



Unpacking The Stress Habit



Chronic pain is any pain that's felt 15 days out of 30 for 3 months or more
– any pain – physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual.

The brain can't tell the difference between one kind of pain and another
– it all sends the same signal, “it hurts,” to the brain.

So, the brain can't tell the difference between a broken bone and a broken heart.



The Stress Response “Stuck” in the ON Position:

**Hypervigilance, shut down, and everything in between,
except balance and ease.**

Confusion (I can't think straight; where the ** did I put my
KEYS?!!!)**

“I can't sit still,” or “What's next?”

**Complaint – as a habit, looping or ruminating thoughts,
worry, time-tripping, and unmanageability.**

A pronounced negative thinking habit.

Procrastination, being stuck in resentment, and self-doubt.

**The brain responds to repetition.
This is something we can leverage
to our benefit.**

GET REAL WITH YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM

The nervous system has to believe that it is NOT under threat in order for us to shift it back into ease.

We can't think our way out of this – we need to nervous system our way through it.

The nervous system reads a long exhale as a cue of safety. So we can begin there – with the BREATH.

And remember, we have developed a stress HABIT.

What is a habit?

Physics tells us that an object in motion stays in motion until acted on by an equal or opposite force.

A habit is an object in motion. It has momentum. In order to change its trajectory, we need to bring in an object of equal or opposite force.

What would that be?

Ways to Rewire the Stress Habit

Breathwork – with repetition

Mantra – with repetition

Meditation – as a practice - there's that repetition again

Connection – remembering our connection to Higher Power, Nature, and others – going to meetings – calling one another... again and again.

5 Other ways to Change Your State - movement, food and hydration, sleep, where your attention is directed (is my focus on my demons or on my divinity?), and releasing the grip of the past.

And all of these require doing them over and over.

HERE'S THE GOOD NEWS

**So, just as we lived the repetitive actions we did in
the frequency of addiction,
we can now leverage the brain's penchant for
repetition by feeding it healthy repetitive actions.**

**What the Yoga Sutras teach us about:
focus,
consistent practice,
and compassion
as choices that lead
to a stable tranquility, serenity, and a
thriving life.**

Yoga Sutras:

1.1 – Yoga is now. Awareness and the present moment. This is when and where we heal.

1.2 – Yoga is the uniting of consciousness in the heart - Connection

1.3 – United in the heart, consciousness is steadied, then we abide in our true nature – joy. This shows us the value of steadiness and truth.

Yoga Sutra

1.13 – Commitment - devoted practice, abhyasa, cultivated the unfolding of consciousness.

Cultivating and training yourself in the art of wise action will consistently lead you in the direction of inner peace and Self-realization.

Ask yourself, “This choice I am making now – is it guiding me into a pattern of freedom and ease, or is it taking me back to my old stress pattern of worry, time-tripping, and disconnection? Is it nurturing my serenity, or is it feeding my neuroses?”



Yoga Sutra

1.36 – Sadness or misery can be removed by introducing the light of awareness. The light within is free from all suffering and sorrow.

Our awareness – when? Now.

... and from a few other wise teachers:

“You cannot solve a problem at the same level of consciousness that created it.” – Albert Einstein

We’re literally shifting out of the frequency, the consciousness, of addiction, of dis–ease, and into the frequency, the consciousness, of recovery and health.

and...

“It’s always there, the truth. You just need to look for it.” – Sherlock Holmes

Sthairyam (“STH-eye-rum”) is a Sanskrit word meaning steadfastness, stability, or stillness.

It's about developing an unshakable, comfortable posture to allow the mind to quiet and connect with deeper states of awareness. The more awareness we can cultivate, the faster we can see when we get caught in our old, unhealthy patterns.

Path of Recovery and Discovery

We gain physical and mental stability cultivated through yoga practice. We keep coming back and leverage the brain's love of repetition to rewire ourselves into a thriving life.

Our determination to stay on a spiritual path is also Sthairyum. This is our path of recovery and discovery.

STEADINESS ENABLES FOCUS
HARNESSING THE POWER OF ATTENTION

Steadiness helps reset the stress response back to normal. And remember how one of the ways to change our state is to harness the power of our attention.

“Chronic pain tries to steal our attention away from everything but it.”

Dr. Peter Przekop, DO, Addiction Specialist

Dr. Przekop gave us an apt description of the brain on chronic pain and at least partly why we can't think straight when we're in it.

The antidote to the mind being drawn back into its old patterns of suffering is this **commitment and steadfastness.**

Compassion - a Foundational Element in Recovery

The yogic word for compassion is *karuṇā* and is translated as compassion, mercy, and self-compassion.

We can have compassion for what led to and arose from that stress habit, and see it for what it is – not a moral failing or some kind of weakness – it's just a habit we developed as we tried our best to cope in the world. We release any judgment and open our hearts to self-compassion.

When I feel that heaviness of falling back into that old stress habit, I know I need to use the breath to help shift and lift me out of it, changing the trajectory, rewiring and transforming the old habit in real time. THIS is the power of our choices and how readily the brain responds to our choices.

In recovery, we keep coming back to what we are feeling without judgment and with compassion.

We keep coming back to practice spiritual principles.

We keep coming back to the breath, and we keep coming back to each other in community.

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