

Finding Steady Energy in Stressful Times

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The holiday season has a way of amplifying everything - joy and stress alike. Between shorter days, added responsibilities, and a world that feels increasingly uncertain, many people find their energy stretched thin. This is a season better suited to gentleness than overhaul - a time to maintain steady routines rather than make big lifestyle or medication changes. It's an opportunity to pause, restore, and protect the habits that keep you grounded when life feels busy or unpredictable.

While the body is remarkably equipped to handle stress, this system evolved to manage brief, occasional challenges - not the constant pressures of modern life. From early-morning routines and commuting to demanding workloads, evening obligations, and the mental load of daily decision-making, stress can feel unrelenting. When layered with trauma history, hormonal shifts, or inadequate nourishment, resilience declines further. Over time, this continuous activation of the stress response can leave

the body running in a near-constant state of alert, using up resources meant for repair and recovery. Chronic stress becomes a cycle of depletion, making it harder to sustain healthy routines, sleep well, and regulate mood. Midlife hormonal changes can also heighten stress sensitivity and prolong recovery time, which helps explain why many people describe feeling "wired but tired" during this stage of life.

In Chinese medicine, this time of year is associated with the natural transition from yang (light and activity) to yin (rest and reflection). Living in harmony with this seasonal rhythm means embracing a slower pace - prioritizing sleep, mindfulness, and gentle movement practices such as yoga, tai chi, or qigong. It's also a time to turn inward, reflect, and rebuild energy rather than expend it. Chinese dietetics recommend warm, cooked foods like soups and stews that are rich in nourishing proteins and healthy fats. Even the body's sleep needs shift during this period; allowing for more rest aligns

with nature's rhythm of restoration. Simple comforts like tea, candlelight, and unhurried meals can also support the body's natural turn toward stillness.

These principles echo naturopathic wisdom, which also emphasizes consistency and recovery over drastic change. To support a healthy stress response, focus on small, sustainable habits that build resilience. A few minutes of morning sunlight - yes, even on cloudy days - helps regulate circadian rhythm and stabilize mood. Nourish your body with protein-rich, warming meals to keep blood sugar steady and energy balanced. Rather than avoiding holiday treats entirely, enjoy them alongside a meal to lessen blood sugar swings. And perhaps most importantly, give yourself permission to rest without guilt. Make space each day for quiet reflection, cozy rituals, or meaningful social connection - all of which feed emotional well-being.

As the season slows and uncertainty lingers, your body's rhythms can serve as an anchor. Energy doesn't come from pushing harder -



it grows from caring for yourself in steady, intentional ways.



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