I'm Aldebra Schroll, I'm physician over at the Student Health Service and I'm a Chico State graduate. So when I was a student here a while ago, one of my favorite classes in to help Sciences arena was alternative healing. So, it kind of got me interested in that venue and after I finish my M.D., I choose to do some more training in acupuncture, for example, and then kind of independent study on issues of more holistic type of health techniques. So, I thought we would talk about that tonight. Are people hearing me? Can you hear me, okay?
So, I was going to go through my PowerPoint kind of talking a little bit. But first, I'd like to talk about stress 'cause I think we want to first recognize and realize how much that can impact our health. So, start with looking at some of the research on that area. So, studies of medical illness suggest that about 50 to 80 percent of illness has stress related aspects to it. The American Academy of Family Physicians reports about two-thirds of appointments are for stress related causes. And in one study of surgical patients, they found those who rated high on personal stress also had more issues with poor coping and they also had poor outcomes after their procedures were done. So, that might mean they might have more pain after the procedure or may be they didn't heal as quickly as had originally been anticipated.
So, how we respond to stress and think about life difficulties can be related to a tendency for a variety of diseases. Our experience of stress is very dependent on how we see our situation. So for example pessimism is correlated with depression and premature death. Hostility has been associated with heart disease. People might have read or heard about that concept of a type A personality and having higher incidences of cardiac issues and stuff. And when they looked at that research and distill it down a little bit more, it seemed to be that hostility was really high correlation, so interesting.
So what causes stress and what are the aspects and how does it happen? We start with what we call the stressor. The stressor is that the thing that stimulates the sense of stress in the individual and that is very individual. So it could be perhaps if you're end up in a traffic jam, maybe it's your work or school schedule. Debt, money is a big issue for a lot of people. Money problems is a big problem for marriage and why sometimes marriages don't survive. Home, needs at home, family needs can feel somewhat endless. So what we find stressful someone individual from person to person. But it all affects all of us in some way.
So there actually are changes that happen at the physiological levels when we are under stress. So the body releases epinephrine, what has been referred to as the stress hormone that can increase the heart rate, lead to elevated blood pressures. It impairs our ability to oxygenate the tissues. It can increase our blood sugar, causes the eyes to dilate, and actually, will delay and affect digestive activities.
So other signs that people might actually feel when they're under stress is the racing of the heart, so people actually grind their teeth and will wake up with pain in their jaw. Headaches are common. People might experience sweatiness. They notice a dry mouth. There might be pain in a variety of places. Often, people have more difficulty fighting off colds and flu.
So how does stress impact us? Doctor Schaefer who is retired from Chico State used to teach a class on the topic of stress, and this is actually from his book that he had written. And he kind of looked at four different ways that stress affects our health. So it can directly precipitate the disease. So perhaps, someone who has a heart attack in the middle of an argument, it can aggravate an underlying diagnosis.

So take for example psoriasis, a skin condition, can be aggravated with stress. It can aggravate chronic pain issues, irritable bowel syndrome. So if we think back, one of the things that happens under stress is our bowel activity is affected. So, people might notice pain for example. They might have some indigestion and other symptoms.

People might respond to stress by having poor coping skills. So they might choose alcohol, other drugs. They might gamble. I put shopping here so--my sister called that "therapeutic shopping". So--but for people who might have money problems, that could be a problem. So if we choose to relieve stress in a manner that gets us into the other problems like high credit bills then we have trouble.

And then we might--have actually affected our immune system. We know that it affects our immune systems so that we might not be able to fight off diseases well. There was something that just came out recently in relation to children who are under extreme stress and long term implications and in one study, for example, more cancers when they were older, that kind of thing. So, stress has a lot of impacts on us.
So physical science of chronic stress might be mood issues so the irritability, feeling anxious, it'd be headaches, impulsive behaviors, feeling kind of hyper, perhaps someone might complain more of depression or fatigue. They might notice insomnia. It definitely can affect your appetite. People will describe difficulty with concentrating or they're focus. Some people might end up using food or alcohol, tobacco and other things, even prescription drugs inappropriately as a way to deal the stress.
So in the long term, what we see potentially is problems with immune function, risks for diseases such as cardiovascular or cancer. Some of the diseases we know are exacerbated by stress including anxiety, depression, headaches, the tension, and the migraine type. And an angina is the pain people have before they have a heart attack and then we know that heart attack, the highest incidence is on Monday morning. And then of course irritable bowel is another thing that we know is exacerbated by stress.
So traditionally, in Western medicine during in my training, we've tried to separate mind from body. But when we looked at the medical practices that are more of an Eastern, maybe Chinese medicine philosophy, we find that they don't make some--much of that separation. And now, we're starting to understand and research and explain how the mind and body interact.
So one author I like is Candace Pert and she is molecular biologist and wrote a book by the name of “Molecules of Emotion”. And she actually is studying how the opiate receptors that are located throughout our body and brain, how they communicate at the cellular and chemical level? So some fascinating research that she is doing, trying to explain those interactions.
So what could we possibly learn from some of these philosophies? Maybe not trying to separate mind and body and finding that there's maybe no distinction instead, trying to think more about finding balance. The concept of chi in Chinese medicine, chi would be correlated with energy. So a lot of the philosophy is about moving energy and that illness, pain, disease are the results of your chi isn't moving. So they put emphasis on lifestyle approaches and the idea is to treat disease before you actually even know it's present. So, Jon Kabat-Zinn is a leader in the field of meditation and he says, "Our goal should be understanding how to live in harmony." How to live in harmony, mind and body.
So, multiple approaches are available to talk about stress reduction. So those might include hypnosis, meditation, yoga, exercise is a great tool for stress. People should aim to have regular sleep patterns, choose a heathful diet, and the response will obviously vary by individual as it does with any medical approach.
I was going to talk a little bit about acupuncture 'cause that's the technique that I am in trained then I use here at the Student Health Center. So, the United States first introduction for a lot people in their topic of acupuncture was from New York Times' writer and this was during the Nixon administration so this is a quite a while ago. And this gentleman was traveling to China with Nixon and had to has appendix out while he was there, and they used the acupuncture. Instead of putting him under anesthesia, they provided acupuncture and they were able to operate and take his appendix out. So he returned to the United States to write about his experience in the Times and that was--so, first off, many people what they first remember of hearing about acupuncture. Now, of course, it's being widely used with the variety of practitioners here in the States.

So how does it work exactly? And I--you know, I didn't bring my needles but the needles are very fine, little thicker than a hair, and they're placed on specific points around the body of what they refer to as meridians and the idea comes back to this idea of energy or chi in trying to move energy.
So, of course, one of the questions that we get a lot is how does that work? And sometimes, I have to switch off a little bit. So we want to try to have an explanation that we can understand with that sort of Western eye. And there are some studies that are starting to happen. NIH, for example, National Institutes of Health, is pursuing more looks at some of these alternative techniques that are being used. So, we do find that acupuncture can increase blood flow to areas of pain and discomfort, and so, one of the most common things that I see is pain.

People seek acupuncture treatment for pain, so that could be chronic low back pain that could be the pain that people feel in their upper neck back, that kind of tension that we carry across our shoulders. Headache is the common thing that I see. And so, when we used the acupuncture needles stimulating some of those muscles in the areas that hurt can increase blood flow. Blood carries the oxygen, and tissues that hurt need oxygen. So that seems to be one of the ways that it benefits us. It releases some endorphins, what people referred to us are natural opioids.

On that note, I do see some side effects with acupuncture. And so that includes for some people a little nausea, they might notice a little lightheadedness, some people feel dizzy. Fainting is potential although not very frequent. Vomiting, again, it's kind of--I think that's part of the opiate response. Now--but again, the vomiting part isn't that common. Some people have described feeling euphoric, so they describe a little bit of sense of euphoric. Most people will notice the sedating type of and/or just
feeling really relaxed. It's not unusual for some to fall asleep, for example. There was a gentleman here earlier who was setting the computer up and that was I think that he remembered when he had acupuncture, he fell asleep.

So what I like about acupuncture, one of the reasons that I started doing acupuncture is you can overdose on it. So, unlike some of the medications that we use, I mean, all medications come with potential for complications, and so being able to offer people something with a little bit less potential for complications, something that attracted me to that. Now--and on that note, I use acupuncture in combination with medical.
I am a Western trained medical physician so I can't get--you know, think away from that. And you will see some practitioners will kind to say, "Oh, stay away from those Western doctors and stuff." I use the two of them together and I find they complement each other nicely. So for example, I had a client who was a patient with migraines for many years and by the time I started seeing her, she was over 60 and had been on migraine medicines for quite a while. And she told her physician, I'm going to go and get acupuncture and it sounds like he's skeptical and most of them are. And so, about a year later, she went back for her yearly appointment, he said, "Well, you haven't refilled your migraine medicine a while. Are you still taking migraine medicine or it's been a while since you filled it?" She said, "Well, you know, I still use it but I don't--just don't need it as often." So the--she still had migraines, that didn't change, but the intensity, the frequency, it seemed to help that when she took her migraine medicine, it seem to compliment and she seemed to have a quicker response and didn't need it quite as often. So to me, that's a benefit.

Some of the other interesting things about acupuncture, so we can do an acupuncture session and then if I was to give them naloxone, which is the prescription we would use if someone had OD on something, so they had OD on heroin or some other narcotic. This is what they would use in the Emergency Room. We can also reverse the benefits of acupuncture with that. So, interesting little research to suggest that it has that interaction at the opioid receptors.
In a summary from the journal of the American Medical Association, they found that acupuncture has a low potential for complications and has comparable efficacy to many of our conventional approaches. So I'm not ringing endorsement but they acknowledged that there are some potential benefits for certain clients for acupuncture.
So I found it useful alternative for pain, headache, sleep insomnia issues, fatigue, and anxiety and my patients have found a little bit decreased need for their prescription medicines and may have also found they didn't have a lot of side effect or complications. So that's what one thing has people like about it.
And these are comments that I've heard from patients. So--and I like this first one. I feel an enhanced sense of well-being because you don't hear that a lot. If I treat someone's blood pressure, their cholesterol, they don't necessarily feel any difference. But acupuncture gives people often are sleeping better, they're having less pain, some people notice just generalized increased energy, and that's definitely something that it makes them have a greater sense of well-being. This refers to the story I just told you, so she wasn't needing migraine meds quite as often and then people are noticing that they sleep better. So those are some of the comments that I've heard from people over the years.
So Chi qonq is a movement practice often used in China although it's becoming more and more available here. But if you were hospitalized, they often will prescribe some Chi qonq as part of your treatment in the Chinese hospital setting. And so, it translates to manipulation of vital energy and people learn to move energy through different techniques of breathing and movement. And the idea is that the patient through using these techniques can heal themselves. And I like that idea of empowering people to do something for themselves. I think that's important.
I thought we would briefly talk about just some supplements and this is an area currently that I'm kind of starting to delve into. I like to start with some caveats and cautions because we do have limited studies right now. There are a lot of potential interactions with prescriptions that people are already on. So that's something that people need to keep in mind, and let's take for example Saint John's wort is one that you might see or hear, read a lot about. That potentially can affect the--how birth controls work. So that would be one that we--we're not offering that right now at Student Health Center for that reason because it can interact with the birth control pills. So that something that people would need to be kind of aware of. And if a person is having some symptoms and/or severe persisting, worsening, they really should see a practitioner.

Fish oil, the Omega 3, is a fish oils can be useful. I see it used a lot from the rheumatologist who treat people for chronic arthritis often recommend fish oil supplements or cardiologist used it a lot for people who have elevated cholesterol, people who've already had heart attacks. It can help balance the cholesterol, enhance the good cholesterol. It also seems to have potential benefit for mood enhancement. So for example, a lot of psychiatrist will recommend it as a compliment, some treatments that they used.

Melatonin is a natural agent to help with sleep. So it's not going to work in the way a lot of sleep agents do were. It will put you into sleep the first time you take it. But with regular use, people will find that it kind of helps to repair and improve their circadian rhythm.
SAM-e is a natural molecule that has some potential benefits with arthritis and from mood enhancement. However, if somebody had a history of bipolar, they would not recommend that. But it can be useful for low grade type of depression.

Zinc lozenges is some of the supplements that could be helpful in the event that someone had a viral infection, flue-type of illness and that is one that we are keeping at Student Health and Valerian is one that can be helpful for anxiety or insomnia. Those are just a few of the supplements and most of which, I think we have at the Student Health.
I thought we would talk a little bit about mindful meditation, and mindful meditation is an approach. It kind of help people—it's been used in a variety of settings. And this gentleman right here, Jon Kabat-Zinn is at the University of Massachusetts. He's been running their stress reduction clinic for probably 20 years and teaching people meditation techniques. And the idea of being to really get people to sort of be here now, focus on being in the present moment, but also kind of letting go of some of those judgments which usually are kind of somewhat harsh that we often put on ourselves, so kind of learning to let go of some of that.

So he's been using these techniques for people with stress, chronic pain and a variety of medical problems. Maybe for example, someone who's had a heart attack, that kind of thing. And so the goal is that people will learn relaxation techniques and help them to deal with stress in a more effective manner.
There are programs locally. Enloe has a gentleman who also uses the same technique as this gentleman from University of Massachusetts. We also have, I don’t know if people are familiar with, but we have the Dharma Center out by the airport. So the Sky Creek Dharma Center is a meditation center. They on Thursday nights are doing the college kind of have meditation for people your age. So it’s kind of the 20 something's meditation that they need on Thursday nights. They also will do on

Saturdays, they have sort of full day, the first Saturday of every month, people can come in for the full day or they can do the half day meditation sessions.

We also have meditation here at the Wellness Center. Are they still doing Monday through Thursday? I think Thursday noon. Noon and that's drop-in. Yeah.

I thought this is a nice quote from a yoga master, "Nothing can bring you lasting happiness and inner peace but you have it already if you quiet down your mind and body enough to experience it."

• “Nothing can bring you lasting happiness and inner peace, but you have it already if you just quiet down your mind and body enough to experience it”

• Yogi Swami Satchidananda
So I thought we would talk a little bit about yoga. Yoga is another ancient practice with the idea of connecting the body, increasing awareness, releasing tension in the mind and in the heart. And yoga, of course, is widely available here on campus to. Kinesiology Department offers classes if people wanted to get credit, and then the Rec Center has variety of yoga classes available. Of course, there are a lot of other studios throughout Chico and people, sometimes--I recommend yoga.

I recommended a lot for well, gosh, for stress and for sleep and if people are anxious or depressed, pain. You might have to kind of try a few different classes to see what feels right. And there's a gentleman out of Berkley, he's a physician who is also a yoga--a yoga master. So he uses yoga in his practice, teaches people. I went to one of his session and he has a book on the topic. I'm trying to remember now. It's just "Yoga as a Medicine" is the title of the book. I can't remember his name but I mean it tells you that people are using it in medical settings.
So people who have used the yoga, we found in studies that they often report less back pain, they will sleep better, have less disability, a decreased need for pain meds and again, that enhance sense of well-being.
So another tool for stress reduction, one that I try to use is the laughter. So when we laugh, we are lowering the release of our stress hormones, we're dilating blood vessels, so we're getting better blood flow. We reduce the blood pressure and from there, we can have a decrease strain on the heart. And again, it releases those natural endorphins like kind of improve our mood. So my recommendation and my philosophy is reading the comics every morning.
So the studies on laughter is interesting, Norman Cousins was a gentlemen who wrote "Anatomy of an Illness" and he had a chronic pain diagnosis and found--he started to rent movies and would laugh as a way to deal with some of his pain. So then he started to kind of take notes to find what was going on. And he noticed if he had 10 minutes of good laughter, he would be relieved to pain for about 2 hours or so. He also noticed some increased mobility. And so, when we actually look at this from the medical standpoint and they started measuring the ESR, which is measurement of inflammation, it's a blood test, and it would decrease that marker for inflammation. So there was something to what he was experiencing.
So my recommendations are to make your health a priority. No one else can do that for you. Develop healthy life styles now that can potentially last you for your lifetime.
Then I thought we would end with a relaxing, some relaxing scenery.