



## **What is the Real Cost of Tension?**

The verdict is in. Excess tension is not only stealing the quality of our lives, it is killing us. Studies show under tension the heart works harder, vitamins and minerals are excreted rather than absorbed, and cholesterol goes up. We are moving at such a fast pace, while at the same time taking in an enormous amount of stimulation, that without even being aware, we hold and use our bodies as if the threat of a human eating tiger was an ever present reality. We are engaged to do constant battle. This stance takes an enormous toll on our bodies and the quality of our lives. We simply are not created to live this way. We bring too much of us to the moment. Instead of being in ease, our bodies are in an almost constant stance of dis-ease.

It's not that tension is bad; this is an important point. We need tension to function. Too little tension, and we are paralyzed to do no more than minimally flop around. Yet, too much tension and we are overworking our bodies to the point of great cost to our health and well being.

What we are seeking then, is using just the right amount of tension for the task at hand. For instance, say you are sitting in your favorite chair with the paper and your morning cup of coffee or tea. Tighten your legs and arms as hard as you can and try to manage the paper and your drink. You can see how silly this excess effort is. Now make your arms and legs as weightless as possible, as if you were in a spaceship, and try to maneuver your paper and drink. It's impossible...all you can do is flop around.

Now, somewhere in between these 2 extreme examples, find just the right amount of tension you need to sit comfortably and relaxed and still hold your paper and drink, without excess effort. In this moment, your body is functioning as it was meant to function, with just the perfect amount of tension for the task at hand.

Begin to notice this concept in your body as you move through various activities in your day. Perhaps you are driving a car and notice that your jaw is clenched. You immediately recognize that this is a misuse of your body at a cost to your well-being. You can then imagine inhaling the breath to your clenched jaw and saying to yourself, "Breathe in ease; breathe out tension."

Like everyone else, you have a particular area of the body where you especially like to carry tension. Perhaps it's the jaw, maybe the neck and shoulders, or it might be the hips. Do you know where your favorite tension carrying area is? Find it and breathe ease into this place often throughout the day.

As you begin to free up excess tension from your body, you will begin to experience more energy and vitality. You will begin to feel better. Congratulations, you are on the way to a higher quality of life.

Deborah Adele is an engaging, lively, and thought-provoking speaker who is not afraid to share stories from her own years of living and learning. She facilitates thoughtful and tangible ways of showing up to life in new ways, leaving participants with a dynamic combination of hope, inspiration, and practical knowledge. She is the author of *The Yamas & Niyamas: Exploring Yoga's Ethical Practice*, 2 CD's: *The Art of Relaxation* and *The Practice of Meditation* and authored a regular wellness column for the Duluth News Tribune.