

- Lifestyles

Fighting stress levels with lifestyle changes

Taupo & Turangi Herald · 21 Jul 2022 · 18 · Dr Glen Davies Reversal NZ in collaboration with Prekure

Our modern lives are very different from those of our ancestors. Stress and pressure has increased, we are more separated from nature and face more uncertainty about our futures.

A total of 10.7 per cent of the world population have a mental health disorder, with anxiety (3.8 per cent) and depression (3.4 per cent) being the main concerns. When you add substance abuse, the percentage is 13 per cent.

Modern management of mood disorders is based on the serotonin hypothesis (Monoamine hypothesis). This hypothesis suggests that serotonin levels in the brain are low, so boosting their levels with medications will solve the problem.

A groundbreaking paper by PreKure professor Grant Schofield says the most prevalent neurotransmitter (brain chemical) is Glutamate, released by stress or trauma.

Glutamate is produced when the 'flight or fight' response is triggered. This is mediated by the sympathetic nervous system. In cave man times this would have helped survival, but in the modern world our stress is more likely to be chronic, caused by work pressures. So, what is the medication to reduce Glutamate? From the answer to this question stems the whole programme we are we discussing. There is no medication.

The best treatments are lifestyle interventions:

■ 1. Nutrition

We recommend an antiinflammatory diet. Simply stop sugar. Sugar causes inflammation. Avoid ultra-processed foods, these cause inflammation. Avoid vegetable oils such as canola and margarine due to their high levels of inflammatory omega 6 oils and increase foods high in omega 3 such as fish. Eat truckloads of above ground vegetables due to their abundance of vitamins and minerals, especially if you have grown them yourself. Prepare and cook food from scratch when possible.

There is a role for ketogenic diet to support brain health and fasting for apoptosis and autophagy.

■ 2. Supplements Depending on the quality of the diet there may be a role for supplements. At times this will be based on the results of blood tests. Antioxidants such as vitamin C to reduce inflammation, zinc and vitamin D for immune function. Mg and B complex reduce anxiety. Exogenous ketones may play a role.

■ 3. Exercise

Exercise is a highly effective mood regulator. It is shown to both maintain mental wellbeing and treat mental health symptoms. Exercise can be anti-inflammatory, improve neuroplasticity and reduce glutamate.

■ 4. Sleep

The brain washes out toxins, including glutamate while sleeping. This is mediated by the glymphatic system. These lymphatic channels increase in size during sleep. Deep, high quality sleep removes the proteins associated with Alzheimer's disease (Beta amyloid) and Parkinsons disease (Alpha synuclein).

■ 5. Cold water exposure

This science is fascinating. Made mainstream by Wim Hof, the iceman, cold exposure has been shown to improve mood and reduce anxiety and depression, possibly by increasing glutamate removal from the brain. Prof Schofield talks about cooling, combined with Mg++ infusion being used in ICU after brain injury to remove glutamate and reset the glutamate receptors.

■ 6. Being calm

Reducing the fight or flight response by stimulating the parasympathetic nervous system can be as simple as remembering to take five deep breaths in and out through your nose. Mindfulness is the opposite of multitasking. Mindfulness is simply focusing your attention onto the task you are doing. Effectively this is a form of meditation. There are many effective treatment options in this space including meditation and yoga.

■ 7. Relationship and community Connection is essential. We are social animals. Become aware of how you are impacted by others. Having meaning in your life. Creating quality relationships. Having a sense of belonging and community are all important aspects of mental wellbeing. Looking at our relationship to social media can be important.

■ 8. Addiction

This is more than our relationship to alcohol (and sometimes recreational drugs). This includes how we interact with food, television and social media.

■ 9. Coaching

Health coaching is about nonjudgmental listening and working on the client's agenda. The coach approach acknowledges that the client is the expert in their own health and already knows the answer. The coach assists the client in identifying and clarifying these solutions. There are many techniques used in this space including FACT (Focused Acceptance and Commitment Therapy).

Health Challenge

Prekure is launching a 21-day Healthy Habits Challenge on August 1 and it is usually \$99 for people to join but this time it is free for anyone who is keen to embark on a reset of their health and wellbeing. This is a great opportunity for anyone who is keen to improve their health but doesn't know where to start and needs some guidance. Katherine is putting together a team of people to join this 21-day challenge and be supported through the private Reset Wellness Facebook group. Search Healthy Habits Free 21 Day Challenge on Facebook.

For more information about health coaching and FACT, contact local practitioners: ■ Dr Glen Davies — Reversal NZ www.reversalnz.co.nz Clinic Address: 172 Tamamutu St, Taupo 3330. By appointment only. Contact: 027 240 3030, admin@reversalnz.co.nz ■ Katherine Froggatt Health & Wellness Coach certified Prekure Health Coach Contact: 021 163 4284, hello@katherinefroggatt.co.nz, www.katherinefroggatt.co.nz