



TRADERS AND THE C WORD

Those who think they have no time for bodily exercise will sooner or later have to find time for illness... Edward Stanley (14th Earl of Darby, 1799-1869)

The C word is not churn, candlesticks, commodities, contango, crash, curbs or any other Wall Street term that comes to mind. It's CORTISOL.

Cortisol, an adrenal hormone, plays a critical role in the "normal" response to stress. By "normal" I mean "short-lived, fight or flight and it is over" type of stress. In this way, it is useful and protective to the body.

However, in extended periods of stress with little or no respite, cortisol increases to high levels and stays there. In doing so, it shuts down normal neuroendocrine feedback mechanisms which regulate the adrenal gland and produces a chronic state of adrenal fatigue with a wide variety of signs and symptoms which you can feel and see. These include:

- Fatigue, despite what would be normally sufficient sleep
- Insomnia
- Weight gain
- Compromise of the immune system, leading to frequent colds, flu or other infections
- Depression
- Hair loss
- Diabetes and other metabolic abnormalities
- Skin eruptions
- Reliance on legal (caffeine, many types of OTC and herbal stimulants) and illegal (amphetamine, cocaine) stimulants
- Increased craving for sweets and simple carbohydrates
- Intolerance to cold
- Deposition of belly fat, leading to protruding abdomen which leads to back pain due to loss of support of the bony spine
- Irritability, anxiety, panic, cloudy thinking, impaired judgment
- Muscle and bone loss
- Elevated blood pressure with cardiac irregularities
- Increase in cholesterol and triglycerides
- Addiction to or abuse of alcohol, gambling, sex or shopping in an attempt to "medicate" stress
- Just plain feeling awful and not knowing why

You tell me that you don't like the way you look and feel and are troubled by it. You have gone to one medical practitioner after the other and either they tell you nothing is wrong or prescribe medication to deal with one or the other symptom and this just makes you feel worse. Or they tell you that you are stressed and you should do something to get the stress down. Unfortunately, much of allopathic medicine is not geared to deal with stress-related illness until it becomes full blown and you are seriously ill.

What should you do? Even if you knew what to do, would you know where to start and would you be disciplined enough to do it?

I don't really teach you to trade (although you tell me repeatedly that I do). I help you get right with yourself so that you are in the mental, emotional, physical and spiritual condition which gives you an edge to becoming successful, not only in trading, but in every aspect of your life. This begins with extreme self-care, focusing on proper exercise and diet.

Trading is a competitive sport. It is a rough, tough game. Can you imagine an elite athlete who never worked out or kept himself in peak physical condition? Can you picture some great football or baseball player saying he got fat and out of shape because he just couldn't find the time to work out and manage his diet? What about a top model, actor or dancer who doesn't pay attention to the way he or she looks? How long do you think these people would survive in the competitive athletic or entertainment areas?

There is absolutely no excuse for allowing stress to take control of your mind and body. It reflects lack of self-esteem which is manifesting outwardly to the world that, no matter how much money you make (or lose) trading, you don't care about yourself. You sit at the computer for hour after hour and don't move. How is that working for you and how toxic is that for your body? Moreover, the chemicals and free radicals which accumulate in your body are slowly destroying your most important trading tool--the brain.

Immobility, sitting around eating junk food, binge snacking (especially late at night), saturated fats, low-carb or high glycemic foods, going on diet after diet (few of any diets work), inadequate exercise discipline and not caring for yourself are akin to poisoning yourself. . Sabotage your health and you will soon sabotage your trading. What difference does it make how much money you make if you drop dead at age 50 from cardiovascular, degenerative or metabolic disease?

Here are a few simple tips to get you started:

1. Tend to your body first. Exercise or do some kind of orchestrated movement every day. I work out at the gym in the evening and do yoga or pilates in the morning. People that work with me know that when I say "Yoga" it means that I will stop what I am doing, unplug the phone, and get down on the mat for as long as it takes to restore myself. Find the style and time of day that is best for you and start now. Even if it's only 15 minutes a day, it is a great start to a lifetime of self-care. Focus on YOU first and the rest will take care of itself.
2. Practice being in the moment with your eating. Eat slowly and think about every bite. Make slow eating a ritual by turning off the TV, computer, blackberry, cell phone, or whatever else you are using to multitask and just sit there and eat quietly. Focus on what you are eating so that you are filling your body with clean, healthy food which fortifies and restores you, rather than depleting your energy stores. You truly are what you eat, so I don't need to tell you what happens when you live on junk, fried, high fatty and simple carb-laden food. Substitute these with walnuts, almonds, fresh fruits and veggies.
3. Take time out. Do not sit at your computer screen hour after hour watching every single tick. Make your quota for the day and then stop. Go outside and be with nature, or take a walk to reconnect your body with your breath and find your center. When you are in your center, you are the most relaxed and receptive. Practice getting there, being there and feeling fully alive.
4. Try progressive relaxation. Breathe deeply and focus on relaxing each part of your body, starting at the head and ending at the feet. Doing this for 20 minutes a day will lower your cortisol level and reduce food cravings.
5. I love the use of aromatherapies for relaxation. Pure organic lavender, rose and vanilla are great stress reducers. Simply inhaling these in proper proportions sends relaxation signals from the olfactory tracts and receptors of the nose directly into the primitive, emotional brain, resulting in a quieting and calming effect.

This is a small introduction to a large and important topic, but I have written enough for today. For anyone who has been touched, moved, or motivated to action by what I have written, I am grateful. Please talk to me and share stories of your journey to wellness. Please tell me that you want to be trading and investing for a long time, as a strong mind in a strong body and how you have chosen to do this?

To keep the body in good health is a duty...otherwise we shall not be able to keep our mind strong and clear....Hindu Prince Gautama Siddharta, the founder of Buddhism, 563-483 B.C.

Until next time,
Good Trading and Brain On!

Janice Dorn, M.D., Ph.D
www.thetradingdoctor.com

.....

Janice Dorn, M.D., Ph.D. holds an M.D. in Psychiatry. She is certified by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology in General Psychiatry and Addiction Psychiatry. She also holds a Ph.D. in Brain Anatomy.

Dr. Dorn has been a full time futures trader since 1994, focusing on the precious metals markets. A graduate of Coach University, she has coached over 600 traders world-wide. She is the author of over 500 articles on Trading Neuropsychology and Behavioral Neurofinance.