

A healthier today Rush Generations and a vital tomorrow



→ Your Health

Stress and Well-Being: Strengthening Resilience for Life



Rebecca Bunn, MA
Psychotherapist

What’s your definition of stress? **Rebecca Bunn, MA**, psychotherapist and manager of Rush’s Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program, offers a clear and practical one: “Stress is when demands on us exceed our resources.”

Stress shows up in the body in a variety of ways that you probably recognize, such as a racing heart, muscle tension, restlessness or trouble concentrating. In these moments, the nervous system releases hormones like cortisol and adrenaline, preparing the body for action in a “fight, flight or freeze” response.

These reactions evolved to help humans respond quickly to danger. As Bunn explains, “Stress was designed to help us switch on automatically in emergency situations, but it was also designed to be temporary.” Instead of turning off when the stressful moment passes, the nervous system can remain activated for long periods.

When this chronic stress continues over time, it places strain on your body and mind and can contribute to high blood pressure, heart disease, weakened immunity, digestive issues, memory problems and persistent fatigue or feeling overwhelmed.

While it’s not possible to eliminate stress entirely — “we’re always going to startle when we’re scared or break into a sweat when we’re nervous,” Bunn notes — it’s possible to build resilience at any age. Because the human brain has a lifelong capacity to change in response to experience, it’s possible to strengthen coping skills and emotional balance to lower the effects of stress and support your long-term well-being.

The role of mindfulness

You may not be able to control every challenge you face, but you can influence how you respond. A shift in perspective can lower both the intensity and the duration of your stress response. Mindfulness offers a practical way to make that shift. Bunn defines mindfulness as “a state of focused attention, combined with nonjudgmental observation of our inner and outer experiences.”

In practice, mindfulness means paying attention to the present moment — your thoughts, your body and your surroundings — without immediately reacting or judging. This pause creates space to reassess a situation. You may notice that a perceived threat feels less urgent than it first appeared, or that you have more options than you realized. Over time, this shift from reacting automatically to responding intentionally supports clearer thinking, steadier emotions and better problem-solving.

Tips for building resilience

You can begin building resilience to stress through small, consistent actions:

- Focus on your breath for a few minutes each day.
- Notice thoughts and physical sensations without judgment.
- Stay connected with others and maintain meaningful relationships.
- Engage in activities that bring purpose and enjoyment.

When you’re feeling immediate stress, bringing attention back to the present moment can help restore a sense of steadiness. Bunn offers a simple reminder: “When life gets overwhelming, be where your feet are.”

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Join us on July 1 for a discussion on mental health and aging. See the calendar insert for details.

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Chicago, IL 60612-3872
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Social Workers Help You Manage Healthcare With Confidence



Theo Lakshmanan, LSW
Social Worker

Managing healthcare on your own can sometimes feel overwhelming. Rush and other health systems offer a secret advantage that can help you every step of the way: a team of professional social workers.

Sometimes described as “empathy ambassadors,” social workers take the time to understand your background, values and daily realities to help make sure your care plan is both realistic and meaningful.

“Social workers are uniquely positioned to support health,” says **Theo Lakshmanan, LSW**, social worker and Rush Generations program coordinator. “We recognize that wellness is connected to our whole lives, including identities, experiences, social connections, communities and cultures, and we also have specialized training in psychology and behavior. By honoring each person’s strengths, needs and approaches to life, we can help develop and achieve realistic health goals that fit with everyday life.”

Social workers can be:

Your guides through a complex system.

Healthcare can feel like a maze, especially during times of illness or transition. Social workers help you and your family understand your options, coordinate care and navigate unfamiliar processes. They also advocate for you, ensuring that your voice, preferences and concerns are heard.

A bridge between you and your care team.

It’s common to feel alone in a new medical situation, but social workers can bridge the gap between you and your care providers. They support communication, clarify next steps and assist during transitions, such as returning home after a hospital stay.

Connectors to community resources.

If you need ongoing support at home or in your community, social workers can connect

you to essential resources like transportation, housing assistance, meal services and caregiver support. These connections can make a significant difference in maintaining your health and independence.

Providers of support for every stage of care.

Whether you’re managing a chronic condition, adjusting after a hospitalization or coping with mental health challenges, social workers can provide both short-term and long-term support that adapts to meet your needs.

Here to empower you and your family.

At the heart of social work is empowerment. Rather than simply directing care, social workers collaborate with you and your family to help you understand your options, overcome barriers and take an active role in your well-being.

With the right guidance and resources, navigating healthcare becomes less daunting and more manageable, allowing you to focus on what matters most: maintaining your health, independence and quality of life.

If you think you or a loved one could benefit from Rush social work services, you have a few options. If you receive care at Rush, talk with your provider. Rush also has a small social work team for people who don’t receive care at Rush: Call (800) 757-0202 and ask to connect with social care services.

Join us on Aug. 19 for a discussion on navigating the health care system. See the calendar insert for details.



Better Together: Take a Rush Generations Workshop

Staying active, connected and confident makes a meaningful difference in aging well. Rush Generations workshops are designed to support all three, with topics that include everything from preventing falls to managing chronic pain to improving strength. These community-based programs are led by trained facilitators — many of whom are older adults themselves — and supported by Rush social workers who make sure the programs are effective.

A key part of the experience is empowerment, says **Padraic Stanley, MSW, LCSW**, Rush Generations program manager. Workshops emphasize teaching skills and tools that can help you better manage your health and daily life. The benefits can be deeply personal, too. As one participant says, “This class made me realize that I have a voice,” describing how she gained confidence to advocate for herself.

You’ll also find a strong sense of connection in workshops. Another participant says, “We become friends... we call each other and ask, ‘Did you drink your water today?’” That encouragement can make healthy habits easier and more enjoyable to maintain.

Check out the calendar insert for a list of this quarter’s workshop offerings, and call (800) 757-0202 to reserve your spot.

Bone Loss and Aging: How to Reduce Your Risk



Sonali Khandelwal, MD
Rheumatologist

Throughout our lives, our bodies constantly break down old bone tissue and replace it with new bone. But for the 10 million Americans with osteoporosis, that balance is disrupted — bone forms too slowly, breaks down too quickly or both. As a result, bones become thin, fragile and more likely to fracture.

Whether you have osteoporosis or want to lower your risk, understanding the basics can help you protect your bone health over time.

Prevention should start early

Though osteoporosis most often appears after age 65, its roots can begin decades earlier. We build about 90% of our peak bone mass before age 20. The more bone we build during those early years, the better protected we are later in life. “Genes and race play a role, but lifestyle and environmental factors are just as important,” says **Sonali Khandelwal, MD**, a Rush rheumatologist. Diet, physical activity, certain medical conditions and even medications can all affect how strong our bones become — and remain — over time.

Calcium and vitamin D, found in foods like milk, yogurt and fortified products, are essential for building and maintaining bone. This is especially important during childhood and adolescence.

However, nutrients alone aren’t enough. Healthy lifestyle habits play a major role in preventing bone loss:

- Limit alcohol (no more than one drink daily for women, two for men).
- Avoid smoking, or quit if you smoke.
- Incorporate weight-bearing exercise, such as walking, strength training or aerobics.

Like muscles, bones grow stronger in response to stress. Regular weight-bearing exercise — ideally, at least 30 minutes three times a week — helps maintain bone density and strength.

Screening is essential

One of the biggest challenges with osteoporosis is that it can go unnoticed for years. Many people don’t realize they have it until they experience a fracture.

That’s why screening is so important. Many experts recommend bone density testing for women over 65, whose thinner bones and declining estrogen levels increase risk.

“Men aren’t usually thought of as high-risk, but osteoporosis-related mortality is actually higher in men,” Khandelwal notes. Men should begin screening around age 70 — or earlier if they have risk factors such as family history, certain medications or chronic conditions.

If you’re unsure about your risk, talk with your doctor about whether a bone density scan is appropriate. Early detection can make a significant difference in slowing bone loss.

Even if a bone density test shows lower-than-normal bone mass, it doesn’t automatically mean you have osteoporosis. A condition called osteopenia describes bone density that’s below normal but not low enough for an osteoporosis diagnosis.

People with osteopenia are at higher risk of developing osteoporosis but may not need medication right away. Instead, doctors often recommend lifestyle changes and regular monitoring. Follow-up bone density scans every couple of years can help track changes and guide treatment decisions.



Treatment and lifestyle changes make a difference

While there’s no cure for osteoporosis, it can be treated effectively. “For more severe bone loss, there are medications that can actually help build bone,” Khandelwal explains. The best treatment depends on your individual risk factors and overall health, so working with a specialist is important.

And the same habits that help prevent osteoporosis — regular exercise, proper nutrition and avoiding smoking and excess alcohol — also help prevent the condition from worsening after diagnosis.

“Don’t wait until you have a fracture,” Khandelwal says. “Bone health is all about prevention and early screening. Talk to your healthcare provider about the steps you can take to protect your bones as you age.”

Join us on July 15 for a discussion on bone health. See the calendar insert for details.

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(800) 757-0202



PLEASE NOTE: All physicians featured in this publication are on the medical staff of Rush. Some of the physicians are in private practice and, as independent practitioners, are not employees or agents of Rush. Rush is an academic health system comprising Rush University Medical Center, Rush Copley Medical Center and Rush Oak Park Hospital.

4 Ways Tai Chi Helps Prevent Falls

September is Falls Prevention Month — a great time to think about your balance and stability. Tai chi offers a gentle, structured way to build strength and confidence while reducing your risk of falls. Its slow, controlled movements can be practiced standing or seated, making it accessible for any fitness level.

- 1. Improves body awareness:** Tai chi trains you to notice where your body is in space, helping you stay steady and avoid missteps.
- 2. Enhances balance and alignment:** Practicing proper posture — like standing with your feet hip-width apart — creates a stronger, more stable base.

- 3. Strengthens weight shifting:** Controlled transitions from one foot to another teach you how to move safely without losing balance.

- 4. Encourages soft, flexible joints:** Gentle, continuous motion keeps joints loose, reducing stiffness that can lead to instability.

With guided practice and consistent repetition, these techniques can become second nature, helping you make everyday movements safer and more controlled. Keep an eye on upcoming editions of the Rush Generations calendar for our Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention workshop.

**Join us on Sept. 23 for a discussion on preventing falls.
See the calendar insert for details.**

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Summer 2026 Free Health and Aging Events

The following lectures will be held virtually. You can view them online or listen to them via phone. Lectures typically last about one hour. For updates on Rush Generations programs, sign up for our emails at bit.ly/RushGenerations.



To join these lectures online,

visit the Rush Generations YouTube page at the time of the event:
cutt.ly/RushGenYouTube.



To dial in via phone (audio only):

Call **(312) 626-6799** at the time of the event and enter **meeting ID 413 655 0125#**.

July

Mental Health and Aging

Wednesday, July 1, 1 p.m.

Emotional well-being is a crucial part of healthy aging. This lecture will cover common mental health concerns in older adults and ways to cope, build resilience and support overall well-being. You'll also learn when it may be time to seek additional support.

Bone Health

Wednesday, July 15, 1 p.m.

What can you do today to protect your bones for the future? Hear from experts how bone health often changes with age, with discussion of risks like osteopenia and osteoporosis. You'll also learn simple ways to support bone strength through nutrition, movement and everyday habits, along with tips for prevention and early detection.

August

Immune Health and Aging

Wednesday, Aug. 5, 1 p.m.

As we get older, our immune systems naturally change, which can make it harder to fight off illness. Join us to learn how aging affects immunity, what you can do to stay protected and how to support a strong immune system year-round.

Navigating the Healthcare System

Wednesday, Aug. 19, 1 p.m.

Healthcare can feel complex and overwhelming, especially when you're trying to make the right decisions for yourself or a loved one. This lecture will break down the basics of the healthcare system, offer tips for communicating with your care team and share resources for understanding coverage and making confident, informed decisions.

September

Medicare 101

Wednesday, Sept. 2, 1 p.m.

Whether you're new to Medicare or already enrolled and want to be sure you're getting the most out of the program, join us to learn about your benefits. We'll share the latest updates on the program's coverage of healthcare and prescription drugs.

Falls Prevention Awareness

Wednesday, Sept. 23, 1 p.m.

Falls are the No. 1 reason for emergency room visits and hospitalization for older adults. In this special National Falls Awareness Month program from Schaalman Senior Voices and Rush Generations, experts will share ways to prevent falls, strategies for improving your balance and tips on staying safe during the upcoming winter months.

For updates from Rush Generations, sign up for our emails at bit.ly/RushGenerations.

Workshops

This quarter's offerings are all held in person.

For all events, please call (800) 757-0202 to pre-register.

For updates from Rush Generations, sign up for our emails at bit.ly/RushGenerations.

Workshops

Take Charge of Your Health

Tuesdays, July 14 to Aug. 25

9:30 a.m. to noon

If you're living with ongoing mental and/or physical health conditions, you can benefit from this workshop that offers skills and support for managing your health.

Sankofa Village Wellness Center
4305 W. Madison St.
Chicago, IL 60624

Fit & Strong

Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays

Aug. 17 to Oct. 9

1 to 2:30 p.m.

For people with limited leg mobility, this program combines strength training, aerobic walking and education to improve balance, mobility and lower body strength while reducing pain and anxiety.

Johnston R. Bowman Building
Ann Byron Waud Resource Center
710 S. Paulina St., Suite 438
Chicago, IL 60612

A Matter of Balance

Tuesdays and Thursdays

Sept. 22 to Oct. 15

10 a.m. to noon

This workshop can help you lower your risk of falls, build strength and balance and overcome the fear of falling.

Sankofa Village Wellness Center
4305 W. Madison St.
Chicago, IL 60624

Connect with Rush Generations at our partner City of Chicago senior centers

You can join a Rush Generations wellness program or meet with a Rush social worker, nurse, dietitian or pharmacist at these centers. For schedules, call Rush Generations at **(800) 757-0202** or contact the center nearest you.

Austin

5071 W. Congress Parkway
(312) 743-1538

Central West

2102 W. Ogden Ave.
(312) 746-5300

Kelvyn Park

2715 N. Cicero Ave.
(312) 744-3799

Southeast

1767 E. 79th St.
(312) 747-0189

Southwest

6117 S. Kedzie Ave.
(312) 747-0440

West Town

1613 W. Chicago Ave.
(312) 743-1016

These centers and all City of Chicago senior centers also offer lunch, activities and community connection Monday through Friday.

For more information, call the City of Chicago senior services help line at (312) 744-4016, Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Both Rush University Medical Center and Rush Oak Park Hospital comply with applicable federal civil rights laws and do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability or sex.

Español (Spanish)

ATENCIÓN: si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987).

Polski (Polish)

UWAGA: jeżeli mówisz po polsku, możesz skorzystać z bezpłatnej pomocy językowej. Zadzwoń pod numer 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987).

繁體中文 (Chinese)

注意: 如果您使用繁體中文, 您可以免費獲得語言援助服務。請致電 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987)

한국어 (Korean)

주의: 한국어를 사용하시는 경우, 언어 지원 서비스를 무료로 이용하실 수 있습니다. 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987)번으로 전화해 주십시오.

Tagalog

PAUNAWA: Kung nagsasalita ka ng Tagalog, maaari kang gumamit ng mga serbisyo ng tulong sa wika nang walang bayad. Tumawag sa 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987).

العربية (Arabic)

ملاحظة: إذا كنت تتحدث اللغة العربية، فإن خدمات المساعدة اللغوية متاحة لك مجاناً. اتصل بالرقم 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987).

Русский (Russian)

ВНИМАНИЕ: Если вы говорите на русском языке, то вам доступны бесплатные услуги перевода. Звоните по телефону 1-312-563-2987 (телетайп: 1-312-563-2987).

ગુજરાતી (Gujarati)

સૂચના: જો તમે ગુજરાતી બોલતા હો, તો નિ:શુલ્ક ભાષા સહાય સેવાઓ તમારા માટે ઉપલબ્ધ છે. ફોન કરો 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987).

اردو (Urdu)

خبردار: اگر آپ اردو بولتے ہیں، تو آپ کو زبان کی مدد کی خدمات مفت میں دستیاب ہیں۔ کال کریں 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987).

Tiếng Việt (Vietnamese)

CHÚ Ý: Nếu bạn nói Tiếng Việt, có các dịch vụ hỗ trợ ngôn ngữ miễn phí dành cho bạn. Gọi số 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987).

Italiano (Italian)

ATTENZIONE: In caso la lingua parlata sia l'italiano, sono disponibili servizi di assistenza linguistica gratuiti. Chiamare il numero 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987).

हिंदी (Hindi)

ध्यान दें: यदि आप हिंदी बोलते हैं तो आपके लिए मुफ्त में भाषा सहायता सेवाएं उपलब्ध हैं। 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987) पर कॉल करें।

Français (French)

ATTENTION: Si vous parlez français, des services d'aide linguistique vous sont proposés gratuitement. Appelez le 1-312-563-2987 (ATS: 1-312-563-2987).

Ελληνικά (Greek)

ΠΡΟΣΟΧΗ: Αν μιλάτε ελληνικά, στη διάθεσή σας βρίσκονται υπηρεσίες γλωσσικής υποστήριξης, οι οποίες παρέχονται δωρεάν. Καλέστε 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987).

Deutsch (German)

ACHTUNG: Wenn Sie Deutsch sprechen, stehen Ihnen kostenlos sprachliche Hilfsdienstleistungen zur Verfügung. Rufnummer: 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987).