

## Greetings!

### in this issue

- Announcing Our New Interactive Headache Diary!
- Migraine and Anxiety: From Awareness to Effective Coping -by guest author Luke Patrick, Ph.D.
- World Headache Awareness Month 2006

### **Migraine and Anxiety: From Awareness to Effective Coping -by guest author Luke Patrick, Ph.D.**

Do stress and migraines have any connection? "Of course," you say, "I've heard it a thousand times!" Perhaps you have read that as many as 80 percent of individuals with chronic migraine also meet criteria for an anxiety disorder. Or maybe your awareness of the connection comes from your own personal experience. Even among migraineurs who don't have an anxiety disorder per se, many find that increased stress is at least one of the factors that seem to bring on a headache.

Researchers are still working to understand the mechanisms behind the anxiety-migraine connection. The brain's limbic system, which is largely involved in emotional functioning, likely plays a role. Neurochemicals such as serotonin, which are involved in depression and anxiety, are also believed to influence the onset and pattern of migraines.

The muscle tension that usually accompanies anxiety may also play a role. Headache pain and other stressors often lead to tightening of the muscles throughout the forehead, scalp, jaw, neck, and even shoulders. Resulting muscle soreness, as well as inflammation of the trigeminal nerve, may then perpetuate the cycle by creating more pain, leading to more anxiety, leading to more pain. While the headache patient is busy attending to whatever stressful issues and

## Announcing Our New Interactive Headache Diary!

[Migraine Survival](#) is pleased to announce the roll-out of our new interactive online headache diary. We are very excited to bring you this unique opportunity.

Keeping a headache diary is an excellent method of understanding your own headache patterns better so that you can gain better control of them. Tracking the foods you eat, the environmental factors to which you are exposed, and patterns of medication use, exercise, and sleep patterns can be useful in determining what might be lowering your personal threshold for the development of headaches or migraines.

In addition to [tracking headache triggers](#), tracking your patterns of

responsibilities she or he faces, muscle tension builds in a gradual and insidious way.

Most likely, it is a combination of these and other factors that moderates the high correlation between anxiety and migraine. While we still don't fully understand the mechanisms behind the connection, we certainly have established that it exists. If you live with migraine headaches, knowing the causes of the connection may not be as important as knowing what can be done to counter the stress response.

## **Lifestyle and Habits**

It's easy to discount the important role that lifestyle modification can have in minimizing the effects of stress. We live in a society that values productivity over pacing. For many, hard work is rewarded by a satisfying sense of achievement. It's important to keep in mind, however, that there is a point at which the drive to achieve can become counterproductive. In an effort to "soldier on," the migraineur may ignore small opportunities to reduce stress throughout the day. Taking periodic short breaks, avoiding the temptation to overschedule personal and work events, and maintaining pleasurable leisure activities are all examples of lifestyle factors that can help to control stress in a significant and appreciable way.

## **Relaxation Training Techniques**

Sometimes, even consistent changes in lifestyle habits are not enough to control stress and anxiety adequately. Fortunately, several methods for relaxation are also available to help counter the body's stress response. Among them are diaphragmatic breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, mental imagery, self-hypnosis, mindfulness practices, and other forms of meditation. Advantages of these skills for headache management include the facts that they are drug-free, fairly simple to implement with regular practice, and require no costly equipment or doctor visits once the techniques are established. You may be able to learn these skills through self-help books or CDs. For many, one-on-one therapy with a counselor or other behavioral health professional may help to more fully develop the necessary skills for relaxation, and to increase awareness of the physiological effects of stress before they trigger yet another migraine.

Some migraineurs may benefit from a more intensive type of relaxation training, known as biofeedback therapy. As the

pain location and severity, and your levels of disability from headache can also assist in making an accurate headache diagnosis. The ability to identify and minimize your headache triggers will enable you to develop the life skills you need to reduce headache frequency and severity, and enhance your quality of life.

Our interactive on-line headache diary includes a three-dimensional head-view paint program, permitting you to draw your head pain directly onto a head model in order to capture a representation of your pain, and store it in your personal and confidential diary file. Although the diary is comprehensive, the average user can complete it in 10 minutes or less. Saved data is stored on a secure server, and can be retrieved at a later date for review. It can be printed out at any time, and from any computer.

Because of the expense of maintaining a secure diary without annoying ads, we are offering this service on a subscription basis. Our printable pdf diary will still be available at no expense as well for those who choose not to subscribe.

name implies, biofeedback counters stress by providing individuals with information about their physiological functions—such as muscle tension and blood flow—through computer monitoring. With appropriate training and practice in biofeedback, individuals can gain mastery over physical reactions that are normally thought of as involuntary and outside of one's personal control. With control comes reduced anxiety, and with reduced anxiety comes better migraine management.

For a more detailed discussion of biofeedback therapy for migraine management, see the next edition of the Newsletter.

Luke Patrick, Ph.D. is a licensed psychologist practicing in Portland, Oregon. He specializes in the psychological management of chronic illness, as well as biofeedback and sport psychology. For more information see [www.OptimotionSolutions.com](http://www.OptimotionSolutions.com).

### **World Headache Awareness Month 2006**

Who stole World Headache Awareness Month this year? It is always in September, but this year I have seen no announcement regarding it. The Migraine Trust has declared 3 September to 9 September to be Migraine Awareness Week. The Migraine Association of Ireland has declared September 11-17 to be Practical Migraine Action Week. The 12th of September is the European Migraine Day of Action.

MigraineSurvival believes in Headache Awareness anywhere and all the time! So, I hope it's still World Headache Awareness Month in the rest of the world as well. Google though I might, I cannot find anyone else in the world participating. My extensive research has, however, discovered that September is Fruit and Vegetable Month, and that October is World Chocolate Awareness Month. Who knew?

We think this service will be useful, and hope you choose to subscribe to this diary designed for optimal health promotion.

[For more information see...](#)

### **Quick Links...**

[HEADquartersMigraine.com](http://HEADquartersMigraine.com)

[MigraineSurvival.com](http://MigraineSurvival.com)

[Newsletter Archive](#)

[Join MigraineSurvival!](#)

**Join our mailing list!**

email: [info@headquartersmigraine.com](mailto:info@headquartersmigraine.com)

web: <http://www.headquartersmigraine.com>

[Forward email](#)

 **Safe Unsubscribe™**

This email was sent to [info@headquartersmigraine.com](mailto:info@headquartersmigraine.com), by

[info@headquartersmigraine.com](mailto:info@headquartersmigraine.com)

[Update Profile/Email Address](#) | Instant removal with [SafeUnsubscribe™](#) | [Privacy Policy](#).

Powered by



HEADquarters Migraine Management | 19001 SE McLoughlin Blvd. | Portland | OR | 97267