

INDEPENDENT/  
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# Health and Fitness

## Five experts relate keys to reducing stress levels in your body

By LUCINDA LANDAU

Special to The Independent/Free Press

"One of the most powerful ways to reduce the stress response is to control the breath," said Sara Cockton, registered massage therapist and speaker at a presentation by five local health care professionals.

Over 100 people were in attendance to hear about natural healing methods to relieve stress held January 23 at the Georgetown Public Library.

Cockton demonstrated the simple technique of abdominal breathing, wherein the muscles of the diaphragm are pushed out with a complete inhale and then pulled

in with a complete exhale.

"This exercise fits easily into even the most fast-paced lifestyle," she said, "Your stress levels will be reduced if you can do it for at least five minutes, twice a day."

Dietician Gabrielle Allison suggested that a snack of one or two slices of bread before bedtime would produce a calm, relaxed,

less stress feeling. "The brain has a learned response to the intake of complex carbohydrates," she explained, "Serotonin is secreted in the brain, and that is the chemical responsible for inducing a feeling of calm."

"The idea that food is comforting is a learned response," she explained, "we're especially vulnerable to bingeing and eating fast foods during times of great stress."

It's no wonder we reach for sweets when we're upset," she added jokingly, "just consider the word stressed in reverse, it spells desserts."

Dr. Gary Butwell, chiropractor, addressed the impact of body chemistry on overall performance. The conductor for this activity is the central nervous system working through the brain and spinal cord. He stressed the need for regular care of the spine to keep all body systems on track and free from disease.

"Everyone thinks that the

hormones produced by stress in the body are the bad guys," said Exercise physiologist Pedro Silva.

"Well, they're wrong. The real source of damage," he continued, "is from the lack of physical movement after the body has released them." The primary contribution of exercise, he teaches, is to alleviate the build-up of stress 'products' in the body.

Dr. Robert Cranfield, chiropractor and coordinator of the workshop, spoke about the need for personal quiet time. "We need time to be alone, time to visualize and meditate," he said. "Learning to say NO without feeling guilty will reduce stress levels," Cranfield maintains, "Recognize that we all have choices in life and you can get out of the 'victim state' of consciousness."

Cranfield says that we are always going to have to deal with stress in our lives, but he believes that the mental attitude of being in control will reduce the effect of stress.

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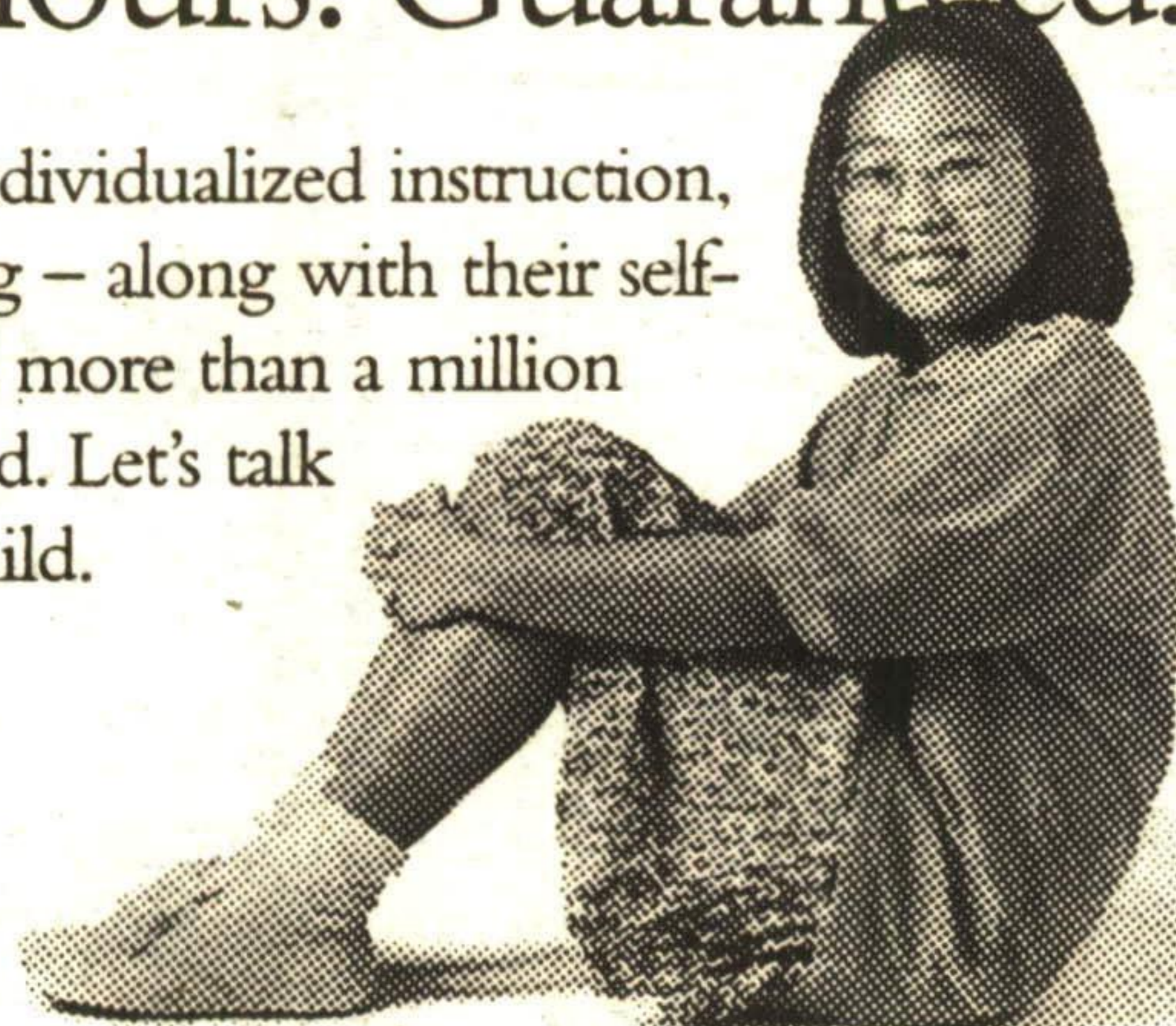
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*Manon Dulude is a Psychotherapist practicing in Georgetown.*

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