

# M

the magazine for  
kansas city moms

# Inspiring

women in  
Kansas City



a too-cute  
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**Day** party

holistic  
**heart**  
**health**

a river runs through  
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## Physiological Effects of Stress

Amanda Chaney is the mother of three and a naturopathic physician with her own practice in Westwood specializing in family care. "Women so often minimize the emotional side of what's going on," Chaney says. "We write it off as stress, and stress isn't taken seriously as a health risk. Multitasking and dieting have become such a part of our daily existence that we assume there's nothing we can do about the way our lives are laid out, until we start manifesting physical symptoms." Chaney maintains that our bodies can only deal with so much stress, and then our adrenal glands become overtaxed and our coping mechanisms challenged. It's only when their day-to-day activities manifest as illness that women really see the stresses of their lifestyles. "And even then," Chaney has found, "for them to have to reverse that is very hard."

Chaney believes that all emotional experiences affect our health—positive and negative, past and present, with negative ones having perhaps longer-lasting effects. "It's easy for people to suppress experiences but it's going to affect us eventually—that's just how our bodies are set up," she says.

Negative emotions such as loneliness and depression produce stress hormones and raise blood pressure, eventually weakening the heart muscles, whereas love, spirituality, friends, pets and alternative treatments such as energy healing and touch therapies can have opposite effects. There's tons of research suggesting this.

### Reaching the Root of the Problem

And when emotional difficulties affect our bodies, what then? Chaney's medical practice is a holistic one, so her approach is to get to the root of the problem and not just suppress it with

## breathing balance

Linda Putthoff, the founder of Plaza Wellspring on State Line Road, mother of three and soon-to-be grandmother, evokes the image when she says, "The more I can see the brilliance of my interior landscape the more I can recognize brilliance in others." A former dancer, Putthoff has been practicing yoga since she was a teenager, but "now it's much more meditative and much less physical than it was. I hear people say so often that they can't do yoga because they're not flexible. But yoga isn't about achieving positions. It's about finding balance between the physical and mental and spiritual."

Among the classes Putthoff teaches at Plaza Wellspring is prenatal yoga, during which she has the mothers-to-be practice a meditation exercise summoning that very deep and pure nonjudgmental, nonlinear love we have for our babies, and give that also to ourselves. "When we can do that it's transformative. We're not good women because we knocked out the to-do list and got the lunches packed and the kids out the door, but because worth is inherent in our beings. It is so important for us to remember to give ourselves that same grace and acknowledgment that we give our children. How can we love when we don't first love and honor ourselves? There will be no wellness to give."

Putthoff points to studies currently being conducted by University of Kansas Medical Center cardiologist Dhanunjaya Lakkireddy on the effect of yoga on atrial fibrillation, a condition usually treated with medication and invasive procedures. Early results look promising in establishing connections between the palpable serenity we so enjoy in that final shivasana pose and yoga's actual ability to normalize irregular heartbeats. His findings are no surprise to Putthoff: "Yoga keeps me centered in my heart—my heart being a representation of the grace of the divine, present in me and focused through me and from me out into the world. The more I can give myself that grace, the more I can really listen to my children and get through the daily work of life with so much less strain—and that's so much easier on our physical selves." [plazawellspring.com](http://plazawellspring.com)

drugs. For instance, "If a patient comes in with a high cholesterol diagnosis and says here's the prescription I got from my doctor, the first thing I say is that your body is not suffering from a lack of Lipitor. It's true that as soon as you take Lipitor, your levels will start dropping, but the bottom line is that the issues that have caused this high cholesterol, whether it's due to diet or genetic factors or whatever, we have to address that. Not to say I don't honor what the other side of medicine offers, because it's not one-way. I believe in integrated care. If someone comes to me with strep throat, they'll definitely get antibiotics, but I don't believe drug therapy is *always* the first call

of action. Generally speaking there are other approaches."

In fact, Chaney believes cholesterol is overemphasized in discussions of heart health: "The bottom line is 50 percent of people with heart attacks have normal cholesterol, so clearly that's not the *whole* story. In my practice I look at lipoprotein particles, which tells a more nuanced picture of your risk factors for heart disease. And assuming there aren't underlying issues already diagnosed such as hypertension that we'd have to be aggressive about, but someone who wants to prevent contributing factors, we look at the foundation of her health, which is her diet."



Chaney gives all her patients the ALCAT, a food allergies and sensitivities test: "It looks at what you really eat and what foods your bodies are sensitive to. If you're over consuming foods your body doesn't handle well, you'll suffer inflammation. And it's different for everyone. I've had patients come back with severe reaction to tomatoes and almonds and broccoli, foods that are normally highly recommended, but we're all wired differently and we all do better with different things, and one of the best things you can do right out of the gate is figure out what your body breaks down and processes well and what pushes you into a proinflammatory state, which is bad for our health."

Chaney also administers a test for 45 vitamins, minerals and other things like amino acids, because deficiencies in the essential nutrients our bodies require will obviously not enable us to function well or feel well. "And we all have deficiencies," Chaney maintains. "I have never had a patient's test come back that wasn't low on something."

A vitamin deficiency is a relatively easy fix. But for Chaney the biggest challenge for women is to put aside time for themselves. Women are so busy taking care of husbands and children and the house and errands, and we always put ourselves last. It's very important to give yourself the time to take a yoga class or do Pilates or go for a long run. You need that to stay healthy, emotionally and physically. "It's true," she adds, "moms are constantly being taken from. All day it's take, take, take, but we're not given what we need so you have to make an effort to find your center." [chaneymed.com](http://chaneymed.com)

### Decompress with Therapy

But what if all this talk about the need to reduce stress and anxiety only makes you feel even more stressed and anxious? Lenexa-based child psychologist and mother Michelle Macrorie, whose MPowered Parenting blog offers practical tips for family well-being, recommends getting outside help: "Therapy can educate you about how to minimize stress, manage stress, and develop strategies to cope with stress. The benefits are huge, and the drawbacks are small."

The fact is that we as responsible women are so hesitant to spend any time or money on ourselves, but we have to realize it's not just for us. "It really is such a parenting gift when moms figure out how to manage their stress and anxieties, and then can share those techniques with their kids at an early age, like breathing through stress and different ways to perceive stress," says Macrorie. "Kids are stressed just like parents are. And sometimes we don't recognize that." [mpoweredparenting.com](http://mpoweredparenting.com)

### Spiritually Moving Forward— Away from Pain

According to Jill Tupper, a life and wellness coach based in midtown Kansas City and mother of two teenagers, stress is an inevitable part of life. "We all go through tough

times, everybody does. Life is sometimes heartbreaking. Being a mother can be heart-wrenching, so how do we strengthen our hearts? The longer we sit on those emotions the more they can damage us. It's very important to experience those emotions, but it's also important to let them move through us. It's when we hold on to them that we get into trouble. Obviously awful tragedies such as death of loved ones take much longer, but we are meant to move through life."

Tupper makes it a point to make clear that she's not a therapist or counselor in any conventional sense: "I don't work with people on their past but on forward movement. I help them reconnect with their inspiration and passion and purpose so they remember who they are and recommit to the life they want. We each have points of choice in life, and moving forward from pain and heartbreak is a choice. Doing so makes you a richer, deeper human being, more able to bring compassion to the world."

Tupper has training both in occupational therapy and from seminary, which gives her approach a bracing mixture of practicality and spirituality. Above all, she seems to champion gratitude: "Each day does have a gift within it for each of us. There are gifts that surround us every day—whether it's a phone call or text from a friend or a step outside to hear the birds or a cup of hot tea or petting your dog or a good song or just saying hi to someone in the grocery store—but when we're overwhelmed in fear and sadness, it's hard to see and experience blessings." When asked what's the opposite of heartache and heartbreak? "Being heartwarming and light-hearted," she says. "Light-hearted" can have two meanings: not just being buoyant but being filled in your heart with light. It's important to remember that we need to let light and love into our hearts." [jilltupper.com](http://jilltupper.com) ❄