

## History Taking: Stress

### Transcript

The next part of the history that we are going to take a look at is stress. Stress as you know plays a huge role in someone's health. It can be *the* underlying cause that is creating all of the havoc. We really want to look at what is going on. As we mentioned previously there are three main areas of stress. There is the physical stress of pain and inflammation in the body, there is stress from the diet of foods that are just not agreeing or foods that are damaging to the body, and there is the emotional and psychological stress. Most people think of the emotional and psychological stress when they think of stress. All three can have a major impact on raising cortisone levels and thus creating havoc in the body. We are going to look at some scales that allow us to evaluate.

Before we begin let's make sure that you are aware that any of the information I'm presenting here is not intended to replace a one-on-one relationship with a qualified healthcare professional. It's also not medical advice and when you are presenting to your clients you need to be really careful and make sure that they are aware that what you are presenting, and what I'm presenting here today, is intended as a sharing of my knowledge, information, clinical research and clinical experience over many years.

I encourage you, and you should encourage your clients, to make their own healthcare decisions based upon your research and in partnership with a qualified healthcare professional. This is especially true for people who are on any medications. I just want to make sure that the things that we talk about in terms of nutrition are not going to interfere with the protocols.

The next part of the history that we are going to take a look at is stress. Stress as you know plays a huge role in someone's health. It can be the underlying cause that is creating all of the havoc. We really want to look at what is going on. As we mentioned previously there are three main areas of stress. There is the physical stress of pain and inflammation in the body, there is stress from the diet of foods that are just not agreeing or foods that are damaging to the body, and there is the emotional and psychological stress. Most people think of the emotional and psychological stress that all three can have a major impact on raising cortisone levels and thus creating havoc in the body. We are going to look at some scales that allow us to evaluate.



We want to look at their day-to-day stressors. What are the foods in their diet? Do they over exercise or under exercise? What's the work situation or home situation? We want to look at major life events. Has there been a death in the family, a recent loss of job, a marriage, or a divorce? The physical limitations can be very stressful. A recent surgery, injury, a loss of limb, or physical difficulties. The family dynamics is huge, how does that play in?

Lets take a look at the forms that we have available for the *Stress Evaluation* and *Risk Assessment*. Let's take a look at the *Stress Evaluation* form. The kinds of questions that we want to ask are things are going to give us information about what the present level of stress is, but what the past level, the recent past, and even the distant past, that can be contributing to the stresses at the present moment. We want to ask some questions. The first question on this form is do you feel significantly less vital than you did a year ago? Yes or no.

The reason for this is to get a sense of how the progression of this person's health is going if there is stress involved and if the stress is considerable it can be deteriorating. Are you happy? Do you feel your life has meaning and purpose? Just not having meaning and purpose in life can be a huge stress on people. When they do not have that 'Jing' to go, to move toward something, it makes it much more stressful.

Do you believe stress is presently reducing the quality of your life? Great question because we want to get their opinion. Some people say I don't have any stress and when you start asking them questions and look at their history you go, whoa, this person has major stress. They may be in denial or they developed some good coping skills, or maybe some not so good coping skills. Ask them if they like their work. Ask if they had major losses in their life. Major losses have been shown in study after study to increase the risk of a person developing a serious disease. We are asking about purpose. Is the majority of your time and money just fulfilling obligations and responsibilities rather than happy, pursuing fun and recreation?

You ask about their experience as a child and talk about some of the abuses that may have happened. Then, do they feel safe? Safety is really important for how a person evolves and how their healthy evolves. Ask about substance abuses and relationships as they were growing up. Ask them about what kind of counseling they have had before. What is their impression of the level of stress in their life, in various aspects of their life, work, family, social, finance, health, other? You ask them about their coping skills. Do they have meditation or relaxation skills? How often do they do them? Ask them how often they do yoga, meditation, imagery, breathing, tai chi, prayer, and other things. Do they have hobbies and leisure activities? It is important that they have some of those.



Ask them about religion, if that is an important aspect of their life. Ask if they have ever been abused. Then you can look at a rating scale. How well are things going at school, in your job, in your social life, with friends, sex, attitude, relationships with various people in their life. Then ask them, from where are they getting their emotional support. We are basically starting out by asking what are those stressors in the life, past and present, how well they are coping, and do they have support systems for that. It is important information and again, you may have sent out a questionnaire or you may sit knee to knee with them, or on the phone with them and just ask these questions. These questions are easier for them to answer sitting quietly because it takes some thought.

Here are some symptoms that are often associated with stress. They are hormonally related stress symptoms. They are related to some of the hormones like insulin, adrenals, and thyroid. We asked them how long they may have had those. Then the life events, this is a *Risk Assessment*. This is a very common questionnaire. It is used by psychologists in various settings and medical settings as well. You basically get points for all of the different bad life events that have happened to you during the last year. It gives you a sense for what the risk factors are for a stress-related illness, a serious illness.

I will just go through a few of these, you can read it. Death of a close family member or spouse, fired from work, adding baby to a family, financial processes, death of anybody in the family, financial issues like foreclosure, they are all separated out and they all have been studied and given a point value. This is from Holmes TH, and Rahe RH, Booklet for *Schedule of Recent Experiences*. It has been around for a while. Then you give them a score.

We want to look at some of the toxic stress triggers like childhood traumas, perfectionism, divorce, taking care of sick family members, and job career changes, illness, dieting, constantly trying to desperately get rid of the extra weight, or going through menopause. Ask what kinds of things they worry over, satisfaction with their life and then a little brief about the sleep and rest.

These are the kinds of questions which will give you a sense of how serious this person's stress is and how likely it is to be contributing to their specific health challenges. The thing is this helps them, too, to objectively see it because sometimes we say to people, I think the stress is underlying a lot of these problems and we need to help you to manage stress and really work on your body in restoring balance, and they're like, I am not under stress.



When you actually have them fill this out and they see the scores, you are much more likely to have them accept the fact that there are stresses involved in their illness, that you want to help them, and you can help them with that.