Stress and Brain Decline

Hi, it's Dr. Sklar with Next In Our Series talking about maintaining a healthy brain. And this week I want to talk to you about stress because stress is one of the biggest factors in why we have brain decline.

Stress is not some intangible kind of airy concept. It is a definite set of physiologic responses that end up killing your neurons or brain cells. high levels of cortisol that get released when we're stressed actually shrink your brain, particularly the area called the hippocampus where we lay down new memories.

So in addition to being damaging to our brain these stress hormones cause other problems.

How Stress Harms the Brain and Body

They increase our risk of cardiovascular disease and cancer among other things. What can you do about stress? A lot of times you can't do anything about stressed.

You've got a boss who's making your life difficult. You're in the sandwich generation with elderly parents and teenage children who both need attention.

Somebody in a family is quite ill. Someone may have passed away. These are life events that put tremendous stress on our bodies. In addition, our lifestyle in modern times means that we are chronically stressed.

So stress is not just a momentary thing that happens out in the woods when an animal chases us, it's a day in, day out, hour by hour, minute by minute state of physiology.

Everyday Sources of Chronic Stress

We can't dump our lives, we can dump the stress in our life, but there are things that can do to enhance our physiology and to dampen the damaging effects of stress on our bodies.

to bring down our cortisol levels. What are these things? Well, just taking a walk out in nature, connecting with nature for many people is healing and relaxing.

Listening to music, getting a massage, yoga and Tai Chi are known for their relaxation responses. One of my favorites because a lot of times people tell me I can't meditate, I get nervous if I try to meditate.

I cannot clear my mind.

Ways to Reduce Stress and Cortisol

It makes me more anxious to try and meditate is to do a guided meditation and there are a number of phone apps for free that you can listen to for anywhere from 10 minutes to 25 minutes or half hour that will guide you through a relaxation exercise.

Some of the ones I'm the most familiar with are called calm, they're stop, breathe, think, and also head space. And one of our favorites to do is called neural agility.

This is one that you purchase online. We'll have the information listed for you. It is like meditation on steroids. I highly recommend it. So please pass this information on to a friend It's very important for your future health and for the future of those you know and love.

And please see below for more information on some of the things that I've mentioned in this broadcast. So take a

deep breath, relax, reduce your risk, and I'll see you next time.