



*Stress can kill  
you if you let it.*

**Read on to find out how chronic stress can affect your body and learn ways to manage it.**

**Read about my experience with chronic stress. Learn about how I responded when the doctor said I was going to die.**



Well With Hilary

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## ***Stress Can Kill You***

Have you ever heard the old saying, “If you want something done – give it to a busy person.” Or “When it comes to volunteer work – 20% of the people do 80% of the work”? I am a believer that this is a reality. 20 years ago I was a mom of two, I had two part time jobs and one full time job, I was an officer with a cadet program, and I sat on the board of directors for two non-profits. I was determined to make my mark in the world. Fast forward five years, and I was now a mom of three, I was the Provincial Communications Coordinator for a Literacy Group, I was the Executive Director of a National Non-Profit (both jobs over 30 hrs a week), I worked as a Marketing & Promotions Consultant in my “spare” time and I was either the President or Vice President of three non-profits!

I literally had my son on a Thursday night, Friday was my EDO and Monday I was back at work – traveling around the province with my infant son and my husband who was kind enough to take paternal leave so I could keep working. That was 2005/6.

I am not telling you this to give you my resume – I am telling you this to let you know how quickly responsibilities can add up and how at the time it may seem like a good thing, something that keeps you happy and keeps you “busy” but eventually – chronic stress on your body - - can kill you.

On July 1, 2006, while I was trying to enjoy a little vacation at the family cottage, I got terribly sick. On June 30<sup>th</sup> I had terrible pain in my left leg. The morning of July 1<sup>st</sup> I noticed my entire leg was turning purple/burgundy. I was rushed to the hospital with a massive Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) that went from my groin to below my knee. There was pretty much a complete blockage. This was the beginning of my battle to stay alive.

I continued to work, from bed for weeks, hiring an assistant to help me work from home and run things. I spent months taking very high doses of blood thinners and the pain I was experiencing was out of control so I ended up on Morphine around the clock just to function. I could barely move without experiencing excruciating pain in all of my joints. Over the next few years I had another couple of DVT, and a bi-lateral pulmonary embolism. (A blood clot in each of my lungs at the same time.) My weight started to increase quite dramatically as my ability to really participate in the world, walking and enjoying my life got

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smaller and smaller. I moved less and less. I did what I needed to do for my jobs and I really only left my house for meetings and conferences I had to attend, classes I had to facilitate or medical appointments.

By 2009 my body weight had more than doubled and I was over 500lbs. I did not eat anything too unhealthy. We were a very “from scratch” family with no dyes or artificial flavours in our diet because our son is on the Autism Spectrum and those things and other toxins exacerbate melt downs. We did not have a choice but to eat well and healthy – but the weight continued to come on. I was trying everything I could think of at the time, Weight Watchers, Fad diets, special shakes, supplements etc. All the while, I was adding to my stress with this direct sales company and that weight watchers meeting. I continued to sit on volunteer boards and work as a consultant and as an executive director. With three young children at home and a lot of extra work going having a child with special needs – the stress on my body and mind continued.

About 10 years ago I knew that things had to change, or I was sure I was going to die. I just didn't know what to do. One doctor after another was lost as to how to help me. I had now suffered heart attacks, kidney stones, gall stones, more DVT and was glucose intolerant... on my way to Type 2 Diabetes and over 600 lbs.

In 2012 an endocrinologist I went to for help to lose the weight and get control of my blood glucose levels – told me straight up – it is too late. He told me that I should be grateful I was not yet a full-blown diabetic and that I had young children and a husband I should spend time with because ***I was dying and there was nothing he could do to help me.***

I could have accepted that. I am shocked often that I didn't accept that. I was in such a terrible place mentally and felt so helpless. My husband and my family showed me a never-ending supply of love and they never gave up on me getting better, but I was so ashamed of what had become of me and so terrified to go to sleep – wondering if I would wake up the next day. I was just done.

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But I didn't accept it. I went home and logged online and searched for a piece of exercise equipment I could use sitting down. I found an Ab-Doer Twist and ordered it immediately. Then I told my husband that while those drugs were keeping me alive – I was not LIVING. I took myself off all prescription drugs and started researching everything I could get my hands on to thin blood naturally, reduce inflammation and gain control of my blood glucose. I became completely obsessed with regaining my health and finding a way to live. I made small goals that were achievable like walking 100 steps without tears and being able to put my own socks on. When I was close to achieving my goals, I made bigger ones. I worked out a few times a day for 30 minutes. I went outside and got fresh air and sunlight. I started doing “stair climbing” just going up and down 3 then 4 then 5 stairs in my house.

The pain I had been in was from the blood thinners causing small bleeds in the small veins in all my joints. When I stopped the blood thinners – as everything started to heal, the pain subsided, and I was able to move more each day. I got more exercise equipment as my ability to move increased - a recumbent bike, a home gym, an elliptical etc... Eventually I took Aquasize and Zumba. I stopped the shakes because they were making me sick because I was eating two meals a day in liquid form and unfortunately, I gained back the first 90 lbs I had lost but I didn't care – by this time I had figured out that it was all about getting control of my pain, and decreasing the stress in my life so that I would STOP making blood clots. My body had been in a constant state of stress response for almost 10 years.

This chronic stress caused my body to be overrun with cortisol and shut down my digestion system really, so that I was not metabolizing anything I ate so it didn't matter if it was healthy or not!

### **Here are just a few of the things that happen to your body because of primary stress:**

Your heart starts pounding, as it sends blood carrying sugar and adrenalin and other hormones around your body. Your blood becomes thicker (and in my case starts clotting) to help it carry more oxygen, fight infection, and stop bleeding. Your blood is preparing for an emergency. Your bladder starts to relax to release excess loads to again be prepared for the flight mode in an emergency. Your digestion processes shut down as blood is diverted elsewhere.

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Your mouth goes dry all the time avoiding extra fluids being added to the stomach. Your liver is stressed. Your lungs breath more intensely to provide more oxygen to feed that increased blood supply. Your muscles are always tense, sore and achy. You will have sleep disturbances and rarely reach a restorative level of sleep. You get headaches, rapid pulse, hot flashes. You experience anxiety, sadness, moodiness. You have low self-esteem and often feelings of guilt or shame. Brain fog. Reduced coordination and forgetfulness can start to take over.

**If you continue to experience stress over a long period of time and do not find a way to manage it – you will experience further difficulties from a state of chronic stress or Secondary Stress.**

**Here are a few of the things that happen next:**

Your skin can develop many issues including breakouts, infections and I had superficial phlebitis (tiny blood clots in the small vein system that got infected right under the skin). Your heart can start racing and high blood pressure can become a serious problem, increasing risks of heart attack and stroke. Your continuously thickening blood can cause blood clots and makes your heart work extremely hard. You can get high cholesterol, causing hardening of the arteries. Your digestion shutting down can cause sever stomach problems especially if you are eating on the run all the time! Increased acidity can cause stomach ulcers. Your body's own fats and proteins can be broken down to proved further energy support. Super oxygenated blood can cause blackouts and upset heart rhythms. Ongoing tension in all of your muscles can lead to aches, pains and even muscle strains. You can experience poor concentration, negative self-talk, fear of failure, overwhelming panic/anxiety and over-react with anger often. Many suffer a loss of libido and/or increase use of alcohol, cigarette, and drug use. There will be an increase in absenteeism, aggression, and irritability. Headaches will increase in length and frequency. You will become susceptible to mild illnesses/colds/fluës. Dizziness and fainting can occur. You can become breathless or experience chest pains. And nights could be spent with negative fitful sleeps.

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After learning much of this through massive amounts of personal research, I made many serious lifestyle changes that honestly saved my life. I became mindful of everything I was putting into my body, mind and soul. I adopted an attitude of gratitude and started living on a different energy frequency. I tried everything to have an incredibly positive mindset and did positive self-talk, meditation, yoga, oxysize, and deepened my spiritual connection. I learned about and started using essential oils, reiki, reflexology, homeopathy and herbal supplements and remedies. I was living a completely natural and toxin free lifestyle. I removed the people and things in my life that were not on that frequency or starved me of positive energy. I quit my jobs and expanded my entrepreneurial skill set by opening my own business and continuing in direct sales companies to be completely in charge of my schedule & time management. I also finished off my positions with all the volunteer groups and said no when asked to run in elections. I was doing me and I was living my best life and the weight was falling off me.

In total I lost over 400 lbs on this journey so far. I am happy, and I am motivated daily to continue my journey to a healthier me because I LOVE LIVING and I LOVE myself. I am now able to enjoy time with my family (and will enjoy it a lot more once COVID restrictions allow!) I am an advocate for change and I help other people who are battling obesity and chronic health conditions to make healthy habit changes to remove or manage the stress on their bodies and get back to living their best life.

You may think everything is okay. I did.

You might think because you can ride your bike for hours, hike a mountain or stand on your feet or walk for long periods of time – you are healthy. I did.

You might think you aren't obese, you have no diagnosed health conditions and you seem to just be able to run like the energizer bunny – you must be fine. I did.

But I wasn't and you might not be.

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If you are super busy or experiencing an elevated amount of stress for long periods of time... you might wake up one day and your whole world could be different. You could be experiencing chronic stress and good or bad – stress can kill you.

So I ask you to please consider your activities. Consider your work life balance. Consider your time management. Consider YOU. Learn to say NO. Do the things that produce the greatest results with the least amount of personal time and energy invested. Eat well. MOVE and keep moving. Live a positive life. Remember thoughts become things. Believe in yourself. Feed your body, mind and soul a healthy diet. That includes the people you surround yourself with, what you read, what you watch, what you do and what you eat and drink.

Everything can change in an instant. I wish someone had told me that being an overachiever who was compulsive about always doing EVERYTHING was going to almost kill me some day.

And IF you are living your life right now, feeling helpless or feeling like it is spinning out of control remember that every time you have felt helpless before – you have survived it. You are a survivor. And I am living proof that even getting as sick as I got, having a specialist look you in the eye and tell you that you are dying – is not a death sentence unless you let it be. Things can change if you have the courage to make it happen and believe it to be true. Whether you think you can or you think you can't, you are right. I can. You can. I believe in you and you need to believe in you.

So if you are lucky enough to only need to make a few changes to maintain your health – let's do this! And if you need to make a gazillion changes to regain your health – let's do that too! We can do it together.

To your health!

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Visit my website at [www.wellwithhilary.com](http://www.wellwithhilary.com) to keep up with my blog or find information on current programs and services that I have on the go in my coaching practice for meal plan programs, cleanses, coaching programs or workshops like the **Stress-Less** or **Law of Attraction** Virtual Workshop Series of sessions!

You can find Well With Hilary on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Pinterest too!

I help exhausted adults on a weight loss journey, break through weight loss plateaus and end chronic stress on their body so they can go from just being alive to truly LIVING their best life!

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