

QCL's Bush Bachelors and Babes is back!

We are asking all Aussie outback lovers to apply with their best-looking photo and ideally some hooking answers to our questionnaire.

All single men and women aged from 18-35 are invited to enter. To nominate yourself or a mate, send us your answers, a suitable photo and contact details to: info@queenslandcountrylife.com.au or post to Bush Bachelors, PO Box 560, Cleveland, QLD, 4115.

Name: _____ Age: _____ Sex: _____
 From: _____ Occupation: _____
 Favorite song: _____
 Three things people may not know about me:
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
 My ultimate holiday destination:
 I always laugh when:
 The best week-end time I've ever spent:
 What I was growing up I wanted to be:
 The best advice I've ever received:
 My idea of the best party:
 Three people I'd like to have dinner with:
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
 My dream most unusual possession you:
 In five years I'd like to:
 I live in the country because:
 A country I'd like to visit is:
 How I could make a difference to Aussie Country Life:
 Why the QCL's Bush Bachelors/Babes is back:
 A saying that means a lot to me is:
 If I was Prime Minister for a day I would:
 If I had a superpower it would be:



To fight or take flight?

STRESS is a pesky little word that gets tossed around a great deal in modern day life.

We stress about things, we feel stressed by stuff, and situations are stressful. But do you really understand stress and, more importantly, how it affects your body?

To combat stress, our bodies have a built-in protection mechanism called the fight or flight response. Normal day-to-day interactions aren't likely to cause us physical harm, so most of the time our bodies are (or it should be) in a nice calm state.

But, at any time when our senses detect danger is approaching, the body reacts by signalling the brain that it needs energy quickly – either to stay and protect you or run away as fast as it can – to 'fight or flight'.

Before your conscious mind even has time to think about what danger you could be facing, your brain has already received the signal and sent out messages to the body in preparation. These messages are sent via the nervous system in the form of hormones, the most important in this case being adrenaline. The following occurs: Your heart rate speeds up, blood pressure rises, the body heats up and muscle cells fill with fresh oxygenated blood. This automatic response happens in a split second, before you're even sure what you might be dealing with. It's your body's way of preparing itself to fight or flight.

Modern Stress

In prehistoric times this reaction could have meant life or death. In modern life this stress response is activated for longer periods of time because we have a greater level of worry and stress in our lives. These days our bodies aren't experiencing

How our bodies react to prolonged stress

a nice calm state as often as they were designed to. The longer the stress response, the more often our bodies are in constant flux between various types of stress. Depending on the level of stress, this flux might range anywhere from running late for work, being caught behind a slower driver, to dodging traffic and being injured in a car accident – all varying and different types of stress.

Over time this prolonged state of stress makes it difficult for our brains to detect a true need for the response but it continues to send out the hormones anyway. On a physical level it's quite taxing because our bodies aren't designed to be in a constant state of stress, always prepared or preparing for danger.

Over time we develop high levels of stress hormones, most notably cortisol, which is known as the stress hormone. This is dangerous for us in several ways because our minds and bodies don't have a chance to rest and recover. If the balance isn't corrected we leave ourselves open to a large variety of diseases and disorders directly and indirectly affecting our quality of life.

Symptoms range anywhere from sleep disorders to skin diseases, heart disease, anxiety, alcohol or drug dependencies, chronic pain, stroke, depression, suicide and cancer.



What can you do?

Most people are unaware of how stress levels creep up on them in their daily lives. Day-to-day little frustrations, hurts, grievances, resentments, disappointments, worries and commitments are felt not just in the mind but also in the body.

Without rest, relaxation or resolution (mentally and emotionally) they are stored and held on to (physically), creating a greater tension and stress within the body. This is the beginning of long-term muscular tension and the development of a continued state of stress.

To combat the stress response, our bodies need to revert to a stable condition, a state of calm known as homeostasis or the relaxation response – the opposite of the stress response. There are a few similarities between the two as the specific characteristics in each state cancel out the other.

For example, in a relaxed state the

heart rate is slower, we don't use as much oxygen because we need less energy, we have a greater sense of calm and clarity, we can focus our attention more easily and overall we feel relaxed and clear-headed.

But in a stressed state the heart rate is elevated, we use much more energy and oxygen, our muscles are tense, we feel agitated and tired and people generally

don't have a positive outlook because they are too exhausted and fatigued to gather their thoughts constructively.

A certain amount of stress is normal and part of daily living but having the stress response activated for prolonged periods is not healthy. We need to develop effective stress management techniques to protect ourselves from the long-term effects of the fight or flight response and live a more balanced and productive life.

Learning to relax

Even though life is now busier than ever before, it is essential to schedule daily time for yourself and practise self-care. Ignoring signs of stress will eventually lead to irritability, lower tolerance levels, increased risk of illness and disease, reduced inner peace, and the inability to focus and manage daily stressors effectively. Suddenly, minor occurrences will invoke an uncharacteristic or overly

exaggerated reaction such as short bursts of anger or frustration. It is essential for long-term health and happiness to effectively manage your stress levels and schedule relaxation time.

10 tips for promoting the relaxation response:

1. Ensure adequate sleep to promote rest and recovery.
2. Exercise – energy creates energy, stimulates blood flow and improves mood.
3. Learn meditation, yoga or breathing techniques to induce instant calm.
4. Recognise the signs of stress in your own body and pay attention to them.
5. Write down the issues that are worrying you to see them clearly.
6. Allocate 10 minutes daily to problem-solving any worrying thoughts.
7. Eat regularly to stabilise your blood-sugar and increase concentration.
8. Make time to catch up with friends and family.
9. Every day take 5-10 minutes just for yourself and clear your mind.
10. Take up or return to activities that you enjoy – e.g. reading, writing, drawing.

By applying just a few of these tips, you'll begin to increase your awareness of just how much stress you are under and how much better you can feel. If left unmanaged, your tension and stress will eventually become so great that you can no longer tolerate what is too painful to ignore.

Your health is in your hands; visit www.mindbodyfood.net for more information on managing and reducing stress. – Viki Thondley