

Soothing the CS Beast



Many, many humans are carrying some Chronic Stress (CS).

CS happens when we've had many acute stress moments all at once; or when we've been caught in a fight/flight 'startle' response that just won't quit; when we've been overworking for years and years; when we've been carrying the weight of unhealed trauma for decades; or when we've been in a state of uncertainty for too long (hello pandemic). Or all of the above!

How do you know if you would benefit from healing from CS? That's easy. Recent research shows the symptoms of CS are *almost identical* to the symptoms from physical brain injuries, such as concussion. They can include any of the following:

- Brain fog
- Difficulty finding the right word
- Short term memory issues (what did I come to the bedroom for?)
- Insomnia and other sleep issues
- Trouble staying awake
- Mood swings
- Personality changes
- Increased sensitivity to environment and external stimuli
- Increased sensitivity to emotional triggers that normally don't affect you
- Anxiety and/or depression
- Exhaustion even though you're getting plenty of rest

Several years ago, the medical community created an effective protocol for helping the brain heal from acute injuries like concussion. It's based on minimal stimulation, to allow the brain to repair.

Once psychology researchers noticed these similar symptoms, they adapted the healing protocols to see if they would be effective for CS.

Turns out, they are - with superb results.

If you think you are carrying CS, I recommend trying this protocol for at least a month. It may even take several months to fully heal, but it's worth starting now rather than later.

Unlike the treatment for concussion, you don't have to spend all day doing nothing in a darkened room. But you do have to give your brain the equivalent kind of space to repair.

The actual protocols for chronic stress are extremely simple. The part that requires a little work from you, is the part about implementing them daily.

Your CS-addicted brain may come up with stories about "not having time", or being "too busy", or this being "too easy to work". But the result from doing this work is totally and utterly worth it AND you'll get back so much energy, you'll have more time as well. You, your animal body, your brain and your nervous system all deserve to heal from chronic stress, if you can.

There are just THREE things to do: brain rest, lists, and going baroque. Let's explore.

Brain rest

Spend a period of 15 minutes every day, deliberately denying your brain external stimuli.

The easiest way to do this is to sit quietly, awake, eyes open but gaze soft, either outside in nature or inside looking out at nature, and do nothing.

If the outside world is very busy (maybe you live in an apartment on a busy city street), focus on the sky, or what you can see of the horizon.

The key here is to minimise input.

No screens, no reading, no music.

This is not formal meditation. While it has similarities, the point here is not mindfulness - it is REST.

Your brain will most likely find this irritating at first; and you will definitely catch it having lots of thoughts. Not a problem. When you catch yourself thinking, gently return your attention to the soft gaze upon nature, and let the thoughts go.

You can start out with 5 minutes per day and work your way up if that makes it easier - but aim to be at 15 minutes daily, within the first month.

It can be helpful to schedule this at a regular time that fits for you.

Lists

Human brains are not supposed to be beasts of burden, carrying data around all day long! They're designed to roam freely, being creative and imaginative, delighting in the immediate experiences of life. It's hard to do that, if your poor brain is being expected to remember dates, shopping lists, etc.

It's time to free your brain up from the weight of having to hold on to everything.

Carry a small notebook or use the notes app in your phone, and make lists for **everything**.

For example: shopping lists, tasks for this morning, ideas you want to capture for later, arrangements with friends to catch up, reminders to call your loved ones, etc. You can even jot down "handcream" so when you get to the bedroom you know what you came for.

Your brain will thank you for setting it free.

Baroque music

European classical music from about 1600 to 1750 is highly ordered, and is often between 50-80 beats per minute, which resonates with many of the rhythms of the human body. It's thought that this is why baroque music is effective at helping a stressed-out brain to reorder itself.

Choose instrumental music rather than music with lyrics, which is too engaging for the brain.

Don't have it as your core focus - rather, let it play as quiet background ambience, for one to two hours a day, while you're doing other things. If you google 'Baroque for the brain' you will find tons of playlists. And if you have a favourite instrument or composer, you can create a playlist around those.

And finally...

As you implement these three protocols in your day to day life, be firm but supremely gentle.

Be firm about doing them with as much devotion as you can, because these are all a gift to your brain.

Be gentle about any sense of 'not doing it right' or 'not doing it well enough' or 'not doing it as much as I should' or 'falling behind'. If you catch those thoughts, remember those are just nasty messages from the patriarchy, trying to control you - perfectionism is highly overrated!

If you miss a day, get back to it the following day and allow yourself plenty of grace for being human.

If you miss a week, same thing - and ask yourself how you could support yourself better.

NOTE: I am not qualified to diagnose, or to prescribe treatment. This resource is designed to help with chronic stress, but if you find this resource doesn't help, please seek support from your doctor or your therapist. Thank you for letting me support you with this strategy for soothing and restoring your nervous system. If you would like more help from me, visit my website www.janetedalgliesh.com
