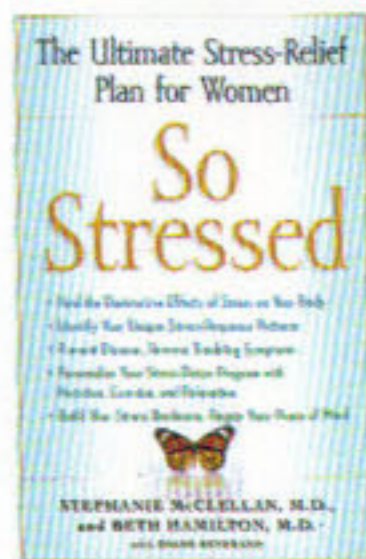


Lavender Pick of the Month

Resting in the River

She's been nominated for four Oscars for her film work and an Emmy for her turn on "Frasier," but for the last several years, actress Marsha Mason has been focusing on one of her most interesting roles of all: organic farmer. In 1992, Mason purchased a large parcel of land in New Mexico's Chama River Valley, then set about turning the overgrazed acres into a viable working farm. Thanks to her dedication, the land eventually began producing a variety of organic herbs and flowers—so many that in 2005, Mason launched the Resting in the River product line made with these healing ingredients. Developed by Mason and Albuquerque-based Certified Master Herbalist, Mitch Coven, the compact line features items the actress herself felt that she needed, from herbal throat sprays and immune boosters to rich body butters and salves. All use organic ingredients like calendula, St. John's Wort, and arnica. One of our favorites is the Healing Hydration Mist, which comes in two scents and a very portable spray size (perfect for the plane or purse). The lavender option refreshes, soothes, and protects skin with calming lavender, toning and healing aloe-vera and immune-boosting spilanthus. www.restingintheriver.com

A Stress-Busting Bible

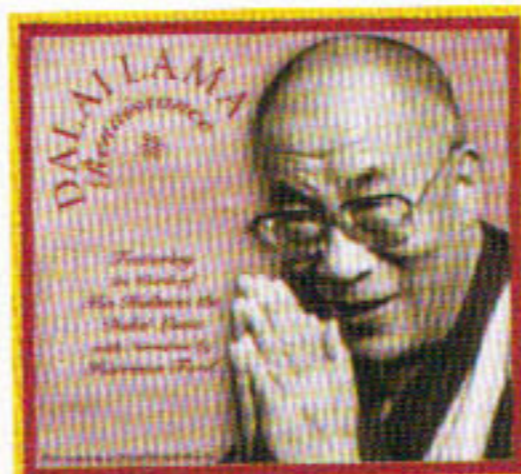


Just some of the sobering facts revealed in the introduction of *So Stressed: The Ultimate Stress-Relief Plan for Women* (Free Press, \$26). Forty-four percent of adults suffer adverse health effects from stress; 95 percent of all physician office visits are for stress-related ailments; and stress is linked to the six leading causes of death (heart disease, cancer, lung ailments, accidents, liver disease, and suicide). None of this came as a surprise to California-based

OB-GYNs Stephanie McClellan and Beth Hamilton, who hear a constant refrain of "I'm so stressed!" from their patients, and see firsthand how stress can cause everything from poor appetite and chronic pain to a decreased libido. In their book, the doctors explore the physiological and psychological effects of stress, and offer useful tips on dealing with it—from nutritional ways to "eat for calm" and stress-busting exercises to relaxation techniques for the muscles and the mind. The experts say that most women fall into one of four "stress types" (detailed chapters help readers identify theirs), so the offered programs are specifically tailored to each one. Peppered with real-life patient stories, interesting information, and practical, easy-to-implement programs, this is a solid stress-busting bible.

Music to Our Ears

The companion to the award-winning documentary of the same name, the "Dalai Lama Renaissance" soundtrack features instrumental pieces from Tibet, India, Iran, and North and South America, interspersed with inspirational sayings by His Holiness, the Dalai Lama (and, in a couple of places, narration by Harrison Ford). The result is a unique mix of musical styles—from Sufi poetry and monks chanting to Afro-Cuban rhythms—that's both enlightening and deeply peaceful. www.limitlessky.net



My Green Life

At Rest with Randi Ragan



"It all starts with the question, 'How am I going to treat myself?'" says Randi Ragan, founder of the LA-based GreenBliss EcoSpa, when asked about living a green life. "Once we recognize that everything—from beauty to relaxation—flows from our inner health, it makes sense to live in the cleanest way possible and pay attention to what we're putting in and on our bodies. But," she continues, "it's also about intention. The goal should be to transform into somebody with a purpose, and when that happens, there's a wonderful ripple effect. Practicing 'enlightened self-care' ultimately becomes about something bigger, and affects how you live, work, and interact with your community."

For Ragan, a seasoned yoga and meditation instructor (and former documentary filmmaker), the transformation took place several years ago when, already "heading down a green path," she noticed that there weren't many places in Los Angeles at the time that put an eco-slant on wellness and spa services. After looking into the idea of opening a spa, she decided to forgo a traditional brick-and-mortar location in favor of bringing the lifestyle directly to her clients. Catering to individuals, groups and even corporations, the 100-percent mobile (and celebrity favorite) GreenBliss EcoSpa offers single services like massage, facials, yoga, and alternative therapies, and also organizes green spa parties and business events using all-natural products.

As her business took off, Ragan (who's married to a massage therapist) slowly made green-minded changes in her own life, replacing the flooring in her house, switching to natural fibers

and non-toxic cleaning products, driving a converted-diesel car, and creating a pesticide-free kitchen garden. With her clients, though, Ragan encourages making what changes you can "in the simplest way possible, because in simplicity is beauty."

What are some tips you give clients on relaxation and stress-relief?

Most stress has us spinning out of ourselves—stress happens when we've let someone or a situation take over—so circle back to you. To help work through an immediate situation, understand how to manage your breathing, and incorporate some quick acupuncture and self-massage techniques, like tapping on the indentation between the throat and the chest, that help promote calm and relaxation.

Any lifestyle suggestions?

The one that most clients fight me on is to be truly alone for some part of each day—no phone, no email, no music. You have to be alone with yourself, because it's in those moments that transformation takes place, but when you are avoiding that relationship with yourself and filling life with noise, the message can get lost. For me, the best place to be alone is in nature. Nature is our last refuge, and to be in it is restorative. Get out and connect with it in some small way—a hike, a walk, whatever. If you never live in nature, why should you care about saving it?

Along the same lines, if you have sleep issues, unplug before bed—don't watch TV, read emails, or check in on the mayhem of the world. Instead, read poetry, look at the stars or city lights, and really prepare your mind for sleep. www.greenblissecospa.com