

Working

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priority for Scanlon. At night she has a routine of getting everything ready such as making lunches and getting bags packed. On the weekends she makes a list of all the things that need to be accomplished and divvies them out.

"You have to be ok if the laundry doesn't get folded," Scanlon said.

To make time for herself, she exercises every day at lunch and also on the weekends with her husband and kids.

"Make sure you keep yourself healthy," she said. "And make sure that your marriage is healthy and that you are taking time for your relationship with him."

All of Scanlon's kids have gone through daycare.

"For me, it is really about the relationship I have with the teacher," Scanlon said. "It's a transition for the mom."

After the second set of children, Scanlon was able to ease back into work part time and then build up into full time as the family adjusted. Flexible scheduling was a big deal for her. Talking with other moms has also created a base of support.

"They get it, they know what I am going through," Scanlon said. "We talk about how to manage. If you are having a rough day and your kid was screaming when you left daycare, it makes you sad. When you talk to someone then you feel better."

Linda Watt, a key accounts manager for retailers at The Group, has successfully pushed her kids into independence.

They are now ages 26 and 24. Watt went back to work when the kids were in school, but she had worked it out with their father to have a parent home at all times with them.

"We would not have latch-key kids," Watt said. "No matter what age children are, they really need parents to be there."

When she looks back at her time as a working mom, Watt said that the best thing to do is to spend time getting to know each individual kid so that when adolescence hit, it was easier to talk with them. When her son got into watching wrestling, she learned all the names of the wrestlers so they could have conversations.

"When you are with them, the time means so much," Watt said. "The quality

Reduce the tolls of stress

Rhema Muncy
Special Sections Reporter

The buildup of stress can cause a multitude of problems. When it comes to handling the multiple pressures of family, work and home, keeping on top of this health diminishing issue needs to take priority, according to Ann-Marie Yeager, MSOM L.Ac, of Good Health Acupuncture and Chinese Herbs, Inc.

"In my opinion, the two big concepts are keep it simple and moderation," Yeager said. "Often women have so many responsibilities and are pulled in different directions."

Something is better than nothing, she said. The media, family and friends can present many opinions of what a woman should accomplish in a day. Yeager cautioned women to not let those images drive their stress levels.

"If they are able to go for a walk 15 minutes at lunch or 15 minutes in the morning or evening, that's something. It is good to get some fresh air, sunlight and movement. It is about keeping it a simple concept. That way they don't ... experience feelings of guilt, which causes more stress."

In Eastern medicine, stress is defined in terms of blockage to the body's energy, or qi. That energy flows through channels called meridians. If there is pain, that means the energy is stagnated or blocked. Qi can also be depleted, causing fatigue and various other symptoms.

"When I see patients in my office, I ask them lots of questions to determine a Chinese medical diagnosis to figure out which systems may be out of balance or blocked."

When someone is experiencing stress, there could be a variety of physical and emotional symptoms, she said, such as insomnia, lowered immunity, allergies, digestive issues, anxiety and depression. The Chinese medicine diagnosis would

figure out which systems may be out of balance or blocked. Then, if the qi isn't flowing, acupuncture can help move the qi or assist in boosting energy.

"I could have five patients who have stress and insomnia and treat them in totally different ways, depending on what is going on with the individual," Yeager said. "Stress presents itself in different ways. It can come out physically with illness, and sometimes manifest into quite serious diseases. In severe cases a medical doctor must be consulted."

Stress can also take a severe toll on emotional health.

"We can often tolerate stress, and sometimes major amounts of stress, for a period of time," Yeager said. "The longer we endure stress, the more it can compromise our health and sense of well-being."

WAYS TO REDUCE STRESS

Yeager recommended several ways to take on the stress monster:

- Decrease caffeine and be moderate — Caffeine can stimulate the system and cause irritability or agitation.
- Utilize acupuncture, chiropractic work and massage therapy
- Exercise — If Pilates, yoga or weight training are on the exercise schedule, consult a professional to prevent an injury, which would cause more stress. Or take a brisk walk for 30 minutes to an hour several times a week.
- Use herbs and supplements — Seek a trained professional because there are no across the board answers for any person. Even though supplements are natural, they can be dangerous.
- Do basic breathing techniques
- Maintain adequate sleep, ideally 7 1/2 to 8 1/2 hours.
- Make time for yourself, even if it is just 15 minutes at least once a week. Read, take a bath, ride a bike or sit by a stream.