



Jaclyn Arens of Bon Homme Yankton Electric Association in Tabor practices yoga during her vacation breaks.

DE-STRESSING

Shed the Stress of a Busy Life: Take it Easy on Yourself

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Take it easy on yourself.

That bit of advice was dispensed by Country Music Hall of Famer Don Williams back in the late 1990s, and it's the same wisdom imparted by Kristie Ching, a certified health and life coach.

Ching, an employee at Basin Electric Power Cooperative's Deer Creek station near Elkton, works with clients who find themselves being overwhelmed by the breakneck speed of modern life and feeling lost and ridden with angst.

What can you do to stay centered while the flurry of activity and information all around you is leaving you exhausted and reducing your quality of life? Ching believes she has the answer. After earning her master's degree in human science in 2014, Ching has helped many clients find the balance they need to regain control of their lives and thrive. But if she had to boil it all down to one pearl of wisdom, she'd say the most important consideration is to make your own success a priority and take it easy on yourself during those times you don't always hit the bullseye.

"You have to give yourself some grace and understand that you don't have to be perfect and it's okay to make a mistake," Ching said.

Maintaining a close mind/body connection is also paramount in being able to cope with the stress and pressures that come to

bear on any given day filled with family and work responsibilities, Ching said. Over the past seven years, she has led classes in PiYo, a blend of pilates and yoga training.

Classes usually include meditation techniques, deep and controlled breathing exercises and vigorous physical movements. The idea is to slow down your mind while moving your body. Some prefer to call it "yoga on crack."

In her work, Ching has discovered that the most helpful directive for many clients is to intentionally take an extended hiatus from the news and generally spend less time in front of a phone, computer or television screen. The results can be transformative, she said.

"The biggest 'aha' moments I get with my clients is when they unclutter their lives and just quiet their minds. We take in so much information from hour to hour. In order to absorb it all, you have to push all of that chaos out with the old stuff cluttering your mind," she said. "One client said what brought her the most peace is when she stopped watching the nightly news. It would literally bring her down. Take some time away from the world and feed your soul. Spend some time laughing with friends or reading a book before you go to bed, not watching TV or scrolling through Facebook."

Tips for Dealing with Stress

By Kristie Ching

- Be thankful. Showing gratitude for all you DO have in your life brings more good into your life.
- Move your body. Do the things you enjoy, attend a class at the local gym, go for a walk or run, dance in the kitchen, play with your kids or grandkids, play a game of basketball with friends. The main thing is to find a physical activity you enjoy.
- Unplug. Put down the phone, iPad, computer.
- Meditation or deep breathing. There are a ton of meditation resources on YouTube, or I teach my clients to utilize a 5-5-7 breathing technique that can be done in just 2 minutes. Set your intention of what you want and just breathe. Breathe in for 5 seconds, hold for 5, exhale for 7.
- Get enough sleep. When you are tired you tend to make more poor choices.
- Write it down. When stress is high it's often a good practice to write it down and get all the frustration
- down on paper. Then throw it away and release it.
- Slow down and eat with all your senses. We often add stress to our bodies just by scarfing down our food. Slow down. Enjoy the smells and tastes.
- Spend time with people who lift you up and make you laugh. Laughter is the best medicine!
- Make time to do the things you enjoy. Reading, blogging, going for a walk, watching your favorite TV show, draw, color, anything to let your inner child come out.
- Unclutter. I encourage clients to first look at areas they need to unclutter. In order to bring in the new you need to take out the old, just like when you buy a new couch, you get rid of the old one.



One thing that Ching is sure to bring up with her clients is the connection of food, eating, the body and the mind.

She said one highly effective way of losing weight is to unclutter the mind before approaching the dinner table. While many succumb to overeating due to worry and stress, managing the spirit and the mind typically results in fewer bad dietary habits and prolonged body weight control. Less stress leads to fewer calories, and fewer calories leads to weight loss. She calls it food freedom.

"When you achieve food freedom, you don't have to diet all the time and deal with the stress that comes with always being on a diet," Ching said. "Stress can

lead to overeating. If you're under stress, don't reach for those potato chips or candy bar. Go find a quiet place and relax for a moment and meditate. If you can meditate for a few minutes before you sit down to eat, that can help you relax, and it will also aid in your digestion."

Jaclyn Arens sometimes experiences stress in her role as marketing and member services coordinator at Bon Homme Yankton Electric Association in Tabor. She was a fixture at the Soul Story Yoga Studio before the local business shut down its facility due to concerns over the pandemic. Arens said the concepts and techniques she has learned can be practiced anywhere. She sometimes pauses during vacation trips to center herself and

prepare herself for a day of outdoors fun.

"Yoga is adaptable for any fitness level and can be practiced pretty much anywhere," she said. "I do yoga to increase my strength, balance, and flexibility, and to take time to think and breathe. One thing I appreciate about yoga is the supportive community, and I look forward to returning to the studio when the pandemic is under control and feeling that sense of community again!"

Soul Story Studio owner Rebecca Johnson said she has no timetable to re-open the studio but has begun offering classes online at www.soulstoryyoga.com/online-classes.

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