

Release
Restore



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Stress, Trauma and Conflict Transformation Services

Greetings.

Too much stress! Too much cortisol in our bodies!

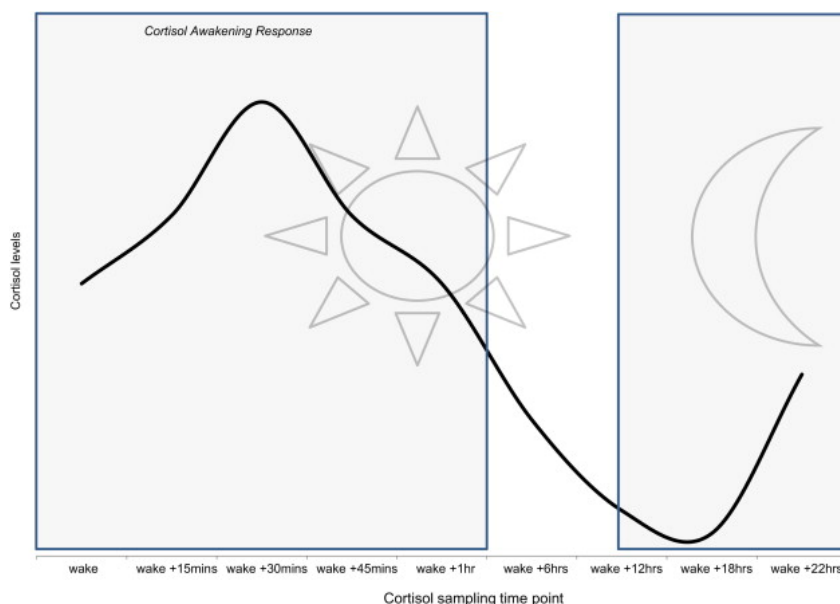
But is cortisol always bad? What about the Cortisol Awakening Response?

Do you leverage yours for a stronger day?

Cortisol Awakening Response—Our Morning Boost of Cortisol

Yes, most of us have too much cortisol in our systems. We'll look at ways to work with that below. But our bodies need a boost of cortisol in the morning to wake us out of sleep and equip us for the day. That natural boost is called the Cortisol Awakening Response (CAR). Ideally, our cortisol levels drop through the day to their lowest levels during the night, then have a rapid rise to wake us up, peaking 30-45 minutes after we awake.

[Winter can blunt our CAR.](#) So can feeling down. CAR gives us energy, heightens our executive function, and makes us more resilient emotionally throughout the day.



Rising earlier, and in the light, can support a healthy CAR. Negative affect (e.g. negative self-talk) can dampen the CAR. What lifts your spirits when you arise? Gratitude before you get out of bed? Setting an intention for the day? Stroking your pet? Exercise? Or try Donna Eden's Energy Exercises ([video](#) or [pdf](#))—a great way to get your energy going.

How to Make Stress Your Friend

Too much cortisol has many harmful effects on our bodies. But stress does not have to harm us. In this 14 minute TED Talk, Dr. Kelly McGonigal shares [How to Make Stress Your Friend](#)—by caring for others.

Kelly also teaches **Heart Breathing**, a simple technique for bringing compassion to ourselves and others. Research shows compassion gives us courage. Courage to show up strong and make a difference. Here's how to do Heart Breathing:

Bring awareness to your heart.

Imagine you could actually nourish your heart with your breath.

It's as if your nostrils were on your chest—a feeling of breathing into your heart and imagining that your heart is being expanded, opened, strengthened, fueled by the breath.

Imagine breathing out of your heart.

Research suggests heart breathing can have immediate effects on your physiology and your mindset—it's effective.

Also, when you do it, it drops your sense of self from your head to a kind of more full-bodied open awareness. It's a hard change to describe, but when people do it, they often experience it. We may go about the world with a sense of me-ness, that's felt across the forehead. It's a particular way of paying attention to the world. When you do heart breathing, it's like your sense of self drops in a way that makes you more receptive, better able to connect with others, a better listener.

Heart breathing opens our sense of compassion. According to Dr. Ruth Buczinsky, PhD, compassion can change our lives in at least four ways that are important at all times (and, I would add, especially in higher stress times such as this pandemic).

One: Compassion **inhibits fear** and **activates courage**.

Two: Compassion shifts dynamics in specific brain regions so that we're better able to **manage difficult emotions** and **tolerate distress**.

Three: Compassion changes the body through the vagus nerve and the parasympathetic nervous system. These changes in the body can **build resilience for stress**.

Finally: Research shows that compassion **improves mental health** and **psychosocial functioning**.

Heart Breathing is adapted from NICABM's (The National Institute for the Clinical Application of Behavioral Medicine) Clinical Applications of Compassion—Module 1 transcript p. 20, (c) 2019

13th Annual Tapping World Summit—Register Now

Looking for high quality, free tapping resources? The Tapping Solution offers a wealth of resources, and, annually, a Tapping World Summit.

This year, its from February 22-March 3. [Register here for free](#). I recommend it.

All the talks and tapping meditations are free for 24 hours. (The resources may be purchased for good value if desired.)

As a warm-up for the summit, here are [three videos they've released](#):

Releasing Stress and Overwhelm (Great way to lower elevated cortisol!)

Moving from Anger to Peace (Another way to move to healthy cortisol levels)

Releasing Anxiety and Worry (These drive stress and higher cortisol)

Many people have started their tapping journeys through The Tapping Solution. Everything The Tapping Solution does offered in an accessible form for self-care.

I'm passionate about supporting people in moving through the hard places in life with strength and resilience. Let me know if you find any of the above resources helpful, or if there are others you'd like to share with me.

If you would like my support working through stress, trauma, conflict, or other hard spots, contact me at 226-792-8200 or sue@sueklassen.ca. Or visit my website, sueklassen.ca to learn more, including [rates for individual sessions or packages](#).

In these winter months, take good care of yourself, and be kind—especially to yourself.

Best regards,

Sue

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[Release Restore](#)

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Peace.

It does not mean to be in a place where there is no noise, trouble, or hard work.

It means to be in the midst of those things and still be calm in your heart.

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