

# Stressless Aging

In the “go-go-go” environment permeating today’s society, the spa industry is poised to bring relief.



A new study shows that stress contributes to aging. Spas are in a prime position to address this connection.

I RECENTLY READ AN ARTICLE BY ONE OF MY FAVORITE EDITORIAL writers. She had just heard about the University of California’s findings that a stressful life can accelerate the aging process. The study is the first to link psychological stress so directly to biological aging.

## New Take on Aging

Although it depressed the writer, for me the study evoked a much different response. If anything, the results stood as a testament to the value of spa teachings and validated my belief system.

The University of California study explored the role of the DNA responsible for the splitting and reproduction of cells. It is presumed that cells reproduce only a certain number of times and eventually wear down, effectively retiring the cell. This, essentially, is the normal aging process. The study also demonstrated how emotional stress severely impairs the DNA, causing the number of cell reproductions to fall short of its average life span. Biological aging, therefore, is accelerated.

## Case Study

Twenty-five years of spa experience has taught me that humans have the tools to effectively alter our response to stressful situations, thereby interrupting the negative effects of stress on our bodies.

Years ago, a man named Norman in his late sixties visited my spa. Norman was a successful businessman who suffered debilitating back pain. The Bramham Spa’s treatment plan began with a thorough case history. We learned he suffered from symptoms caused by a severely compromised parasympathetic nervous system. In short, he was experiencing the repercussions of stress.

Our initial approach was to turn off the pain. Confident that trigger-point therapy would be effective, we were surprised when after three treatments Norman showed no improvement. We then treated him for five consecutive days with manual lymphatic drainage, a therapy both analgesic and soothing in nature. His back pain eased, his digestion improved, his breathing became deeper and more even, and his blood pressure normalized. Through treatment, Norman learned how to respond differently to the stress in his life. Needless to say, my spa gained a faithful client.

## Other Options

The tools spas can employ to counter the ravages of stress are numerous, and they are appearing on more and more spa menus. Disciplines like yoga and meditation are potentially life changing, as are the therapies of Aroma-Reflex, Connective Tissue Massage, hydrotherapy, and manual lymph drainage. The potential is staggering and carries great promise.

The spa industry has embarked on a journey of ever increasing responsibility. Therapists must understand the physiological responses of treatments and have the knowledge to determine when a treatment is appropriate. The health benefits of the service must be understood and communicated to the client. Spa management, meanwhile, must make a serious, ongoing commitment to education. It is a commitment to excellence with an eye to the future.

The human body is an amazing and complex work of art, and the emotional and physical body is one. Our physical appearance is a mere reflection of our inner health, and our industry is positioned to combat naturally the effects of stress-related aging. It is our challenge...and the challenge is a gift.—*Anne Bramham*

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