to look at stress, as I am sure it is part or very much part of all our lives. First we are going to do Pilates or stretches again as this can really help relieve tension and build up of stress inside us. Feel free to just watch us with amusement if you prefer.

Pilates (10 minutes) (use you tube ; for any interested mums)

Reality Check: How stressed am I? (Taken from Refresh by Murray and Murray)

Tick the ones appropriate to you:

Physical Warning Signs

- Tired, exhausted, lethargic all the time
- Difficulty sleeping
- Weight gain from comfort eating or loss of appetite
- Clenching/grinding teeth
- Stomach pains
- Racing heart
- Breathless
- Tight chest
- Tight throat, difficult to swallow
- Difficult to relax, switch off

Mental Warning Signs

- Lack of concentration, can't organise or plan, make decisions eg shopping list
- Forgetful
- Hours spent obsessing about the same thing
- Negative thoughts
- Pessimistic
- Hypercritical of self

Emotional Warning Signs

- Feel sad most of the time
- Often cry for no reason
- Emotionally numb
- Always worrying
- Feel worthless, take on other emotional burdens eg stories of pain or fear on TV

Relational Warning Signs

- Frustration, irritable, impatient

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Exercise

- This helps our sleep too. We might be on our feet all day but we are often in 'fight or flight' mode or when our adrenaline is running high as we multitask with our kids but the adrenaline has no place to go- this damages our body and brain and adrenaline finds itself difficult to stop producing.
 - Regular exercise redirects all this nervous energy and gives it a physical outlet, a healthy tiredness.
 - Exercise also stimulates the production of good chemicals eg dopamine and helps to rejuvenate the brain. It is difficult to find time to do exercise but if we try and plan it into our week with the support of our partner this is half the battle. Do exercise with a friend , then you are less likely to not do it or be lazy. Build it up slowly. Find something you enjoy eg a dance class, jogging with mad music in your ears or a podcast, fast walking in the park pushing a sleeping child? Be accountable to a friend. Or if just too tired do Pilates or yoga, v good for relieving tension, use a you tube video to follow.
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- **Relaxation**
 - This is different from rest!
 - Take a break and refresh with something else interesting.
 - Am I Mrs Frantic-rushing about stressed ?
 - Am I Mrs Reflective-working hard but pausing to stop, to look, to listen, to be thankful, to appreciate, to enjoy and bank the enjoyment.
 - Stop and be still- God says in the Bible "Be still and know that I am God". For those with faith in God through Jesus this is calming, trusting that God is in control and if we stop he will guide us. His plans are far wiser than ours.
 - There is so much going on in our heads, racing thoughts, isn't there.....

Some people mediate, trying to empty their minds of stressful thoughts but apparently 40% of people who mediate feel stressed whilst doing it!! But Jesus says "come to me all who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest". Meditating on his love for us and help is very calming and he promises us peace. We can all call on God for help, he loves each and every one of you and yearns for you to ask for his help and guidance and seek Him.

Discuss in 2/3s

Q What do you think of the idea of prayer and meditation?

Do I rush around or stop and reflect?