

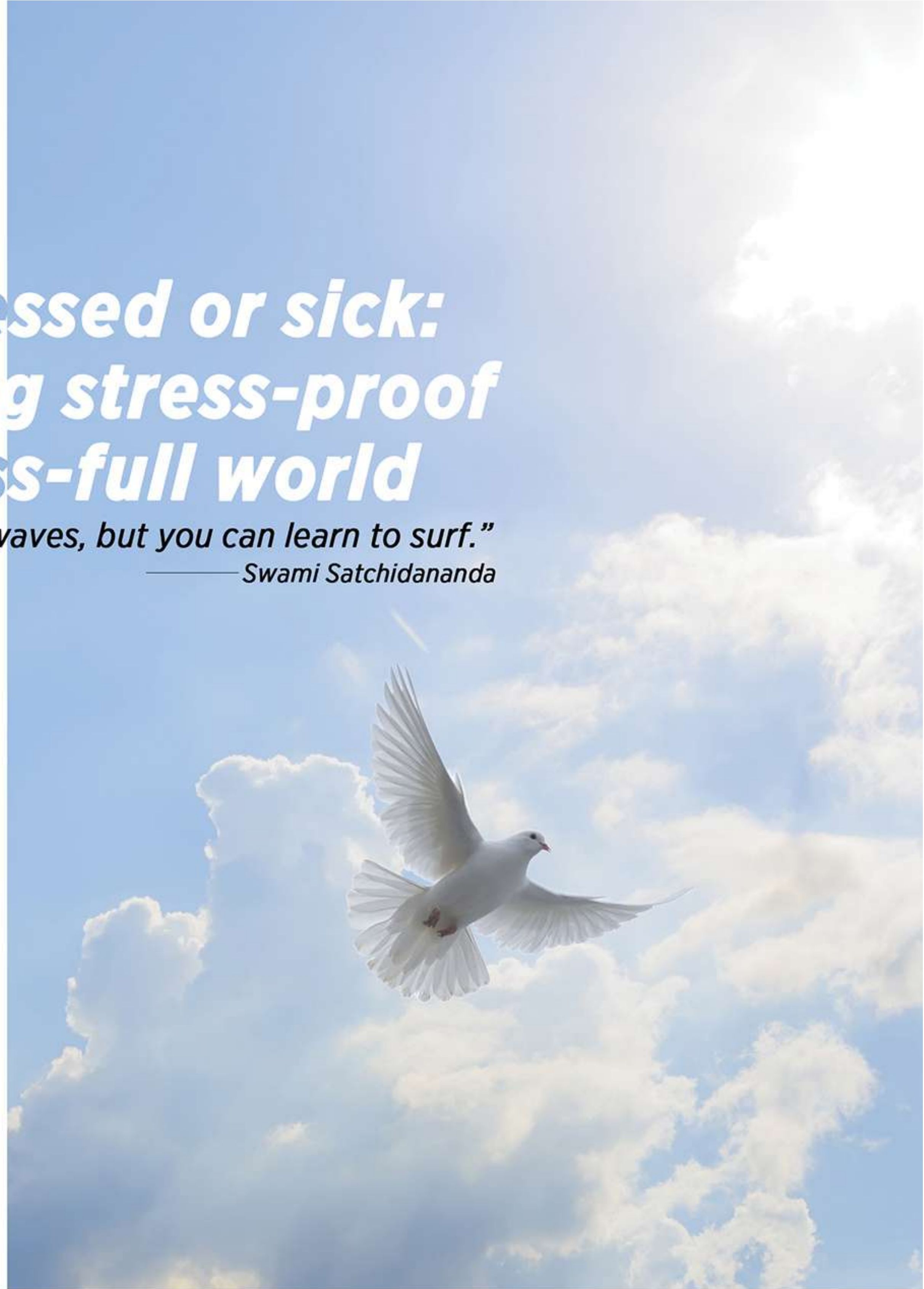
# *Am I stressed or sick: Becoming stress-proof in a stress-full world*

*“You can’t stop the waves, but you can learn to surf.”*

——— *Swami Satchidananda*

**E**veryday life is accelerating at a disorienting speed that is unprecedented in human history. People are obsessed with time and overloaded with internet induced addictive multi-tasking, 24/7 breaking news, social media triggered intrapsychic, interpersonal and political conflicts, and tailor-made on-line marketing and shopping. This collective digital attention crisis put them in a constant fight or flight stress response that the human brain misinterprets as threat and danger. This is not to speak of common personal worries about work, finance, health, family and relationship issues. Although a tolerable level of stress is motivating, living in a nervous world is making our nervous system truly nervous and, for some, ready to crash.

Unsurprisingly, people have reported high levels of stress and related somatic, cognitive, emotional and behavioral symptoms. When chronic or severe, stress can jeopardize brain function and produce clinical anxiety, panic, depression, explosive anger, premenstrual dysphoria, addiction, eating, and other mental and chronic physical diseases, especially in biologically and psychosocially predisposed individuals. The stressed brain tricks us since mental health problems can masquerade as serious physical disease and lead to excessive bodily testing and self-monitoring, especially in this era of the digitally quantified self. Luckily, mental health problems are treatable even if they have existed for a long time, though they are under-recognized and under-treated.



This presentation will summarize how stress shapes the brain and body systems and explain how “feeling stressed” and “stressed out” differ from clinical level “break-down”. Although external stressors and mind spam are hard to change in modern existence, we can modify our reactions to stress since the brain exhibits neuroplasticity. Accordingly, the best way to combat stress is to develop resilience using methods that can be practiced easily, perhaps as often as one checks the smartphone. I will provide tips on how to (1) do breathing and walking exercise that nourishes the brain rather than just improves cardiac fitness, (2) tune up our master brain clock and hence other circadian rhythms, (3) take digital vacation to “waste” time with real people and in the natural world, (4) eat to keep our gut bugs and hence brain networks healthy, (5) think flexibly to edit the world, (6) reclaim self-awareness and acceptance, (7) dream a dream, not a dream house and, when the above no longer work, (8) seek the latest and most effective treatment like cognitive behavioral therapy and/or pharmacotherapy, and (9) learn what wellness means after recovery from one’s unique stressed-out experience.

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# 我是受壓

## 還是生病？

活在長期高壓的世界，要讓身心能輕裝上陣

**現**代社會的生活節奏以前所未見的速度不斷加快，急促得令人迷失方向。日常生活講求分秒必爭，加上互聯網無處不在，在資訊超載的環境，一心多用已成常態。廿四小時無間斷播放的真假新聞報導，社交媒體觸發的內心衝突、引發複雜的人際和政治紛爭，以至網絡上充斥著按個人喜好度身訂造的宣傳推廣和網購廣告……接收過量資訊令大腦壓力水平顯著增加。

這種「數位化注意力危機」使人體持續處於「作戰或逃跑」反應（fight or flight response）的狀態，讓大腦接收錯誤訊息，誤以為長期面臨威脅或處於危機。另一方面，個人對工作、財政、健康、家庭和感情上的種種憂慮，亦會額外加重心理負擔。雖然適量的壓力可以化為推動力，使人進步向前，但壓力過高會導致神經系統繃緊，甚至令人瀕臨崩潰。

在佈滿壓力的氛圍下，很多市民都出現不少身體、認知、情緒與行為方面的相關症狀及學會不健康的生活習慣。若壓力嚴重或長時間持續，就有機會損害腦部及其他生理功能，引起一連串問題，包括：焦慮、驚恐、抑鬱、暴怒、成癮行為、經前煩躁、厭食、暴食，以及其他精神和慢性身體疾病。而本身已有潛在生理和心理問題的人士，更會面臨較高的發病風險。值得注意的是，精神健康問題可引發顯著的身體症狀，這令受壓力影響而出現身體不適的人士會為了確認病因，接受許多不必要的體檢和干預措施。

幸好，雖然很多精神健康問題仍然未得到足夠關注和適切處理，不過，即使是久未處理的問題，都是可以治療或治癒的。

是次研討會上，精神科專科醫生李誠教授將會講解壓力如何影響大腦和身體其他系統，以及「受壓」跟臨床水平的「崩潰」之間的區別。



「你雖停不住浪，卻可以學會衝浪。」  
——沙吉難陀大師

雖然在數碼化的高速生活時代，資訊爆炸與壓力是難以完全避免的，但我們可以因應外在環境，憑著大腦的可塑性自我調適（neuroplasticity），學習應對壓力的新策略。採取簡單易學的方法，透過恆常實踐，逐步提升抗壓能力（resilience）。

李教授將於會上講解各樣技巧，涵蓋以下內容：

- ★ 以深呼吸及散步來滋養腦功能；
- ★ 每日調較自己的腦時鐘，從而調節其它身體內的生理時鐘；
- ★ 度個數碼假期，「花」時間與真實的人面談及交往；
- ★ 透過健康飲食，增強大腦及腸道微生物組的功能；
- ★ 以靈活的思考編輯世界；
- ★ 學習重拾自我覺察的能力，接納自我；
- ★ 追求夢想，而不只是發夢「上車」。

如果以上技巧都不再有效，講座還會講解以下資訊：

- ★ 如何尋求最新最有效的療法，如認知行為治療及/或較少副作用的藥物治療；
- ★ 從自己壓力重重的獨特體驗恢復過來後，了解健康的人生其實意味著甚麼。

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