

Lockdown Stress and Anxiety



Just when we thought we were beginning to head back to some sort of new normal, here we are back in lockdown again. How you dealt with lockdown back in March doesn't necessarily predict how you will deal with it now. The first time around it was kind of novel and we watched in horrified fascination as we seemed to fare so much better than many other countries around the world. Then restrictions were relaxed and we breathed a sigh of relief as we were able to slowly get back to seeing our loved ones, using the gym and going out for dinner again.

This time people may be feeling a real sense of going backwards and worried that this may become a recurring pattern. Some people were already deeply concerned about their job and financial security. Others were simply hanging out for their winter holiday in the sun which is just not going to happen now.



Stress Tolerance

The ability to tolerate stress varies from person to person. We all have our own coping mechanisms. However, often these are negative behavioural patterns which might numb the feelings for a short time but are usually more harmful in the long term. This includes things like smoking, drinking alcohol and bingeing snack foods in front of the television. The body will try to deal with some of your stress during sleep. Interestingly there has emerged a phenomenon called COVID-19 dreams. When there is an increase in the complexity of life's problems there is often an accompanying increase in vividness and clarity of dreams. Sometimes these coping mechanisms can seem to get you through short term stress, but when the stress level begins to exceed your tolerance level, real problems can arise. Stress has physical consequences for the body. It disrupts just about every system in the body. It can affect your heart function and blood pressure, lower immunity, increase allergy, decrease digestion producing IBS, cause insomnia and upset your hormonal balance. It also can have a major impact on your mood leading to irritability, angry outbursts, anxiety and depression.

Physical Brain Changes

Interestingly, over time, long term stress and worry can cause physical changes in your brain structure which sets you up for anxiety to become your "go to state". Have a listen to my 3 minute video below on how this phenomenon can impact your brain and your mood.

What Can You Do?

There are so many beautiful herbs, minerals and vitamins which can make a huge difference to the way you feel. They calm and soothe the nervous system, promote more restful sleep and help the body produce those feel good neurotransmitters. There is also a lot you can do yourself to help the body cope with and combat stress. I challenge you to choose one of the following to do everyday for the next week and see how you feel.

- Take 5 minutes to sit quietly with your eyes closed and do some deep breathing, concentrating on making the out breath longer than the in breath.
- Download a meditation app (there are so many options available) and try 5 minutes of guided meditation every day. Eg Calm or Smiling Mind
- Take a nice long hot relaxing bubble bath
- Go for a half an hour walk in a nearby park if you have one and try to get as much exposure to nature and sunshine as you can.
- If you are always tired and feel you don't get enough sleep, go to bed half an hour earlier



– Reach out to someone in your life to connect to. Maybe you haven't spoken to them for a while. Give them a call or set up a Zoom chat to reconnect.

Free consult during lockdown

While Melbourne is in lockdown I'm offering anyone who needs help a 25 minute, FREE, Lockdown Stress and Immune Resilience consult. The consult can be held online or in person. I'll come up with 3 things for you to boost your immune health as well as some particular techniques and exercises you can do to bolster your mindset and help relieve feelings of stress and anxiety.