

Stress SOS!

Hypnotherapist Ursula James shares how the gut and stress are linked – and why combatting one can help the other.

1 Listen to your gut
Research has shown that gut has its own 'brain', and is extremely responsive to stress. Over the years, you can develop strong reactions to certain foods once you are stressed, and these can cause not only digestive imbalances, but increase anxiety and depression, so it is important you listen to your gut. It's called 'gut instinct' for a reason!

2 Identify what stresses you
Each night before sleep, make notes of what you have to do the following day – not as events, but rather as potential stress points. It may be waiting for a call on Zoom, trying to get your children to study; whatever it is, make a note. Even doing this helps you be more prepared as your dreams can now look for ways of coping better.

3 Prepare, prepare, prepare
As you get into the habit of writing down stressors (and not just at night, but as they occur to you),

you can start to jot down ways of preparing yourself better. This may mean taking two mins to close your eyes and do some deep breathing, or stretching your neck and shoulders.

4 Manage your stressors
Protect yourself from stress with an 'auric egg'. This is a meditation technique where you create a protective bubble of light around you, which helps when you have to deal with stressful people.

5 Do a full body scan
Sit or lie down for five mins and work your way through your body from the tips of your toes to the top of your head – identify all the parts that are fine. This puts into context an upset gut. By identifying all that is working well, the negative focus on your stomach will subside.

6 Keep a food diary
Avoiding certain trigger foods isn't always easy, but if you can identify which ones are the worst, you can at least prepare yourself for feeling under the weather!

7 Note your moods
Your mood can't always feel stable if your stomach is upset. If you find yourself feeling down or depressed when this happens, sit down, close your eyes and take two mins to drill down into your thoughts and identify if there is actually anything to worry about.

■ **For more on gut health turn to page 41.**

Clinical hypnotherapist Ursula James was presenter of *Sex, Lies and Hypnosis* on Channel 5, where she used hypnotherapy to work with couples to help them improve their relationships. Download her free Mindfulness app, in association with Yuza, from the App Store.

