

# Targeting Wellness Newsletter

Good News for Good Health!

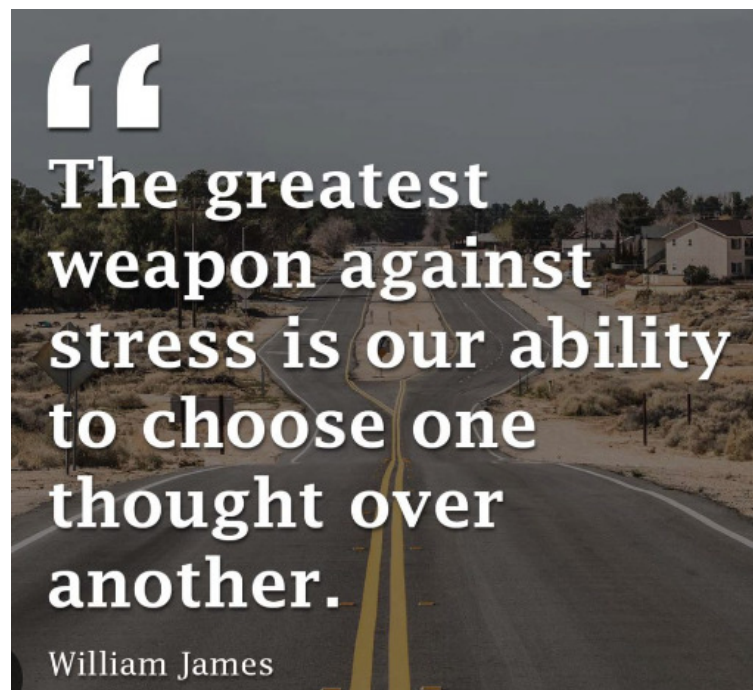
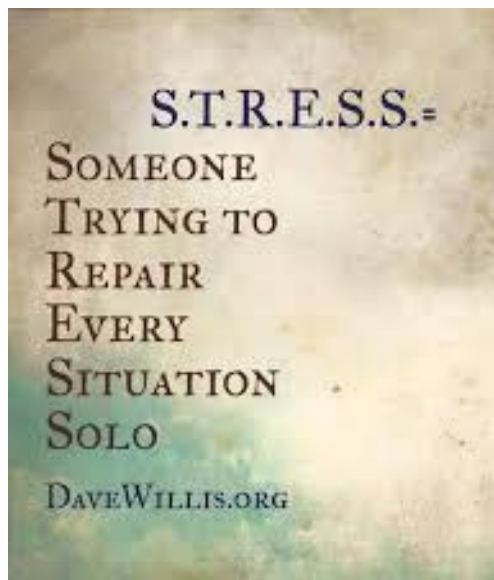
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Quarter 4—Stress

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## How Do You Handle Stress?

We all experience stressors in our life. Why is it so challenging?

When we think about managing stress, it's important to also think about our level of resiliency. Resilience allows us to navigate any challenge with a calm, clear focus. At its foundation is the belief that we have the skills and strength to get through it. That "belief" is based on our perception. And that perception is grounded in experiences and teachings as far back as our childhood. On average, as an adult, we have anywhere from 60,000 to 80,000 thoughts every day. No wonder it sometimes feels nearly impossible to "calm our mind". However, that is what our mind is meant to do....think! Yet WHAT we think is the key because it influences our emotions, our physical well-being and our behavior. Therefore, being able to live with a more positive rather than negative thought pattern is crucial for handling stress and maintaining overall health and happiness. Easier said than done. So in reality, it isn't easy but the process is simple. The solution: Stay in the present moment! I'm not being facetious...please hear me out.

Contemplate this for a moment: Pick a recent situation that caused you stress. Perhaps it involved dealing with a difficult relationship (work or home), realizing you made a mistake, or having to deal with a very uncomfortable situation. Got one in mind? Do you recall what emotions were front and center? Perhaps anger? Frustration? Embarrassment? Quilt? Disappointment? Can you recall how those emotions manifested inside your body? Maybe it was a sinking feeling in the pit of your stomach? Instant headache? Shallow breathing? Elevated blood pressure?

This is normal and is our survival mechanism known as "Fight, Flight or Freeze". It is what enabled our ancestors to survive! It's automatic. It's programmed into our brain, specifically our amygdale, whose job it is to seek out danger.

Another important point to keep in mind is when we feel stressed or have a negative reaction towards ourselves, another person, or the situation, we are either in the **past** ("I should have done...", "what they did caused my reaction", or "this situation is really BAD") or we are thinking of the **future** ("what if I mess up", "they are going to be so upset", or "I'll be happy once this is over".) Does any of this sound familiar? Believe me, you are NOT ALONE!!! The solution once again: **Stay In The Present Moment!** When we are present, we cannot experience stress. Don't believe me? Think about this: Stress only comes when we transport to either the regrets of the past or the uncertainty and fear of the future. In the present we can truly only be in the moment. The "moment" has no stress.

In this newsletter, I want to share with you ways to bring yourself back to the present moment when feeling distress. To do that you first need to build up your mental fitness, in other words, your resilience! Are you ready to take back control of your thoughts? Believe me when I say doing so will profoundly change your life in so many wonderful ways.

## What's So Great About The "Present Moment"?

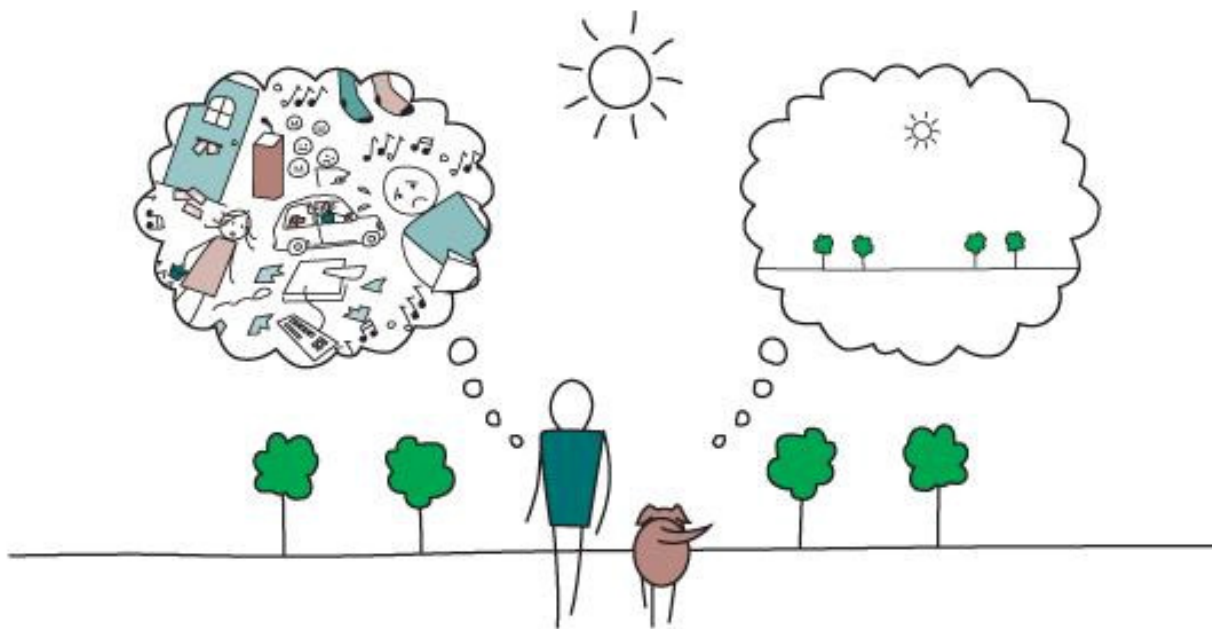
*Being in the present moment means that we are aware and mindful of what is happening at this very moment. We are not distracted by ruminations on the past or worries about the future, but centered in the here and now. All of our attention is focused on the present moment (Thum, 2008).*

This has certainly become a popular topic in recent years; its not just a fad or a trendy lifestyle tip. It has been backed by proven scientific evidence that being present and mindful is the key to staying healthy and happy. It can help us deal with pain more effectively, reduces our stress and it's impact on our health, as well as improves our ability to cope with negative emotions like fear and anger (Positive Psychology, 2018)

I would guess by now you have thought "But Debby, its important to think about past experiences and to plan for the future. After all, that is how I got to where I am today and how I can get to wherever I'm going." Yes that is true; however, one of the aims of mindfulness and a key to better health and happiness is to **balance your thoughts of the past, the present and the future.**

How is that possible? **By becoming more aware.** If you find yourself worrying, or feeling a lot of negative emotions, or ruminating over a mistake you made on a report, notice your level of stress. Where are your thoughts? Past? Future? Consciously shift yourself back to the present moment.

- Think about the past in small doses, and make sure you are **focusing on the past for a reason** (e.g., to relive a pleasant experience, identify where you went wrong as an opportunity to gain knowledge, or figure out the key to a past success).
- Think about the future in small doses, and make sure you are **focusing on the future in a healthy, low-anxiety way** (e.g., don't spend time worrying about the future, think about the future just long enough to prepare for it and then move on).



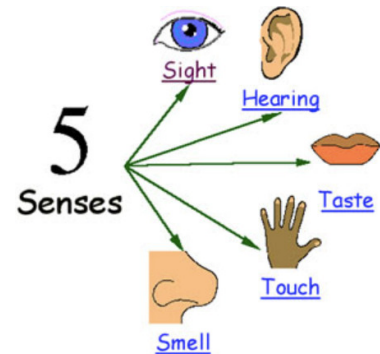
Mind Full, or Mindful?

## Strengthen Present Moment Awareness

### Focus on one of your five senses:

This actually is a form of meditation. When you notice you are feeling negative emotions, or you are heading for a heated conversation, bring yourself to one or more of your senses—

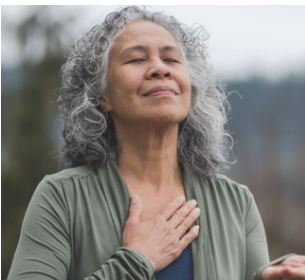
- **Sight**—look at something and really look at it (colors, the way the light reflects off of it, the shapes...
- **Touch**—hold something and pay attention to the texture, temperature, edges...
- **Smell**—breath in the fresh air, coffee brewing, someone’s cologne...
- **Taste**—what flavors do you notice, is it hot or cold, spicy, sweet, crunchy, creamy...this is a helpful tip if you are trying to become more conscious of what you eat



### Connecting with breath:

You might consider trying this the next time you are feeling overwhelmed:

**Breath in saying “I am breathing in”, breathe out saying, “I am breathing out.” On the next breath try saying “I am here” coupled with “This is now.” (Yokeley)**



There are many reasons why yoga is so beneficial; one key way is that it provides a connection to the present moment through focusing on the breath with every pose. Our breath is ALWAYS the here and now. It is ONLY happening IN THE MOMENT. So when we focus on the inhalation and the exhalation we can only be in THAT moment. Make sense? Also when you stretch and move you are connecting your mind to your body—helping you stay focused on now. It can help you notice where you are holding tension and pain. Try breathing into those areas and image the tension floating away with your next exhale.

### Do a mindful body scan:

Before leaping out of bed in the morning, do a quick body scan by focusing your attention on one part of your body at a time—starting with your toes. Pay attention to how that area is feeling and notice any sensations, tightness, soreness. This helps you start your day in a centered place.

### Write in a journal/“Morning Pages”:

I recently read the book *“The Artist’s Way”* by Julia Cameron. She speaks about “morning pages”, taking some time before starting your day to just write whatever comes to mind no matter how silly. They are for your eyes only. This practice provokes, clarifies, offers comfort and prioritizes what might not otherwise surface.

### Take a mindful nature walk/run (a.k.a. “Forest Bathing”) :

Try leaving your headphones at home the next time you go for a walk or run. Pay attention to what is happening around you using the sensory exercise I mentioned above. Basically you are “bathing” in the beauty around you through your 5 senses. Be intentional with your awareness. Notice your feet hitting the ground. See the leaves falling from the trees. Open your ears to all the songs while feeling your breath go in and out.

### Conduct a mindful review of your day:

Think back to the mindful practices you did to start your day. What were some memorable moments/events? Take note of your mood that followed you as you moved through your daily routine. This is a nice way to end your day on a positive note. Please remember to do this with blameless discernment, meaning you are merely observing not judging yourself for anything you might have or have not done.

## Our Brain On Food

The understanding of mental health and well-being has become a topic of great interest and rightly so. According to the Harvard Medical School, a large-scale study revealed that 50% of the world's population will develop some form of mental disorder by the age of 75. That's 1 in 2 people! The severity of the "disorder" and type can vary based on gender.

### ***The most common seen among women include:***

- Depression, specific phobia that interferes with daily life, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

### ***The most common seen among men include:***

- Alcohol abuse, depression, and specific phobia

Talk therapy and traditional therapeutic models absolutely have their place and are extremely effective, however, new research has also uncovered that our lifestyle choices can also play a significant role in how we feel and how we deal with stress. In particular, the food choices we make have a huge impact on our emotions.

For centuries there has been research exploring the link between what we eat and how it impacts our mental health. I have often mentioned in my talks about the importance of our gut health and gut-brain connection. Decades of science-based studies have shown that there is a connection between our microbiome (the bacteria in our gut responsible for digesting our food) and our nervous system. Our gastrointestinal system is actually referred to as the "second brain". Simply put, nutritional imbalances and deficiencies (in nutrients) disrupt that connection leading to symptoms commonly associated with mood disorders. For example, "a deficiency in essential fatty acids can impact neurotransmitter function, potentially manifesting as depression or anxiety". (Daily Motivation, 2023) Another example is low levels of vitamin B-12 and other B vitamins may be linked to depression. (Mayo Clinic, 2018)

Ninety-five percent of our body's serotonin, a.k.a. the "happy hormone", is produced in the gastrointestinal tract and is responsible for regulating sleep, appetite, moods and also inhibits pain. It makes sense why the food we eat and the gut bacteria produced from it, can have such a profound impact on our emotions. Gut bacteria plays such an important role in our overall health as well. With eating more whole foods such as vegetables, whole unprocessed grains, legumes, lean meats, fish, and fruits, billions of "good" bacteria line our intestines and provide a strong barrier against toxins and "bad" bacteria which lead to inflammation (and "leaky" gut). These "good" bacteria also help to absorb nutrients from the food and "activate neural pathways that travel directly between the gut and the brain". (Selhub, 2022)

Our brain does more than just produce thoughts. It takes care of so many functions that we often take for granted such as movement, breathing, heartbeat and our senses. The quality of "output" is only as good as the "input" received. What the brain requires is a constant supply of "fuel"...which comes from the food we eat. Like with any expensive machinery, if you fuel it with junk, it's not going to perform nor last for very long! The same goes for our brain. "Low-premium" fuel (a.k.a. food) such as processed and refined foods are extremely harmful because the brain has little ability to get rid of the them. In addition to worsening the body's ability to regulate insulin, these substances such as sugar, preservatives, etc, promote inflammation and oxidative stress. According to Harvard Health, "It makes sense. If your brain is deprived of good-quality nutrition, or if free radicals or damaging inflammatory cells are circulating within the brain's enclosed space, further contributing to brain tissue injury, consequences are to be expected." (Selhub, 2022)

Want to put this idea to the test? Pay attention to how you feel after eating different foods, not just in the moment but the next day. Try eating "clean" for two weeks (heck even two days 😊). That means no processed foods and no refined sugars. See how you feel. Then slowly introduce them back in to your diet, one by one, and again note how you feel. When people start eating "clean" they can't believe how much better they feel both physically and emotionally. Eating this way reduces inflammation and inflammation is the #1 cause of many common chronic diseases. So what do you say? Are you interested in feeling better and living with less pain AND a better mood? I'd love to hear from you if you are willing to share your experience.





# Chickpea Kale Tomato Soup

This is one of my favorite soups any time of year but especially now that we are getting into the cooler weather. It's got a ton of spices which make for a very taste dish! Hope you enjoy it. Leftovers are great because the flavors just keep getting better.

## BASE INGREDIENTS:

- 1 medium **yellow onion**, fine dice
- 8 oz. **mushrooms**, sliced
- 2 Tablespoons reduced-sodium **tamari** (sesame paste)
- 2 Tablespoons minced **garlic**
- 2 cups low-sodium **vegetable broth**
- 2 cups **water**
- ¼ cup **nutritional yeast** (if using)
- 1 teaspoon pure **maple syrup**
- 1 – [ 14.5 oz. can ] **petite diced tomatoes**
- 1 – [ 8 oz. can ] **tomato sauce**
- 1 – [ 15.5 oz. can ] **chickpeas**, drained and rinsed
- ¼ teaspoon **baking soda**

## SPICE/HERB INGREDIENTS:

- 1 teaspoon **garlic powder**
- 1 teaspoon **onion powder**
- 2 Tablespoons **dried minced onions**
- ¾ teaspoon **dried basil**
- ½ teaspoon **dried oregano**
- 1 teaspoon **dried parsley**
- ¼ + 1/8 teaspoon **regular chili powder**
- ½ teaspoon **cumin**
- ½ teaspoon **Italian Seasonings** (oregano, basil, Thyme etc.)
- ½ to 1 teaspoon **sea salt** (+/-)
- Pinch **cayenne pepper** (+/-)

## Other Ingredients:

- 1/3 cup dry GF **orzo pasta**
- 2 cups chopped **baby kale** (or spinach)

*Recipe from Monkey and Me Kitchen Adventures*

## DIRECTIONS:

1. Place the **Spice/Herb Ingredients** (except the *cayenne pepper*) in a small bowl, mix well, set aside.
2. In a large ceramic/enamel-lined pot or similar stock pot, add the diced onions, sauté over medium-high heat until the onions begin to soften, approximately 7 to 9 minutes, stirring periodically to prevent burning. Add a tablespoon or so of water if they start to stick and/or to prevent burning.
3. Add the sliced mushrooms and tamari, sauté over medium heat to reduce the mushrooms, approximately 3 to 4 minutes.
4. Add the minced garlic, sauté for one minute, stirring constantly.
5. Then add all the remaining **Base Ingredients** (except the *baking soda*) and **Spice/Herb Mix**, stir well to combine. Bring the mixture to a boil, then lower to a low-boiling simmer. Add the baking soda, stir well, then add the orzo pasta. Simmer for 10 minutes or until the onions and orzo pasta are perfectly tender, stirring occasionally.
6. Add the chopped baby kale stir well to combine. Simmer for 5 more minutes, then add the cayenne pepper, stir for 30 seconds, then remove from the stove.
7. Allow to sit for 5 minutes to allow the flavors to marry.



## Nutrition Facts

Serving Size A bowl	
Serves 4	
Amount Per Serving	
<b>Calories</b>	184
% Daily Value*	
<b>Total Fat</b> 2.3g	3%
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	0%
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 32.2g	12%
Dietary Fiber 8.2g	29%
<b>Protein</b> 11.5g	23%
Calcium 7%	Iron 17%

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