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"treating the cause of your problem, not just the symptoms"

Feeling a Little Stressed?

Researchers many years ago did studies on rats to determine what effect "stress" has on the poor little animals. Although their methods would seem rather cruel by today's standards, they did come up with some useful information. They purposely exposed animals to stress for varying periods of time. They then dissected the animals to see if there were any changes to their brains and organs. To be sure the changes they found were from the exposure to stress, they also had a group of rats that were not exposed to the stress to compare to. They found that these animals had chemical changes in their brain and physical changes in their organs.

The theory is that a mild level of controlled stress is stimulating and healthy. It keeps us motivated and alert. However, too much stress for too long of time can become a problem. I see the physical results of excess stress every day in my Chiropractic practice. Helping these people is not always that simple. These people often have very tight muscles in their neck and back. The tight muscles limit the mobility of the joints in the neck and back, often leading to reoccurring neck or back pain. Tension-type headaches are almost a given. These are not the migraine-type but instead they cause a more constant dull pressure or ache at the back, top, and even the front of the head. Although not usually addressed directly in my practice, these people experience constipation, digestive problems, high blood pressure, poor or inability to sleep, and many other problems. The biggest challenge is not treating the physical symptoms that come with stress, it is making the patient realize what it is in their life that needs to be addressed in order eliminate the stress. No matter what symptoms arise, getting rid of them long term is almost impossible unless the stress is dealt with first.

Chiropractors should never try to take the place of a councilor or psychologist. However, it is any health practitioner's job to recognize these problems when they occur. For my patients, I encourage them first identify what the stress is. They then must try to control it, or in worst case scenarios, simply avoid any situations that cause it. For many, regular exercise helps alleviate much of the physical stress and the related muscle/joint stiffness. Also, try to get adequate sleep, usually eight hours per night, and try to go to sleep at the same time each night. If you need to get your mind off things in order to fall asleep, do

some good mindless reading, such as Harry Potter, that takes you away from your everyday activities. If the physical symptoms (headaches, stiff/sore back or neck) are persistent, Chiropractic and/or Massage Therapy are good conservative options that will not require you to take medication. If other problems such as high blood pressure arise, you should also consult your Medical Doctor.