

# THE LIFESTYLE AND CULINARY MEDICINE NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2026, VOLUME 10

## THIS MONTH'S FOCUS: NATIONAL STRESS AWARENESS MONTH.

April is Stress Awareness Month, a dedicated time to check in on your well-being.

It's easy to view stress as the enemy, but here's a refreshing perspective: stress is actually a normal, healthy response to feeling threatened or overwhelmed. The key isn't necessarily to eliminate it entirely, but to learn how to manage it so it doesn't manage you.

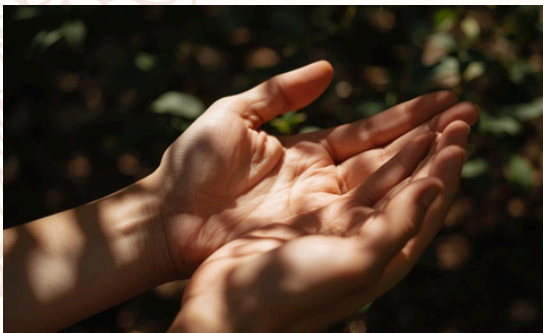
The path to a calmer mind doesn't require a total lifestyle overhaul.

In fact, even the smallest daily shifts can lead to a massive improvement in your emotional health over time. As the saying goes, "Little by little, a little becomes a lot."

With care,

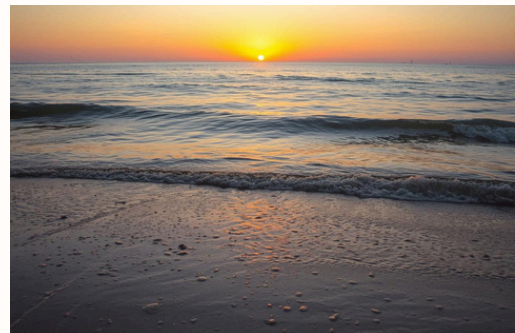
*Dr. Lateef*

### SMALL STEPS FOR BIG WINS



#### **MINDFULNESS & PRESENCE**

Here are a few simple, science-backed strategies to help you navigate stress this month. These actions take only a few minutes, but can significantly shift your physiological and mental state



#### **GROUNDING TECHNIQUE**

When you feel overwhelmed, pause and identify: 5 things you see, 4 things you can touch, 3 things you hear, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste. This pulls your mind out of "future-worry" and back into the present moment.

## QUICK TIPS ON STRESS MANAGEMENT:



### BOX BREATHING & NATURE

Inhale for 4 seconds, hold for 4, exhale for 4, and hold for 4. This simple, rhythmic breathing signals to your nervous system that you are safe, helping to lower your heart rate almost instantly.

Step outside for just five minutes. Whether it's a quick walk or simply standing by a window, the sight of natural light and greenery can lower cortisol levels and provide a quick mental reset.

### THE "DONE" LIST

Instead of focusing only on what is left to do, take a moment to write down three things you've already accomplished today—no matter how small. Shifting your focus to your "wins" builds a sense of agency and calm.





# THE POWER OF MOVEMENT AND NUTRITION



## MOVE TO DECOMPRESS

When it comes to stress, what we do with our bodies is just as important as what we do with our minds. Physical activity and thoughtful nutrition act as a "buffer" for your nervous system, helping you stay resilient when life gets demanding.

You don't need an hour-long workout to see results. A brisk 10-minute nature walk or a few minutes of stretching can significantly lower cortisol levels. Movement helps "burn off" the extra energy created by the stress response, leaving you feeling more grounded and clear-headed.

## EAT FOR RESILIENCE

What you eat directly impacts your mood and energy. Aim for fiber-rich, whole-food options that provide a steady release of energy throughout the day.

- Anti-inflammatory ingredients like berries, leafy greens, and walnuts can help your body recover from the physiological toll of stress.
- Complex carbohydrates, such as oats or sourdough, can actually boost serotonin—the "feel-good" hormone—helping you stay calm under pressure.





# VEGETABLE NOURISHING BOWL

## Equipment

- Large sheet pan (15" x 21") 15 x 21-inch
- Small Blender

## For the Base

- Mixed greens
- 1 large ripe avocado
- Tricolored Quinoa, cooked as per package directions.
- Fresh basil.
- I love adding a ripe avocado and fresh basil to these bowls—the perfect finishing touch, but both are optional.

## Ingredients

- 1-1/4 teaspoon paprika
- 1-1/4 teaspoon onion powder
- 1-1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1-3/4 teaspoon chili powder
- Salt and Pepper
- 1-2 large sweet potato peeled and cubed, 3 cups
- Broccoli Florets, 3-4 cups
- 1 (14.5-ounce) can chickpeas rinsed and drained
- 4 tablespoons olive oil divided

## Hot Honey Mustard Sauce

- 2 tablespoons Dijon Mustard
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 1 tablespoon water
- 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar



## Instructions

- Preheat oven to 425°F.
- Prepare the seasoning mix by combining the paprika, garlic powder, onion powder, chili powder, salt, and pepper in a small bowl and stirring together. (I add 3/4 tsp salt and 1/4 tsp pepper, but add to your preference.) Set aside.
- Peel sweet potatoes and cut them into chunks. Rinse broccoli florets, set aside, Rinse and drain chickpeas and thoroughly dry.
- Place prepared sweet potatoes on the sheet pan. Add two tablespoons olive oil and half the seasoning mix. Toss to evenly coat all the potatoes; space out the potatoes so they don't overlap (the more room they have, the better they will roast) and bake for 15 minutes in preheated oven.
- Remove from oven and flip/stir the sweet potatoes around and move to one side of the tray. On the other side, add chickpeas, broccoli, and 2 tablespoons of oil and remaining seasoning. Toss together and space everything out to have plenty of room to roast. Return to oven and bake another 15–20 minutes or until vegetables are crisp tender. Remove from oven and toss everything once more. Taste and add more salt if needed.
- Add all sauce ingredients to a small blender, season to taste with salt and pepper (I add 1/2 tsp salt and 1/8 tsp pepper), and blend until smooth. Transfer to a mason jar and place in the fridge while waiting on veggies.
- Add mixed greens to 4 bowls (add as much/little greens as you'd like). Cook quinoa according to package directions and divide it equally among the bowls. Drizzle a touch of dressing into each bowl and give it a quick toss. Divide roasted veggies equally among the bowls. Thinly slice or chop the avocado and add in equal parts to each bowl. Ribbon the fresh basil and add on top (to taste). Drizzle the sauce over each bowl (as much or as little as you'd like—there will likely be extra!) Enjoy!