

Is Your Body in a Recession?

If you think about the cycle of "getting depressed," there's almost a standard procedure: Having a rough day. Then, feeling a little low. Eventually, anxiety, deep-rooted fears, and thoughts of inadequacy creep in. Meanwhile, as negative events take place in our country, it seems to affect our collective consciousness: When the dollar starts to fall, housing prices bottom out, groceries and everyday living gets more expensive, the stock market begins to crash...and so do our emotions. The moment we turn on the news, we're flooded with stressful noise about the state of affairs in the world. And as we attempt to digest current events, our own personal lives are often just as hectic: keeping up with bills, staying attuned to the needs of our families, and having no time to relax.

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When stress levels begin to elevate, we can quickly become our own worst enemies. When it comes to finding a little bit of relief, the first solution to come to mind is most likely not "I need to get a workout in." Chances are good that it's probably something escapist – watching TV, eating comfort foods, drinking heavily, or going on a shopping spree. We often latch on to something that helps us avoid reality – and in theory, that's not such a bad thing. Let's face it – tuning the world out for a moment helps us process stress. It can be a valuable survival skill. The problem, however, is that if we "check out" too often or too much, our health begins to suffer, which often makes things much worse. We can emerge from that "comfort zone" only to find that we're heavier, more tired, and maybe even further in debt – both physically and financially.

The reason I bring up debt and money issues is because they're the source of so much of the "doomsday" news we hear on a daily basis. This naturally induces a stress response in all of us, but there may be a light at the end of this tunnel. I recently spent an enlightening weekend retreat at the Esalen Institute in Big Sur for their Annual Benefit, "A Time For Solutions." There I met Spencer Sherman, one of America's top financial advisors and authors. We discussed how closely connected our emotional health is to our physical health, and the toll it takes on our bodies when either of them suffer. His insights on "fiscal fitness" are very relevant to this discussion.

On the physical side, there's no greater sense of contentment, release, and joy than the one you can gain from feeling healthy. That's why I've used exercise as a form of escapism since my teenage years. I learned the lesson after both my parents died unexpectedly and I was left feeling lost and out-of-control. It was a pivotal moment for me: Instead of going down that dark road of depression, I turned to exercise instead. I started running regularly, and quickly found that the process was a powerful antidote to the pain I was feeling.

It's common knowledge now that too much stress can have dire health consequences, such as increasing your risk for cardiovascular disease and obesity. The stress hormone that gets a lot of ink here is cortisol, and research shows that it can lead to central body fat and high food intake. High cortisol levels are also associated with increased insulin levels, which throw blood chemistry off-balance alongside your mood and motivation. Even after a stressful moment has passed, the increased cortisol levels in the body can cause us to eat more than usual. And we all know what that means: potential



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The solution, of course, is to make stress management a higher priority. That means getting plenty of sleep, limiting caffeine and alcohol, and staying hydrated (since studies show that dehydration may raise cortisol levels). Also keep in mind that B Complex formulas can help manage your stress levels and boost your energy; try [Rainbow Light Energy B Complex](#). If you haven't tried exercising during difficult time periods, see what happens when you put it at the top of your agenda. I bet you'll be pleasantly surprised to find that life's obstacles suddenly become doable: solutions surface more naturally, and that incessant noise you hear from your television - or your bank account - will become much more manageable. The mind has the ability to take a small problem and expand it until it becomes completely out-of-control...but it also has the power to keep it in check.

Breaking a sweat can help you gain a clearer, brighter perspective on everything, including those money woes. No doubt the endorphins that flood your bloodstream during exercise having something to do with that. For a balanced approach to managing stress through physical exertion, try this combination of workouts with a few of my favorite DVDs: [Yoga Sculpt](#) for getting grounded and relaxed; [Cardio Knockout](#) for blowing off steam; and [Lift Weights to Lose Weight](#) to release anxiety.

But don't forget about the more practical side of the matter. Spencer Sherman has some excellent tips to help you to make peace with money while getting the most of your workouts:

Spencer Sherman's 5 Tips for Keeping Stress Off Your Body

- Know your numbers and develop clear intentions for fun spending categories, like entertainment, dining out and vacations.
- Save something –even if it's a dollar a day in a shoebox. It will turn around your "can't save" mentality.
- Know your childhood money stories and how these early stories still run your life today. This will reduce much of your money madness.
- Speak up when your friend asks you to join for dinner at a restaurant you can't afford.
- Use cash instead of credit cards for all non-essential purchases when feasible.

~ For more about Spencer Sherman and his financial fitness ideas, and to take his "Money Madness" quiz, go to www.curemoneymadness.com.

Remember, the economy may be headed toward a recession, but that doesn't mean your body has to follow it!



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