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Riordan Clinic is a world-renowned, academic medical center that has led the world in integrative oncology and complex chronic illness care since 1975. The Riordan Clinic was established as a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization with missions in research, provider education, and patient education. The Health Hunter Newsletter has been published since 1986 as an educational resource to providers and patients.



Trauma, Cancer, & Disease



AUTHOR

Dr. Kirsten West
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Chronic, maladapted psychological and physiological patterns may play a larger role in disease than we once realized. Unfortunately, cancer and chronic disease are affecting a rising number of our populace daily. We must ask the “why?” and truly question the “how?” Genetics can no longer serve as our scapegoat. Not only must we consider terrain, our physiological landscape, but we must also consider the impact of trauma on that terrain. This impact cannot be ignored. In fact, the first signs of distress are not only physical but also emotional. We must pay attention.

Trauma can result in mental and emotional patterns that interfere with our ability to manifest health and to simply “be.” Trauma sits within us. It is at the root of adaptations that once

served us well as a child/adolescent/young adult but may do us a disservice later in life. Essentially, how we once adapted to emotionally and/or physically distressing situations impairs our wellbeing as adults. Most importantly, it puts our physical, mental and emotional health at risk.

So what exactly is trauma?

For many years we have equated trauma to war, physical abuse, or other situations of great physiological/emotional magnitude- i.e., big “T” traumas. However, trauma exists in MANY ways. Poor attachment to a caregiver, not feeling emotionally seen, validated, heard, connected or safe at a young age may all be considered trauma- i.e., little “t” traumas. It is truly our perception of our experiences which define trauma. Most of our trauma, as a human species, grows from that sense of insecurity as a child. We require safety

Continued on page 2

and connection to move forward in life. When that does not exist, especially in the years we learn attachment, we experience trauma and we adapt. How we adapt is different for each. Those adaptations stay with us for years and in turn affect our relationships, mental health and physical health. Little “t” and Big “T” traumas can have equally devastating effects on our health if not managed effectively.

Poor management of that chronic stress response/adaptation may equate to chronic disease. This can be put quite simply- the body feels distress and therefore unwell. If a traumatic pattern has been around long enough, that response may not register as a subjective experience of that distress and yet the patterns persist. This is why becoming acutely aware of our inner world and our past is paramount. If depression, anxiety, and a generalized sense of distress or sensitivity to otherwise mild situations/life events are prevalent, it behooves us to look past the mind and superficial momentary thought patterns and into the body, to determine why. Mental health cannot always be helped by talk therapy and we now know that these “traumas” either big or small, must be eradicated at the physiological level.

As a clinician, it is often the questions we forget to ask that hold the most insight with a diagnosis of disease and specifically, cancer.

- Do you have unresolved grief?
- How are your relationships with others?
- Is there any past physical, mental or emotional trauma?,
- Do you have grievances that have never been forgiven?
- Do you feel safe expressing who you truly are?
- Do you feel supported by the world around you?
- Do you speak your truth?

These are some of the most difficult questions to ask and many times, the most difficult questions to answer. It is easier to focus on the tangibles- such as supplemental intake, dietary intake, medications and which of the latest integrative health fads are recommended as opposed to peeling back the layers of the emotional onion to discover what could lie at the core of disease. This core is the foundation for behavior and mental/emotional health or “dis” ease.

Several conditions are all aligned with a history of trauma. Autoimmunity and malignancy are good examples of these conditions. Autoimmunity is often associated with a history of abuse. In this case, the body learns to protect itself from the abuse and in so doing, self-surveillance is on overdrive- the body begins attacking itself. Clinically, blood autoimmune markers are often elevated in those with a history of abuse. Malignancy may also be attributable to a history of trauma. For example, gynecological cancers in those with a history sexual abuse, digestive cancers in those who have never fully digested and “enjoyed life” and throat cancer or cancers of the head and neck may come with a history of feeling unheard. The patterns are prevalent and while correlation does not equal causation, getting to the root of trauma can “heal.”

Of note: a diagnosis of cancer or life threatening illness is also a trauma in of itself and is akin to PTSD. Trauma begets trauma.

Emotional distress may manifest as, but is not limited to, depression, anxiety, addiction and ADHD. When we see these disorders as an adaptation, we take away their associated shame. These are more than

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down by life, which is truly our maladaptation to it, that we seek help for what appears to be mental “illness.” Whatever the case, awareness is the first step.

Many focus on talk therapy to heal trauma. This does not work if trauma has resulted in maladapted physiological/emotional patterns. It isn't that talk therapy isn't helpful, but it may only help to a certain extent as maladaptation exists at the cellular level. Therefore, trauma is best helped by mind/body based therapies. Effective therapies and tools include but are not limited to: EMDR, Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing, hypnosis and mind/body based movements such as yoga. EMDR utilizes rapid eye movements, those that are active in sleep, to help change the way we approach events. These rapid eye movements, most active in the REM phase of sleep, help us to re-analyze our day and are imperative for memory and learning. If we can hone the brain waves active with REM, we are given the ability to make a lasting change in trauma response. This essentially reprograms the brain and subsequent physiological response. Hypnosis also serves to change brain activity and in so doing, alters adaptations and perceptions to past events. Yoga and additional mind/body movement, when done with a skilled therapist, can also help to reframe our adaptations and trauma response from a physiological level. Yoga therapy is an example of this.

mental processes, they are patterns recorded in the body's physiology and are most always due to trauma. Studies show that physiological responses, including changes in brain activity, will occur over time in the face of a previous trauma. Once we adapt to a traumatic experience, the body holds those memories and forms neural connections. If unresolved, these neural connections become seasoned pathways that forge the same responses later in life. Unfortunately, those responses, more often than not, no longer serve us and may actually hinder our growth, development, and health.

The behavioral manifestation of trauma may also present as addiction. Addiction comes in many colors and is not always drugs, alcohol or cigarettes. Our relationship to food, exercise, and work may also mask deep set traumas. Pay attention to these. The moment our relationship to any of these begin to counteract our physical or mental health, there is often a traumatic experience at the core.

The question becomes, how do we positively manage and thereby mitigate trauma? First, we must identify it. That takes honesty with ourselves, our partners, our family, and our lives. It is not easy. Often, a physical or behavioral diagnosis creates the need. Sometimes, we feel so worn

There is a physiological response when healing occurs at the physical AND emotional level. Changes in lab values may provide the first evidence of this. Clinically, this can be seen and I have been fortunate enough to witness this. It is true that when we feel “whole” we heal.

In conclusion, emotional trauma comes in many forms and many sizes. Trauma is not always a big T and more often than not, it is the little “t’s” that cause mental/emotional and physical maladaptation. These are insidious, occurring and building over time. Our ability to recognize them is often of great difficulty. We must become aware of our inner terrain, our inner voice and our inner child. This is where our truth lies and our capacity to heal awakens. In so doing, the power of supplements, dietary interventions, lifestyle changes and additional integrative therapies are exponentiated and the true changes to terrain are made. It begins with recognition and giving ourselves the space to “be.” Trauma can be our greatest awakening if we let it be so. We must first learn how to see it.

Harmonizing Biorhythms for Stress Reduction:

A Guide to Well-being



AUTHOR

Jasmin Murphy
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In the world of health, understanding and managing stress is paramount, especially as we navigate the complexities of modern life. Stress, an ever-present factor in our day-to-day existence, can manifest from a variety of sources, including our careers, relationships, and personal challenges. However, it's the nuanced, often overlooked biorhythms that can sneakily impact our wellness over time if not properly understood and regulated. Understanding and regulating our biorhythms offers a powerful pathway to reducing stress and enhancing well-being. Biorhythms, the natural cycles that control our physical, emotional, and intellectual states, are the unsung heroes of our body's ability to maintain balance in the middle of the chaos of daily life. Disruptions in these rhythms, often caused by the demands of modern living, can lead to increased stress, emotional turmoil, and physical health issues. Exploring the dynamic relationship between biorhythms and stress, is a journey to finding practical strategies that harmonize these natural cycles, paving the way to a life enriched with wellness and tranquility.

The Science of Biorhythms

Biorhythms encompass various cycles, including the circadian rhythm, which regulates our sleep-wake cycle, hormone production, and metabolism over a 24-hour period. Beyond circadian rhythms, ultradian (shorter than a day) and infradian (longer than a day) rhythms also play crucial roles in our overall health, influencing stress levels, reproductive health, and more. When these rhythms are in sync, we feel at our best; when they're off, everything from our mood to our immune system can be affected.

Harmonizing Your Biorhythms: Strategies for Stress Reduction

1. Prioritize Sleep

Consistency is key in maintaining a healthy circadian rhythm. Establish a regular sleep schedule and create a pre-sleep routine that signals to your body it's time to wind down. Avoiding screens and embracing calming activities before bed can enhance sleep quality, directly impacting stress levels and emotional resilience.

2. Seek Out Natural Light

Natural light, particularly in the morning, can help recalibrate your circadian rhythm. This exposure helps suppress melatonin production during the day, improving wakefulness and mood. Spending time in nature can realign our internal clocks with the natural world, offering profound stress relief and emotional replenishment. Activities like walking, gardening, or simply being in green spaces can rejuvenate our biorhythms and restore balance.

3. Mindfulness and Meditation

Mindfulness meditation has emerged as a powerful tool in the fight against stress. By cultivating a state of active, open attention to the present, mindfulness can help with recognizing and accepting feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations. Regular meditation practice has been shown to reduce stress, improve concentration, and enhance overall well-being. Starting with as little as five minutes a day can pave the way for a more mindful approach to daily life, encouraging a deeper connection with oneself and a more proactive stance toward managing stress.

4. Breathwork Techniques

Breathwork refers to various techniques that utilize breathing to improve mental, physical, and spiritual

health. One effective method is the 4-7-8 technique, which involves breathing in for 4 seconds, holding the breath for 7 seconds, and exhaling for 8 seconds. This practice can act as a natural tranquilizer for the nervous system, helping to alleviate stress and anxiety. Incorporating breathwork into your daily routine can serve as a quick and accessible way to reset your stress response and foster a sense of calm.

5. Physical Activity and Yoga

Engaging in regular physical activity is a well-documented strategy for reducing stress. Activities like walking, cycling, or participating in group sports can not only improve physical health but also promote mental well-being by releasing endorphins, the body's natural mood lifters. Yoga, in particular, combines physical movement with breathwork and meditation, offering a holistic approach to stress management. Yoga practices can vary in intensity, making it accessible to individuals at all fitness levels and contributing to both physical and emotional resilience.

6. Journaling and Expressive Writing

Journaling or expressive writing provides an outlet for processing emotions and stress. By regularly putting thoughts and feelings onto paper, individuals can gain insights into their stressors and emotional patterns. This practice can facilitate a deeper understanding of personal experiences, including "little t" traumas, and promote a proactive approach to healing. Setting aside time each day to write can help clear the mind and pave the way for emotional release and recovery.

7. Cultivating Social Connections

Strong social connections are vital for emotional support and stress reduction. Engaging in meaningful relationships and community activities can provide a sense of belonging and support, counteracting feelings of isolation and stress. Whether it's joining a hobby group, participating in community service, or simply spending time with loved ones, nurturing social ties can bolster emotional health and resilience.

8. Integrate Intentional Rest

Embracing intentional rest goes beyond mere relaxation; it's a strategic approach to rejuvenate energy levels and mitigate stress, deeply attuned to our ultradian rhythms. These rhythms suggest that after every 90 to 120 minutes of intense mental or physical activity, your body naturally craves a period of rest. Acknowledging this need by incorporating deliberate rest breaks can significantly enhance your well-being. The power of napping cannot be overstated. A short, 20-minute nap can work wonders in restoring alertness and improving cognitive function, acting as a reset button for the mind and body. This deliberate pause can not only refreshes you but also helps in aligning with our natural biorhythms, fostering a more productive, calm, and stress-reduced state of being.

9. Digital Detox

Limiting digital consumption, especially before bedtime, helps prevent disruptions to your sleep cycle caused by blue light. Regular intervals of digital detox can also decrease stress by fostering a healthier, more mindful engagement with technology and the present moment.

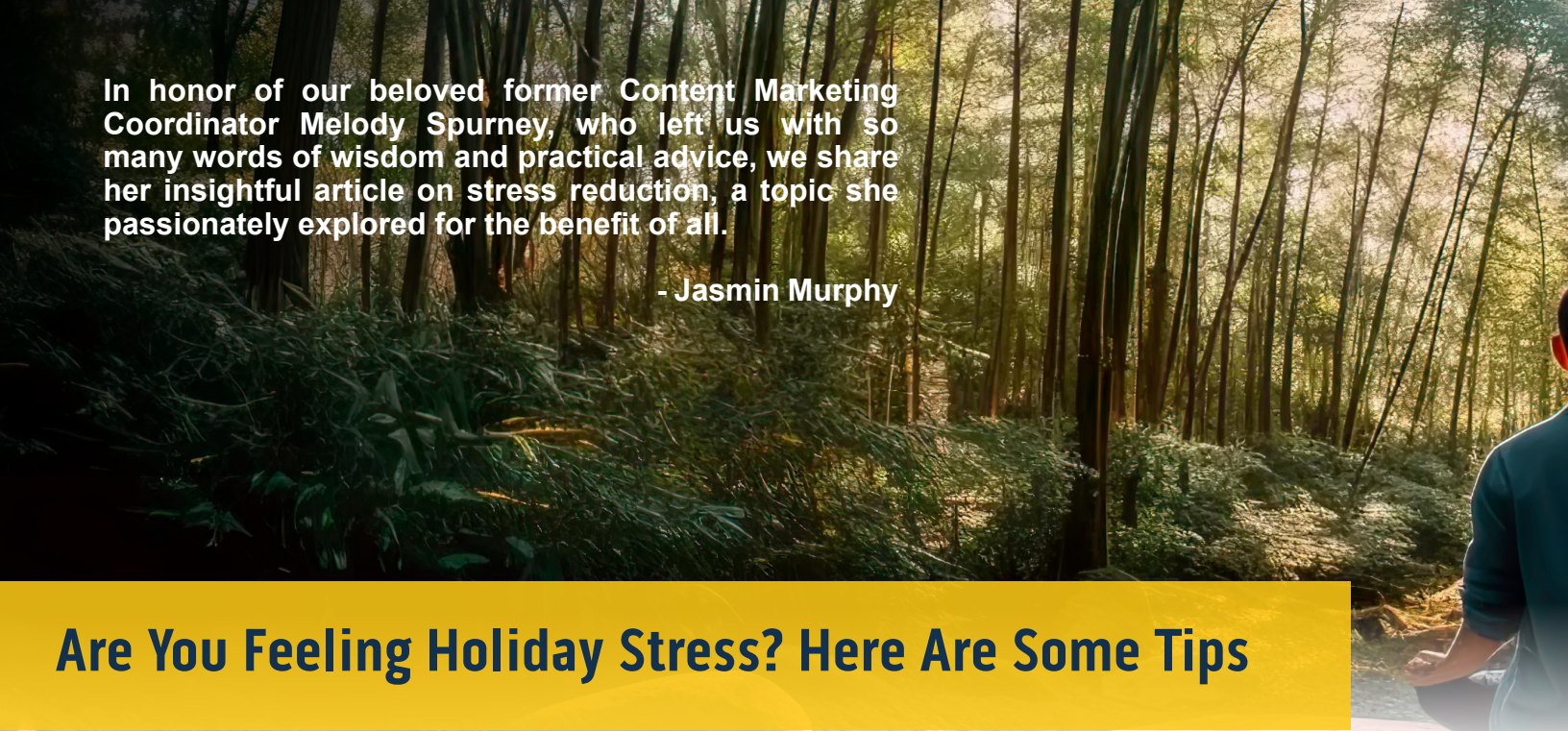
10. Seek Professional Guidance and Support

Seek professional support to help manage stress and balance your biorhythms with our clinic's specialized services. Our providers can offer personalized guidance, including how to incorporate science backed supplements like our Adrenal Adapt and Adrenal Revive, to support your body's stress response and maintain hormonal balance. You can visit the Riordan Clinic website to learn more about our approach to stress reduction and how our providers can help you achieve a balanced, healthier life.



Embracing the Journey

Regulating biorhythms isn't just about reducing stress; it's about fostering a holistic sense of well-being that impacts every aspect of life. By integrating mindfulness, physical activity, expressive practices, and professional support into our lives, we can navigate the path toward wellness with confidence and resilience. As we embark on this journey, it's essential to remember that healing is a personal and ongoing process, one that requires patience, compassion, and commitment. Together, these strategies can illuminate the path to a balanced and fulfilling life, marked by profound personal growth and well-being.

A person is seen from the back, sitting on the ground in a forest, meditating. The forest is dense with tall, thin trees and green foliage. Sunlight filters through the trees, creating a peaceful atmosphere.

In honor of our beloved former Content Marketing Coordinator Melody Spurney, who left us with so many words of wisdom and practical advice, we share her insightful article on stress reduction, a topic she passionately explored for the benefit of all.

- Jasmin Murphy

Are You Feeling Holiday Stress? Here Are Some Tips

By Melody Spurney

Those who have been following Health Hunters this year, and through the years, know that stress is a common theme. Stress can impact both physical and mental health, and studies show – and many people can personally understand – that the holiday season can add to stress.

US News & World Report shared results of a poll by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) that showed 31% of Americans anticipate being more stressed this holiday season than last year. [1]

Several studies, including the APA, said that finances are a primary source of stress during the holidays. Women disproportionately feel stressed around the holidays, with 44 percent of women reporting an increase of holiday stress, compared to 31 percent of men. Greater responsibilities, such as shopping, cooking, cleaning, and planning celebrations during the holidays may contribute to women's increased stress levels.

Additionally, lower middle income people (\$30,000-\$50,000 annual household income) are more likely to report an increase of holiday stress. People who report their stress increases around the holidays are more likely than others to worry about money and buying gifts. They also report worrying about finding time to get everything done. [2]

The holidays also offer people an increased opportunity to engage in unhealthy behaviors and report an increase in participating in sedentary activities such as watching more TV and sleeping to manage stress. Increased drinking and comfort eating is common around the

holidays. While comfort eating increases for both men and women, women were nearly twice as likely as men to report doing so. [2]

In a separate study by Sleepopolis, eight in 10 Americans reported an increase in stress during the holiday season. Survey results showed that 32.3 percent of women typically get less sleep, while a lesser number of men (21.8 percent) said the same. More than 15 percent of men said they get more sleep during the holidays. [3]

Tips for De-Stressing During the Holidays

- Be realistic about expectations.
- Prioritize activities you enjoy.
- Prioritize sleep.
- Plan as early as possible for travel and celebrations.
- Itemize a shopping list for each person and set a realistic budget.
- Eat a healthy snack before attending a party.
- Put food on a plate and prioritize fresh vegetables. Avoid eating handfuls of anything.
- If you overeat, go back to your normal routine the next day.
- If you are hosting a party, consider a buffet of simple food rather than a sit-down dinner.
- Buy non-perishable items in advance.
- Cook ahead if possible.
- Hire a helper.

Resources

How to relieve Holiday Stress | U.S. news – US news health. (n.d.). <https://health.usnews.com/wellness/articles/how-to-relieve-holiday-stress>
Holiday Stress Report Final – American Psychological Association (APA). (n.d.-a). <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2006/12/holiday-stress.pdf>
Holiday Stress and sleep in 2023: A Data Study. Sleepopolis. (2023, November 17). <https://sleepopolis.com/education/holiday-sleep-survey/>



Quiz: Discover Your Stress Reduction Strategy

Instructions:

Answer the following questions to uncover your ideal approach to reducing stress and harmonizing your biorhythms. Keep track of your answers and match them to the key at the end to discover what works best for you across generations!

Questions:

1. What's your go-to method for unwinding after a long day?
 - A) Reading a book or listening to music
 - B) Going for a walk or doing some physical activity
 - C) Meditating or practicing deep breathing exercises
 - D) Planning out my next day to avoid stress
2. How do you prefer to start your mornings?
 - A) With a cup of coffee and the news
 - B) By getting some sunlight and fresh air
 - C) With a short meditation or mindfulness exercise
 - D) Checking my to-do list for the day
3. When feeling overwhelmed, you:
 - A) Talk to a friend or family member about it
 - B) Dive into a hobby or physical activity
 - C) Focus on breathing or take a quick meditation break
 - D) Organize your thoughts and tasks and complete them.
4. Your ideal holiday season involves:
 - A) Time spent with loved ones, sharing stories and laughs
 - B) Outdoor activities and exploring new places
 - C) Peaceful moments alone to reflect and relax
 - D) A well-planned schedule to enjoy festivities stress-free
5. When considering your health, you believe:
 - A) Emotional well-being is just as important as physical.
 - B) Regular exercise is key to managing stress
 - C) Mindfulness and meditation can transform your stress
 - D) A structured routine and planning are essential

Key:

Mostly A's: Emotional Connection & Creative Outlets - You find stress relief in connecting with others and engaging in creative activities. Prioritize time for emotional expression and hobbies.

Mostly B's: Physical Activity & Nature - For you, moving your body and spending time outdoors are the best stress busters. Incorporate regular exercise and nature walks into your routine.

Mostly C's: Mindfulness & Meditation - You thrive on inner peace achieved through mindfulness practices. Focus on meditation, deep breathing, or yoga to reduce stress.

Mostly D's: Organization & Planning - Planning ahead and organizing your life helps you mitigate stress. Use tools and strategies to keep your days structured and predictable.

Conclusion:

Whatever your results, remember that blending various strategies can offer the most comprehensive approach to managing stress and enhancing your biorhythms. Explore different methods and find what best suits your lifestyle and preferences!

Celebrating Nels: A Journey of Resilience and Hope



In the spirit of hope and healing that defines our community, we shine a spotlight on an extraordinary individual whose journey inspires us all. Nels, a name now synonymous with courage and resilience, has recently marked a milestone that fills us with both pride and joy. After months of unwavering determination and the compassionate support of our clinic's team, Nels had the honor of ringing the bell, signifying his cancer is now in remission.

I had the privilege of meeting Nels in person in November of 2023 after scheduling him for his first appointment at the clinic. I was instantly touched by his positivity, strength, and amazing spirit. Throughout his treatment, he kept a smile on his face, reminding us of the power of perseverance and the importance of compassionate care.

As Nels rings the bell, he not only celebrates his own victory but also shines a light of hope for others on their journey toward recovery. It is a poignant reminder that each challenge overcome is a step closer to a brighter future.

We congratulate Nels on this significant day and thank him for allowing us to be part of his story. His journey is a testament to the fact that, together, we can overcome the toughest battles. To Nels, we say: Your strength inspires us, your resilience motivates us, and your recovery brings us immense joy. Here's to many more milestones in your journey of hope, healing and health!

Honoring Excellence in Healthcare: Brianna Morrow, RN

We're thrilled to celebrate a shining star in our healthcare community, Brianna Morrow, RN, for her outstanding contribution to the field of nursing!

Brianna has been recognized by the Wichita Business Journal for Excellence in Health Care, a testament to her unwavering dedication, compassionate care, and expert knowledge. Her ability to blend empathy with professionalism makes her not just an extraordinary nurse but a true healthcare hero.

Her commitment to patient well-being and her innovative approach to nursing practice set her apart. Brianna's remarkable journey is an inspiration, showing how passion and expertise can truly make a difference in our community's health.

Join us in applauding Brianna Morrow's incredible achievements and her enduring impact on healthcare excellence.



Dark Chocolate Avocado Spinach Brownies

Indulge guilt-free with these rich, dark chocolate avocado spinach brownies, blending health and taste for a stress-reducing treat.



Ingredients:

2 ripe avocados, mashed	1/4 teaspoon salt
3/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder	1/2 cup dark chocolate chips (at least 70% cocoa)
1/2 cup almond flour	
1/4 cup coconut oil, melted	
1/2 cup honey or pure maple syrup	
2 large eggs	
1 teaspoon vanilla extract	
1 cup fresh spinach, finely chopped	
1/2 teaspoon baking soda	

Directions:

1. Preheat your oven to 350°F (175°C). Grease an 8x8 inch baking dish with a little coconut oil or line it with parchment paper.
2. In a food processor, blend the mashed avocados, cocoa powder, almond flour, melted coconut oil, honey (or maple syrup), eggs, and vanilla until smooth.
3. Add the spinach to the food processor and blend until the mixture is uniform and the spinach is finely incorporated.
4. Transfer the mixture to a bowl (if not already in one) and stir in the baking soda, salt, and dark chocolate chips.
5. Pour the batter into the prepared baking dish, spreading evenly.
6. Bake for 25-30 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out mostly clean.
7. Let the brownies cool in the pan for at least 20 minutes before cutting into squares.

Contact the Editor

Please send any comments or suggestions to

newseditor@riordanclinic.org

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ADRENAL REVIVE 

We are happy to offer our patients Adrenal Revive, an excellent product that offers a combination of herbal extracts that work synergistically to modulate adrenal secretion and increase the body's natural ability to respond to mental and physical stress, by providing the correct combination of natural, plant-based extracts. This supplement may be valuable to anyone that wishes to remove any stress-associated health changes that affect quality of life.



ADRENAL ADAPT 

Adrenal Adapt: The human body is an interconnection of cells and tissues; that is why Adrenal Adapt contains essential vitamins to support immune function, in addition to three potent herbal extracts, and a calming agent (Licorice). These herbal extracts have been selected in order to provide a targeted, gentle, but effective support for the delicate hormonal balance that is maintained by the adrenal glands.



FOOD AS MEDICINE GUIDEBOOK

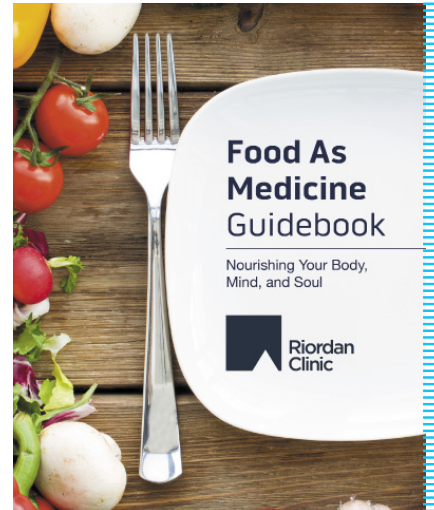
The "Food as Medicine: Nourishing Your Mind, Body, and Soul" guidebook is still available for download.

Link to download:

riordanclinic.org/food-as-medicine-free-guidebook/

Whether you are making big life changes or simply want to make better food choices with an understanding of how food relates to overall health, this free guide is an amazing resource and available online.

The 42-page guide covers a variety of topics, including recommendations to get started, the relationship between food and inflammation, toxins, tips for buying organic foods and understanding labels. It also includes more than a dozen recipes for breakfast, lunch, dinner, dessert, and snacks.



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EPISODE 70

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