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HEALTH, BEAUTY & FITNESS

Skin deep with Samantha Altea

Stress Less

Your job has been a nightmare all week and you're not going to make your deadline. The kids are driving you nuts. Yesterday, your car broke down and it's going to cost an arm and a leg to fix.

It's raining cats and dogs, just as you light the barbecue for your mother's birthday party and what's more, you just got a leak in the roof of your house. You've got stress! Yes?

We all, at one time or another, get a little frazzled and have to deal with the stresses and strains of life. What might stress one person out may not faze another. But we've all got our limits and our own tolerance levels and though it *stresses me out* to say, we do all encounter stress from time to time. So, how to deal with it?

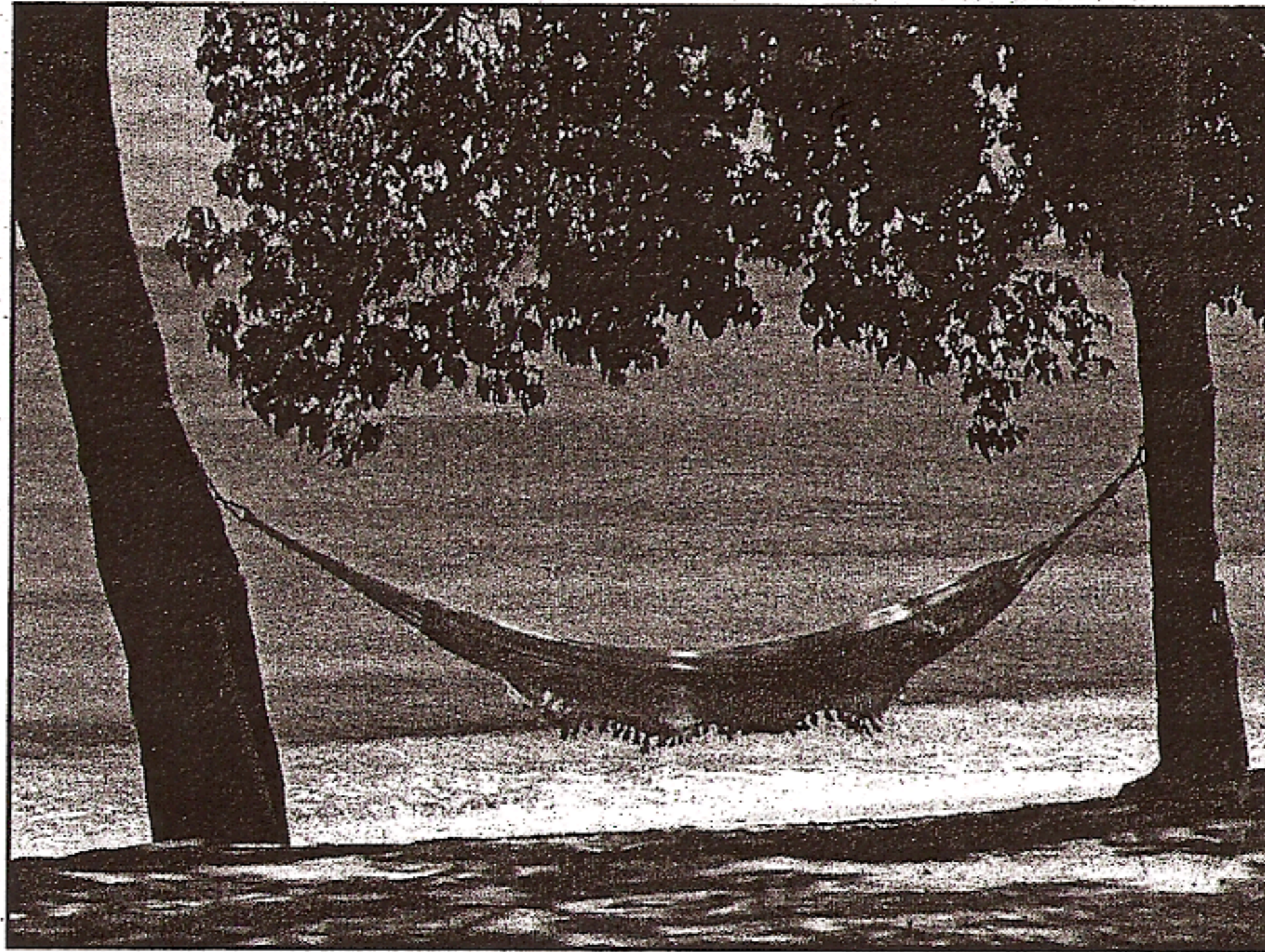
Yoga, meditation and relaxation techniques are always good ways to combat stresses. But those are the obvious fixes.

What about ones we might not immediately think about?

Cell phones, for one, are a source of stress for women, according to a study by Noelle Chesley, Ph.D., assistant professor of Wisconsin. Chesley says that if you're constantly connected to your cell phone, work worries are just at the other end to taunt you while at home and vice versa; when at work, family and social issues interrupt and stress you out via your cell. The study that Chesley did indicated that this type of cell interaction made women crazy and so she suggests communicating via e-mail rather than cell which, in the study, seemed to cause fewer stress triggers.

According to researchers in Ohio, whilst in a relationship, it's better to have "disagreements," (read: blow out fights) with your partner in a calmer way, using supportive language if possible. I know it's hard when you're at the end of your tether, believe me.....I know. But fighting in a constructive, calmer manner only benefits you. Couples who fight dirty have a 150% chance of more stress chemicals called cytokines. So count to ten, start again and try, try, try to remain calm.

Tie up your loose ends! Finishing up any odd jobs or chores that are constantly nagging in the back of your mind reduces stress, even if you aren't aware of the levels of stress they're causing. So much so that Michael Roizen, MD has put together research finding that nagging little issues like cleaning out your



closet, returning phone calls, etc, can be more stress inducing than something more major like losing your job, or a serious break up. So stop procrastinating and get spring cleaning.

Those of us with a sweet tooth will be thrilled to learn that eating something bad for you might not be as bad as you think. In moderation, goodies made with real sugar (not artificial sweeteners), reduces the stress hormone called glucocorticoid. So after Easter we should all be feeling A-okay. Three Easter

Bunnies later, I know I'm not as stressed.

Investing in an iPod or MP3 player can also reduce stress, as long as you can afford one. The reason? Soft music is proven to reduce your heart rate and blood pressure, but be warned, if you listen to faster songs, your heart rate and blood pressure may rise. So, to relax, fill your pod with soothing stress-relieving tunes and take it with you so you can plug in whenever you're plugged out!

Our sense of smell can also be a stress reliever. In particular, smelling peppermint or cinnamon was proven to decrease frustration, according to a study by a university in West Virginia. The study was carried out to see how smelling these two scents would affect road rage. So bring cinnamon or peppermint candies en route. It's also believed that they can aid at other stressful times. Cinnamon is said to calm people and make them happy. Therefore some stores even pump cinnam-

on into the atmosphereand it's always a good trick to have cinnamon, coffee, and baking smells in the air when you're trying to sell a house. So smell is beneficial in stress-relief, and additionally gives a pleasant feeling.

The sun is finally out, the sky is blue, temperatures are rising and the lazy hazy days of summer at the beach are just around the corner. So follow some of the above techniques so that in 2006 you'll learn to enjoy it and most importantly, stress less.

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