

# Stress Management



## Therese Ryan

MA., Bsc., RGN., Dip Stress Mgt., NCEF.,  
Life Coach., NLP Practitioner

- Stress & Wellbeing Expert to RTE Health Show - How Long will you live?
- Head of International Stress Management Association (ISMAUK) in Ireland
- Director of Renewal Consultants

**Services:** Stress Management - Performance & Wellbeing Management  
- Mediation - Conflict Coaching - Training - Consultancy

**One-to-one consultation available at:**  
Limerick, Cork & Tralee

**Contact for Appointments:**  
T: 061-446046 M: 086-3109976  
E: therese@renewalconsultants.com

## 'The Hurried Women's Syndrome'

It's January, and since this edition of National Fitness News Journal is focusing on women's issues, we needed to explore the notion of excessive Juggling? I am not referring to the circus juggling act but to the life act of juggling family, work and the much ...more. Being female myself something that fascinates me is the assumed female skill of juggling also known as "Multi-tasking". There is this national assumption that women are just born with the skill. The question is are we or is this the female response/ coping mechanism to deal with life's demands.

Can the constant pressure of juggling in this fast paced life affect your health? The answer is that Yes. The end result of constant multi-tasking/ juggling is called 'The Hurry Women's Syndrome'. As exercise & health fitness professionals working with women, we need to be aware of it, so that we can support our clients to achieve the happy medium.

### What is the Hurried Womens Syndrome (WHS)

The Hurried Woman Syndrome (HWS) is a stress related illness which more and more Irish women are presenting with.

### Who does it affect:

HWS mainly affects women between 25 and 55 years (usually with one or two children between the ages of 4 and 16) who are desperately trying to juggle a hectic work life with an equally demanding home life, (Dr Brent Bost, 'The Hurried Woman Syndrome', 2004). The common factor amongst all HWS sufferers is not whether they do or do not have children it is that they are suffering from STRESS. (Coward, 1992).

### Stress is defined as:

*"The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demands placed on them" (H. S.E 2005).*

*"A condition of reeling experience when a person perceived that the demands placed on them exceed the resources the individual has available" (ISMA, 2007; cites Lazarus).*

### What Causes WHS

The root cause of HWS is chronic stress. "There are many kinds of stress and they vary from person to person. Sometimes, stress can't be avoided. However, in the case of a majority of the women, most of the stress can be avoided or managed better. These avoidable stresses are those that often come from a busy, hectic schedule and lifestyle choices that people make," fatigue, and often a vicious cycle starts - more fatigue causes more weight gain which causes more tiredness, lower libido, low self-esteem with more guilt, and the cycle continues.

### The Causal Factors/ Stressors are:

- A demanding career
- Working long hours
- Inability to pace and balance oneself or lack of understanding for the need to do this
- Caring for a sick relative/ friend/children
- A busy hectic social life
- Always saying yes
- Burdensome responsibilities.

### How Dangerous is Chronic Stress:

Chronic Stress can damage the heart, cause blood pressure problems and several other complications. In fact, on an average, stress-related problems account for at least one-third of medical problems. And another one-third are treated simply by controlling stress. Research has identified that anything that reduces estrogen (and stress is a big culprit) puts women on a high-risk course for heart disease. (Wake Forest University's Baptist Medical Center (March 2002/ issue of The Green Journal - a publication of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists).

### The Symptoms

#### of WHS are:

The symptoms that you as a health and fitness professional need to be aware of are:

### The four major symptoms of the Hurried Woman Syndrome are:

- constant feeling of tiredness
- frequent mood swings
- problems in controlling weight
- Low sex drive (libido)







Additional Symptoms to watch out for are:

- High stress
- High anxiety levels
- mild depression
- physical exhaustion
- digestive disorder
- low self-esteem

### Your Role:

#### The power of understanding

What we need to realize is that your client who is suffering from Chronic stress and they may not realize they are stressed! To them this is normal. I would recommend that in their Fitness Programme you build in some relaxation exercise. This could be in the warm up and cool down stage. At first your client may seem uneasy or impatient with the 'slowness' so too begin, keep it to just a few minutes (2-3min). Then as you progress with you client, encourage them to build this up to 10 minute relaxation exercise. I suggest that in working with you client you refer them to a professional who can support them to make the Positive Mind Shift.

#### What advice can I give my clients?

- Any woman who exhibits HWS should:
- See her doctor for a thorough check-up
- Refer her to a stress management professional to support her to make the relevant life changes

#### Prioritizing the Life Change - Diary It!

In my work I have had the opportunity to work with amazing women. One thing that is a common factor amongst these women is - finding the time or making the time to be physically active. The truth is that often they do not realize the importance of physically activity and how this will support them in their overall quality of life and health. I recommend that you advise your client to purchase a diary and to plan out their 'physical activity routine' with you before the end of the session. This insures that they have given the priority and brings home the message that 'no one gives us time, it's up to us to make the time for what we need to do'.

#### Summary:

Exercise and Health Fitness professionals play a vital role in motivating and supporting their clients to choose activity over sedentary lifestyles. The message we as health professionals need to be communicating to our clients is that exercise is a part of life and can be fun. 'Be Active for the Best of Your Life'.

#### Tips for Female Clients:

- Learn to say no.
- Accept that being in high gear 24 x 7 will adversely affect your health unless you manage it properly.
- Accept that one is not invincible and that one needs to work with one's limitations versus against them.
- Find ways to weave in regular de-stressing rituals into their lives such as yoga classes, watching a film or having a massage.
- Give yourselves regular treats, look forward to them throughout the week and stick to them.
- Implement and learn such Life Skills as time management, anxiety management and learn the ability to compartmentalize life.
- As the health professional you need to remind your clients that their own well-being must be at the top of the list, not at the bottom.