

Stress Management Using Muscle Testing

by Wayne W. Topping, Ph.D.

During this time of transition one of our major challenges is to determine how to significantly increase public awareness of Touch for Health. I believe we'll ultimately get more people into Touch for Health programs by: (1) simplifying the muscle testing that the public is first exposed to; and (2) by packaging the material to make it accessible to the largest number of people, packages that are tailored differently depending upon the group targeted. Just as Educational Kinesiology and the Fitness Team are targeting specific groups another area we can develop is that of Stress Management.

The Challenge

Whenever you have a product to sell you first need to determine whether there is a market for it. The answer is going to be partly determined by your perspective, however.

Many of you are probably familiar with the story of the two shoe salesmen representing different companies that were sent out to Africa to determine what the market potential was for shoe sales. One reported back that the situation was hopeless, that no one wore any shoes, or even knew what they were! The other reported back that the market potential was absolutely incredible, that no one was wearing shoes yet, and, better still, there was no competition!

What is our perspective on Touch for Health? Do you see a limited market? Or do you see an unlimited market?

At last year's Annual Meeting there was much talk about Touch for Health being in transition. Some voiced the opinion then and since, that much of the market we've aimed at has become saturated, in certain geographic areas. Without really intending to, we've directed much of our attention to people already interested in wholistic health, and Touch for Health is just one of many therapies or

technologies competing for their time and attention. What about the remainder, the majority of the population? Do they need it? Yes, but it needs to be packaged differently. I remember hearing Dr. Thie say on a number of occasions how he was shocked to learn that most of his patients were not interested in learning Touch for Health to help prevent health problems but preferred to come to him regularly to be "fixed" or put back into balance.

Why? Is it because they don't want to take responsibility? Partly. However, looking back after being a Touch for Health Instructor since 1977, I believe it is because Touch for Health is initially too complicated for most people.

In his introduction to the *Touch for Health Workbook*, Dr. Thie had this to say: "If all you ever did was show others the emotional stress release technique probably 80 percent of the people would get better from that one technique alone." I have recognized for many years that the emotional stress release technique is both one of our simplest techniques, and one of the most useful. In the book *Stress Release* I expanded upon the emotional stress release technique and packaged it together with other simple techniques. The material is simpler than learning the 14 pairs of muscles in basic Touch for Health, yet it has led people on into Touch for Health classes after they have experienced the value of muscle testing. Similarly, we've had people decide to take Touch for Health after they've taken Brain Gym 1 and experienced the benefits of doing the lazy 8's, the elephants, etc.

Ristead de Barra's presentation in 1987, *Streamlining TFH for the Lay Person*, was also prompted by the recognition that the basic 14-muscle balance is too complex for the average lay person in a first course involving muscle testing.

Thus, as I see it, was are faced with two major objectives: (1) to simplify what is being taught, and (2) to package the material in such a way as to make it accessible to the largest number of people. Let's consider these in turn.

1. **Simplification.** My experience is that most people who have taken a basic Touch for Health class find that doing a 14-muscle balance is sufficiently overwhelming or time-consuming that they don't do it on any regular basis. While they may have good intentions it's just too much effort. Instead techniques that are simpler and faster to use are more likely to be worked with on a regular basis. Thus, the emotional stress release technique, cross crawl, lazy 8's, elephants, brain buttons, etc., all fit the bill -- simple yet fast, and they get results. When we can get a majority of the population doing some of these activities regularly we won't have a problem getting people motivated to learn Touch for Health.

One of the simplest ways to reduce the complexity of muscle testing is to reduce the number of muscle tests. Thus the emphasis is shifted away from use of specific muscle tests representing different meridians, to the use of an indicator muscle, such as the extended deltoid (flyer) or pectoralis major clavicular (swimmer), to test to ascertain whether the mind/body retains its organization or becomes disorganized by a specific activity. We use this type of muscle testing when we test to see whether certain thoughts are generating distress for the individual, whether a cross crawl exercise is disorganizing, whether reading out loud is stressful for the individual, etc. Here the muscle is being used purely for biofeedback purposes and the non-verbal question being asked is: "can the individual handle this activity, or is it causing undue stress, disorganization, etc.?"

2. **Packaging.** How many computer programmers would be interested in learning how to balance their meridians?? Almost none. How many would be interested in alleviating the

tightness in their shoulders? Most. How many would be interested in two or three simple techniques to help avoid job-related visual stress? Probably most.

The point is that the person learning something has to see that it has relevance for them. Can a person relieve emotional stress, prevent visual stress, prevent chronic tightness in the shoulders and neck without knowing how to do a 14-muscle balance? Yes. Moreover, if a person is taking a class after already having personally experienced that the techniques work, then they are more likely to use the information that they are learning.

Thus I see a shift occurring towards the development of modular workshops where there is more theoretical background given and relatively less time using muscle testing. The muscle testing remains, however, the primary tool to exemplify what is being taught. I believe such workshops would have a greater chance of penetrating into the business, educational, and athletic communities. Let's illustrate the point by looking at the area of stress management.

Stress Management

Over 50 percent of all our illnesses are said to be stress-related. Heart disease, high blood pressure, colitis, asthma, kidney disease, peptic ulcers, anxiety, depression, obesity, rheumatoid arthritis and cancer are some of the stress-related conditions. It would, therefore, seem very relevant for everyone to know what causes stress, how to recognize how distressed they are, how to recognize the sources of their stress, to become sufficiently motivated to want to change, to learn how to change, and to follow through.

The emotional stress release technique is a very powerful technique. Yet I am convinced that many people who have learned it in basic TFH classes don't appreciate it as highly as they could because they don't receive enough understanding as to the nature of stress and what symptomatic changes it can create physically, emotionally, and in

behavior. Self-awareness is one of the keys to effective stress management. For example, the "burnout syndrome", characterized by psychological, physical, emotional and spiritual exhaustion, was first identified in the early 1970's. Included among the groups that are at higher risk for burnout are: people in the "helping" professions, doctors, and nurses, paramedics, emergency medical technicians, and social workers. Many of them don't recognize the significance of the earlier symptoms of burnout. Educating such people as to the significance of what they are experiencing will usually make them more receptive to learning what they can do about it.

To get muscle testing procedures into the business community requires sufficient education, as is currently being undertaken with the TFH Fitness Team, that a need for our technology is appreciated. Just as simple muscle testing procedures can be packaged together for athletes, and just as has already been done for the educational community by means of Educational Kinesiology and Brain Gym, so too can muscle testing be a primary biofeedback tool to teach effective stress management. Over the past year I have been working on a workshop manual specifically to address this area. I have used many of the same techniques that are described in my book titled *Stress Release*, but there is also much material on the emotional, physical, and behavioral changes due to stress; recognizing burnout and what to do about it; time management; avoiding procrastination; using muscle testing to determine whether the type of exercise you are doing is appropriate; using muscle testing to screen out those foods, colors, environmental factors you may be sensitive to; etc. The goal is to use this manual as a vehicle to get muscle testing into the business community in the stress management area. Let's illustrate the approach briefly by looking at a few different areas of traditional stress management.

A. Goals. Goals give us direction in life. If you wanted to reach a specific destination you wouldn't travel on a ship without a rudder, would you? Yet, many people are attempting to go through life without concrete, clearly defined goals. Like rudderless ships they are tossed to and fro. Goals are like a rudder: they provide direction, and having direction gives greater stability. Most business people know the importance of having goals. However, are their goals creating stress for them? Are the left and right hemispheres of the brain in agreement in regard to the goals? Or, is there conflict? Having the person state their goal then testing an indicator muscle on the left side of the body then repeating the procedure with the same indicator muscle on the right side of the body will allow us to answer that question. A bilateral switching-off indicates that distress is being generated by the goal (correct with the eye rotation technique). A unilateral switching-off indicates conflict between the two hemispheres (correct with the brain integration technique). Alternatively, the person could imagine that they are achieving their goal. If the pectoralis major clavicular muscle then unlocks hold the frontal eminences while the person continues with the same thoughts or visualization. This illustrates the point that there are several ways to apply the same emotional stress release correction -- extremely simple to more complex, with the technique used varying according to the amount of class instruction time, age of participants, their background level, severity of problem, etc.

B. Using Exercise As Prevention and Change of Pace. One of the occupational hazards for typists, key punchers, computer programmers, and many other people with desk jobs, is chronically tight shoulders. After you've been sitting for some time it is great to get up, stretch, move around, and to get the blood and lymph systems activated again. Variations of the cross crawl exercise are excellent for this purpose and have the added advantage of increasing the

integration between the left and right hemispheres of the brain so that one is better able to handle work-related stress.

Certain exercises from Educational Kinesiology and Brain Gym are also excellent to do periodically as a change of pace. Doing the elephants, owl, lazy 8's, brain buttons, and the "scrunchies" (neck rolls) will go a long way toward easing the tension in the shoulder and neck muscles as well as keeping eyes and ears switched on for reduced work stress.

C. Procrastination. One of the most useful things we can do to regain control of our time is to overcome procrastination.

Why is procrastination harmful? Because it creates a lot of stress that is not necessary. Crises are created that wouldn't occur had action been taken earlier. It creates anxiety for the person who is tackling the task at the last moment. It creates stress for the typist who is having to push everything else aside in order to type up the paper before the deadline. Because she is typing under pressure, she is more likely to make errors. Other department heads who wanted to see the report before the meeting are being denied that opportunity. All around, many people can be more stressed because of one person's procrastination.

Why do people procrastinate?

(a) **Fear of the project.** If we anticipate something is going to be too difficult, we are most likely to shelve it until later. If we anticipate that the phone call is going to result in a "no", we put off making that call.

(b) **Boredom.** We tend to put off the mundane, less exciting tasks until we have to do them.

(c) **Dislike of the task.** Maybe if we forget about the task, it'll get lost in the shuffle, it won't be needed, or someone else will do it. Result: we put it off.

The Real Reasons Behind Procrastination.

Although you may believe that people procrastinate for reasons such as those given above, there are actually two primary reasons according to William J. Knaus, Ed.D., psychologist and author of the book, *Do It Now: How to Stop Procrastinating* (Prentice-Hall). They are self-doubt and "discomfort-dodging".

(a) **Self-doubt.** These people have shaky self-confidence, and are very critical of themselves. They have a high fear of failure and are indecisive about doing things. Some procrastinators are perfectionists and have such high standards that they don't attempt things because they won't be good enough.

(b) **"Discomfort-dodgers."** According to Knaus these people have a low tolerance for tension and frustration. They procrastinate because they're afraid of the anxious or uncomfortable feelings they associate with beginning a task. They procrastinate to avoid anticipated pain.

Overcoming Procrastination.

In addition to regular stress management techniques to counter tendency to procrastination we can do much with Touch for Health and related techniques. The "discomfort-dodgers" can do emotional stress release while visualizing themselves doing whatever task they have been putting off. Once the stress has been defused then there is no anxious or uncomfortable feelings to force them to retreat from the task at hand. Self-doubters who are fearing failure can do ESR while getting in touch with the negative feelings. They can continue holding the frontal eminences as they then imagine a successful outcome for the project. We have found one of the fastest ways to turn around a negative self-image and a belief that one has to do everything perfectly is by use of statements as described in "Stress Release". Occasionally beliefs such as "I must be perfect" are so strongly held that we use a more powerful method called personality trait reprogramming which will not be described here.

D. Making Sure that Changing the Habit is Appropriate. Effective stress management means eliminating habits that are inappropriate, e.g., cigarette smoking. We generally do things, such as cigarette smoking, for reasons. What happens, therefore, when we eliminate a negative habit and don't adequately address the reasons for the habit? It will be difficult for the person to break the habit, and we may inadvertently drive the person towards other inappropriate habits, that may even be more serious. When we work on changing an inappropriate habit we have to consider the overall ecology of the habit and the proposed change. Muscle testing of statements such as "I no longer need to smoke cigarettes to show my rebellion towards my parents" is the fastest way I know to obtain this information.

These four examples -- goals, using exercise as prevention and change of pace, procrastination, and making sure that changing the habit is appropriate -- were described briefly just to illustrate that muscle testing can make a significant contribution to the field of stress management. People participating in such a course would be learning standard stress management fare but with the addition of muscle testing and Touch for Health and Educational Kinesiology-type exercises to increase its effectiveness. My belief is that such a formula increases the likelihood that we can get muscle testing into the business and other communities. I further believe that people using muscle testing in this context are going to more open to taking Touch for Health classes to find out how else they can help themselves and others through muscle testing procedures.

References

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