



Cathedral Village Wellness News

2146 Robinson Street • Regina, SK • (306) 757-HEAL



We Turned One!

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It is hard to believe but the Naturopathic Doctors at Cathedral Centre for Wellness are celebrating our first anniversary together! Doctors Allison Ziegler, Julie Zepp Rutledge, Laura Stark and Marika Geis have been practicing together out of our beautiful location at 2146 Robinson Street for one full year.

If you haven't been to visit us yet, our clinic is located on the second floor, above *The Caring Place*, on Robinson Street across from Safeway and beside Butcher Boy meats. We invite you to come in and check out our lovely space! We offer scheduled and walk-in appointments and high quality supplement sales.

Our mandate is to provide high quality health care to our patients and to serve the community through health education and empowerment. We at the Cathedral Centre for Wellness believe in the incredible healing power

of the body and of nature and we all work to provide a grassroots approach to your health

care needs.

Of fundamental importance to us is nutrition. We work with our patients to determine the optimal diet that is right for you and help give you the tools necessary to succeed in these changes. We focus on lifestyle—giving protocols that might include hydrotherapy, cleansing, or breathing exercises in order to assist you on your healing path. We work with high quality supplements to support your body in overcoming or preventing disease. We also believe in the power of the mind-body connection.

Our goal is to work with our patients to find the root causes of their illness, to work together in establishing treatment plans that will ensure maximal compliance and success. We encourage you to establish a relationship with a Naturopathic Doctor if you haven't already—our commitment is to you.

Good health is worth the effort and we look forward to assisting you with yours!♥

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Too much of a good thing? Bio-identical progesterone isn't without risk

By Dr Marika Geis N.D.

Ask anyone suffering from extreme PMS or early menopause if they've benefited from bio-identical hormones and they'll tell you that along with B vitamins, Fish oil, Chaste-tree, seed rotations, calcium/magnesium, liver and adrenal support, bio-identical progesterone was a game changer. The benefits of bio-identical progesterone don't stop there. In women with PCOS, progesterone can lower the male type hormones responsible for some of their symptoms along with balancing the pituitary hormones that help regulate their cycle. While the processes that contribute to the above conditions are complex, the one common denominator is the relative excess of estrogen, a hormone, which if left unopposed, can have a significant impact on our health.

Nowhere was this made clearer than with the Women's Health Initiative in 1991. Of the 3 interventions, one sought to determine which would have the greater benefit on reducing cardiovascular risk, cancer and osteoporosis: estrogen only therapy or estrogen in combination with progesterone. Women with intact uteruses given 'estrogen only' therapy were at significantly greater risk of developing uterine cancer, a risk that was reduced when estrogen was given in combination with progesterone. As a result the study ended in 2004, two and a half years early.

In a world that seems de-

termined to ensure that we are swimming in vast amounts of estrogen, both from *the environment*: plastics and their petrochemical cousins, pesticides and herbicides etc...and *internally*: lack of ovulation (a process that produces progesterone), compromised liver function (which will hold onto estrogen as opposed to eliminating it) and excessive stress (a process that sequesters progesterone to make more stress hormone), progesterone might seem a likely antidote for all this exposure given its role in balancing the effects of estrogen. This of course, after liver function has been corrected and balance has been restored to the nervous system, right? For the most part this is true but what happens when we're given too much of a good thing? What might present as a baffling array of symptoms apparently implicating the thyroid gland, the nervous system and cardiovascular system, could actually have their roots in supra-physiologic amounts of progesterone as we shall soon see.

Lucy, a 47 year-old mother of 3 children, experiencing increasingly irritable episodes prior to her cycle along with night sweats that leave her sleepless



and drained of energy went to her doctor's office asking for advice on how to handle this new development. She has a good rapport with her physician and reports that she has also been experiencing frequent headaches, some flushing during the day and increasingly irregular periods that are quite heavy and painful. Her intrepid doctor, resisting the urge to recommend antidepressants and/or birth control pills, and having just read Dr. John Lee's 'What Your Doctor May *Not* Tell You About Menopause', correctly sees this as the relative imbalance of estrogen and progesterone that occurs in early menopause and goes about prescribing her the standard dose of bio-identical progesterone to be taken during the last 2 weeks of her cycle. Lucy left relieved and began taking her medication at the appropriate time. Well, she was astonished. Most of her symptoms had disappeared, she felt more like her old self and life went back to normal. After about 6 months or so she found herself back in the doctor's office with the same symptoms. What happened? More progesterone is prescribed except this time the symptoms aren't getting any better. In fact, Lucy is now experiencing heart palpitations, hair loss, extreme fatigue, depression, low libido, cravings and weight gain. Some preliminary blood work by her doctor showed a normal value for thyroid function but a high fasting blood sugar

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Too much of a good thing?

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along with a cholesterol profile that increased her risk of having a cardiovascular event in the future. Perhaps Diabetes? Maybe.

Lucy decided to take matters into her own hands unwilling to accept the fact that within 6 months she went from a healthy 47 year old woman to one that could potentially be taking 4-5 different medications to mitigate the cardiovascular risks associated with Type 2 Diabetes. She had some brave friends that had seen Naturopathic Doctors with some encouraging results and decided to make an appointment. During the course of the interview, her naturopath suggested something called 'salivary hormone testing' to see where her levels of estrogen and progesterone were at given that her decline started with common peri-menopausal symptoms. They decided on a hormone panel that included the hormones in question in addition to assessing the status of her nervous system. The results clearly indicated where the problem was. Estrogen was within the normal range for a woman her age but her progesterone was clearly out of balance. And not by a little. The normal reference range for this particular test for progesterone is 0-50. Her result came back as 3200!!

When the body encounters an agent that is in excess of what it needs, it will attempt to protect itself from its effects by down regulating the number of

receptors on the target organs that respond to the agent in question. Take adult onset Diabetes as an example. In response to chronically high blood sugar, the pancreas makes more and more insulin in an attempt to keep levels within range. However, when the body registers that too much is being made, the number of receptors to insulin is reduced and the body secretes even more insulin to achieve the same blood sugar lowering effect. This is what is known as insulin resistance - the precursor to Type II Diabetes. Progesterone receptors will act in much the same way in that once the body is flooded with progesterone and all receptors are saturated, the body will make less receptors available because it no longer needs to maintain sensitivity. Since the target tissues no longer need progesterone it is often repurposed to other systems.

One common fate of excess progesterone is cortisol. Anyone with a history of PMS that was improved by including adrenal support to their health regimen can attest to this. When the body is under chronic stress, it will sequester progesterone to make more cortisol leaving the patient with a relative excess of estrogen. But what happens when there's a relative excess of progesterone? The *same thing*, although the stimulus won't be excessive long term stress. Excess progesterone will be shunted to making additional cortisol. Excess cortisol can have a suppressive effect on the thyroid gland - the metabolic powerhouse of the body. The end

result is a spectrum of symptoms that involve the pancreas, adrenals, thyroid and ovaries: extreme fatigue, depression, low libido, hair loss, weight gain, palpitations, insomnia, cravings and perhaps more troublesome is the potential to precipitate progesterone receptor positive cancers.

So what's the bottom line? As a naturopath, I can't say that bio-identical progesterone is my first choice when it comes to treating things like PMS, perimenopause, PCOS or some other kind of estrogen dependent condition. I usually try and support the systems whose dysfunction is leading the body to manifest those particular symptoms. This can go a very long way! However, when my patients are doing their very best to support healthy blood sugar levels, manage their stress and take their supplements and things are *still* just not quite right, I have no qualms about recommending bio-identical hormones. But, and a very *BIG but*, it is usually done with appropriate testing to ensure that the recommended dosage actually reflects what their body needs. A good rule of thumb is to start low and go slow. Test every 2-3 months for the first 12 months to ensure that your levels are within range and make corrections accordingly. A good compounding pharmacist is a crucial ally when a patient's needs go beyond the standard available dose. Avoid unintended consequences....test don't guess!♥

Cleaning out your pantry

By Dr Allison Ziegler N.D.

With the new season comes the desire to make goals, make changes, live better and feel healthier. An area we can have a significant impact on is what we choose to nourish ourselves with. With the rising amount and availability of processed, convenience foods, our nutrition has veered too far from the nutrient dense, whole foods. As a result, diseases such as diabetes, obesity, heart disease, cancer, autoimmune and mental illnesses are on the rise. Each item of food we choose to eat should serve a single goal of nourishment to our body, allowing the body to live to its healthiest and fullest by providing the very essence for work and play.

Cleaning out the pantry by replacing foods that hinder health with life giving, nutrient rich foods can help you create healthier patterns, feel better and prevent disease.

1. Begin by getting rid of any foods containing:

White and Brown Refined Sugar and High Fructose Corn Syrup
Canadians consume, on average, 110 grams of sugar a day, which is equivalent to 46 teaspoons. Refined sugar has been overly processed, essentially voiding itself of any nutrients. As a result, consuming refined sugar does not provide any nutrient value to the body and is only a source of empty calories. When sugar is consumed, excess amounts are stored in the liver and eventually are returned to the bloodstream as fatty acids, which ultimately end up as fat. In addition to contributing to diabetes and obesity, consumption of refined sugar has

been linked to a weakened immune system, yeast infections, hyperactivity, ADHD, mental and emotional disorders and chemical imbalances in the brain.

Sugar is hiding in many different food items; therefore, when trying to get rid of foods that contain processed sugar, label reading is essential. Sugar can be identified as glucose, sucrose, fructose, sucralose, dextrose, maltose, maltodextrin and high fructose corn syrup, to name a few. Some common food items that sugar can be lurking in are cereals, crackers, bread, candy, pasta sauces, salad dressings and condiments.

Trans Fats and Saturated Fats

Trans fats are synthetically derived fats that are identified as hydrogenated and partially hydrogenated oils. Saturated fats are solid at room temperature, such as butter, margarine, red meat, and shortening. Consuming foods high in trans and saturated fats increase inflammation in the body and are the number one leading cause of heart disease. These unhealthy fats can be found not only in butter and oils, but also in chips, cookies, cereals, breads and just about any highly processed food item.

A good rule of thumb to follow is having only olive, grape seed, safflower, flax and sesame oils in your pantry. Even though it is a saturated fat, coconut oil is also good to have on hand because it is one of the only oils that can be safely heated at high temperatures.

White flour/Pasta

Food products containing white flour such as pastas, crackers, breads and cereals are simple carbohydrates that adversely affect health. White flour begins as the whole grain; however, through processing it is stripped of its vitamins, minerals, fibre and enzymes, which leaves a product with no nutritional value. As a result, like sugar and high-fructose corn syrup, white flour products elevate blood sugar levels, contributing to diabetes, weight gain, fluctuating energy levels, mood swings and decreased immune system.

Regular Table Salt

Regular table salt is mined from underground salt deposits and more heavily processed to remove minerals and tends to have additives to prevent clumping. Sea salt, on the other hand, is made from evaporated seawater and contains other trace minerals, which offer many health benefits such as thyroid support, muscle and immune health.

Anything That Has More Than 3 Unrecognizable Ingredients

The Rule of 3 is a great way to prevent consuming food items that contain unhealthy ingredients. If you read a label of a food

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Cleaning out your pantry

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product that has more than 3 ingredients that you do not understand, get rid of or do not purchase it. Get your children involved! They love being detectives and can have a lot of fun with this. Include them while cleaning out and restocking your pantry.

2. Replace the items with healthy options:

Throw Away: White/brown processed sugar; high fructose corn syrup; cookies and snacks sweetened with them, and sweetened peanut butter.

Replace With: Coconut sugar, brown rice syrup, maple syrup, honey, agave nectar and stevia, cookies sweetened with any of this list or evaporated cane juice (Kashi is a good brand), all natu-

“The best way to serve our unique nutritional needs is to empower ourselves with knowledge, listen to our bodies and respond with healthy, nourishing choices.”

~ Terry Walters

ral peanut butter or almond butter.

Throw Away: Butter, margarine and shortening and regular potato chips that are high in unhealthy fats.

Replace With: Olive, flax seed, sesame, coconut and grape seed oil, rice chips, vegetable chips and kale chips.

Throw Away: White flour products including pasta and crackers.

Replace With: Spelt, buckwheat or brown rice pasta, rice chips/crackers.

Throw Away: Regular table salt and products containing high sodium (canned soup, salad dressings and sauces).

Replace With: Sea salt, homemade salad dressings using olive oil and balsamic vinegar.

Keeping the goal in mind that each item of food we choose to eat should serve as a source of nutrients to the body can be helpful when making the lifestyle change to clean out your pantry and restock it with healthy foods. The nutrients gained from our food acts as the foundation for the rest of our health. If we provide our body what it needs to function properly, health and vitality will result! ♥

Laura's Decadent Healthy Ice Cream

By Dr Laura Stark N.D.

In the spirit of enjoying healthy fats and the last warm days summer, here is the recipe for the most decadent ice cream you will ever eat!

Ingredients:

- 6 whole eggs (organic from pasture-raised chickens)
- 2 tsp vanilla (I use powdered from Organic Traditions)
- 10 drops apple cider vinegar
- ½ cup coconut oil
- ½ cup grass-fed butter (Organic Meadows brand)
- ¼ cup MCT oil
- 1 tsp (or less) stevia (I use green powdered leaf)
- ¼ to ½ cup carob powder (optional. Could also use cacao)
- Optional: up to ½ cup ice or water as desired for texture

Method:

Put all ingredients (except ice/water) in blender and blend until smooth and creamy. A yogurt-like consistency will produce a very creamy ice cream, but for an icier texture, slowly add ice/water blending until well incorporated. For best results, pour the mixture into your ice cream maker. Without an ice cream maker, chilling in the freezer will produce an icier ice cream..♥

A Big FAT fact sheet

By Dr Laura Stark N.D.

Fat is a pretty controversial topic it seems. Despite having some texture issues with fatty meats, I love fats and feel the need to stick up for them and do a little clearing of the air, per se. In the last few decades there have been some commonly held beliefs about fats such as “eating fat will make you fat”, “saturated fat and cholesterol cause heart disease”, “animal fat causes cancer”, and generally that “fat is bad”. At the same time, there is a ton of emerging information about the benefits of healthy fats – everyone should be supplementing their diet with healthy omega 3 rich oils.

So, some fats are good and some fats are bad. Well, there is controversy here as well. Some of the big research studies that shaped our commonly held ideas about fats such as the Framingham Heart Study and the China Study are riddled with controversy with issues like deleted data in the original publications and poor conclusions extrapolated from the data. (I need to pause and shake off all the adversarial online commentary that follows this fat research – I suppose it makes sense as fat is such a good fuel for a long burning fire!) My purpose here is not to get into debunking research, but to point out that the science itself usually does not actually give us the sweeping and definitive conclusions that get presented to us in the media, get translated into government policy, or shape the way medicine is practiced. I think we need to keep our minds open to possibilities – to new information – with the humble attitude that we understand only a very small fraction of the wonders that are our bodies and the magic of life.



So, let's get on to what we know of the bio-

chemistry of fats and how our bodies use them. Fat is the body's primary fuel to produce energy while at rest and during low intensity activity. Fat and cholesterol are integral components in the structure of each cell in our bodies – maintaining fluidity in our cell myelin sheath that surrounds and protects our nerve cells. Dietary fats are critical for the absorption of the fat-soluble vitamins – A, D, E and K. Cholesterol is the building block of all of our steroid hormones – estrogen, progesterone, testosterone, and the anti-inflammatory corticosteroids. Fats are essential. So to help you choose among the myriad options, the following is a list of common fats with some commentary on the qualities of each in the categories of cooking oils, non-cooking oils, supplemental oils, and foods with fats. Note the go-ahead green (●), yellow yield (Δ), and red stop (⊘) to help guide you through this long list!

Cooking oils: Should have a higher saturated fat content and lower mono- and poly-unsaturated fatty acid (MUFA and PUFA) proportion so they will not be easily oxidized by the heat of cooking.

●Coconut – saturated so it is stable for high heat, has some yeast fighting properties, and is a unique oil that boosts our fat metabolism

because it goes directly into our mitochondria to be burned as fuel without the need for enzyme transporters.

Δ Palm – very similar to coconut oil, but with greater issues of sustainability with the deforestation to produce palm plantations. Palm is commonly hidden in many products as “vegetable oil” and is often hydrogenated.

●Butter (**organic, grass-fed**) – stable for cooking with so much nutrition packed in. A good source of all the fat soluble vitamins (A, E, D and K), conjugated linoleic acid (used as a supplement to aid weight loss), glycosphingolipids (that help fight gut infections), and butyrate (that supports fat metabolism, healthy cholesterol, and intestinal health).

●Ghee (clarified butter) – all the butter benefits (if organic and grass-fed) with the lactose and milk proteins removed. A good quality ghee can be eaten safely by the majority of dairy sensitive people.

Δ Olive – mostly omega 9 MUFAs making it a moderately stable oil. Ok for low heat baking or sautéing. A good quality raw olive oil provides polyphenols for healthy blood pressure and cholesterol (as do the olives themselves).

Δ Avocado – high in MUFAs like olive oil making it stable for low temperature cooking, but why not just eat the avocado and get all the great protein and fibre too!

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⊗ Grapeseed – although it has a high smoke point, the high concentration of PUFAs make this an inappropriate cooking oil.

⊗ Canola/Corn/Soybean – these are genetically modified and high in pro-inflammatory PUFA omega 6s.

⊗ Margarine/Shortening – usually made from hydrogenated canola oil, it is unstable PUFAs turned into trans fats which create inflammation and contribute to hardening the arteries (arteriosclerosis), insulin resistance, and increasing the risk of heart disease.

⊗ Peanut – the most common deep frying oil because it does not take on the flavours of the foods cooked in it so multiple things can be made in the same oil. Made up of MUFAs and PUFAs, peanut oil is oxidized in the deep frying process.

Non-cooking oils: Tend to be more fragile and prone to oxidation – they need to be protected from air, heat and light or they will become rancid. Always choose cold-pressed and store properly.

△ Flax – the oil most concentrated in the essential omega 3 precursor oil, alpha linolenic acid (ALA), flax oil is very fragile. The body needs to convert the ALA into EPA and DHA in the body to reap the health benefits, but this process is blocked by an overabundance of omega 6 in the diet.

● Camelina – a somewhat “new” oil being produced in Saskatchewan with sustainable farming practices. A close runner-up behind flax as a high ALA oil with the added benefit of a high vitamin E content to help keep this oil

more stable. Although advertised as a cooking oil, the high PUFA content makes it more appropriate to keep only as a salad oil.

△ Hemp – it contains the suggested ideal ratio of 4:1 omega 6 to omega 3 that we should have in our diets. It has a lower percentage of ALA than flax or camelina, but it does have a small amount of beneficial GLA (see Borage below).

△ Walnut/Pumpkin Seed/Sesame/Sunflower/Safflower – most nut and seed oils have high MUFA and PUFA content that make them susceptible to easily going rancid. These all have higher omega 6 content than is ideal, but each do have merits in the flavour department.

Supplemental oils: Concentrate particular fatty acids that are beneficial to our health as anti-inflammatories, cholesterol balancers, brain nourishers, etc. Mainly the Omega 3 fatty acids EPA and DHA. Not all supplemental oils are created equally – close attention needs to be paid to the quality of manufacturing of these oils. Ask your naturopathic doctor which brands they recommend.

● Fish – most fish oils are concentrated to maximize the amount of EPA. A concentration method that preserves the natural triglyceride form of fat rather than producing ethyl esters is usually easier to digest.

Fish oil should never taste or smell fishy – this means that it is rancid. Fish oils need to be protected from heat, light and air (during the manufacturing process too) which may make capsules the more stable choice. I typically recommend a liquid fish oil (kept in the fridge)

though, because to achieve a therapeutic dosage usually means swallowing more than 8 capsules daily versus 2 teaspoons or 1 tablespoon of liquid oil. The well-researched and long list of benefits from supplementing fish oil makes it a pretty reasonable argument that everyone should be taking it.

● Green-lipped Mussel – powerfully anti-inflammatory source of omega 3s as well as glycosaminoglycans (an important component of joints) which makes this a potent anti-arthritis oil. From the pristine waters of New Zealand, we should keep sustainability in mind.

● Seal – a non-concentrated, natural triglyceride form of the omega 3s DHA, EPA and DPA. DPA is found only from mammal sources, including humans, and provides reinforcement to the benefits of the EPA. Human breast milk contains high amounts of DPA and DHA to feed babies’ growing brains. The naturally higher concentrations of DPA and DHA in seal oil make it the perfect omega 3 source for pregnant and breastfeeding moms. The tightly regulated seal hunt makes seal oil very sustainable and like traditional hunting, it is humane and the entire seal is used.

● △ Krill – a highly bioavailable phospholipid form of EPA and DHA requiring lower dosages than fish oil. Also contains the powerful antioxidant astaxanthin especially beneficial for eye and

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heart health. There are some concerns about over fishing krill at the bottom of the food chain – make sure you buy from sustainably sourced brands.

△ Algae-sourced Omega 3 – A good vegan alternative to the other marine sourced omega 3 oils. It's the original source at the bottom of the food chain so it does take a lot of algae to produce a therapeutic dosage of DHA and EPA.

● Cod Liver – a non-concentrated source of EPA and DHA (lower dose than fish oil) but also containing the natural fat soluble forms of vitamins A and D, making it a wonderful oil for people on the autistic spectrum, with psychiatric diseases and eye or vision disorders.

● MCT – medium chain triglycerides extracted from coconut or palm oils. This is the component of coconut that promotes fat metabolism in the body. A wonderful energy source for athletes and those trying to lose weight. Okay for low temperature cooking as well.

● Borage/Evening Primrose/Black Current Seed – all sources of GLA, an omega 6 fat with important therapeutic benefits for skin diseases and hormonal concerns like PMS and menopause.

● Castor – if used internally, it's a powerful laxative and not widely recommended. Topically, it's a wonder-oil that helps to increase circulation and decrease inflammation. It's great on top of painful muscles and joints, over constipated bowels, over a liver needing some detoxing, over phlegmy or irritated lungs, on dry, inflamed skin, etc. A true medicine cabinet must-have.

Foods with fats:

● Beef/Lamb (grass-fed) – with almost entirely saturated fat, even when cooked, beef and lamb supply a good dose of fat soluble vitamins and other nutrients (similar to butter above) while the high quality protein also contains higher amounts of water soluble vitamins and minerals because the animals were fed the type of food their bodies were built to digest and thrive on.

● Pork/Duck/Goose/Chicken/Turkey (grass-fed) – with higher content of PUFAs and more thorough cooking needed, these meats don't quite reach the standard set by beef and lamb.

⊗ Meat (*conventionally raised*) – choose lean cuts and trim off the fat – it's where most of the chemical toxins get stored.

△ Fish – sardines and anchovies have the highest EPA and DHA content with the lowest risk for heavy metal contamination (these are the most common fish used to make fish oil). Salmon, trout and mackerel are the second choices for oily fish. Always check Canada's Seafood Guide for updated information on choosing sustainable and healthy fish.

△ Eggs – organic pasture-raised chickens produce the healthiest eggs. From local farmers rather than the store is the best place to get these. Yolks are rich in healthy cholesterol if they are raw or cooked without breaking the yolk. This prevents oxidation which would turn that cholesterol "bad".

△ Dairy – pasteurized dairy from conventionally raised cows does not

fit the bill as a healthy fat source. If we had access to raw milk products from grass-fed cows, that would make for a good choice. Organic dairy is a slightly better middle-ground option that is available in stores.

△ Nuts/Seeds – whole nuts and seeds retain the naturally occurring vitamin E and other antioxidants that keep their omega 6 rich oils from oxidizing. Whole (non-roasted) nuts and seeds as well as their butter forms in moderation are a better choice than using their oil equivalents. Nuts and seeds out of their shells should be stored in the fridge or freezer to keep them from turning rancid.

● Flaxseed – ground and kept sealed in the freezer (or ground at the time of use) keeps the antioxidants that protect this unstable oil and the lignans that have anti-carcinogenic and phytoestrogen benefits.

● Hemp hearts – being more stable and having the addition of some protein and fibre makes hemp hearts a better addition to your salad than hemp oil.

● Chia seeds - similar protein and fibre composition as hemp hearts, but the fat content of chia seeds is primarily omega 3 ALA.

⊗ Processed foods – breads, cakes, cookies, crackers, chips, dips, salad dressings, buttery spreads, processed cheese, mayonnaise, etc. contain hydrogenated (trans fat) or otherwise rancid vegetable fats listed above. ♥

The Zone—part 2

By Dr Julie Zepp N.D.

In the Summer 2013 edition of Cathedral Village Wellness News I wrote an article titled The Zone—part 1. In case you missed it it is available on my website www.drzepp.com/newsletter when you click on the link to CVWN Summer 2013. To refresh your memory, in this article I attempted to explain a concept of our “Window of Tolerance”. This term is used to describe a zone of ideal existence. Within this zone we feel calm and relaxed but also have motivation and passion. We are neither *hyper-aroused* (anxious, high strung, nervous or overly intense), nor are we *hypo-aroused* (lethargic, depressed, apathetic or overly laissez-fair).

I talked about seeing patients that are constantly living on one side of this optimal zone or the other, or moving back and forth without resting in that sweet spot in the middle. When we live our lives outside of this space we run the risk of health problems—from mental-emotional, like the anxiety and depression I already mentioned—to the physical, resulting in conditions such as burn-out, sleeplessness, chronic fatigue, chronic pain, heart attacks/ strokes if we spend too much time in hyper-arousal, and conditions like obesity, diabetes, heart disease, fibromyalgia if we spend too much time in hypo-arousal.

I placed a strong emphasis on cultivating the ability to recognize where we are in our range of activation. Often we are not aware of the moment that our thoughts take us from

feeling calm to a place of feeling anxious and then acting from this more adrenaline-filled place. Alternatively we may not be aware of the feeling of sadness that comes over us when we perceived someone was rude to us—until the moment we are eating our third helping of ice cream later that day. Beginning to cultivate the mindful awareness of how we (our minds and bodies) feel in a given moment is key to helping us navigate to keep within “the zone”.

In this article I promised to give you some tools that will assist you in moving back into your zone. In practicing this more and more often, this will also increase the size of your zone that will make you more resilient to a wider spectrum or number of life’s challenges. After all, we can’t control the lessons we are presented with—we can, however, control our level of resiliency. Resilient people don’t tend to have fewer curve balls in their life, they just have more tools to deal with them and as such they have left of an upsetting impact on their lives.

I have divided up the tools into categories: 1) tools to use when you are in an “acute” state of hyper-arousal; 2) tools to implement regularly when you know you tend to be someone who has more of the hyper-arousal traits in order to become more balanced; 3) tools for an “acute” hypo-arousal state and 4) tools to use regularly for hypo-arousal types.



1) Acute hyper-arousal:

• Get out into **nature**: this strategy is listed for rebalancing on either side of the zone. Nature is the cheapest, most accessible tool for getting us rebalanced and refocused. The *ground* is *grounding*. Stand flat on the earth (actually the earth—not pavement or decking, though if that is all you have, so be it!) and feel the solid energy of the earth pulling all of the angst out of your body. Or immerse yourself in water outside—a pool, a lake—create a mini-baptism for yourself. Be “reborn” in a more peaceful state.

• **Deep breathing**: it really does work! But with all of these tools, will work that much better with mindfulness and intention. Make the choice to breathe in calm and breathe out tension/ anger/ frustration.

I say make the choice because for some bizarre reason, as humans, we sometimes don’t want to let go of the frustration. It’s like we would rather punish ourselves by staying angry with the person who cut us off or be worked up about the fact that the grocery line up is really long—as opposed to giving ourselves the gift of taking that breath and *letting it go*

• **Thymus tapping**: this is a great technique that works well to diffuse built up energy. Simply tapping gently with

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fingertips or a loosely closed fist over the breastbone helps balance the nervous system rapidly. Do this for about 30 seconds or more until you can feel the calm come back

- **Intense exercise:** sometimes you just need to blast off your adrenaline. Those of us that tend to hyper-arousal need to be cautious not to overdo this. Use it selectively to diffuse energy but don't abuse this or you will move to burn-out.
- Rapid and uncensored **journaling:** if emotions get too intense, putting a pen to paper or fingers to keyboard and blasting out our experience can help us work through them.



• **Breath of fire:** this is a yogic breathing tool that works really well (especially for kids) when we have some pent up energy that needs to be expelled—it is a tough one to

explain so I recommend searching online for videos that show this method

The key with all of these tools is that we continue with them until we reach a state of stillness. Often this may end in a sob or sigh and we can feel much of the tension leaving our bodies.

2) Longer term/ hyper-arousal

- regular meditation/ slowing down

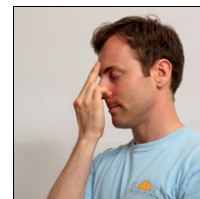
- Taking regular vacations to rest (vs. adventure-type vacations)
- Getting regular massages
- Taking a yoga/ tai chi class
- Saying “no”/ taking commitments off your calendar rather than adding more
- Taking caffeine and alcohol out of the diet (off we hype ourselves up on the caffeine then bring ourselves down with alcohol)
- Increasing the intake of complex unrefined carbohydrate foods, such as grains, in the diet as these promote calming neurotransmitters like serotonin
- Make a ritual of drinking herbal tea - turn it into a slow, mindful ceremonial activity
- Taking a regular B vitamin and adrenal supplement. The adrenal supplement should be non-glandular and not contain licorice or panax ginseng as these are too stimulating for someone in this state. A healthy adrenal support for someone who tends to hyper-aroused/ alarm state has B vitamins, Siberian ginseng/ rhodiola/ ashwaganda or other “adaptogenic” herbs
- Taking extra magnesium to help with relaxation
- Taking herbs to relax the sympathetic nervous system (things like passion flower, skullcap)

3) Acute tools/ hypo-arousal:

- Get out into **nature**—same as above. It is **grounding**.
- **Exercise**—just pull on your shoes and put one foot in front of the other. It doesn't matter if you only start to go for 5 mins. or around the block. Once the blood is flowing you will likely want to keep going.

Get up from your desk/ your couch... and just **move**—cross-crawl is great. This is where you stand balanced on both feet and then lift one leg and touch the opposite hand to that knee, and alternate touching. This stimulates the brain, especially enhancing the connection between the two hemispheres.

- Drink **water**. A glass of water can help lift the fog and oxygenate the brain and body.
- **Gratitude journal**—be a little more introspective and deliberate in your journaling (vs. the “free flow” writing used in hyper-arousal) - think about what passions you or what you are grateful for and write about it. This fosters our “inner fire”
- Put on **music and dance**. Don't worry if you stink!
- Have a **shower**—or a bath but end either with some invigorating cool-cold water
- **Alternate nostril breathing:** this is another great yoga breath that helps energize. Again, due to space limitations for instructions, google this one too.



4) Longer term/ hypo-arousal

- Regular exercise routine. Exercise promotes the neurotransmitter dopamine which is often lower in the hypo-aroused state. It is a bit of a catch-22 as we need dopamine to produce the motivation to exercise, but exercise produces dopamine! So the first few times (weeks!) into the routine might be

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all about will-power getting us going, until our body can start to produce the inner chemistry that makes it easier to be motivated.

- As you get fitter, engaging in more intense exercise will be beneficial as this has a more significant impact on dopamine and norepinephrine.

- Join a fitness class or running or walking group as having the external motivation of social/group support is often important for success with hypo-arousal.

- Taking regular vacations—this time ones that add action and activity (avoid things that would add to being sedentary): golf trips, canoe/ kayak, bike/ hike adventure-style.

- Be gentle with yourself, mentally, as it will take some time to get fit and feel good pushing yourself!

- Adrenal support is also important, and this time more stimulating herbs can be used, as well as formulas that contain glandular extract of adrenal tissue. Combinations that include one of the ginsengs, licorice, adrenal extract should be considered. B vitamins are also very important.

- Drink green tea—the little bit of caffeine may be of benefit and it contains many important antioxidants

- Avoid foods such as sugar, pop, breads, too many starches—even foods like rice/ oatmeal, that can create blood sugar crashes and low energy

- Take support for the pancreas (like chromium and/ or pancreatic enzymes) as this organ is often

sluggish

- Eat protein rich foods and a diet that focuses on protein and veggies.

The tips I suggested above are best for someone in a hypo-arousal state, naturally. Some of us tend to be “do-ers” more than others who tend to be more “passive”. It is possible, though, that you are in this state as a result of burnout, you have pushed too hard and now are crashing. In this case, there are important things to keep in mind. Though exercise and movement will help, do NOT over do it. Start back slowly. Your recovery will happen faster if you conserve your energy rather than give it all away once you get a wee bit back.

This is something I am aware of from first hand experience. By nature I am someone who has little difficulty with inner motivation. I can easily get myself into a hyper-aroused state. In Chinese medicine we could say I am more “Yang” in nature. I have gotten into trouble with this several times in my life and the most significant came after my third year of school at the naturopathic medicine college I was attending. My first few years I would push myself to go to the 40 hours of class per week, stay up doing the required school work, wake early to get a 5am run in, and work all weekend at a health food store, all in the city of Toronto—a very “yang” city whose energy of “busy-ess” further contributed to my inner buzz. Keeping up this pace only led me to the point where I could no longer walk up the stairs in my townhouse without almost passing out and gasping for breath. My adrenals were exhausted and I had the begin-

nings of chronic fatigue setting in. I had to pull out all the self-care stops: getting regular acupuncture treatments at the school’s clinic, taking an assortment of adrenal supportive supplements, paying close attention to my diet and making sure it was well-rounded and healthy, avoiding caffeine (even though I so dearly craved it with this depleted state! It would just worsen the situation), sugar, and resting. Lots. I can tell you it was very difficult to quiet the voice in my head that was telling me this amount of rest was just making me lazy or unfit (our heads can be SO mean!).

It took a number of years, lots of practice, patience and self-compassion, and also the positive influence of my now-husband who gave me permission and taught me the benefits of lying on my bed and just staring at the ceiling!, but I did finally recover (and then I had 2 kids and am now recovering from that!).

Recovery is an active process, which means I have to be constantly mindful of my state in order to remain living within my window of tolerance and implement many of the strategies I outlined on a daily basis in order to keep myself in a regulated state.

Regular, daily physical activity of reasonable intensity and duration (never before would I have thought I could get a good workout in 20-30 minutes! but I can and am healthier for it!), a healthy well balanced diet with little to no gluten, dairy, sugar or processed foods. This means not

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only “junk” or “fast” food but also things like breads, cookies, muffins, etc.—even those made with “healthy” flours like gluten-free flours. They are still processed i.e. not in their natural state (like the grain itself would be—rice, millet, quinoa, oats, etc.) and therefore should be only a peripheral part of our diets, with an emphasis on the whole grains, proteins (chicken, fish, eggs, legumes), lots and lots of veggies and some fruit.

Adequate sleep is also paramount. 8 to 10 hours per night is what is required for rest and repair. If you, like I used to, believe that “6 hours per night is all I need”, you are wrong. Our bodies can handle this for short periods or when we are young, but it is not natural or healthy and will rapidly deplete our reserves. 8 to 10 hours. I’m serious. Seriously. Now, I go to bed at 9:30. I know that the dishes are not always all done and the kids toys are definitely not tidied up. And my apologies: I also know that an early bedtime means many of my emails are unanswered or unread before my head hits the pillow.

However in order for me to maintain my patience, energy, sanity

and love for my husband, children, patients, work and life itself—I need to prioritize sleep. Especially now that I am getting it again (those darn infants can really mess up our lives!)! Without these four fundamental elements in place—mindful awareness, physical activity and a healthy balanced diet, sleep/ rest—I would be a basket case. Just a couple of weekends ago I had a rotten day. I was in a foul mood, was so quick to snap at the kids and felt completely overwhelmed with life “it just doesn’t stop” I said between snuffles to my husband that night in bed.

I was not feeling the candidate to write an article on self-regulation since I sure hadn’t done a good job of it that day. Upon reflection (delayed mindfulness! It took me a full day to ‘regroup’ and realize where I had gotten off track) I realized that not only had I chosen to skip my run that morning, but I also didn’t eat a proper breakfast before we headed out. Instead of my usual banana and nice big bowl of buckwheat (try it! It’s yummy—kasha, flax oil, cinnamon and sea salt—you’ll be hooked) I had maybe a spoonful of chia cereal and since I wasn’t overly hungry didn’t think much of it as we rushed out the door for our family adventure. (Note: in a rush! = lack of awareness = leav-

ing the house before being “grounded”, oops!). Three strikes against me and its not even 9 o’clock. When we reached home around noon I had the chance to start over—eat a healthy lunch and have a rest—but instead neglected to tune in to see that this was what my body needed and instead had a wee bowl of noodles (no protein) while standing up and then hustled about doing things I felt I “should” be doing rather than doing what I needed to do which was put my feet up and read or rest. And so my misery continued.

Generally I am pretty good at tuning in and regulating myself so I’m not sure what happened on that particular Sunday, other than needing a good anecdote to share (not like this article needs to be longer!). In any case, hopefully my sharing illustrates what it takes to be healthy: awareness, honoring the awareness, patience, tools, motivation and action. Though simple, I know that it is not always easy but it is worth it. Take the time to ensure that these 4 foundational elements (mindful awareness, exercise, nutrition & rest) are in place and you will experience greater health, resiliency and peace. Trust me, I’ve been there.♥

“The present moment is filled with joy and happiness. If you are attentive, you will see it.”

— [Thich Nhất Hạnh, *Peace Is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life*](#)

“If you want to conquer the anxiety of life, live in the moment, live in the breath.”

— [Amit Ray](#)



Resource list: This is just a short list of some of my most favorite books and authors that have been instrumental to me on my path of learning, in case you are interested! I'm sure I have missed many but these come to mind right now!:

Personal growth/ spirituality:

- *Daring Greatly* by Brene Brown (she has great TedTalks videos too www.ted.com).
- *A Return to Love* by Marianne Williamson
- *The Gift of Change* by Marianne Williamson
- *The Four Agreements* by Don Miguel Ruiz
- *The Journey Home* by Krypton
- *Embraced by the Light* by Betty Eadie
- *The Road Less Travelled* by Scott Peck
- *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* by Stephen Covey
- *Full Catastrophe Living* by Jon Kabat-Zinn

- *Wherever you go, there you are* by Jon Kabat-Zinn
- *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho
- *The Power of Intention* by Wayne Dyer

Physical health/ Diet:

- Anything written by Christiane Northrup
- *Mind Over Medicine* by Lissa Rankin
- *The Hormone Cure* by Sara Gottfried
- *Crazy, Sexy Diet* by Kris Carr
- *The Power of Superfoods* by Sam Graci

Eating Alive by Jonn Matsen

Relationship/ Parenting:

- *Attached* by Amir Levine and Rachel Heller
- *Everyday Blessings: a guide for mindful parenting* by Jon and Myra Kabat-Zinn
- *Buddha mom* by Jacqueline Kramer

Fall 2013 Product Recommendations

Selection of supplements at the health food store can be a confusing and overwhelming process. Taking the guess work out of what to take is one of the goals we have as Naturopathic Doctors in assisting our patients on their road to wellness and so we have decided to profile some of our favorite products each season.

If any of the products we profile are of interest to you, they can be obtained through our clinic reception at 2146 Robinson St. ♥

Dr. Laura Stark: DPA Gold (Seal oil) - The tightly regulated seal hunt makes seal oil very sustainable and like traditional hunting, it is humane and the entire seal is used. Unlike fish oil, seal oil is a non-concentrated, natural triglyceride form of the omega 3s DHA, EPA and DPA. DPA is found only from mammal sources, including human breast milk. DHA and DPA are essential for feeding babies' growing brains and the naturally higher concentrations of DPA and DHA in seal oil make it the perfect omega 3 source for pregnant and breastfeeding moms. Two teaspoons provides the recommended dose for pregnancy. ♥

Dr Marika Geis: INOSITOL-SAP

Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) is the most common cause of ovulatory disorders and female infertility. Signs and symptoms of PCOS may include menstrual irregularities; ovarian cysts on ultrasound; hair loss and male sex characteristics like acne and male pattern hair growth; insulin resistance and obesity. Insulin resistance appears to play a causative role in the development of PCOS. Myo-inositol has been suggested as a first-line therapy in the treatment of PCOS, and has been shown to be effective in mitigating the symptoms of this syndrome and its associated secondary conditions. ♥

Dr Allison Ziegler: suggest **HMF Forte** is a maintenance probiotic formula, which provides strains of bacteria to assist in re-establishing and maintaining a normal intestinal microflora. An overgrowth of pathogens leads to a compromised immune system, resulting from many factors such as impure water supply, antibiotics, processed foods, pesticides and stress. ♥

Dr Julie Zepp Rutledge: Innate Multivitamins for Women, Men, Women 40+ and Men 40+ and Expecting Moms (Baby and Me Trimester 1&2 or Trimester 3&post): I love the Innate Response line of supplements and am using it more and more often. Rather than containing synthetic vitamins like most vitamins do (yes, even the ones at the health food stores!), Innate uses organic whole foods as raw materials for their supplements. Which means you are getting nutrients from the whole foods themselves! The various foods used are juiced then dried at low temperature and pressed into tablets without binders or fillers. Super clean, super healthy! And most now come in a One Daily tablets (except the Baby and Me).♥