

COMBAT STRESS

The Healthy Lifestyle Way



LARRY LEWIS

By making adjustments to your lifestyle you will create natural defences against stress.

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My Sister's Life meant Something

I love you Sis!

I dedicate this book to my sister Janette,
it is through you that I find my passion and
desire for healthy lifestyles.

It is you that gave me the motivation and
desire to write this book and I want you to
know your life meant something. Also I
dedicate this to all those other people that
have given me support and assistance
through the troubled and traumatic times
of my life. You stood by me, supported me
and showed faith in me.

To all of you I want to say thank you.
To my two daughters I want you to know I
love you with all of my heart, you have all
played a part in making this book possible.
To Denise my wife, thank you for always
being there, through thick and thin.

For you Sis!

Your life was never meant to be so tough,
You eventually reached the point where things got too rough.
You were never able to combat stress,

Or get away from the debilitating distress.

Stress took away everything you could have been,
Left you struggling and got you into the wrong scene.
Let me tell you, your life meant something more,
And this book will make the difference, giving you the door.

If my love for you could have changed the way things turned out,
You would have lived on and achieved so much no doubt.
You always knew that I was there for you,
That I always cared; that I always loved you.

My love for you couldn't change the way things became,
It couldn't heal your wounds or stop your pain.
Again I say, that your life surely meant something,
My love will never let me give up or do nothing.

Even though you could no longer stay,
You're in my mind night and day.
I'm thankful for the time you were here,
Your life surely meant something my dear.

Rest in Peace my darling sister, Jan
You made the difference and I'm your biggest fan.
The book now gives meaning to your life
And those that read it will eliminate their strife.

Larry
Your Brother, through whom you helped write this book.

INTRODUCTION

Who am I

I have spent nearly 20 years of my working life in the Health and Fitness Industry. In addition having for many years studied personal development, I then qualified as a Life Coach. My philosophy is simple – the mind and body are connected, they both have to work well and together to achieve success. I am the author and creator of a Healthy Lifestyle Plan which has helped hundreds of people change their lives and bodies forever.

There was a time in my life when I struggled with stress. At that point in my life, when I was in my mid 20's I suffered from post traumatic stress disorder. This followed events, which I have no need to explain, not because I now can't deal with them, but because 'the past doesn't make the future' and it is not the events that are any longer important, but what they brought to me afterwards.

My approach to stress management is very different from many others, in that I do not believe that we need to spend time remembering, analysing or going over the past to enable us to come to terms with it, I will simply show you what to do to enable you to think differently about it. It is not the past that is important, but the present and the future.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a psychological disorder resulting from extremely stressful or life-threatening events. These experiences I relived through nightmares and flashbacks. I had trouble sleeping and felt detached from others. The effects on my daily existence were major.

I was very lucky to be surrounded by very caring people who were prepared to give me the necessary time and to patiently show me how to combat this. They did not force me to relive events, they just helped show me tools and

techniques that enabled me to combat stress and rebuild my life, and although these events will stay with me for the rest of my life, as comparable events would do for anyone, they no longer could disempower me, and they are the reason I acquired the skills to deal with all stressful events that would then come into my life. When urgently required, other strategies came to me, providing more resources to ensure that stress never again became an overwhelming factor in my life.

I have written this book in order to share my knowledge with you and to introduce you to practical, easily applied tools and techniques that will help you and others in your life - friends, family members and work colleagues, develop stress combating skills.

My journey to understanding, developing and using these myself has been every bit as demanding as yours, all those frustrations, and bad turns that you have suffered, rest assured I have probably experienced many similar. But believe me this journey, and the abilities it will provide you with, is worth the effort.

A very big turning point in my life came when my sister died suddenly. Her death had a profound meaning for me and caused me to take stock and reach out for a new life, with a very major purpose.

On reflecting on the death of my sister, who had been so important to the development of me as a person, I began to think about the effects of stress and the impact it had had on her life. She had suffered from it since she was about 16 years old.

Janette (Jan), my sister, died suddenly at the age of 48 on the 7th September, 2001, when according to a post mortem, her heart just stopped working. Ultimately this was caused by her succumbing to the impact of stress throughout

her adult life, and an addiction to Valium, the drug that had been prescribed for her aged 18 to combat this stress. This loss of my sister to the ravages of stress has inspired my purpose in life - dedication to healthy living and combating stress. I set out to ensure MY SISTERS LIFE MEANT SOMETHING! If I could help one person deal with stress, whatever the origins of the stressors, then I was fulfilling this objective. My life took off in a rewarding direction. It was a life changing experience for me, and ultimately led to me writing this book.

My Sister was stunning. She was a 'leggy' model, actress and dancer. She had much success- Made it to Hollywood, appearing in many films. But whatever successes she gained, she never was able to combat stress, or get away from its debilitating effects. These effects of stress and her addiction to Valium took away everything she was, and prevented her from being everything she could have been. Her life was not only cut short, but every member of her family was affected in some way.

To live through your own sister's descent into an addiction to prescription drugs, her constant battle to break out, culminating in her premature death, are events which live with you forever, and for me, created an implacable determination to make a difference to other people whose lives I touch.

I now knew that I had to do something towards helping others tackle stress, so I set out on a journey to bring the tools that I had been taught to rescue myself, to help people learn about stress, and show them ways to manage it in their life, as well as enabling them to create healthy lifestyles. I wanted to contribute this knowledge to everyone. All around me I saw people that I knew would benefit.

There is nothing new in my techniques, they have been around for a long time. All I've tried to do is keep them as simple as possible. I have invented nothing. These are those that were taught to me all those years ago. Of course I have

acquired more knowledge, through the reading of many personal development books by so many great authors, and attending seminars and workshops. I read and studied everything I could, and spoke to many people who possessed great knowledge.

Too many people are increasingly disillusioned by their feelings of hopelessness, struggling with so many demands and pressures, for which they have no strategies to deal with. They often feel that life seems so unfair. They work hard, they do their best; but nothing seems to change. Too often these individuals are too ready to blame others or exonerate themselves.

My intention with this book is to provide you with the tools and techniques to improve the quality of your life, bringing you positive results. But knowledge alone is not power, it needs to be properly applied for it to be truly powerful. Whoever you are, whatever your circumstances, this book is for you. You will make a difference to your life if you apply the knowledge contained within.

In the twenty years I have been working actively in the fitness industry, I have never ceased to be amazed by the things I have seen and heard in relation to lifestyles that people have come to accept as the norm when, in fact, their quality of life is far less than they deserve or should expect, no matter how it has been occasioned.

Too often people who have been diagnosed with such conditions as arthritis, rheumatism, diabetes, depression, back problems or stress, seem to immediately start their descent down an imaginary slippery slope. They see, feel and believe their life to be on a descending spiral.

To see a 40 year-old man diagnosed with diabetes, age 20 years overnight is a shocking thing to witness.

To see a fit 50 year-old successful businessman, with an active social life, a mortgage-free perfect home, two wonderful children succeeding in their own lives, being diagnosed with clinical depression, losing his way overnight, and seeing his entire body posture and state of mind crumble, is an exasperating sight.

To see a beautiful 42 year old woman, a single mother of three, and a phenomenal business woman, become physically and emotionally overwhelmed following the death of her brother and father within a year, where her whole life lost meaning, and becoming hostile toward those people to whom she had been close, and tormented daily by an agonized yearning for those she lost. She was my final symbol, that now it was my time to combat stress – the healthy lifestyle way. The old soldier now had to take up this path, to save someone very special in his life, a lifelong friend.

My passions have led me to take everything I have learned and experienced and to publicise it through my writings and my speaking engagements to people who need to find answers to prevent stress gaining mastery over them any longer.

It is my deepest wish that from this point in time you combat stress, the healthy lifestyle way!

This book has been written to share with you the information, strategies, philosophies and skills that can help you to empower yourself to completely change your life.

Getting you Started

We're all stressed! It's a consequence of modern-day life. No one lives without stress. There are so many different sources of stress in the world today. This stress can rob you of energy, health, productivity and happiness. You cannot afford to allow stress to sabotage your well-being or quality of life. Stress seems to be mounting on you from all sides - job security, workload, financial worries, family stresses and strains, relationships, illness, day-to-day activities and many other sources of stress. Your ability to cope is being tested to the full.

Symptoms can be psychological, physical, or both. Some examples that you may relate to are: irritability, lack of concentration, worry, migraines, overeating, not eating enough, not sleeping well, lower back pain, rashes, an upset stomach or ulcers, tension headaches, high blood pressure, and chest pains, to name but a few. Stress can also lower your resistance to disease, and affect how well your body responds to sickness and how well you recover from minor setbacks.

This book aims to support you in taking more control of your stress level. I have written it as a self-help manual that you can delve into at any time to find answers to help you in dealing with the demands and pressures in your life. I bring it to you knowing that you will positively benefit from handling stress more effectively in your daily life. I am the perfect example of how, once you learn to handle stress, and develop skills to enhance your defence against problems, your life changes so much for the better.

I invite you to flick through the pages to get a feeling for the range of topics and techniques. Something may stand out that can help you get results quickly. Select and use the parts that you feel are important to you now that can meet your present needs.

As you look at each section, ask yourself "What will this part do to help me?" or "How can I use this to handle my stress?"

Certain ideas will appeal to you, others won't. You may love some ideas, and hate others. But you will find tools and techniques that offer you solutions and provide weapons in your armoury against the ravaging effects of stress.

This book gives many practical, effective ways to deal with stress. Implement one idea or implement them all; either way, your stress level is sure to decrease. And that is what this book is all about.

So it is your responsibility to reduce the amount of stress in your life. Whether or not you take the time you need for yourself depends on no one but you. Understand that the amount of stress in your life will not go away unless you make changes to what you do and adopt a healthier lifestyle as well as utilising some new techniques to get in control of your mind, body and soul.



'Stress is the trash of modern life - we all generate it but if you don't dispose of it properly, it will pile up and overtake your life'. ~ Danzae Pace

SECTION 1:
ABOUT STRESS AND THE
EFFECTS OF STRESS

About Stress And The Effects Of Stress

Combat stress – The Healthy Lifestyle way will show you:

- What stress is
- How stress affects your health and lifestyle
- How to effectively deal with stress using simple and effective techniques to bring about positive health benefits, both mentally and physically.

I will help you diagnose and understand the stress in your life, identify your stressors and assess your readiness to make changes. Then I will provide you with methods, tools and techniques for you to take and develop a systematic approach to combat the stress in your life.

Stress is a major cause of ill health – so the prevention and management of stress is a must-have skill.

Unfortunately, stress is playing a major part in today's growing health crisis. Here are a few of the health conditions that have in part been attributed to stress:

- Heart Disease
- High Blood Pressure
- Strokes
- Diabetes
- Cancer
- Depression

- Anxiety
- Chronic Fatigue
- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Low resistance to infection

So do you think your health is affected by stress? Perhaps your pressures are building, you are starting to struggle, and beginning to worry about the effects stress is having on you. You have demonstrated by your reading of this that you are no longer willing to leave stress unchecked in your life or allow it to harm either your body or mind. Today, I want you to make a commitment, to do what is necessary to combat stress, and that will entail making changes in your life and how you deal with things, from this moment, before change is forced upon you through ill health.

Managing stress whilst implementing a healthy lifestyle will not only improve your life, it will help you become fitter and healthier, as well as enable you to cope better with the stressors in your life. I know that is what you want.

‘Combat stress – The Healthy Lifestyle way’ will enable you to make a fresh start towards a healthier, less stressed and happier you, giving you ideas and resources for managing and preventing day-to-day stress, and helping you to improve your life.



‘If you ask what is the single most important key to longevity, I would have to say it is avoiding worry, stress and tension. And if you didn't ask me, I'd still have to say it’. ~ George F. Burns

I invite you to discover new ways to face those challenges that life's stressors are sending your way. I promise you that physically banging your head against the wall, or putting your fist through the door, are not effective stress relievers. Read through this book, and you are certain to find solutions which will work for you.

Personal Benefits from Combat Stress

- Increased Ability To Relax
- Increased Ability To Handle Stress & Tension
- Improved Physical Health
- Improved Mental Health
- Improved Energy & Concentration
- Improved Nutrition & Digestion
- Reduced Risk Of Weight Gain
- Elevate your mood
- Improve sleep
- Sharpen your mind
- Make right lifestyle choices
- Learn breathing techniques
- Learn relaxation methods
- And so much more

Organisational Benefits from Combating Stress

- Healthier, Happier Workforce
- Motivated Team With High Morale
- Good Employee Relations
- Less Sickness & Absenteeism
- Lower Staff Turnover
- Positive Community Benefits
- Improved Company Image

Stress affects us all - Learn How to Cope with Stress & Improve Health

There is no escaping from stress. Everyone, man, woman and child, will be afflicted by stress at some point in their lives. It's just a fact. Stress is a part of life, and there is no getting away from it. You're always going to have to deal with stressful situations on a daily basis. As I will explain shortly, this isn't necessarily a bad thing.

It is how you manage these situations that determines whether you suffer from the adverse effects of stress, and its negative impact on your health and well being.

So as you cannot cure stress, you must learn how to cope with it. If you don't learn how to manage your stress you will suffer its adverse effects. But as you're reading this book, you're obviously aware that there are solutions, and here you know you will find those that are right for you.



'Stress is essentially reflected by the rate of all the wear and tear caused by life. although we cannot avoid stress as long as we live, we can learn a great deal about how to keep its' damaging side-effects, distress, to a minimum' ~ Hans Selye, M.D

"Combat stress – The Healthy Lifestyle way" will assist you in coping with stress in relation to your day to day routine and address general lifestyle issues, giving you a clear road map for making positive changes in your everyday lives.



'Stress is nothing more than a socially acceptable form of mental illness' ~ Richard Carlson

Workplace Stress



'I don't believe people die from hard work. They die from stress and worry and fear -- the negative emotions. Those are the killers, not hard work' ~ A.L. Williams

The most significant reason reported for work related ill health is musculoskeletal problems; the second is Stress.

The musculoskeletal system (also known as the locomotor system) is an organ system that gives animals the ability to move using the muscular and skeletal systems. The musculoskeletal system provides form, stability, and movement to the human body. (Extracted from Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia).

It is made up of the body's bones (the skeleton), muscles, cartilage, tendons, ligaments, joints, and other connective tissue (the tissue that supports and binds tissues and organs together). This accounts for the number one reason for work related ill health, closely followed by stress.

Causes of workplace stress can be associated with a wide range of factors. These include:

- A feeling that they're paid less than they deserve
- An unsupportive boss
- Being in the wrong job
- Boring, repetitive and monotonous tasks
- Bullying or harassment
- Continuous unreasonable performance demands
- Excessive time away from home and family
- Feeling unimportant
- Lack of consultation and communication
- Lack of job security
- Lengthy working hours
- No control over destiny at work.
- Office politics and conflict among staff
- Poor relationships with colleagues
- Poor working conditions
- Too much work
- Too little work
- Target driven business piling on pressure
- Work that's too difficult
- Work that's not demanding enough
- Work-life-balance out of sync

Certain professions such as nurses, teachers, doctors, police and the armed forces all provide many reports of high work related stress levels. Females, of the age 45-54 are reported to be the most likely to suffer from stress. From personal knowledge, very few professions, industries or jobs escape from the burden of stress.

Consequences to Business

- Demoralised work force
- Increased Staff Turnover
- Reduced Productivity
- Decreased Cooperation And Teamwork
- Increased Levels Of :
- Anxiety,
- Absenteeism,
- Illness,
- Poor Productivity
- Errors.
- Inconsistent work patterns
- Late arrival to work
- Reporting in intoxicated
- Accident rates
- Conflict

The 'Quality of Working Life' report published in April 2006 by the Chartered Management Institute and Workplace Health Connect found that:

Of those questioned:

- 21% have difficulty making decisions due to ill health.
- 26% want to avoid contact with other people
- 30% are irritable 'sometimes or often' towards colleagues.
- 31% experienced a loss of humour creating workplace pressures.
- 43% feel or become angry with others too easily.
- 44% experienced frequent headaches.
- 55% complained of muscular tension or physical aches and pains.
- 55% experienced feelings of constant tiredness at work.

- 57% complained of insomnia.

Information from the UK Health and Safety Executive stress statistics shows

- 442,000 working individuals in 2007/8 believed that they were experiencing work-related stress at a level that was making them ill (Labour Force Survey)
- 13.6% of all working individuals thought their job was very or extremely stressful (Psychosocial Working Conditions Survey 2007)
- 13.5 million working days lost in Britain in 2007/8 due to Work-related stress, depression or anxiety (Labour Force Survey)
- £700m every year in stress-related costs to UK employers
- £7bn per year the cost of stress to society
- 70% of doctors appointments, and 85% of serious illnesses are the result of stress

In conclusion, work-related stress is a major cause of ill health. These statistics seem to be getting no better year by year. By the fact that you are reading this, and I know will be implementing many of the techniques I will be giving you, my hope is that not only will you experience a far healthier, confident life, but many of those around you will also benefit from what you will subsequently know. A saying, which comes to mind, is that the best way to learn, is to teach.



‘Men for the sake of getting a living forget to live’. ~Margaret Fuller

What Is Stress?

Stress refers to – ‘any type of bodily reaction to a mental, physical, emotional or social stimulus – where this reaction changes the way we feel, think or perform our daily tasks’.



‘Stress is not only created by how we see a situation, but also how we react to it. We do, in fact, control our own stress’ ~ Catherine Pulsifer

Stress describes our body’s automatic, inbuilt response to either “fight” or “flight” from what we perceive as danger, harm or a threat to ourselves.

This “fight or flight reaction” is extremely responsive. It’s like the accelerator peddle in a car. Just the slightest pressure gets a reaction. So your “fight or flight response” reacts to the merest threat of potential danger. This could be real danger or just a perception of danger. This is a really important part of the human make up. It is our inbuilt defence mechanism. When something dangerous happens, our bodies will produce this "fight or flight" reaction to let us know that we either need to run away or fight. If you have ever faced very real dangers to your physical survival, this response will have kicked in, and as you’re still here, reading my book, you know how important it was for you to have it.

Believe me, if you see a dinosaur walking down the road towards you, your flight reaction will kick in, and off you’ll move in the opposite direction. You’re sure to

appreciate your stress response in this case. Mind you, it's pretty unlikely in this day and age. But yesterdays dinosaur is today's debt collector, bailiff, disgruntled client, and traffic warden. I think you get the point. Who is it that affects you this badly?

In prehistoric times people needed to be able to protect their family, hunt animals to be able to eat, run away from the threat of hostile people or aggressive predators. At the moment of actual physical danger, an alarm was activated in their brains, their bodies produced extra energy, and they were ready for high levels of physical activity, which enabled them to fight or flee from any threat. Once the threat diminished their bodies no longer needing this extra energy, so then it calmed down, returning to a state of relaxation.

In this day and age, the most typical dangers or threats are less physical. Your 'fight or flight' response is triggered by psychological (relating to the mind or mental activity) threats, just as much as they are by physical ones. So mental and emotional pressures activate stress, in the same way as do physical pressures.

Many people facing, eviction from their homes, closure of their businesses, losing their job, the break up of their family, perhaps through a acrimonious divorce, seeing a loved one inflicted with cancer, or their child going off the rails, face tremendous pressure leading to stress, as much as our prehistoric ancestors with their physical dangers. .

Today with the constant pressures associated with living in a fast-paced world, stress is often constantly affecting us. There is no getting away from the fact that everybody faces stress in one form or another on a daily basis. Over time stress hormones accumulate in our bodies and eventually, unless we find ways to reduce stress and recover from its effects, we become burnt-out, depressed or

see deterioration in our health. It's this build up, over time, caused by a variety of stressors, which eventually causes us problems.

This stress we experience daily often goes unnoticed, and often just unmanaged. Many people simply put up with stress, just accepting it as the way things are. Eventually they experience serious physical and mental health problems caused by all this stress.

Today stress and the problems it can cause have become more and more common in our lives. The good news is that there are solutions at hand, and these I will be providing you with. They may not remove the threats, take away all the pressures, but be assured from someone who in his life has had to deal with many major difficulties; these techniques enable you to keep yourself together during even the worst periods. They will keep you sane, and enable you to stay strong and face your challenges.

The Definition of Stress

Above, I describe stress as: a term that refers to – any type of bodily reaction to a mental, physical, emotional or social stimulus – where this reaction changes the way we feel, think or perform our daily tasks.

So stress is the body and mind's response to any pressure that disrupts its normal balance. It occurs when our perception of events doesn't meet our expectations and we are unable to manage our reaction, which results in the throwing out of sync of our physiological (body) and psychological (mind) equilibrium, and if not brought back into balance, this can create numerous health problems.

The UK Health and Safety Executive define stress in the following way: "the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them".

Hans Selye, MD defines Stress as "the non-specific response of the body to any demand".

Other definitions are:

'Stress is the pressure that a person experiences when their demands exceed their personal resources and their ability to meet those demands'.

'Any opposing reaction or force to your own intention that causes strain or tension, and this can be mental and physical'.

'Stress is a build up of mental and physical tension in your body that distracts your mental focus, drains your energy and impairs your immune system – all reducing your productivity'.

'It is a physical and psychological reaction to the perception that the demands on you exceed your coping resources'.



'Stress is basically a disconnection from the earth, a forgetting of the breath. Stress is an ignorant state. It believes that everything is an emergency. Nothing is that important. Just lie down'. ~ Natalie Goldberg

Is Stress Bad?

At the level at which stress is our basic survival instinct creating our "flight or flight" response, stress is good. When it kicks in adrenaline is released into the body and this can cause an increase in blood pressure, as well as an increase in body temperature, heart rate and in our ability to handle obstacles and all our senses are heightened.

A moderate amount of stress helps to get you ready for the daily challenges you will face, and this stress reaction is a survival tool which helps to keep our bodies strong and our minds alert. So again it's a good thing.

Eustress is defined in Richard Lazarus' model as stress that is healthy or gives one a feeling of fulfilment. So it's good stress. The kind you feel when you get a pay rise, buy a new home, or go on a great first date. Good in the sense that it makes you feel elated, that the stress is enjoyable. Challenges and projects create Eustress, as opposed to overload and problems, which create distress (bad stress).

Eustress can provide us with motivation, it can energise us, and it raises our game, resulting in peak performance. The stress provides you with the push you need to respond to situations, motivating you to perform at your best and stay focused and at full attention. Any author would admit there are certain times that they'd rather be sitting watching TV than writing an article, but that looming deadline gets them off the sofa and over to the computer. That feeling of pressure is what helps you get yourself out of bed every morning so you can go to work, or to go into the gym for your workout.

After a certain point, stress rapidly becomes counterproductive or even dangerous. When you have maximized the effects of 'good' stress and reached your 'tipping point', you then fall over on the other side where stress becomes bad and unhealthy. You are at overload at this stage. Now your stress is working against you. You move from peak performance to weak performance. You struggle with an inability to concentrate, anxiety and depression which ultimately can lead to heart disease, diabetes, eating problems, substance abuse or even death.

It is our interpretation of how things are that determines whether a situation is deemed by us to be good or bad. We interpret situations through our thoughts, beliefs, feelings and personal values. For example, if you were offered a new job that would entail moving to a new city. This move will require a big change, and by its very nature will cause some stress. Change is tantamount to stress.. Whenever something causes a change in your life this will always bring about stress. It makes no difference whether this is a "good" change, or a "bad" change. Either way it is stress.

If you are thrilled and excited about the move, then to you this is a good stressor. Alternatively, if you are miserable and afraid about the move, to you this will be a bad stressor. This was demonstrated when I was offered a fantastic salary package to move from Hertfordshire to Newcastle. For me the excitement

of pastures new, a job that I really looked forward to, and earning a big salary really motivated me, got me feeling as though I was on top of the world. But this same move caused my wife huge stress. To her, leaving family and friends behind, selling the house, looking for a new home and not knowing anyone in Newcastle, created fear and anxiety. The same situation, but we both reacted so differently to it.

Some stress in our life can cause us to feel happy, excited, surprised. When this gets too much it then does not serve us in any useful way, and can result in physical and emotional harm. A high level of stress can make you more unproductive, stops you from getting a good night sleep, makes you feel excessively anxious all the time, as well as many other adverse effects.

So stress in itself isn't necessarily harmful, but too much can be damaging. Chronic daily stress is a bad thing because it wears down both our physical and mental ability to handle daily tasks.

As demonstrated above, each individual responds differently to the varying levels of pressure to which they are exposed, but when the pressure becomes excessive for the individual, it can result in physical and mental symptoms. What I am going to enable you to do is take control of your life, no longer allowing stress to be in control of you.

The Body's Stress Response

When faced with a threat, the body's defence's kick into the "fight-or-flight" response. Stress activates adaptive responses. The body calls upon all its forces to confront the on coming threat and protect you from harm. Its your body's defence mechanism, resulting in the following reactions:

- Heartbeat increases; pumping blood to the necessary parts of the body quickly.
- Blood pressure increases
- Blood flow:
 - is constricted to the digestive organs.
 - increases to the brain and major organs.
 - increases to the major muscles.
 - constricted to the extremities e.g. hands and feet
- Muscles tense up
- Breathing becomes more shallow and rapid.
- Your nervous system releases stress hormones such as Adrenaline into the bloodstream.
- Blood loss in case of injury is prevented by your Blood vessels constricting
- Your Pupils dilate allowing more light in and other senses become heightened
- The liver releases stored sugar into the blood stream
- Other non-essential body processes are suppressed.
- Your digestive system is slowed down, as is your reproductive system
- Growth hormones are turned off.
- Your immune response is repressed.
- The body perspires
- Metabolic rate increases
- Blood clotting agents are released.

Thankfully it does stop short of turning you into The Incredible Hulk.

These stress responses are there to protect and support us. As explained earlier they have their uses, in the right circumstances, particularly life-or-death situations. They help us to fight with more strength or run away faster.

In the world we find ourselves in today, most of our stress is brought on by psychological threats, not physical ones; it's just that our minds and bodies can't tell the difference. The stress response will be activated over an approaching deadline, an argument with the wife, a mass of unpaid bills, your teenage daughter being late home, your petrol warning light flashing on a country road. So no differently to a caveman confronting a dinosaur, our bodies go into this automatic response.

In today's world so many of us are faced with so many different roles and responsibilities, it is not surprising we feel as though we are under constant pressure. We face so many problems, and worry about so many things; we are constantly operating at high stress levels. We frequently jump in and out of emergency mode. Once we've dealt with one crisis we lurch into the next.

The more frequently our stress response is activated, the harder it is to turn it off. Instead of subsiding once an emergency has gone, our stress hormones, and increased heart rate and blood pressure remain high. This in turn takes a heavy toll on the body.

The risk to your health, and threat of serious illness, is increased dramatically through this constant exposure to stress. That is why learning to deal with stress is essential for you, learning tools and techniques that will help you handle stress in a positive way, and thereby reducing the harmful impact that stress has on your life. When stress is in control of you, it also controls your attitude to life and your physical health.



'Stress is not what happens to us. It's our response to what happens. And response is something we can choose'. ~ Maureen Killoran

What Creates Stress?

Stress comes from our internal perception of the world and the things that we perceive to be threatening to us.

Have you noticed how much doom and gloom there is in the world? What are our newspapers full of? The news programmes on television. We are always forced to read or hear about disasters, poverty and famine, terrorism, deaths, financial crisis, crime and other very negative, gloomy news. All this contributes further to our own personal stress. How often do you hear people talking about climate change? I hear people discussing and getting stressed about the fact that we in the UK will never see a hot summer again. Now in 2009 we are reading and hearing about an economic downturn, and we are certainly seeing panic set in.

Nowadays you can't get away from the hustle and bustle of life. There's no escaping. If people want to get hold of you, it's now so easy. With new technology, phones, internet, emails, text messaging, all of which are supposed to have provided us with more time, have now made us contactable most of the time, and there seems to be no escaping from any part of our lives, particularly work.

Today stress is triggered by rush hour traffic, exams, late nights, missing a deadline, a bounced cheque at the bank or having an argument with our supervisor, boss or spouse as well as major Life events.

Having a certain amount of pressure in our lives is good. It gets us going. What is important is keeping the pressures on you at the right level. Too much pressure, on a constant basis doesn't allow you recovery time, and can result in health problems. So is it surprising that so many people now suffer from stress? There is no stigma to being diagnosed as suffering from stress, it's now so common. There is no divide, no class distinction; it's the price many of us are paying for modern living.

It's impossible to escape from pressure totally, so it's really important to acquire methods to help you manage stress effectively. In this book, I shall shortly demonstrate a variety of ways to reduce the negative impact of stress.

So let me make this very clear. A small amount of pressure is good in that it gets you alert, helps maintain your motivation to get things done, and allows you to perform well those things that you must do. But, when there is too much pressure, or the pressure of certain things is sustained for a length of time, this becomes stress. Stress, we know, when it gets too much will cause physical and emotional problems, as well as ill health. So keep on reading, I will give you the tools and techniques to manage stress effectively.

The Different Types of Stress

Understanding the different types of stress will enable you to understand where the stress in your life originates.. Only when you know this, can you then put solutions into place to deal with it. There are four main types of stress that people experience.

Eustress

Eustress is defined in the model of Richard Lazarus as stress that is healthy or gives one a feeling of fulfilment. It is a positive form of stress, usually related to desirable events in a person's life.

- Handling a challenge
- Winning something
- Getting a promotion
- Being in Love
- Your holidays
- Getting Married
- Authoring a book (that's after publication)

Whenever you need to exert physical force, Eustress will occur, preparing your muscles, heart and mind, in readiness for the strength you are going to require. Any sportsman, just before their activity begins, will experience stress. It gets your mind and body strong, alert and ready to perform. In this case rather than it being an immediate threat that is causing stress, it is an immediate challenge. It gets your blood pumping to all your major muscle groups, increases your heart rate, your blood pressure, and you're ready to rock and roll, and take on the world. It's definitely my best friend, when in the gym, lying on a bench, with a heavy loaded barbell over my chest.

Distress

Distress is negative stress. It is the stress you experience when your ordinary routine is being continuously changed. This alteration in what you regard as the norm, can bring about strain, anxiety, even suffering.

Distress can be broken down into two categories:

- Acute Stress
- Chronic Stress.

Acute Stress

Acute stress is short-term stress, and is the body's immediate reaction to any situation that seems demanding or dangerous - 'coming from pressures or demands of the recent past or anticipated demands and pressures of the near future'.

Your stress level depends on how intense the stress is, how long it lasts, and how you cope with the situation. The body usually recovers quickly from acute stress, but it can cause problems if it happens too often or your body doesn't have a chance to return to normal.

Although it is an extreme stress, it appears rapidly, and only lasts for a short time. It is experienced in response to an immediate perceived threat, physical, emotional or psychological; the threat can be real or imagined; it's the perception of threat that triggers the response.

As acute stress is a short term condition, not lasting very long, it doesn't create the long term effects, such as ill health, that other levels of stress do. At worst it can lead to a person being unable to function at optimum level for a period of time.

- A job interview,
- A car crash
- Following an unforeseen 'life crisis' such as an accident or death of somebody close
- Doing a public presentation or giving a speech
- A dangerous event
- A deadline
- Realising you've forgotten something important
- Running late for a meeting
- Queuing
- Traffic jams

Chronic Stress

Chronic stress is a long-lasting condition. This is the stress that can wear people down day after day, year after year. It's the stress that results after constant day to day hassles and a life where you go from one problem to the next. Eventually it all gets on top of you and the effects upon your health can be catastrophic. Over time, chronic stress will have a serious effect on your health.

So chronic stress is often caused by the unrelenting demands and pressures for seemingly endless periods of time, over which one sees no solution or way out. With modern life bringing this barrage of ongoing stressful situations, lasting for long periods of time, it ultimately suppresses your fight or flight response, you become the punch bag, instead of the boxer, no longer having the will to defend yourself from the onslaught of daily life. You now have chronic stress.

Chronic, sustained, uncontrolled stress can result in a failing immune system, illness, and even death.

By becoming more aware of the common or persistent stressors in your life, you can then initiate methods for managing them. Let's start thinking about those that affect you the most:

- Long-term pressured work
- Long-term financial problems
- Long-term relationship breakdown
- Bullying and/ or abuse
- A series of acute stress events
- Serious illness

Hyperstress

Hyperstress occurs when an individual is overloaded or overworked. It again is a negative stress caused by a person being pushed beyond what they can handle; or forced to undertake or undergo more than they can take.

When you are in a job that has so many demands, where your workload is so extreme that you are pushed to your limit, and beyond, where day after day you are working flat out, with no end in sight, this results in Hyperstress. When experiencing Hyperstress even something really small, can become a stressor and result in you experiencing colossal emotional outbursts. This type of stress can cause serious emotional and physical problems. So if you've ever overreacted, just found yourself blowing up at something, when a little time afterwards you've asked yourself why that happened, over something so trivial, well Hyperstress may be affecting you.

Hypostress

Where Hyperstress is when an individual is overloaded or overworked, Hypostress is where you don't have enough stress in your life. It occurs when you

may be constantly bored, unchallenged, agitated and not excited by your life, perhaps stuck in a 9 to 5 job, where you get home of an evening, and feel brain dead, because you can do the job in your sleep, and nothing happens to get your mind alert, when the clock has ticked by so slowly, you're just waiting for the time when you can escape the monotony.

Stressors

Stressors are any pressures and demands which cause stress. They include physical traumas, disease, life events and situations, together with threats, daily hassles, internal perceptions, worries and obsessions. Stressors are any internal or external factors that make demands on an individual and tend to disrupt our equilibrium.

As commonly used, the term "stressor" indicates a situation or event seen as being challenging in that it produces a stress response which places demands on a person's physiological or psychological resources as well as possibly causing a state of physical or mental tension. A prolonged reaction to a stressor will produce a severe disruption called a strain.

There are so many causes of stress. We are all different, in the way we are, our personalities, our general outlook on life, the way we think, the skills we possess, and whether we are happy with what we have in our lives. So what is stressful to one person may not be stressful to another. Where one person may perceive a situation as being challenging and full of opportunity and potential, another individual will see the same situation as being very stressful and feel unable to cope.

Not all stressors are negative; positive things can cause stress too. Anything that forces us to alter can be a stressor. Any event, good or bad, if the alteration it requires strains our coping skills and resources, will ultimately result in stress.

Your body and your mind do not know the difference between positive stressors and negative stressors. An example of a positive stressor may include your forthcoming wedding, the birth of your child, a job promotion, Christmas time, preparing for your holiday, even winning the lottery.

So even positive events or experiences can be stressors. You will have a reaction to any stressful situation.

Common Causes of Stress



'Stress: we all have some stress in our lives, some of us have more, some of us have less stress. But if stress is allowed to overtake our lives then serious implications can result'. ~ Catherine Pulsifer

It is really important for you to identify the causes of stress in your life, and then once you have done so, to try to minimise them. Here are some examples of situations which can create stress:

- Arguments with partner
- Big loan or mortgage
- Change in eating habits

- Change in family contact
- Change in living condition
- Change in schools
- Change in sleeping habits
- Change in social activities
- Change in workload or conditions
- Change of personal habits
- Changes in job responsibilities
- Child leaves home
- Christmas
- Death of a close friend
- Death of a close relative
- Death of a partner
- Divorce
- Family member with ill health
- Financial hardships & debt
- Getting back together with partner
- Getting married
- Having an affair
- Holidays
- Jail term
- Job change
- Job loss
- Minor violations of the law
- Moving house
- New baby
- Outstanding personal achievement
- Partner begins or stops work
- Personal injury or illness
- Pregnancy

- Retirement
- Separation
- Sexual difficulties
- Start or end of school
- Trouble with boss
- Trouble with in-laws

Stressors can be short-term (acute) or long-term (chronic):

We will all at certain times in our lives have to deal with stressful situations. Some of these will be temporary short-term 'acute' stressors, which make us react to immediate threats, which activate the fight or flight response, which when the situation is resolved, will go away. Others will be long-term 'chronic' stressors, where we are facing ongoing and continuous pressures, which ultimately result in our fight or flight response being suppressed.

It is these long-term 'chronic' stressors that we find to difficult to deal with, and they can lead to psychological and emotional damage.

Symptoms of Stress

We all face difficult challenges and obstacles, and at times the pressure becomes too hard to handle. We feel weighed down, not knowing how to meet the demands placed on us. At this time, when life's demands exceed our ability to cope with the pressures in our lives, stress will then affect us physically, mentally and emotionally.

It can affect almost every aspect of our lives. If we do not learn and adopt methods to control and manage it, it can start to dominate our lives.

Your starting point to get in control of stress is to first acquire the knowledge of how to be aware of it in yourself. The physiological changes caused by the fight-or-flight response, result in Stress having a major affect on your mind and body, as well as affecting your behaviour. As each individual is so different, the signs and symptoms of stress differ greatly from person to person. There are literally hundreds of symptoms. Many of the common warning signs and symptoms of stress are shown in the following lists. Do you recognise any of them in yourself?



'Pressure and stress is the common cold of the psyche'. ~ Andrew Denton

Stress Warning Signs and Symptoms

1. The Physical Effects of Stress

- Aggressive body language
- Asthma
- Backaches
- Blushing
- Changes in appetite
- Changes in bowel habits
- Chest pains
- Cold, sweaty hands and feet
- Cold chills, or “goose bumps”
- Constant illness
- Constant restlessness and fidgeting
- Constipation
- Diarrhoea
- Difficulty breathing
- Difficulty with sexual orgasm
- Dry mouth
- Eating disorders
- Elevated Blood Pressure
- Enlarged pupils
- Eyestrain
- Fatigue
- Frequent colds
- Frequent urination
- Frowning
- Gaseousness or belching
- General aches and pains
- Gritting or grinding of teeth
- Headaches
- Hyperventilation
- Impotence
- Increased Heart Rate
- Increased perspiration
- Increased sensitivity to light and sound
- Indigestion
- Insomnia
- Jaw clenching

- Jaw pain
- Joint/Muscle tension
- Lacking Energy
- Light-headedness, faintness, or dizziness
- Nausea/Vomiting
- Neck aches
- Night sweats
- Premature ejaculation
- Racing pulse
- Rashes
- Ringing in ears
- Shortness of Breath
- Skin breakouts (hives, eczema)
- Sleep problem
- Slumped posture
- Sore throat
- Stomach acidity/heartburn
- Stuttering or stammering
- Sudden, suffocating panic
- Trembling of lips or hands
- Twitching/Muscle Spasm
- Ulcers
- Uneven or rapid heartbeat
- Weight Problem

2. Emotional Symptoms

- Agitation
- Angry outbursts
- Anger

- Anxiety
- Bitterness
- Blame others
- Critical of Self and others
- Depression or general unhappiness
- Diminished initiative
- Emotional or Easily Upset
- Feeling of worthiness
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Feeling tense and “on edge”
- Guilt
- Hopelessness
- Inability to relax
- Impatience
- Irritability,
- Jealousy
- Lack Of Concentration,
- Lack of humour
- Lack of interest
- Low self-esteem
- Moodiness
- Nervousness
- Panic Attacks
- Poor Memory
- Premenstrual Symptoms
- Reduced Sex Drive
- Restlessness
- Self depreciating
- Sense of loneliness and isolation
- Sensitivity

- Short temper
- Suspiciousness
- Tendency to cry
- Withdrawal

3. Behavioural Symptoms

- A more “serious” appearance
- Accident Prone
- Argumentative
- Constant tiredness
- Defensiveness or suspiciousness
- Eating more or less
- Edginess
- Excessive alcohol consumption - Need Alcohol to Relax
- Excessive smoking - Need a Cigarette to Unwind
- Excessive/Comfort Eating
- Excitability
- Frequent use of over-the-counter drugs
- Gambling or overspending
- Hyperactive, Workaholic or Can't Stop
- Impulsiveness
- Inattention to dress or grooming
- Increased frustration and irritability
- Increased number of minor accidents
- Isolating yourself from others
- Jumpiness
- Lack of Appetite
- Lack of personal hygiene
- Lies or excuses to cover up poor work

- More frequent lateness
- Nail biting
- Need Several Coffee, Tea or Fizzy drinks daily
- Nervous habits (e.g. nail biting, pacing)
- Nervous Laughter
- Overreacting to small problems
- Overreaction to small things
- Perfectionism
- Picking fights with others
- Procrastination, neglecting responsibilities
- Recreational drug use
- Reduced work efficiency or productivity
- Rushing around or pacing the floor
- Sleeping problems - too much or too little
- Social withdrawal
- Speech Problems - Fast or mumbled speech
- Strained communication with others
- Sweet Cravings
- Taking tranquilizers just to sleep
- Tearfulness
- Teeth grinding or jaw clenching
- Too much time spent on certain activities (e.g. exercising, shopping)
- Unusual behaviour
- Weight gain or loss without diet

4. The Mental Effects of Stress

- A feeling of being a failure
- A feeling of being bad or self hatred
- A feeling of being the target of other people's animosity

- A feeling of ugliness
- A sense of being overloaded or overwhelmed by problems
- An intense fear of open or enclosed space, or of being alone.
- Anxious or racing thoughts
- Constant irritability with people
- Constant or recurrent fear of disease
- Constant worrying
- Depression/Anxiety
- Difficulty in letting go and laughing
- Difficulty making decisions
- Diminished fantasy life
- Diminished productivity
- Disorganization or confusion
- Dread of the future
- Errors in judging distance
- Fear of getting close to people
- Fearful anticipation
- Feeling constantly frightened
- Feeling neglected
- Feeling unable to cope
- Feelings of isolation
- Forgetfulness
- Future Oriented
- Grammatical errors
- Inability to concentrate
- Increased anger and frustration
- Increased or decreased appetite
- Increased smoking and alcohol consumption
- Indecisiveness
- Lack of enthusiasm

- Lack of interest in life
- Loneliness
- Loss of interest in other people
- Loss of interest in sex
- Loss of objectivity
- Loss of sense of humour
- Mathematical errors
- Memory problems
- Moodiness
- Nightmares
- No attention to detail
- Obsessive behaviour
- Paranoia
- Past oriented,
- Poor judgment
- Problems concentration
- Racing thoughts
- Rechecking tasks
- Reduced Creativity
- Reduced Interest
- Seeing only the negative
- Stammering
- Suicidal thoughts
- The inability of finishing one task before rushing on to the next
- Trouble learning new information
- Trouble thinking clearly
- Unable to feel pleasure or enjoyment
- Very tearful - More frequent crying

Post Traumatic Stress

My old friend. They say that the best way to see a problem is to take whatever good can come from it. At the time when I was suffering in the extreme from post traumatic stress disorder, did I realise that the pain I had experienced, and the nightmare I went through before and afterwards, would ultimately lead to me standing on stage, writing books and articles, helping others improve their lives? I would like to say I did, but that wouldn't be the case. Looking back now, from where I am today, I realise that it was a lesson I had to go through to become the person I was meant to be.

An extreme stress reaction can result from sudden, traumatic experiences and events such as a natural disaster, sexual assault, witnessing a violent death, experiencing a life-threatening accident, or participating in military combat. This is known as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Those struggling with post-traumatic stress may experience a variety of symptoms. One of the greatest struggles associated with the effects of PTSD are the really confusing mix of emotions that you constantly move between such as fear, shame, depression, guilt or anger. The more you recall the events the more you build within yourself this emotional turmoil. It gets no easier; in fact you constantly beat yourself up day by day. You can also have flashbacks, often replaying those memories or images. Frequently you find yourself waking in the middle of the night screaming, shaking, and freezing over the nightmares you have. Most times that you think of the traumatic event it triggers one or other of these emotional outbursts.

These traumatic events strike without warning and generally turn people's lives upside down. Once a person has experienced trauma, it's often extremely difficult for them to believe that their life can ever be the same again. Let me

add here, that I'm living proof that you really can move on, and never again allow these events to traumatise you.

Factors that effect this severe reaction are:

1. The traumatic nature of the incident;
2. The character and personality of the individual involved; the circumstances of their life at the time, and past experiences.
3. The preparation of the individual, and the support given to them before, during and after the event.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines trauma as '*a powerful shock that may have long-lasting consequences*'.

Post Traumatic stress disorder is best described by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, published by the American Psychiatric Association:

The person has been exposed to a traumatic event in which both of the following were present::

- The person experienced, witnessed or was confronted with an event that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others
- The person's response involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror.
Note: In children, this may be expressed by disorganized or agitated behaviour

The traumatic event is persistently re-experienced in one (or more) of the following ways:

- Recurrent and intrusive distressing recollections of the event, including images, thoughts, or perceptions
- Recurrent distressing dreams of the event.

- Acting or feeling as if the traumatic event were recurring (includes a sense of reliving the experience, illusions, hallucinations, and dissociative flashback episodes, including those that occur upon awakening or when intoxicated).
- Intense psychological distress at exposure to internal or external cues that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event.
- Physiological reactivity on exposure to internal or external cues that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event.

Persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma and numbing of general responsiveness (not present before the trauma), as indicated by three (or more) of the following:

- Efforts to avoid thoughts, feelings, or conversations associated with the trauma
- Efforts to avoid activities, places, or people that arouse recollections of the trauma
- Inability to recall an important aspect of the trauma
- Markedly diminished interest or participation in significant activities
- Feeling of detachment or estrangement from others
- Restricted range of affect (e.g., unable to have loving feelings)
- Sense of a foreshortened future (e.g., does not expect to have a career, marriage, children, or a normal life span)

Persistent symptoms of increased arousal (not present before the trauma), as indicated by two (or more) of the following:

- Difficulty falling or staying asleep
- Irritability or outbursts of anger
- Difficulty concentrating
- Hypervigilance
- Exaggerated startle response
- Duration of the disturbance is more than one month.

- The disturbance causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.

Illnesses That Stress Can Aggravate

When one is under stress major physiological changes take place in the body, such as:

- Increase in adrenaline secretion
- Rising blood pressure
- Fast heartbeat
- Increased tension in the muscles
- Digestive system slows down

Eliminating stress improves particular aspects of your health, for example, there is evidence to show that stress management can reduce the danger of heart attack. So, it makes sense to follow a stress management plan. And once you have discovered the techniques and tools to do this, which you will do in the next section, that's exactly what you're going to be able to do.

Too much stress can contribute to and aggravate many health problems and major illnesses including:

- Allergies
- Alopecia
- Asthma
- Backaches
- Cancer
- Chronic Fatigue
- Colds / flu

- Depression
- Diabetes
- Dizziness
- Eating disorder
- Faintness
- Hair loss
- Heart Disease
- Heart Disease/Attack
- High Blood Pressure
- Hypertension
- Insomnia
- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Lowered fertility
- Migraines/Headaches
- Muscle and joint pain
- Nightmares
- Obesity
- Skin problems (acne, hives, psoriasis)
- Strokes
- Ulcers

Medication

At this point I will just mention a solution that was once frequently offered to a large number of people suffering from severe Stress. That was to prescribe Tranquillisers, known as 'mother's little helpers'.

A consequence of this was that millions of people became addicted to these tranquillisers. Breaking this addiction proved really difficult for far too many people. My sister being one of them.

My sister lost that battle, and hence my desire to help others find better solutions. In my sister's case Valium couldn't help her learn to cope better with the stresses she faced, they just made her less aware of them, but she became dependent on Valium until the day she died.

If I can help one person identify their stressors, and provide them with the tools and techniques to deal with them in a far more effective way than they are currently doing, then I will be very happy. I personally, do not want you becoming reliant on medication, when I know there are so many other fantastic methods that you can adopt to handle stress far better.

In my view prescription drugs do not have to be the answer. You want an alternative! Well there is an alternative to conventional pharmaceutical methods and now I'll outline the techniques that we recommend.

If you want to prevent stress, you must learn how to deal with the problems life throws up and find simple, natural ways of reducing tension.

Indeed many doctors are now endorsing alternative methods to medication and that is what we are bringing you.

SECTION 2

STRESS TOOLKIT

ASSESSING YOUR LEVEL

OF STRESS

Determine Your Personal Stressors:

It's time to stop and think about what stressors affect you. Determining your individual stressors can help you cope for several reasons:

- Uncovering the cause of your stress will help you to avoid the effects it is producing in you
- Knowing why and where your emotions come from makes you feel more in control, and helps lessen stress.
- Recognizing that your behaviour is indicative of stress can reduce your anxiety about the behaviour itself.

It is best to figure out exactly what stressors affect you. You will benefit from taking the time to sit down and identify the areas of your life that you find the most stressful, so that you may begin to be proactive in eliminating, or at least reducing the stress in that area. This is your starting point, a game plan to map out how you can gain control of yourself and the world around you. You must know where the problem is in order to fix it.

When considering your stressors, determine how strongly they affect you. Does the stressor leave you negative or angry for many hours or for only a few seconds? Determine how strongly each affects your mood. Is the stressor hardly noticeable or does it make you really mad?

No more will you ignore or avoid your stressors, hopeful they will go away. Take a little time to examine the cause of your stress. Identify precisely what is troubling you.

EXERCISE: YOUR PERSONAL STRESSORS

Make a list of your top ten stressors. Once you have made this list, describe each stressor in a couple of sentences so you have a really good focus on each one.

Stressor 1: _____

Description: _____

Stressor 2: _____

Description: _____

Stressor 3: _____

Description: _____

Stressor 4: _____

Description: _____

Stressor 5: _____

Description: _____

Stressor 6: _____

Description: _____

Stressor 7: _____

Description: _____

Stressor 8: _____

Description: _____

Stressor 9: _____

Description: _____

Stressor 10: _____

Description: _____

Now you have done this, don't let them affect you today. Don't spend your time thinking about them right now, and start letting the negativity they will bring you, make you distracted or get you down. Shake out your arms; take a few deep breaths, in through your nose, out through your mouth. Shrug your shoulders, bring them up and back. Do this three times. And know that today you will walk away with the methods and techniques which will ensure that these stressors will no longer get to you.

Personality and Stress Test

Is there a type of person who is more likely to experience stress? Certain people are more likely to experience stress than others. These people are known as 'type A' personalities.

They tend to be more competitive and impatient and have tight time schedules compared to 'type B' personalities who are more relaxed and 'laid back' in their style.

Type A Individuals tend to:-

- Emphasize various key words in normal conversation without real need and tend to say the last few words of sentences far more rapidly than the opening words. They also tend to complete other people's sentences for them.
- Always move, walk and eat more quickly.
- Feel impatient about the rate at which most events take place.
- Attempt to do several things at once, for example driving and dictating at the same time, thinking about another subject while someone else is talking to them, checking email while talking to someone on the phone and so on.
- Find it difficult to talk about things which don't have a personal interest.
- Feel guilty when trying to relax.
- Try to schedule more into less and less time, making few allowances for unexpected events.
- Have a chronic sense of time urgency.
- Often state to the minute how long their regular journeys take

So do you demonstrate Type A behaviour? Circle the number which applies most closely to the way you behave in your everyday life. The total points will give you your behaviour type.

EXERCISE: PERSONALITY AND STRESS TEST

Casual about appointments	←----- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 -----→	Worry about being late
Not competitive	←----- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 -----→	Very Competitive
Good Listener	←----- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 -----→	Anticipate what other people are going to say, often finishing sentences for them.
Never feel rushed	←----- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 -----→	Always in a hurry
Can wait patiently	←----- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 -----→	Very impatient while waiting
Do one thing at a time	←----- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 -----→	Try to do many things at once. Think about what to do next while on the current task
Slow deliberate talker	←----- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 -----→	Fast speaker, emphatic and forceful
Easygoing	←----- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 -----→	Push self and others
Care about satisfying self no matter what others may think	←----- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 -----→	Want recognition from others
Slow at doing things	←----- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 -----→	Do things in a hurry, e.g. Walking, talking and eating
Express feelings	←----- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 -----→	Hide feelings
Many outside interests	←----- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 -----→	Few interests outside work and home
Unambitious	←----- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 -----→	Ambitious
Relaxed, laid back	←----- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 -----→	Eager to get things done

Scoring:

Total your points and see how they compare with the following:

Below 70

Type B You tend to stress free personality. Why are you reading this book?

70 - 90

Type B+ Your behaviour is reasonably stress free. However, you show some potential for slipping into some forms of Type A behaviour and it might be useful to become aware of these situations and develop some specific coping skills.

90 - 110

Type A- You have a tendency towards being stressed although your score is not as high as for a true Type A and it would be helpful to you to adopt some stress management techniques

Above 110

Type A You should make every attempt to modify your behaviour. You must implement a personal stress management strategy!

So How Stressed Are You?



'Stress is when you wake up screaming and you realize you haven't fallen asleep yet' ~ Unknown

Let's find the answer to your level of stress by completing a Stress Risk Questionnaire.

This self-assessment questionnaire is designed as a tool for identifying stressors in your life and how well you manage and deal with stress. Effective identification of these stressors is key to effective stress management.

Take 10 minutes of uninterrupted time to complete this questionnaire. Make notes and write down ideas any areas you need improvement as you complete the questionnaire.

EXERCISE: SELF ASSESSMENT

Please choose what you perceive is your stress level

Ideal	Good	Possible Problem	Problem	Extreme

EXERCISE: STRESS RISK QUESTIONNAIRE

Stress Risk Questionnaire

1. Life Events

What potential stress factors have you experienced in the past year or so? Have you had any of the following things happen to you during the past year? If so, simply circle one of the numbers following each of those items. Score only the items which apply to you.

This section is based on the works of Thomas Holmes and Richard Rahe)

Life Event	Point Value
------------	-------------

Minor violation of the law	10
Holiday	10
Change in social activities	15
Change in sleeping habits	15
Change in eating habits	10
Change in residence	20
Change in work hours	20
Change in church activities	20
Change in recreational activities	20
Tension at work	25
Trouble with manager/boss	25
Small children in the home	25
Change in living conditions	25
Spouse stops/starts work	25
Outstanding personal achievement	30
Problem teenager(s) in the home	30

Trouble with in-laws	30
Difficulties with peer group	30
Son or daughter leaving home	30
Change in responsibilities at work	30
Taking over major financial responsibility	30
Foreclosure of mortgage or loan	30
Change in relationship with spouse	35
Change to different line of work	35
Loss of a close friend	35
Major change in financial state	40
Major business readjustment	40
Gain of a new family member	40
Sexual difficulties	40
Pregnancy	40
Change in health of family member	45
Retirement	45
Reconciliation with spouse	45
Loss of job	50
Marriage	50
Personal injury or illness	50
Loss of self-confidence	60
Death of a close family member	60
Injury to reputation	60
Trouble with the law	65
Marital separation	65
Divorce	75
Death of a spouse	100

Total

2. Symptoms of Stress

What stress symptoms have you experienced in the past year or so? Has your behaviour or habits changed visibly during this past year? Circle the most suitable answer to the questions below. Be sure that the answer you give is appropriate and honest. Where applicable; circle only if the question applies to you.

How would you describe your general health 3 years ago and now?

	3 yrs ago	Presently
Good	1	1
Reasonable	2	2
Poor	3	3

Are you experiencing, or have you experienced any of these stress symptoms in the last year?

	Never	Sometimes	Often
Headaches/migraine	1	2	3
Aches and pains	1	2	3
High blood pressure	1	2	3
Poor sleep patterns	1	2	3
Skin Rashes	1	2	3
Indigestion	1	2	3
Stomach ulcers	1	2	3
Asthma	1	2	3
Anxiety	1	2	3
Depression	1	2	3

Heart disease	1	2	3
Changes in appetite	1	2	3
Exhaustion	1	2	3
Increased tobacco consumption	1	2	3
Increased alcohol consumption	1	2	3
Inability to concentrate	1	2	3
Erratic moods	1	2	3
Low self esteem/confidence	1	2	3

Do you ever feel:

	Never	Sometimes	Often
a. Irritated	1	2	3
b. Angry	1	2	3
c. Frustrated	1	2	3
d. Helpless	1	2	3
e. Anxious	1	2	3
f. Depressed	1	2	3
g. Unable to concentrate	1	2	3
h. Over tired	1	2	3

Are you stressed at work?

	Never	Sometimes	Often
	1	2	3

Have you taken leave in the past 12 months due to work related stress?

Yes	No
1	2

If yes, how long for?

A few days	One week	Two weeks	Longer
1	2	3	4

Have stress related symptoms returned on your return to work?

Yes	No
2	1

Has your GP suggested that your condition was due to your work?

Yes	No
2	1

Are you receiving treatment from your GP for stress related symptoms?

Yes	No
2	1

How do you feel emotionally at the present time?

I do not feel sad	1
I feel sad	2
I am sad all the time and I can't snap out of it	3

How satisfied are you with your life?

Mostly Satisfied	1
Partly Satisfied	2
Not Satisfied	3

In general, how stressful is your life?

Very stressful	3
Somewhat stressful	2
Rarely stressful	1

The following attitudes and personality tendencies may be a contributing factor of your stress.

	Never	Sometimes	Often
I lack self-confidence	1	2	3
I am easily frustrated	1	2	3
I worry about everything	1	2	3
I have a lot of imperfections	1	2	3
I am Pessimistic about my future	1	2	3
Everything I do has to be perfect	1	2	3
It is most important for me to be liked	1	2	3
I have trouble getting things done on time	1	2	3
I have trouble making or keeping friends	1	2	3

How effectively do you handle stress in your life?

Not effective	3
Generally effective	2
Extremely effective	1

How do you commonly respond to stress? (Please circle ALL that apply)

Eat	3
Anger	3
Smoke	3
Exercise	0
Watch TV	2
Humor/laugh	0
Drink alcohol	3
Talk to someone	0
Withdraw from others	3
Relaxation techniques	0

When do you feel you would be ready to work on stress/depression?

Not an issue	3
Not ready to change	2
Willing to change soon	1
Willing to change now	0

Assess your lifestyle factors

	Never	Sometimes	Often
I experience problems falling asleep.	1	2	3
I experience problems staying asleep.	1	2	3
I experience high energy late at night.	1	2	3
I have energy highs and lows through the day	1	2	3
I feel tired all the time.	1	2	3
I need caffeine to get going in the morning.	1	2	3
I usually go to bed after 10 pm.	1	2	3

I get less than 8 hours of sleep per night.	1	2	3
I am easily fatigued.	1	2	3
Things I used to enjoy seem like a chore lately.	1	2	3
My sex drive is lower than it used to be.	1	2	3
I suffer from depression	1	2	3
If I skip meals I feel low energy and disoriented	1	2	3
My ability to handle stress has decreased.	1	2	3
I find that I am easily irritated or upset.	1	2	3
I have little time for play or relaxation.	1	2	3
I crave sweets.	1	2	3
I frequently skip meals or eat sporadically.	1	2	3
I am experiencing increased physical complaints.	1	2	3

Total up all scores in Section 2 Symptoms of Stress

Total

Scoring:

See how what your scores mean:

0 – 30	You are in good health.
30 – 40	You are under some stress.
40 - 50	You are a candidate for adrenal burnout.
50 – 60	You are in adrenal burnout.

60 + You are in severe adrenal burnout.

Now add the totals from Life Events and Symptoms of Stress

Total

Scoring:

See how what your scores mean:

Your total score measures the amount of stress that you are subjected to.

Greater than 300 Highly stress

200 – 300 Significant stress

150 – 200 Moderate stress

Less than 150 Low stress

Thank you for taking the time to fill in the questionnaire. Now you have completed the Assessment you can use the information to help guide you in your objective to reduce the stress in your life.

SECTION 3

STRESS MANAGEMENT

TECHNIQUES

STRESS MANAGEMENT

TECHNIQUE 1:

NURTURE YOUR BODY

GET A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

Healthy Eating



‘Those who think they have no time for healthy eating will sooner or later have to find time for illness’ ~ Edward Stanley

A varied, well balanced diet is a basic requirement for healthy living. Without the proper “fuel” your body and mind won’t function at peak performance. A healthy body and mind is paramount if you want to live a life without the debilitating effects of stress.

A good diet based on solid nutritional principles is essential for good health. By diet I’m not referring to some fad in which you totally eliminate a certain kind of food or try to survive on magic powders. I’m talking about a balanced plan of nutrition that is optimized to achieve health and fitness and provide the proper fuel to power you through your day.

A well balanced nutritious diet, especially one low in fat and sugar, helps to prevent stress, and is essential for the maintenance of good health. A poor diet creates a nutritional deficiency which impairs the health of the body, and the brain, affecting our thoughts, feelings and behaviour. So when starting on a stress management routine it is vital to begin a healthy eating plan.



‘He that takes medicine and neglects diet wastes the skills of the physician’. ~ Chinese Proverb

Your diet has a major impact on your energy levels, how well you sleep, your levels of health and fitness, and on how you perform throughout the day and into the evening. All of which has an effect on your stress levels.

A poor diet will create a feeling of tiredness and sluggishness and can lead to weight gain, which in itself can be detrimental to your health and stress levels. To get the best out of your body and mind you need to eat the right foods, in the right balance, at the right time.

A well balanced diet is essential for you to achieve optimum health. This diet should consist of complex carbohydrates, protein, plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables, and lots of water. Saturated fats, sugars and salts should be kept to a minimum.

The Food Pyramid



‘To eat is a necessity, but to eat intelligently is an art’. ~ La Rochefoucauld

A really good guide to follow for healthy eating is provided by The Food Pyramid. The Food Guide Pyramid provides suggestions of what to eat each day based on sensible dietary guidelines to enable you to follow a healthy, balanced diet.

According to the food pyramid, it suggests the following daily recommendations::

Fats, Oils, & Sweets	Keep consumption to a minimum
Milk, Yogurt, & Cheese Group	2-3 servings daily
Vegetable Group	3-5 servings daily
Bread, Cereal, Rice, & Pasta Group	6-11 servings daily
Fruit Group	2-4 servings daily
Meat, Poultry, Fish, Dry Beans, Eggs, & Nuts Group	2-3 servings daily

The Healthy Lifestyle – Healthy eating Principles

Decide today to move your diet away from fatty, sugary, salty food, to healthy, nutritious foods. Take complete control of what you put into your body; it's your first line of defence against stress.



'The wise man should consider that health is the greatest of human blessings. Let food be your medicine'. ~ Hippocrates

If you want to follow a healthy, balanced diet it really is quite simple, all you need to do is follow the principles I'm about to provide you with. All it is going to take on your behalf is the commitment and personal determination. You only

get one body so it's best if you look after it.

The suggestions I am about to give you, are part of my Healthy Lifestyle Eating Plan, and have been adopted by many thousands of my clients, who have achieved unbelievable results. Of course many have started it with the main goal of losing weight. They succeeded in this. But each and every one of them benefited in other ways as well. For example, many noticed an increase in energy, vast improvements in sleep patterns, less anxiety, more productivity, and yes, a reduction in stress.

One thing I am 100% certain about, is that whatever your age, shape or gender, following the suggestions I am about to give you will bring very positive outcomes to you, and I also know nobody out there would be unable to follow the guidelines. So, if your health means as much to you as how you think you look, and it certainly should, make this change a 'must do'.



'You don't have to cook fancy or complicated masterpieces— just good food from fresh ingredients'. ~ Julia Child

Here are the principles that we incorporate in our Healthy Lifestyle Plan that you need to follow for a Healthy Eating Nutritious Diet:

Principle 1: Keep Below 10 Grams of Fat per Meal

By choosing low fat options in all that you eat, keeping below 10 grams of fat per meal, you will be maintaining your fat intake well within the recommended limits for good health. You need to be careful because fat can be hidden in foods

where you don't expect it. Always count up the fat portions of each item you eat to ensure you don't go over your meal limit, get into the habit of reading the nutritional labels on any packaging.

In particular you should avoid consuming foods containing saturated fats. These are 'bad' fats. They are commonly found in processed foods, e.g. crisps, cakes, biscuits, as well as in sausages, beef burgers, some cheeses, butter, hard margarine and full fat milk. If you eat too much saturated fat, you could increase your blood cholesterol levels and raise your risk of coronary heart disease.

All fats are high in calories though, so it makes sense to limit your overall fat intake, particularly if you want to also lose some weight.

When you combine a low fat diet with more fruits, vegetables, and whole grain products, you will find yourself trimming down and feeling far better. The key is to keep fat intake at less than 10 grams per meal.

There are some fats that are actually good for you, in small quantities, and therefore important to include in your diet, as they are essential for your body to function properly. These good fats are polyunsaturated fats and monounsaturated fats. Both are shown to lower the cholesterol levels in our blood as well as preventing heart disease.

Polyunsaturated fat will be found in many vegetable oils, such as soya bean oil, corn oil and sunflower oil, and in fatty fish like salmon, mackerel, herring and trout. Some nuts and seeds e.g. walnuts and sunflower seeds also contain these fats.

Monounsaturated fats are found in vegetable oils e.g. olive oil, canola oil, peanut oil, sunflower oil and sesame oil. It is also found in avocados, peanut butter, and

many nuts and seeds.

'Good' fats include omega-3 fatty acids, found particularly in oily fish such as herring, mackerel, sardines, tuna, salmon and swordfish; and omega-6 fats found in olives, nuts, seeds and seed oils, and many vegetables and grains.

Tips for cutting down on your fat intake

- Replace full-fat milk with semi-skimmed or skimmed milk
- Look out for the 'low fat' and 'polyunsaturated' labels on dairy products,
- Buy lean cuts of meat, cut the fat off before you cook.
- Have natural yoghurt instead of salad creams or mayonnaise
- Grill, oven bake or steam – don't fry
- Go vegetarian — try pulses, beans and vegetables
- Substitute poultry for red meat
- Replace meats with fish — particularly white fish, which has only a minimal fat content

Principle 2: Eat 5/6 Small Frequent Meals per Day - Spread 2 1/2 To 3 Hours Apart

You should eat 6 small meals a day. Just don't tell my Mum I'm telling you this, because like many of you, the advice we were given as children, was to eat our 3 square meals, and not to snack in between. Well it was wrong. When you eat every few hours, you maintain a good blood sugar level which will give you energy throughout the day; you will experience less hunger pangs and cravings, and food is more efficiently absorbed and processed by your body.

By feeding your body frequently throughout the day you will transform your body, look better, feel better, and improve your health. Not a bad recipe.

You should eat something every 2 1/2 to 3 hours.

Breakfast

Morning snack (fruit)

Lunch

Afternoon Snack (fruit)

Evening meal

Evening Snack

Principle 3: Curtail Simple Carbohydrates and Eat Complex Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates are defined as any of a group of organic compounds that includes sugars, starches, celluloses, and gums and serves as a major energy source in the diet of animals. These compounds are produced by photosynthetic plants and contain only carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen.

Carbohydrates supply the body with the fuel it needs to function and the energy to keep going throughout the day. Carbohydrates can be broken down into two types, Simple and Complex Carbohydrates.

Simple carbohydrates are best described as fast releasing carbohydrates, single or double molecules that are quickly broken down and digested into glucose (basic sugar molecule) that the body either retains as glycogen, both in the muscles and liver or quickly releases into the bloodstream to fuel the brain and muscles, which when consumed give you a sudden instant energy boost which doesn't last for long and these should be limited in your diet. These sugars provide only energy (calories) and nothing else.

Sources of simple carbohydrates include:

- Bakery Goods.
- Biscuits
- Cakes
- Chocolate
- Dried Fruit
- Soft Sugary Drinks
- Sweets,
- Table Sugar,
- White Bread
- White Rice

Complex carbohydrates are long strands of glucose molecules and fibre that are indigestible, containing many sugar molecules linked together into a branched chain, as well as containing essential nutrients.

Because of their complex structure, the body takes longer to break them down into glucose. Therefore glucose is released slowly into the blood stream over a longer period. Additionally, the release of insulin is reduced, therefore glucose stays in your blood stream longer so your energy levels can be maintained for a greater length of time creating a long-lasting, constant flow of energy to the body.

Complex carbohydrates are bulky, low in fat and often high in fibre, these foods fill you up without providing too many calories. These foods can also contain some calcium, iron and B vitamins.

Examples of Complex Carbohydrates:

- Brown Rice
- Cereal

- Fruits
- Grains
- Nuts
- Potatoes
- Starchy Vegetables (Potatoes; Corn: Peas; Beans)
- Whole Grain Bread
- Wholemeal Pasta

Load up on complex carbohydrates, avoid simple carbohydrates.

Tips for cutting down on your sugar intake

- Replace sugary desserts with fresh fruits
- Snack on fruit
- Substitute sugary snacks with fresh fruits or fresh vegetables
- Try unsweetened natural juices
- Don't use sugar in coffee and tea
- Look for the 'sugar-free' labels on cereals
- Eliminate junk foods

Principle 4: Increase Protein Consumption

Eating plenty of quality protein helps to build strength, develop athletic performance, and maintain health.

Proteins are a main constituent of all plant and animal tissues. Our bodies constantly pull together, break down and utilise proteins, and it is important that your diet provides enough protein daily to replace that which is used up. It is essential to have protein in your diet to stay strong and healthy, which is of the utmost importance in your battle against stress.

Proteins are composed of amino acids. Amino acids are fundamental to vibrant health. Different foods contain different amino acids. There are 22 amino acids, divided into essential and non-essential. Essential amino acids must be included in our diet as they cannot be created by the body.

Complete proteins are those that include all of the essential amino acids, such as: meat, fish, poultry, eggs, milk and milk products.

Incomplete proteins are those that contain only some of the essential amino acids. They need to be combined with other foods to attain the missing essential amino acids. Examples of Incomplete Proteins are: whole grain cereals, grains (wheat, rice, corn, oats, barley and millet), vegetables, nuts and legumes (dried peas and beans).

Protein is vital for energy, growth, maintenance and repair of muscle. Foods which provide protein also tend to contain essential vitamins and minerals such as iron, B vitamins, zinc and magnesium. Functions of Protein include:

- The growth, repair and healing of the body
- Cell maintenance and repair
- Regulation of a wide range of bodily functions
- Building and maintaining body tissue and muscle
- Prevent muscle and bone breakdown
- Regulates water and acid-base balance
- Involved in blood clotting and vision
- Carries nutrients in and out of cells in the body
- Is needed for the formation of antibodies helping the body fight against disease and infection
- Crucial to burning fat, and increasing and maintaining your metabolism
- Provides energy when carbohydrates are not available
- Make essential hormones and enzymes

- Support the immune system

Protein may be found in meats and poultry, fish, eggs, nuts, beans and lentils

The best protein-rich foods are those that are low in fat, such as:

- High-protein shakes
- Chicken or turkey breast
- Egg whites
- Fish and shellfish
- Very lean cuts of red meat
- Low-fat or non-fat dairy products

You need to limit high-fat protein foods such as:

- Cheese
- Red Meat Cuts
- Sausages
- Full-Fat Dairy Products

It is important to eat Protein as it provides calories that don't raise blood sugar, stabilizes blood sugar levels when eaten with carbohydrates, and provides necessary building blocks for maintaining muscle tissue. It is important for the repair, building and maintenance of lean tissue and muscle.

I suggest you eat a fist sized portion of protein at each meal. Eat lean source protein. This type of protein comes from chicken, turkey and fish, and smaller amounts of red meat and pork fish, and tofu. You need high-quality protein to rebuild your cells and replenish your energy and these are lower in fat than many other foods. By consuming healthy proteins you feel sufficiently full, while eating smaller amounts.

Trimming off visible fat and removing the skin from poultry before eating will

further lower the fat content.

Tips to increase your intake of protein

- Put Low Fat Cheese on top of pastas and cooked vegetables
- Use Low Fat Cheese, grated or sliced cheese in potatoes, casseroles and salads
- Slice eggs and add to salads, casseroles and sandwich fillings
- Have baked beans, a bean salad or bean vegetable dip such as hummus
- Add Nuts (in their natural state, not salted or treated) to Salads
- Prepare cheese spreads or dips for crackers or raw vegetables
- Make grilled cheese or pimiento cheese sandwiches
- Snack on nuts, sunflower or sesame seeds and granola
- Spread peanut butter on bread, crackers, celery, apples or bananas

Principle 5: Never Eat Carbohydrates By Themselves (Eat With Protein And/ Or Vegetables)

Each meal needs to provide your body with a nutritional balance. You should aim to divide your plate into four, having a portions of lean (low fat) Protein in one quarter, a portion of Carbohydrates, and portions of Salad and Vegetables.

This balance will keep your blood sugar and insulin levels stable which is necessary to get your body into peak mode. This balance also helps control your appetite, so you are less tempted by unhealthy foods.

Principle 6: Drink At Least 8 Glasses Of Water Daily

Drink 6-8 glasses of water per day. Drinking water makes you feel less hungry, has no calories, and has countless health benefits. Make it easy for yourself by carrying a bottle of water around with you. Being dehydrated will make you

tired. Drinking lots of water will flush out salts, toxins, waste products, and other residues that can build up in your system and slow you down. You will feel much better just by increasing your daily water intake.

Your body is made up of about 70% water. Our bodies are dependant on water, it is essential for life. All our body's processing relies on water. We can not survive without water. To maintain good health you need to consume about 8 glasses of water daily.

Principle 7: Starve Your Body Of Carbohydrates For 48 Hours Every 2 Weeks

Your body responds to a restriction of carbohydrate consumption by initiating a drop in your insulin levels, and an increase in your glucagon levels. Glucagon is a hormone that brings about an increase in body fat burning as well as removing cholesterol from your body.

By restricting carbohydrates, your body will go into a state of ketosis, where your blood sugar levels stabilise, insulin levels drop, and you burn body fat. I suggest that every 2 weeks, eliminate your carbohydrate consumption for 2 consecutive days. Even though 48 hours is a very short time, I have found that these two days every 2 weeks do make a difference. A big reason, is that you are in control, and showing your willpower and commitment to yourself.

Principle 8: Never Eat Carbohydrates Before Bed Time

As your metabolism slows down while you are asleep, eating large meals late at night before bedtime, especially high calorie carbohydrate meals, increases the likelihood that you will be storing many of these calories as fat, while you are sleeping..

It is best to restrict carbohydrate consumption up to an hour and a half before going to bed. So if you retire at 10 pm, then my advice is not to eat after 8:30.

Principle 9: Eat Plenty Of Fruit And Vegetables (Eat Only Fruit At Snack Time)

Increase your daily intake of fruits and vegetables, I recommend you eat a minimum of 5 portions of fresh fruit and vegetables per day, which will provide you with important vitamins and minerals.

We all require a supply of vitamins and minerals for our bodies to develop and grow healthily. They are used in a variety of ways, such as:

- For growth and good health.
- Keeping your body healthy
- Helping to prevent against many illnesses and diseases.
- Building strong bones,
- Circulating blood safely
- Keeping our internal organs functioning at their best.
- Controlling the chemical reactions within the body to convert food into energy and living tissue transmitting nerve signals
- Maintaining a normal heart beat
- To produce necessary hormones
- Maintain normal body tissue

A healthy balanced diet will include fruits and vegetables. I suggest 2 to 4 servings of fruit and 3 to 5 servings of vegetables each day. Eating as much of this in it's natural state as possible, raw, uncooked, is important as it will retain many of the nutrients which are lost during the cooking process.

I suggest that you eat an apple for your morning and afternoon snack. Apples are filled with indispensable vitamins and minerals, providing a high amount of

fibre. Eating an apple can help curb the sweet tooth. They have a high nutrient level and low Gi ranking.

Five portions a day from the fruit and vegetable group is a minimum and you can aim for 7, 8 or even more! They are low in calories and full of goodness

Principle 10: Keep Salt Consumption Below 2 Grams Daily

Cut down on salt, many foods already contain salt so there is no need to add extra. Research shows that by reducing your salt consumption you will lower blood pressure.. A study by the Food Standards Agency in 2003 found that people's regular salt intake increases the risk of high blood pressure, which in turn increases the risk of other major health problems..

Tips for cutting down on your salt intake

- Don't put the salt pot on the dinner table
- Replace salty snacks with fresh fruit and vegetable snacks
- Look out for the 'no added salt' labels
- Replace normal salt with low-sodium-salts or Bio-Salt
- Halve the salt content in cookery recipes
- Use alternative herbs and spices to flavour your food

Principle 11: Reduce Caffeine Intake

Cut down on caffeine. By following the other principles in this section you should no longer need caffeine as your energy booster. You will now be finding your energy levels far exceed what they once were. Too much coffee contributes to feelings of irritability, mood swings, upset stomachs as well as sleep disturbance. The recommended level of consumption is 300 milligrams daily. Aim to have no more than two cups a day, of coffee, caffeinated tea, or fizzy drinks. Instead it will be far better for you to drink Green Tea or Water.

Principle 12: Eat A Good Breakfast

Start your morning off correctly. Start the day with a good healthy breakfast; this can be very beneficial as this is the best time to eat well. Stress seems to affect people most strongly when they are feeling hungry. When your body is not fuelled you tend to feel more worn out, your mind feels more sluggish and then stress strikes hardest. By not eating breakfast you are leaving yourself susceptible to stress.

Treat yourself as though you were a performance car being prepared to race. You're going to fuel yourself efficiently. No cheap graded fuel for you, but a highly nutritious one. Whatever excuse you want to make, it doesn't matter, if you don't fuel your car, it's going to break down; if you fill it with the wrong fuel, it won't perform well.

A few benefits of eating breakfast are that it has been shown to boost memory. It improves moods, and of course it helps to control your weight. Just believe me when I tell you that starvation achieves none of this.

You can get your day started with a healthy breakfast. My preferred choice is a high-fibre cereal with skimmed milk and a glass of fruit juice, alternatively I prepare a "smoothie" where I blend a banana with low-fat yogurt, orange juice and skimmed milk. It's scrumptious as well as being nutritious.



*'If the doctors of today do not become the nutritionists of tomorrow, then the nutritionists of today will become the doctors of tomorrow'.
~Rockefeller Institute of Medicine Research*

A SAMPLE SELECTION OF GOOD FOOD		
Breakfast <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wholemeal cereals with skimmed milk. • Wholemeal toast with cold meat slices • Eggs (Omelette or scrambled) • Fruit salad with yoghurt • Smoothies – home-made • Porridge 	Lunch <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wholemeal bread sandwiches with either salmon, sardines, tuna, chicken, lean beef, cheese, and add salad • Salads with the addition of nuts, legumes (kidney beans, chickpeas and lentils), with salmon, sardines, tuna, chicken, lean beef • Baked potatoes with beans or cottage cheese • Healthy soups – low fat and low salt, high in vegetables, beans and grains such as barley. Look for products that have less than 10 g of fat. • Low fat cottage cheese 	Dinner <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wholemeal Pasta and low-fat sauce that has a source of protein. • Fish (tuna, salmon, mackerel, sardines). • Stir-fries with protein. • Rice-based dishes (chilli, curry – homemade) • Vegetarian omelettes • Salads with the addition of nuts, legumes (kidney beans, , chickpeas and lentils), with salmon, sardines, tuna, chicken, lean beef • Add lots of colourful vegetables to your plate.
Puddings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fruit salad • A few squares of dark chocolate • Baked apples stuffed with dried fruit • Yoghurt and fromage frais 	Snacks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crudites with yoghurt or other low-fat dip • Fruit • Nuts (Brazil, Cashew, Macadamia –Walnuts, Pine nuts, Hazelnut, Almonds) • Seeds (Pumpkin, Sunflower, Sesame) • Yoghurt and fromage frais 	Drinks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water • Herbal teas. • Green tea

Daily Exercise



'The sovereign invigorator of the body is exercise, and of all the exercises walking is the best' ~ Thomas Jefferson

Having worked in the fitness industry for many years, it still amazes me why so many people wait until they are diagnosed with conditions such as arthritis, diabetes, or high blood pressure before they step into a gym. Until then they don't seem to be able to find the motivation to get off the couch and exercise.

Exercise is a key element in improving or maintaining health and well being. People of all ages can substantially enhance their health and the quality of their life by doing a reasonable amount of physical activity daily. Without jumping on my soap box, let me state one very simple fact. Exercise promotes health and helps prevent disease and illness.

Getting strong and breaking into a sweat on a regular basis is a vital component of becoming and staying a healthy person. Think of an exercise program as medicine. This medication is the most powerful thing you can prescribe for yourself to prevent the many nasty diseases and conditions that may well come your way, unless you do something to prevent them.

Stress accumulates in the body as stored energy. Therefore, an incredibly important way to relieve stress is to exercise. Exercise is great for physical and

mental health. Exercise will help reduce the physical strain of working all day. Exercise is one of the healthiest things you can do for yourself.

Regular exercise can help you look and feel better. The benefits of exercise include:

- It is essential to physical health
- Reduces cholesterol build up
- Increases lung capacity
- Invigorates us
- Improves our skin circulation
- Tones our muscles
- Strengthens our bones
- Makes us feel healthier
- More energetic
- Helps us to sleep more soundly
- Reduces tension
- Distracts us from our problems
- Disperses anger
- Makes us feel mentally healthier
- Makes us more able to tackle our problems
- Reduces the danger of heart disease; diabetes; high blood pressure; colon cancer
- Less mood swings
- Fights the feelings of depression and anxiety
- Helps to control body weight
- A sense of psychological well-being

Benefits in the fight against Stress

Let me now give you some of the incredibly important benefits of exercise to managing stress:

- When exercising we release beneficial chemicals into our brains and bodies
- Exercise focuses our mind away from the causes of our stress
- Exercise warms and relaxes our muscles which are cold and tight when we are stressed
- Exercise contributes to creating a healthy body which reduces our susceptibility to stress
- Exercise will increase the blood flow to our brain
- Hormones are released through exercise
- Exercise stimulates the nervous system
- Chemicals such as beta-endorphin are produced in the body during exercise which have a positive effect on how we feel
- Exercise can produce a powerful sense of well-being, creating a high directly reducing the feelings of stress.
- Exercise reduces tension and increases fitness.
- Exercise refreshes you, makes you stronger and makes you more able to cope with what life throws at you

Get 50 minutes of exercise every day

So with exercise being such a great method in managing stress as well as helping to decrease the risk of heart disease, preventing high blood pressure and assisting you to lose weight, let this be the motivation for you to find time in your life to take up exercise on a regular basis, regardless of your age, shape or size.

You should aim for 50 minutes of exercise every day of the week. Even if you can't find the time to do this in 50 consecutive minutes, you should be able to break up your exercise time into 5, or 10 minute slots.

When exercising you should aim to exercise at a target of 75% to 85% of your maximum Heart Rate. Your Maximum Heart Rate is calculated by taking your age in years and subtracting it from the number 220. For example:

Age	Maximum Heart Rate	75%	85%
20	200	150	170
30	190	142.50	161.50
40	180	135	153
50	170	127.50	144.50
60	160	120	136
70	150	127.50	59.50

So, the Maximum Heart Rate for a 40-year-old is 180 (220 minus 40). The typical 40-year-old with no health concerns would want to exercise at a heart rate of about 135-153.

When you watch television, listen to the radio, or read the newspaper, you couldn't fail to realise that generally people are now less active than they have ever been before and obesity rates are at a all time high level.

So here I put forward to you a very simple method of exercise, that won't tax you too much, and will cost you nothing to be able to do. The method of exercise I am inviting you to do is walk. Yes, that's all, just walk! Walking is a wonderful method of exercise for people of all ages.

Power Walking

If you want to take it up one notch, Power Walking is low-impact, provides a vigorous aerobic workout, and it burns calories and body fat, significantly speeding up your metabolism. In addition you'll improve your endurance, increase your energy and boost the health of your heart.

Power walking is merely fast walking made with powerful arm actions. The difference between power walking and jogging or running, is that in power walking at least one of your feet must be in contact with the ground at all times.

To perform a Power Walk, here are some simple instructions:

- Use correct posture. Your body in proper alignment. Keep your ears freely above your shoulders ensuring your head is in alignment with your neck and spine. Walk tall with your shoulders upright in alignment with your hips. Keep your head up and straight, staring directly ahead, not at the ground.
- Hold your chest up high.
- Keep your arms at around a 90 degree angle. Close your hands in a relaxed fist. As you walk swing your arms from front to back. Do not bring your arms across your body. By swinging your arms, you'll walk faster, burn more calories, and build upper-body strength.
- Suck your abdominal muscles in and up to tighten them.

- Squeeze your buttocks in as though you are holding a five pound note between them as you walk
- Slant your back slightly forward
- Stride out with small, quick steps
- Push off from the floor with your toes, landing on your heels, roll through your instep and again push off with your toes. You should use your calf muscle to drive you forward
- When walking up an incline, such as a hill, you need to shorten your stride, slant your body just a little forward and pump your arms higher up
- How you breathe when power walking is of the utmost importance. Breathe naturally. Inhale through your nose, and exhale out through your mouth. As you walk, take 4 short breaths in, one after the other, then 4 short breaths out. So it is in – in – in – in, and then out – out – out – out.
- Try to set a pace of about 4 to 5 miles per hour. At this pace you will be just at the point where you're about to break into a jog. And you should stay at this pace throughout your walk. If all you can manage is a 20-minute mile, don't worry. Walk regularly, and within 6 weeks, your pace and endurance will increase.

If you can do 30 minutes in the morning, 10 minutes in the afternoon and 10 minutes during the evening, that's great. Try to do as much as you can each day, even if you have to split 10 minutes here and 10 minutes there.

Power walking provides a simple yet effective way of giving your whole body a thorough workout. You will discover that power walking brings mental well being as well as physical strength.



'Success in life can be reached equally by two different ways -- a positive, creative mind leading to a stronger, healthier body or a strong, healthy body leading to a more creative, more positive mind. Either way, or in combination of both ways, there are two rules: 1) Begin 2) Continue' ~ Laura Teresa Marquez

Strength Training



'Strength shall overcome adversity' ~ Jesse Bousquet

A few of the major benefits of Strength Training is that it can decrease stress, reduce blood pressure and increase lean body tissue. It also creates psychological benefits that will improve your physical health.

I have always found that when I am in the gym training with weights, my concentration is intensely focused on every repetition, the movement of the weights, the tension I feel in my muscles and my breathing. I cut out all other thoughts, bringing 100% of my attention to the exercises I am doing. I leave all the stressors from my life in the changing room, none of it matters and

throughout my weights session I start to feel at peace.. Once I've completed my workout, I am pumped and on a high, so my stresses seem far reduced than when I first arrived at the gym. I am feeling great.

Strength training describes any exercise that utilises resistance to work your muscles to the point of fatigue through contracting them against a force or weight.

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia: 'A complete strength training workout can be performed with an adjustable barbell and a set of weight disks (plates). Strength training is a common type of training for developing the strength and size of skeletal muscles. It uses the force of gravity (in the form of weighted bars, dumbbells or weight stacks) to oppose the force generated by muscle through concentric or eccentric contraction. Strength training uses a variety of specialized equipment to target specific muscle groups and types of movement'.

Effective stress management requires a physical outlet to release the chemicals that the body is releasing when under stress. Strength Training is one of the best tools for doing this, and regularly performing strength training will improve your ability to handle stress effectively.

When you incorporate strength training into your life, you not only will become stronger, more capable, and healthier, you also will become more energetic, will feel better, and will look better, and have a great release valve for stress.

Reasons why you should strength-train:

- To avoid muscle loss
- To avoid metabolic rate reduction
- To increase muscle mass

- To increase metabolic rate
- To reduce body fat
- To increase bone mineral density
- To improve glucose metabolism
- To increase gastrointestinal transit time
- To reduce resting blood pressure
- To improve blood lipid levels
- To reduce low back pain
- To reduce arthritic pain

In addition:

- To improve posture
- To increase sex drive
- To improve overall quality of life
- To improve appearance
- To increase muscle strength and muscle power
- To improve health

As well as:

- A great stress relieving technique
- A distraction from stressful situations
- An outlet for frustrations

Don't be intimidated by the idea of strength training. Its natural for you to think of Arnold Schwarzenegger, or muscle bound guys in a local body building gym. But it's great for everybody.

Strength training is an important component of fitness, for both men and women, of all ages. It will not create big, bulging muscles unless you follow a

very strict regime, lifting extremely heavy weights. It will build bone mass, tone your muscles, help you increase your metabolism, Lifting weights has also been shown to improve psychological health as well, by increasing self-esteem, confidence and self-worth.

Having worked in Ladies-only gyms for some time, I am aware that a majority of Ladies look at strength training as the domain of men. It is common for many women to only use the cardiovascular equipment, such as treadmills and steppers, never utilising the weights area. They are put off by the grunts and heavy weights being used by the guys. Also they believe that if they use the weights they will end up with big, bulky, muscular bodies.

So ladies, this bit is really important. Strength training is not just the domain of the males. You also can do it. ~In fact if you want a toned body, its not a could, it's a must. You will also find it is a great way for you to distress your body. So keep reading, you can do this just as well as any guy.

Strength training is versatile - you can do it anywhere with a minimum amount of inexpensive equipment.

The Strength Training Programme

I have written a workout programme that anyone can do. You'll be amazed at how much better you'll feel when you take the time to keep your body strong and healthy.

From hundreds of possible exercises, the ones in my programme have been selected as the most suitable. They are safe, easy to do, and just as important, you can do them almost anywhere.

I suggest that you aim to do strength training 3 times a week. But once is better than nothing in this case. My recommendation is to do strength training every Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

The only equipment you need is a bench/or gym ball and a barbell with some weights to attach to it (Argos is a great place to go to get them).

You must prepare yourself correctly before you begin a strength training session. Before any workout you should do ten minutes gentle warming up to raise your core temperature in readiness for exercise as well as to boost blood flow to your muscles. I suggest jogging on the spot, some power walking, or some stretching exercises.

Do each exercise in the order shown exactly as described, making all your moves slow and deliberate. Pay close attention to the number of repetitions you perform.

The word repetition describes one complete exercise movement that includes both the concentric and eccentric movements. In other words the going down followed by the going back up.

A set describes a group of repetitions performed one after the other without resting. Therefore, if you are instructed to do 1 set of 12 (1 x 12) squats, you would squat the weight for 12 repetitions in a row to complete one set. I'll explain what a squat is shortly.

A rest interval is the amount of time taken in between sets. You should rest for 30 seconds between exercises, and for 3 minutes between circuits, unless otherwise stipulated.

Resistance is the amount of weight used in an exercise. Pick a weight that suits you. Choosing the right starting weight requires some trial and error as you get used to how much weight you can handle for different exercises. If you have selected the right weight for you, each set should feel challenging but manageable without compromising good form. Ideally you should reach failure (the point at which you cannot complete a rep without breaking form) on the last rep of each set. Don't use too much weight, it should be difficult by the end of each set but not so tough that you break form or use momentum to finish a rep.

Each week you should be able to increase the weight for each exercise you do by between 5 – 10%. But remember, whatever weight you use, you should be able to complete the required number of reps each set. When you can complete all your repetitions without exhausting your muscles, you'll know it's time to increase the weight.

If you're beginning strength training for the very first time, or returning to it after many years of not having done any, one set is all you should do initially. Over time build up to three sets. The weights you select must be heavy enough to challenge you during the last few repetitions. As you get stronger you must then add more weight.

This is a Circuit training workout which is an efficient and challenging form of exercise. Circuit Training involves performing different exercises one after the other. The advantages of performing Circuit Training include:

You keep moving throughout the programme, cut down on rest intervals between exercises, and therefore complete your session in a short period of time.

Throughout your circuit training session your heart rate will remain elevated, which ensures not only a maximum fat burn, but also that you will achieve a big cardiovascular fitness boost.

Circuit training involves doing one set of a given exercise and, after only a little rest, moving on to another movement for a different body part, which keeps your heart rate elevated as the intensity of your workout remains high. Continue this one set per exercise format until you complete multiple sets for at least one exercise per body part, then get a rest period after completing all the exercises in the circuit. Then begin the circuit again.

Working different muscle groups in successive sets allows one body part to recover while training another

Each set should take 30-45 seconds to perform and sets alternate between upper and lower body exercises. The circuit is repeated two or more times per session. Circuit training improves aerobic conditioning and increases strength when performed three times per week.

**MONDAY – WEDNESDAY - FRIDAY:
Total-Body Strength Training Workout
Programme**

<i>EXERCISE</i>	MUSCLES	REPS	REST	SETS
<i>Squat</i>	Primary: Quadriceps, Secondary: Hamstrings, Glutes, Erectors	12	30 seconds	1-2-3
<i>Bench Press</i>	Primary: Lower Pectorals; Secondary: Front deltoids' Triceps, Upper Pectorals	12	30 seconds	1-2-3
<i>Lunge</i>	Primary: Hamstrings Secondary: Quadriceps, Calves	12	30 seconds	1-2-3
<i>Bent over Row</i>	Primary: Latissimus dorsi; Secondary: Teres, Rhomboids, Erectors	12	30 seconds	1-2-3
<i>Stiff Legged Deadlift</i>	Primary: Hamstrings; secondary: Spinal erectors	12	30 seconds	1-2-3
<i>Military Press</i>	Primary: Front Deltoids; Secondary: Side Deltoids, Triceps	12	30 seconds	1-2-3
<i>Upright Row</i>	Primary: Traps Secondary: Biceps, Shoulders	12	30 seconds	1-2-3
<i>French Press</i>	Primary: triceps brachii	12	30 seconds	1-2-3
<i>Biceps Curl</i>	Primary: Inner and outer lower Biceps	12	30 seconds	1-2-3
<i>Calf Raise</i>	Primary: Calves; Secondary: Soleus	12	30 seconds	1-2-3

The Exercises Explained

Squat

Stand upright with your back straight, knees unlocked, and your legs about shoulder-width apart, keeping your abdominal muscles tight and your feet pointing at a slight angle. Rest a barbell across your upper back. Hold the barbell with a firm overhand grip, shoulder width apart, letting it rest comfortably across your upper back. Bend your knees, slowly lowering your hips straight down until your thighs are parallel with the floor. Keep your back as straight as possible, your chin up, your abdominals pulled inwards and your shoulders squared. Once you reach the bottom position, pause for a slow count of one, flexing your top leg muscles, then press from your heels, and drive the weight upwards, return to the starting position. Inhale deeply on the descent, and exhale on the way up. Then repeat.

Flat Bench Press

Lie on a flat bench (or fit ball) with your back pressed flat and firmly on the bench, position your feet flat on the floor a little more than shoulder width apart. Grip the barbell with an overhand grip, so your palms are facing upwards and a little wider than shoulder-width. Hold the barbell in a starting position which is directly above your nose with your arms at a full extension.

Using a slow and controlled motion lower the barbell until it reaches the bottom part of your chest with your upper arms parallel to the floor, and your elbows pointing out. At the bottom, pause for a slow count of one, flexing your chest muscles. Then slowly raise the barbell back to the starting position as you squeeze together your chest muscles, then repeat. As you raise the barbell breathe out, and when you lower it, breathe in.

Lunge (Barbell)

Stand upright with your back straight, knees unlocked, and your legs about shoulder-width apart, keeping your abdominal muscles tight and your feet pointing forward. Rest a barbell across your upper back. Hold the barbell with a firm overhand grip, shoulder width apart, letting it rest comfortably across your upper back. Take a large step forward about 2 feet with your right leg. Then slowly bend your knees to the point where your right thigh is positioned parallel with the floor. At this point both your knees should be bent at a 90-degree angle. The right knee should not pass the front of your right foot. Breathe in and lower the rear knee towards the floor whilst maintaining a strong braced body position. Breathe out as you Push off with your right foot to rise upwards to the starting position. Complete set and repeat opposite leg. Then repeat.

Bent over Row

Stand upright with your back straight, knees unlocked, and your legs about shoulder-width apart, keeping your abdominal muscles tight and your feet pointing forward. Hold a barbell with a firm overhand grip, shoulder width apart, your palms facing in towards your legs. Slowly bend over at your hips with your back almost parallel to the floor, while you lower the barbell in front of you until it almost touches the floor, being sure to keep your knees straightened or only slightly bent, maintaining the same leg position at all times. This is the starting position. Now pull the barbell up until it reaches the outside of your chest. Pause, and then return to the starting position. Then repeat. Inhale up and exhale down.

Stiff Legged Deadlift

Stand upright with your back straight, knees unlocked, and your legs about shoulder-width apart, keeping your abdominal muscles tight and your feet pointing forward. Hold a barbell with a firm overhand grip shoulder width apart your palms facing towards your legs.

Keeping your head up and back flat, and bend at the hips. Using the strength of your hamstrings, NOT your back, slowly raise your torso up to an upright standing position. DO NOT lean back at the top, bend forward at your hips, and slowly lower the barbell in front of you until it almost touches the floor, being sure to keep your knees straightened or only slightly bent, maintaining the same leg position at all times. Keep your back straight throughout the exercise. While concentrating on the muscles in the back of your legs, raise your upper body and the barbell to the starting position. Don't hunch over, keep your back fairly rigid throughout the exercise. Then repeat. Inhale up and exhale down.

Military Press

Stand upright with your back straight, knees unlocked, and your legs about hip-width apart, keeping your abdominal muscles tight and your feet pointing forward. Hold a barbell with a firm overhand grip shoulder width apart, your palms facing out. Bring the barbell up to your shoulder level. Slowly press the barbell overhead, extending your arms without locking out while maintaining the natural arch in your spine. Pause for a slow count of one, flexing your shoulder muscles. Then slowly lower the barbell and return back to the starting position and then repeat. Exhale up and inhale down.

Barbell Upright Row

Stand upright with your back straight, knees unlocked, and your legs about shoulder-width apart, keeping your abdominal muscles tight and your feet pointing forward. Hold a barbell with a firm overhand grip ,shoulder width apart, your palms facing down, thumbs pointing towards each other with the barbell hanging straight down in front of you at about the top of your thighs. While keeping both your body and your wrists straight, pull the barbell straight up until it nearly reaches your chin, with your elbows pointing out to the side, almost as high as your ears. Throughout this movement maintain the barbell as close to your body as possible. At the top , pause for a slow count of one, flexing your muscles at the front of your shoulders and in your upper back. Then slowly lower the barbell and return back to the starting position and then repeat. Exhale up and inhale down..

Flat-Bench French Press

Lie on a flat bench (or fit ball) with your back pressed flat and firmly on the bench, position your feet flat on the floor a little more than shoulder width apart. Grip the barbell with an overhand grip, so your palms are facing upwards and a little wider than shoulder-width. Hold the barbell in a starting position which is directly above your nose with your arms at a full extension.

Keeping your upper arms fixed, using a slow and controlled motion lower the barbell by bending your elbows while keeping your upper arms stationery to just above your forehead. Pause for a slow count of one, flexing your triceps muscle, then slowly raise the barbell and return back to the starting position, and repeat. Make sure there is no shoulder movement on this exercise. The movement should come purely from your elbows. As you raise the barbell breathe in, and when you lower it, breathe out.

Barbell Curl

Stand upright with your back straight, knees unlocked, and your legs about hip-width apart, keeping your abdominal muscles tight and your feet pointing forward. Hold a barbell with an firm underhand grip shoulder width apart your palms facing out just in front of your legs. Slowly begin curling the barbell to full elbow flexion bringing it up to near your shoulders, keeping your elbows tucked in to your your sides. Pause for a slow count of one, flexing your biceps. Then slowly lower the barbell and return back to the starting position and then repeat. Inhale up and exhale down.

Calf Raise

Stand upright with your back straight, knees unlocked, and your legs about shoulder-width apart, keeping your abdominal muscles tight and your feet pointing forward. Rest a barbell across your upper back. Hold the barbell with an firm overhand grip shoulder width apart letting it rest comfortably across your upper back. Point your toes out at a 45-degree angle. Keeping both legs straight, raise yourself up on your toes as high as you can. Pause for a slow count of one, then slowly lower yourself back down to the starting position.

Get it right

When participating in a strength training programme, it is important to carry it out in a safe and effective way. To ensure this it is important to use good form ('the way the exercise is performed'). This means you must use the full range of motion when you perform each exercise, use the correct muscles for each exercise, following the above descriptions carefully and accurately. This way you are minimising the likelihood of injury.

Here are some tips that will assist you in performing your strength training exercises in the best way:

- Before commencing your strength training exercises it is essential to do stretching first
- After stretching, you should warm up using light weights do 20 repetitions of the first few exercises
- It is important to stay hydrated during your training session, so drink lots of water
- Use proper body posture and exercise techniques
- Avoid locking your arm or leg joints into a straight, tight position
- It's vitally important to breathe correctly during strength training. Ensure that you do not hold your breath during your exercises. The correct breathing technique is to inhale when lifting or pushing and exhale when relaxing or lowering the weight
- Keeping a record through writing a journal of what you do is essential to the success of your training. By keeping track of your progress over time, it will keep you motivated and inspired to keep going.
- To see the best improvements your strength training must be progressive, which means that you need to gradually increase the amount of weight you lift, to enable you to constantly experience a higher level of challenge in your training. By just lifting the same weight, month after month, you will see no improvement, and will lose any challenge. So always record the weights you are using for each exercise, and the number of repetitions, so you always can see your improvements, when you make them.
- If at any time during your strength training programme, you feel any shortness of breath, or dizziness, stop immediately.

Work Out Log

Use this work out log to enable you to measure your performance and keep track of your fitness and strength gains. Use the comments section to record how you felt on that particular exercise. Archive each completed month so that you can maintain a total record of your physical development.

Day

Date

Start Time

End Time

Muscle Targeted	Exercise	Target		Set 1		Set 2		Set 3		Comment
		Sets	Reps	Reps	Weight	Reps	Weight	Reps	Weight	
Legs	Squat	3	12							
Chest	Bench Press	3	12							
Legs	Lunge	3	12							
Back	Bent over Row	3	12							
Legs	Stiff Legged Deadlift	3	12							
Shoulders	Military Press	3	12							
Back	Upright Row	3	12							
Triceps	French Press	3	12							
Arms	Biceps Curl	3	12							
Legs	Calf Raise	3	12							

Adequate Sleep & Rest



'And if tonight my soul may find her peace in sleep, and sink in good oblivion, and in the morning wake like a new-opened flower then I have been dipped again in God, and new-created' ~ D.H. Lawrence

Your body needs adequate sleep to repair and recharge itself. Experts recommend an average of about 8 hours sleep a night. Too little sleep can affect your mood, your work, and how you feel.

To get yourself the best night's sleep, it is important to establish a wind-down hour to make the transition from your active day and evening activities to your sleep time. By taking an hour to just chill out and relax before going to sleep, you will find that your sleep is far more restful, and calming. This one hour will get you into the necessary state, ensuring that both your mind and body are rested and relaxed after the events of the day. During this one hour, don't do anything associated with work or finances. My top tip, is to either use progressive muscular relaxation, or meditation, both of which you will learn about further on in the book.

Feeling tired or run down is a symptom of stress that comes from not getting enough sleep. The more sleep you get the better your ability to fight stress. By getting an adequate amount of sleeping time, you will be giving yourself great support in maintaining your health and the energy and strength of mind to cope

with your problems. I'm sure you have noticed those times when you have had a bad night's sleep, and didn't enjoy sufficient hours in the land of nod, where the next day you have been tense, and far more irritable than usual.

Natural preparation for a good night's sleep is preferable to medication, so here are a few simple suggestions:

- At least 30 minutes relaxation period before bedtime
- Ensure your bedroom is not too warm and has good air circulation
- Try to finish stressful activities long before bedtime so they do not engage your mind too much
- Always make sure you empty your bladder before going to bed and do not drink a very large amount of any beverage too close to bedtime, which will cause you to wake to empty your bladder, thus disturbing your rest
- Reading can help to tire your eyes thus aiding sleep
- Preparation for the next day long before bedtime can help to reduce apprehension
- Avoiding mental over-stimulation close to bedtime such as horror/action films etc. can be helpful.
- Use the muscle relaxation or meditation technique, covered later, when ready to settle down for the night
- Keep a window slightly open to allow fresh air to enter your bedroom

Sufficient sleep is essential to a healthy mind and body. Your life improves in every way when you wake feeling refreshed and ready for the day ahead.

Stretching



‘When you engage in systematic, purposeful action, using and stretching your abilities to the maximum, you cannot help but feel positive and confident about yourself’ ~ Brian Tracy

Stress results in muscles tensing up and it often leads to headaches, as well as a stiff neck, tense shoulders and even back problems. One of the best ways to reduce stress is to perform some basic stretching to help reduce stress.

Taking time to stretch provides you with other benefits. No matter how busy your mind is before you start, stretching focuses you completely, calms you, enhances your well being and helps to restore the body’s equilibrium.

A great thing about stretching is how easy it is to do, and that you don’t need any equipment, as well as the fact you can do it anywhere. You can do it in the morning, afternoon or evening, in fact any time that’s best for you. All I suggest is that you find the time, on a daily basis, to do some stretching.

To stretch correctly use slow, steady and controlled movement of your muscles, using a full-range of motion. At this point maintain this position for 15 seconds, to increase your blood flow, and fully stretch your muscles.

Benefits of stretching include:

- Increasing flexibility

- Regulating the blood flow in your body which helps you in maintaining your blood pressure
- Improving your blood circulation
- Relieving stress by relaxing tense joints and muscles
- Improving joint range of motion
- Minimizes pains and aches by promoting better posture
- Results in better circulation, creating relaxation, clearer thinking, and stress release
- Stretching brings deeper breathing, filling the body with more oxygen, inducing relaxation and stress release
- Stretching as a form of exercise causes the brain to release endorphins which bring about stress release

The Stretches explained:

Neck Stretch

Stress frequently affects the neck area of the body. Stand up straight and ensure you do not arch your back. Allow your head to fall forward, and feel your shoulders and neck relax.. Slowly roll your head to your left side, by moving your chin towards your left shoulder. Hold for 15 seconds. Then slowly bring it back to the starting point. Now slowly roll your head to your right side, by moving your chin towards your right shoulder. Hold for 15 seconds. Then slowly bring it back to the starting point.

Chest Stretch

Stand upright with your back straight, knees unlocked, and your legs about hip-width apart and your feet pointing forward. Take your arms and stretch them out behind your back. Bring your palms together and interlock your fingers.. Now with your arms fully extended behind your back, and clasped together, feel

the stretch in your chest. Hold for 15 seconds. Then slowly release bringing your arms back to a relaxed position by your side.

Upper Back Stretch

Stand upright with your back straight, knees unlocked, and your legs about hip-width apart and your feet pointing forward. Raise both your arms straight above you towards the ceiling. Bring your hands together and interlock your fingers, with your palms facing up to the ceiling, parallel to the floor. Extend your arms up as though you were trying to touch the ceiling with your palms. Feel the stretch in your upper back. Hold for 15 seconds. Then slowly release bringing your arms back to a relaxed position by the side of you.

Shoulder Stretch

Stand upright with your back straight, knees unlocked, and your legs about hip-width apart and your feet pointing forward. Extend your right hand across your body, palm facing towards you, bringing your arm to rest across your chest. Now place your left forearm on the top of your right forearm, with your fingers pointing up, and your palm facing towards you. Push slowly your left arm back, and turn your head to your right, and feel the stretch in your right shoulder. Hold for 15 seconds. Then slowly release bringing your arms back to a relaxed position by your side. Now repeat the stretch for the other side.

Low Back Stretch

Lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor. Bring your hands together and place them around your shins, grasping them firmly. Now slowly pull both knees up towards your chest while raising your feet off the floor. Bring your knees as close to your chest as you can, feel the stretch in your

lower back. Hold for 15 seconds. Then slowly release bringing your feet back to a relaxed position on the floor.

Abdominal Cat Stretch

Position yourself on your hands and knees on the floor. Both your hands and knees about shoulder-width apart, your elbows slightly bent. Your hands placed directly under your shoulders, your knees directly under your buttocks. Slowly lower your abdomen down towards the floor, allowing your lower back to bend downward and stretch, feel the stretch in your front abdominal muscles. Hold for 15 seconds. Now slowly arch your back and hold for 5 seconds. Finally sit back on your heels, arms extended straight out and hold for a further 5 seconds. Then slowly release

Gluteus Spinal Twist

Sit on the floor with both legs extended straight in front of you. Take your right leg and cross it over your left leg, placing your right foot flat on the floor outside your left knee. Rest your left elbow on the outside of your right knee, bringing your right arm behind you with your palm placed flat on the floor. Slowly turn your upper body to the right and looking over your right shoulder simultaneously, apply gentle pressure with your left elbow on to the outside of your right knee and feel the stretch in your right buttock. Hold for 15 seconds. Then slowly release. Now repeat for the other side.

Lying Quadriceps Stretch

Lie on your stomach on the floor with your legs together and straight down, hands flat by your side. Bring your right leg up towards your buttocks. Now reach around with your right hand and take hold of your right foot. Pull slowly downwards on your leg to the furthest comfortable position, and feel the

stretch in your right quadriceps. Hold for 15 seconds. Then slowly release bringing your leg back to the floor and your arm to your side. Now repeat the stretch for the other side.

Lower Back Stretch

Lie on your back, on the floor with your legs together, knees bent. While keeping your head on the floor, slowly pull both legs into your chest, and wrap your arms around the back of your knees. Now pull down on your legs while gradually lifting your buttocks off the floor, and feel the stretch in your lower back. Hold for 15 seconds. Then slowly release bringing your leg back to the floor and your arm to your side.

Seated Hamstring Stretch

Sit on the floor with both legs extended straight in front of you. Pull the toes of your right foot towards your shin. Position the bottom of your left leg up against the inside of your right thigh. Place both hands on to your right leg. While keeping your back straight, slowly bend forward at the hips towards your right leg, and feel the stretch in your right hamstring. Hold for 15 seconds. Then slowly release returning to an upright position. Now repeat the stretch for the other side.

Calf Stretch

Stand upright with your back straight, knees unlocked, and your legs about hip-width apart and your feet pointing forward. Take a step forward with your left leg. Place your hands on your hips. Now keeping your feet flat on the floor, your toes pointing forward, slowly bend your legs, feel the stretch in your right calf. Hold for 15 seconds. Then slowly release bringing your legs back to an upright position. Now repeat the stretch for the other side.

Quadriceps Standing

Stand upright with your back straight, knees unlocked, and your legs about hip-width apart and your feet pointing forward, facing a wall. Place your left hand on the wall for support. Bend your right knee to raise your right heel up toward your buttocks, and now grasp hold of your foot, with your right hand behind you. Inhale, slowly pulling your heel to your buttock while gradually pushing your hips forward. feel the stretch in your right quadriceps. Hold for 15 seconds. Then slowly release bringing your legs back to an upright position. Now repeat the stretch for the other side.

Biceps Stretch

Stand upright with your back straight, knees unlocked, and your legs about hip-width apart , your left hand side facing a wall. Place your right arm on your right hip. Now place your left palm on the wall, at approximately shoulder level, keeping your arm straight, and your fingers pointing back, away from you. Next take a couple of small steps and slowly rotate your body to the right, feel the stretch in your left bicep. Hold for 15 seconds. Then slowly release bringing your body back to an upright position, and both hands return to your side. Now repeat the stretch for the other side.

Triceps Stretch

Stand upright with your back straight, knees unlocked, and your legs about hip-width apart and your feet pointing forward. Stand strong with your shoulders back and chest pushed out. Raise your right arm overhead, and bend it pointing your elbow to the ceiling and your palm facing your back. Now position your left hand on your right elbow. Use your left hand to pull your right arm back, and to the left. feel the stretch in your right tricep. Hold for 15 seconds. Then slowly

release bringing your body back to an upright position, and both hands return to your side. Now repeat the stretch for the other side.

Drink Water



*'Water is life's mater and matrix, mother and medium. There is no life without water' ~
Albert Szent-Gyorgyi*

Yes, I mentioned this in Healthy eating, so hopefully you're getting the point of how important this is. It's a fair bet, that at this time you do not drink enough water. If you are the exception to this, I congratulate you. Now I'm not talking about cordials, squashes, juices, teas and coffees. I'm talking about a nice, refreshing glass of water. Our organs, one of which being your brain, are reliant on water to function correctly. Without enough water you won't be able to function at your best, and that just gets you stressed.

Water is required by your body for it to be able to operate efficiently. So many of our body functions are dependant upon water. It is essential to keep our bodies fully hydrated by drinking water regularly. You need approximately 6 to 8 glasses of water every day.

It only takes a very small fluid loss for the body to become dehydrated, and this will occur before you become aware of being thirsty. Even a small deficiency of water can radically change and upset your biochemistry. With the fact that you

lose water through breathing, perspiration, urination and bowel movements, it is obviously essential that you need to replace it.

My suggestion is that you carry a bottle of water with you at all times. Have it with you in the car, at your desk, by your side when on the couch. When it is there, you will drink.

So no excuses. Get drinking! We are talking about WATER!

Let's take a look at two common unproductive stress management strategies.

Quit smoking today

Ask a smoker why they smoke, and many will answer that it's a must do in order to relieve stress. Sorry to tell you then, but nicotine actually increases anxiety and tension. There are over 13 million smokers in Britain. There are in excess of 100,000 deaths from lung cancer, heart disease as well as respiratory illnesses which are caused by smoking cigarettes.

It's easy for a non smoker to preach how bad smoking is for you, I hear you say. Well, for many years I was a smoker. I know how difficult it is to overcome this addiction. I'm in the fitness industry, have always taken care of my body physically, yet still I found the excuses to keep on smoking. Alan Carr's book will help, I highly recommend 'Easy Way to Stop Smoking'.

Let me tell you a few simple facts, to show you why smoking cigarettes is not a viable, or successful method for handling stress.

One packet of cigarettes costs in excess of £5. So a smoker of 20 a day, spends £35 a week, £1820 a year. What better use could you put that amount of money to?

So just by lighting a cigarette, and smoking it, you believe brings you relief from your stress. Maybe. But be honest with yourself. How long does that relief last? At best only a very short time. Your stress takes over again really quickly, so your answer, light another cigarette. You know smoking for stress relief makes no sense, and doesn't work

No matter how many cigarettes you smoke, they simply do nothing to solve your problems. They remain, unaffected. Smoking does not help you find the causes of your stress, or help you to eradicate it.

The name of this book is 'Combating Stress – The Healthy Lifestyle Way'. I assure you there is nothing healthy about smoking. In most people's situation the stress they face will not kill them, but as statistics show, smoking may.

Most people that smoke, inwardly know they're being stupid. They would love to quit, but believe that is going to be so difficult. They beat themselves up about it; hate the fact that they're showing their kids that smoking is ok. By this way of thinking smoking is causing them far more stress than it is relieving. Many chemists together with the NHS now offer stop smoking support, so there can be no excuses for not trying, at least. You have everything to gain, and absolutely nothing to lose.

Make the decision to quit smoking. Plan how you're going to do this. For example

- Join a stop-smoking programme.

- Set a quit date. Stretch out the time between cigarettes as your quit date approaches.
- The odds of quitting for good increase with every effort you make.
- Read Allen Carr's "Easy Way to Stop Smoking"

Your health will benefit, and in truth so will your mind.



'Smokers think that smoking is helping them to relieve their stress, whereas actually it's having the opposite effect. People are fooling themselves if they think carrying on smoking is going to help ~ Dr Amanda Sandford

Sensible use of Alcohol

It is undeniable that modern life can be very stressful, with so many pressures and demands placed upon us and consequently so many people like to unwind with a drink or two... or three ...or four. They use alcohol to relax and to combat the effects of stress.

Drinking alcohol as one of your methods of stress management really isn't a very sensible option. Using alcohol as a relaxant can lead to bigger and bigger problems:

- The more alcohol you drink, the more alcohol you will need to feel 'relaxed' – this can lead to addiction
- Hangovers impair concentration and even simple tasks become more difficult

- Alcohol disrupts sleep, leaving us weary and bad-tempered
- Knowing we're drinking too much can be stressful in itself
- Alcohol can intensify feelings of anxiety and depression
- Alcohol can lead us to do things that afterwards regret causing more stress

So using alcohol for combating stress becomes a vicious circle. If you drink to try and cope with stress, the negative effects of alcohol will only make your stress worse, and can lead to serious problems with your physical or mental health.

The good news is, if you stay within sensible limits, its unlikely drinking alcohol will increase your stress:

Men: No more than 3-4 units a day and no more than 21 units in one week.

Women: No more than 2-3 units a day and no more than 14 units a week.

We all need at least 2 days a week without alcohol.

This still doesn't mean that alcohol is an effective stress management technique. The simple fact is that it is not.

There is no doubt that many individuals turn to alcohol in response to stress, as their way of coping. The more severe and chronic the stressor, the greater the alcohol consumption.

It's a fact that people under stress generally demonstrate more unhealthy and unproductive behaviours than people under less stress. A key example of this is their consumption of alcohol. Stressed. In fact, stress is strongly associated with alcohol abuse.

Studies show that alcohol increases the stress response because it stimulates the production of the very hormones that the body produces when it is under stress. So drinking alcohol is not a suitable method for relieving stress.

Alcohol will not solve your ongoing problems. At best it provides temporary relief from stress symptoms. At worst excessive or continued use of alcohol may cause long term physical and mental problems.



'If you nurture your mind, body, and spirit, your time will expand. You will gain a new perspective that will allow you to accomplish much more' ~ Brian Koslow

~

STRESS MANAGEMENT

TECHNIQUE 2:

RELAX YOUR

MIND & BODY

Introduction



'Your body is an amazing creation, capable of performing great wonders, but you can destroy that miraculous machine's potential with an overdose of stress' ~ Harry J. Johnson

If you want to get yourself into a supportive mental state, feel physically vibrant and totally alive, then these are the techniques that will achieve this for you. By using them, you will create for yourself a physical and mental “peak state”, as well as being able to retain a positive mental attitude throughout the day.

You need to realise that the way you feel emotionally affects the way you feel physically. Alternatively, the way you feel physically affects the way you feel emotionally.

When you relax, your muscles loosen, blood pressure lowers and the heartbeat slows down. It is the totally opposite response to that of stress. It is without doubt a far more beneficial and enjoyable state to be in. In this section I will introduce you to methods and techniques that will enable you to relax. You must practice the techniques you wish to use, because it does take time for you to get them just right. But the time it takes to acquire the ability to use these techniques to relax will be worth it for the undoubted benefits it will bring you.

I thought these techniques were "strange" at first; well in truth that may be a bit of an understatement. I was extremely resistant, unable to accept that such simple methods would be able to calm my mind, control my thoughts and help

me get back on track, after all that had happened to me. But those helping me through these days were persistent, patient and determined to see me through. I'm glad they were. It was these techniques that produced the most dramatic changes in my stressful life!



'A strong body makes the mind strong' ~ Thomas Jefferson

So your mind and body work hand in hand. Anything that affects one of them, will automatically affect the other. It is essential for you to understand, that to control your state of mind, you must consciously direct your internal thoughts and physiology.

When your body is under stress, it is important to try and find methods to relax, in order to minimise any physical wear and tear that may be inflicted by stress. It is by relaxing your mind that you can best relax your body. As a famous quotation states - 'where the mind goes, the body follows'.

Let's start by looking at how your body reacts when the stress response is triggered. Generally it will experience the following:

- Heart rate speeds up
- Blood pressure rises
- Breathing speeds up
- Blood moves to major muscles

- Muscles tense
- Sweating occurs
- Blood sugar increases for energy

For a short time this reaction is not a bad thing. This stress response involves both your mind and body; it drives you to perform efficiently and productively when work or personal challenges demand it, but if you stay at this level for a prolonged period of time, that is when it can create problems. When stress is ongoing then it becomes an unhealthy condition to experience in your life, your mind and body then become affected by the ongoing, overwhelmingly negative feelings that stress inflicts upon you.

Make Your Physical Environment Comfortable

It is important to create and surround yourself with a stress-free environment. The physical environment that we create around ourselves is very often a direct demonstration of how we are feeling, where we are emotionally and mentally, a gauge of our state of mind. If we are stressed we become distracted, we seem to lose things (keys come to mind – now where did I put them?). If we are disorganized, the piles begin to gather (paperwork, clothes at the bottom of the bed, rubbish in the car). If we are feeling stressed, the emails in our inbox mount up, the voicemails remain unheard and mail unopened.

Do you think that if your car, house, and office are disorganised and messy, that this provides a conducive environment to stay relaxed? I don't think so. I know the state of my daughters' bedrooms creates great stress in my wife's life! But this is a different issue.

If you are starting to fall to pieces, the first place that it is likely to become apparent is in your environment. Personal cleanliness and discipline starts to wane and you start paying less attention to yourself, and the things around you. Often you will create an environment around yourself that generates further stressful situations, whether in your workplace or at home.

When you are stressed you often start to struggle with your self respect and self esteem. This begins to reveal itself through your behaviour. You leave your clothes lying scattered around on the bedroom floor; you wear dirty clothes on a night out because you don't care enough about yourself to be attentive to your appearance at all times. You need to start showing some respect for yourself, paying attention and being aware of your environment. You must make an effort to attend to every detail of your environment and be impeccable in that attention.

So are you keeping on top of your physical environment, or wasting time trying to find things in a cluttered, disorganized environment? Even though these frustrations are small, each one either triggers a small release of stress hormones into your body or reduces your overall sense of happiness. This creates a background level of stress in your life, which is then exacerbated by the serious stressful incidents you face.

By managing the small stresses in our life, we can reduce the impact of the major stresses when they occur.

Let's take a look at your personal environment ...

EXERCISE : PERSONAL ENVIRONMENT QUIZ

Tick the statements that apply to you. See for yourself how comfortable and satisfied you are with your environment. Those that you leave unchecked, well they need your attention. What changes do you have to make, to be 100% happy with your environment? Get started on making those changes!

- ☐ My personal papers, and receipts are neatly filed away.
- ☐ My car is in excellent condition. (Doesn't need mechanical work, repairs, cleaning or replacing)
- ☐ My home is clean and tidy. (Vacuumed, wardrobes and drawers organized, tables clear, furniture in good repair; windows clean).
- ☐ My appliances, machinery and equipment work well. (Fridge, toaster, lawn mower, water heater, hi-fi etc.).
- ☐ My clothes are all ironed, clean and make me look good. (No creases, piles of washing, torn, or ill-fitting clothes).
- ☐ My plants and animals are healthy. (Fed, watered, getting attention).
- ☐ My bed/bedroom lets me have the best sleep possible. (Firm bed, light, air).
- ☐ I live in a house/flat that I love.
- ☐ I surround myself with beautiful things.
- ☐ I live in the geographical location of my choice.
- ☐ There is ample and healthy lighting around me.
- ☐ I consistently have adequate time, space and freedom in my life.
- ☐ Nothing in my environment harms me.
- ☐ I am not tolerating anything about my home or work environment.
- ☐ My work environment is productive and inspiring.
- ☐ My computer works very well and fully supports my efforts.
- ☐ My hair is the way I want it.
- ☐ I am well groomed when out in public.
- ☐ I back up my hard drive at least monthly.

- ☐ I surround myself with music which makes my life more enjoyable.
- ☐ My bed is made daily.
- ☐ I don't injure myself, fall or bump into things.
- ☐ People feel comfortable in my home.
- ☐ I have nothing around the house or in storage that I do not need.
- ☐ I can always find what I need (keys, remote control, papers)
- ☐ I am consistently early or easily on time.

Taking care of your personal environment, making it conducive to positive thoughts is a key to your personal stress management.

Any items that you don't select, are either demonstrating an area from which stress is generated, or is demonstrating that it is caused by you being stressed. Don't just ignore this area, do something about it. Make changes! You Have just carried out a health check of your environment. Make the most of it, by making the changes that you have highlighted. You know it not only makes sense, but will provide you with a better platform to kick start your life in the direction you want it to go..



'Clutter causes stress, and clutter is one of the main barriers of productivity' ~ Charisse Ward

Deep Breathing



'Sometimes the most important thing in a whole day is the rest we take between deep breaths' ~ Etty Hillesum

The way you breathe has a major effect on your sense of wellbeing. Many people breathe poorly, without even realizing it. Breathing is essential to sustaining life. Yet so many people neglect their breathing because it is involuntary. It takes place without any effort on your part. In fact most of the time you are totally unaware that it is taking place at all. This means that many, many people do not breathe properly and allow their uncontrolled, habitual breathing to be too shallow, using only a fraction of their lung capacity.

You take an average of about 15 breaths per minute, 900 breaths an hour, so about 21,600 breaths per day.

We are living in a hectic, fast-paced world, and stressors are increasing in most people's lives. One of the results of this is that people's breathing is becoming more shallow in response to the burden of pressure we feel. Despite the importance of breathing to us as human beings to merely be able to live, we do not pay attention to the way we breathe, do nothing to control our breathing, and therefore most of us just breath badly all the time using Shallow Breathing.

Shallow Breathing is where you tend to breathe from the chest, rather than from the abdomen. This creates a shorter and shallower breath. The diaphragm is not used as it should be. Stress causes shallow breathing, only using the upper part of the chest, revealing our emotional and mental state. When people are stressed they take rapid, shallow breaths from their chest. This results in insufficient oxygen entering the body, so we become sluggish and exhausted. If short shallow breathing continues, a mental and emotional imbalance will occur translating into physical effects throughout the body. Shallow breathing tires you out, reduces your stamina and endurance.

Shallow breathing is detrimental to your health:

- oxygen levels are lower
- energy levels are lower
- stress levels are higher

You will benefit physically and emotionally both in the short and long term by acquiring a proper breathing technique. Deep breathing can increase the body's cleansing pace by as much as 15 times the normal pace, and this will deliver improvements to your health. It is very simple to adopt the habit of breathing properly. With practice you will soon be breathing from your abdomen, and that is the best way for you.

An increased amount of oxygen allows the heart rate to slow down. This produces a calming effect. Relaxation comes through the tensing and relaxing of muscles. A deep inhalation tenses the respiratory muscles and a deep exhalation relaxes them.

Allowing more oxygen to be absorbed will improve body function. This assists the body's response, repair and recovery from stress. An increased amount of oxygen allows the heart rate to slow down. This produces a calming effect. Taking time for breathing exercises gives you the chance to pause and plan your response to a stressful situation. A diversion from stress prevents distress. Focusing on your breathing and practicing deep breathing exercises will help relieve tension and stress.

We must breathe in through our nose and out through our mouth. It not only helps clear the mind but allows you to feel livelier because you are utilising your lungs to maximise the oxygen in your bloodstream.

As breathing is of such fundamental importance to you, and without it, hey you wouldn't be alive, it makes sense to once again take notice of your breathing. Stop right now, just pay attention. Let's give you an exercise to do.

Deep Breathing Technique

- Find a warm quiet place where you will not be disturbed.
- Sit in a chair, arms at your sides, legs uncrossed with good posture so that your stomach is not squashed in.
- Feel any tension in your muscles. Then starting from your feet and working up to your head, relax all your muscles. Work your way through your entire body. Sense every part. Relax totally.
- Now pay attention to your breathing, become aware of each breath, its rhythm, depth or shallowness, and its speed.

- Position your left hand on the top part of your chest and put your right hand on your abdomen at the navel (belly button), just below your rib cage. As you take a deep breath in, your right hand which is placed on your abdomen will rise higher than the left hand on your chest if you are correctly deep breathing, meaning your diaphragm is pulling air into your lungs.
- Exhale all of the air in your lungs. Keep pushing the air out. When you feel like you can't exhale any more air, pause.
- Take a slow deep breath (inhale) through your nose more deeply than usual as though you are trying to suck in all the air around you and hold it in for a count of 4 and let your stomach swell forward against your hand as you breathe in, (if you are breathing correctly you should feel your abdomen raise as your lungs fill up with air). Your hand on your chest should only move slightly. When your chest rises more than your abdomen, then you are breathing from your chest (shallow breathing).
- Then pucker your lips and exhale through your mouth making a relaxing, whooshing sound like a big sigh, making a sound of relief as the air leaves your mouth) while tensing the abs, tighten your stomach muscles, letting them fall inward until a full contraction has been obtained. Slowly exhale for a count of 8. The hand on your upper chest must remain as still as possible. As all the air is released, softly squeeze your abdominal muscles to totally empty the outstanding air from your lungs. Make sure you have completely exhaled all the air from your body.
- Make exhaling slower and longer than inhaling. Exhalation should take about twice as long as inhalation. So if you counted to four when you inhaled, strive to count to eight when you exhale, but don't force it.

- Repeat steps 7 and 8 four more times.
- As you are doing this keep your focus completely on your breathing. If you observe other thoughts in your mind, just let them go, keeping your attention on your breathing.

Meditation



'The time to relax is when you don't have time for it' ~ Jim Goodwin

With the way our modern lifestyle is, maybe it is no surprise that we are often stressed out. Getting stuck in heavy traffic, crowded shopping centres (particularly during December), waiting in queues, phoning call centres, all cause a build up of stress. This stress needs to be released. Meditation is one fantastic way of relieving this stress. The form of meditation that I practice is very simple. It doesn't require you going of to find a Buddhist Monk in the Himalayas. All you have to do is sit quietly and focus on your breathing.

At its simplest, meditation can be described as the focus of the mind on one thing. During my meditation session I direct all my attention on my breathing, and do not allow myself to think about anything else. It is my way of calming and relaxing my mind. It can bring a source of tranquillity to your busy life.

Meditation is a tool for improving your health. With the hectic pace and demands of modern life, many people feel stressed and over-worked. It often feels like there is just not enough time in the day to get everything done. Stress makes you despondent, edgy and frustrated. It can also affect your health. Are you so busy that you feel there is no time to stop and meditate? In truth Meditation will free up time, by making your mind calmer and more focused. A simple ten to fifteen minute meditation can assist you to rise above your stress and help you find inner peace.

Meditation can also help us to understand our own mind, allowing us to transform our mind from negative to positive, from troubled to calm, from unhappy to happy. A key strength of meditation is that it will enable you to overcome negative monologues in the mind and encourage constructive thinking.

Daily meditation will help you achieve a clearer mind and deeper relaxation, assisting your bodies natural healing processes and elevating your mental, emotional and physical health.

By practicing meditation on a daily basis you will be able to alleviate tension and further benefit from relaxation as well as prevent the build up of stress within you.

Simple Breath Meditation Techniques

Meditation Breathing Technique can help you clear your mind of all thoughts. You are going to totally focus on your breathing, and let go of all thoughts, just relaxing your mind and body.

Use this basic breath focus as your meditation technique. The key to meditation is simply slowing your heart rate and allowing your mind to focus on your breathing and nothing else.

The first stage of meditation is to stop distractions and make our mind clearer and more lucid. Breathing meditation can calm the mind and develop inner peace.

Try this exercise.

- Choose a quiet place to meditate where you will have a minimum amount of disturbance.
- Sit in a chair, get comfortable, while keeping your back straight and upright to prevent your mind from becoming lethargic or drowsy.
- Now stay very still and quiet, with no distractions around. Your body should be comfortable and relaxed.
- Partially close your eyes, leaving them only slightly open to allow enough light in to keep your brain alert in order to avoid sleep mode setting in.

- Turn your entire attention and focus to your breathing. Allow yourself to breathe naturally. Don't try to adjust your breathing. Don't consciously try to make any changes. Just let yourself breathe. Keep observing your breath.
- Notice your breath coming in and out of your body. Does it come in your mouth and out your nose? Notice your chest and tummy rising as you breathe. Just sit still and pay attention to your breathing. If your thoughts turn away from your breath, simply bring them back.
- If you find your attention starting to drift away from your breathing, such as thoughts about other things popping in to your head, or distractions caused by external noises, gently bring your full focus back to your breathing. Just let any other thoughts go. Keep your complete attention on your breathing. Just observe your breaths.
- Notice the speed of your breathing. Become aware of the rhythm of your breaths. Discern the depth of each breath. Keep breathing. Notice the subtle changes that will automatically happen. Still, remain just an observer, don't try to adjust your breathing in any way, just let it happen on its own.
- Keep concentrating on your breath, and simply watch it come and go. Spend at least a couple of minutes merely noticing your natural breath as it is happening, experience the rising and falling of both your chest and abdomen. Observe how air passes through your nostrils and throat. Examine the sensation of your breaths leaving through your lips.
- Keep concentrating on your breathing. If you are not breathing in through your nose and out through the mouth, this is the time to

adjust it. Let your breaths go deeper, but let your mind remain silent.

- Just observe how you take in the air. Feel it filling your lungs. Now hold your breath for a second or two, keeping it in your lungs, then breathe out, and then wait for another second or two before you breathe in again. Keep doing this for about a minute.
- Now go back to breathing naturally without trying to control your breathing, refocus on the sensation of each breath as it enters and leaves your nostrils. Concentrate on this sensation, nothing else.
- Now adjust your focus to the sensations you feel at the end of your nose and to your lips as you take each breath in and out. Relax. Simply observe.
- Keep focused on each breath you take. Remain focused single-mindedly on the sensation of the breath. Keep your mind concentrated on your breath.

When the otherwise incessant flow of our distracting thoughts is calmed through concentrating on the breath, our mind becomes unusually lucid and clear. We should stay with this state of mental calm for a while. When the turbulence of distracting thoughts subsides and our mind becomes still, a deep happiness and contentment naturally arises from within. Experience this sense of inner peace, contentment and relaxation.

- Keep observing the air coming in and out your body. Feel the sensations in your nose and mouth. Keep watching. Just be aware. You are simply observing.
- Breath in, breath out.

- Now, breath in to the slow count of eight, 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8, hold your breath to the slow count of eight, 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8 and breathe out to the slow count of eight, 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8. By doing this you will give yourself an oxygen boost, and take you into an even more relaxed state.
- Now go back to breathing naturally without trying to control your breathing, refocus on the sensation of each breath as it enters and leaves your nostrils. Concentrate on this sensation, nothing else.
- Merely stay in this position of watching your breathing as long as you wish.
- When you wish to exit the meditation state, still keep your eyes closed and just sit quietly for two or three minutes, then gradually open your eyes becoming aware of your surroundings. Stretch out, and resume your activity.

Note: Sometimes you just need to take a 10 to 15-minute chill out time, just to clear your head of clutter, and let yourself relax. . So use this meditation technique and let yourself just be - and let your mind experience a period of tranquillity.

Visualisation

Visualisation is a technique where you use your imagination to deliberately create a picture or movie in your mind of your own making. Rather like painting a picture, you have complete control to create any image that you desire.

Visualisation is a way of using your mind to get what you want out of life. By thinking of the positive things you want to happen on a regular basis, you're creating a positive energy.

Shakti Gawain said that in creative visualization, one clearly imagines whatever one wants to "manifest"; then one gives the idea, image, or feeling "positive energy," by focusing on it regularly, until it becomes reality.

A classic definition of visualisation is “the formation of mental visual images; the act or process of interpreting in visual terms or of putting into visual forms” (Owen 1999).

There is tremendous power in your thoughts. Remember the old saying: "the body won't go, where the mind has not gone to first"? Generally people allow their subconscious mind to freely interpret their uncontrolled thoughts and determine the actions they take.

The good news is that your subconscious mind doesn't know the difference between something real and something intensely imagined. When you repeatedly imagine yourself in possession of your goal, your subconscious mind will stir you into actions that lines up with the mental image you hold.

When you have pictures in your head of what you fear is going to happen, you can't possibly have a good day. This is a great way to build stress within you. The opposite of what we are looking to do.

By taking 10 minutes out of your day to use for visualisation, you could create a great day, then a great week, building up to a great month, creating a great year and ultimately a great life.

Make sure that you visualise what you desire, and do not focus on what you don't want. No longer allow yourself to focus on what you lack or negatively on what you don't have, or even on what you have but don't want, but instead on the actual possible solutions, or what it is you truly want. By focusing on the problem (or lack) you are in fact fostering it, giving it extra energy, and allowing it to manifest itself, attracting more of what you don't want. The negativity you carry around when thinking of all the bad things in your life contributes to you being stressed.

You can use the power of visualisation to help you improve every area of your life. It is a power you use everyday, whether you are conscious of it or not. With the conscious and effective use of visualisation you can fill your life with success.

In order to use the visualisation technique find yourself a quiet place where you will not be interrupted. Then take a few minutes to make a conscious effort to silence your mind, shutting off your thought processes and focus specifically on your visualization. You may need to try to do this a few times before you really get the hang of it, but be persistent, it will be worth it.

Select a situation you would like to experience in a relaxed manner. Use these steps for developing a creative imagination.

Step 1 – Desired Picture: Write down or repeat out loud a picture of an upcoming stressful situation or event, working out just the way you would want it, phrasing it in the present tense.

Step 2 – Use all your senses: Take a deep, relaxing breath. You are more accessible to ideas when you're relaxed. Create a picture in detail. Your mental pictures should be as much like the actual experience as possible. Pay attention to sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, and other details in the scene.

Step 3 - Picture Outcome: Imagine the desired results actually happening. Imagine it in the present tense using phrases like "I am." Do not use terms like "I'll try to."

Step 4 - Create positive emotions in your scene, such as: Encouraged, Enthusiastic, Excited, Exhilarated, Full of life, Inspired, Joyful, Loving, On cloud nine, Optimistic, Overjoyed, Respected, Thrilled, Unconcerned, Worthy. Imagine it! See yourself at your brilliant best.

Step 5 - Practice this technique twice a day: Devote five minutes to the image at least twice a day. Try it first thing in the morning prior to getting out of bed and again in the evening just before dozing off to sleep. Let all your body tension escape. Imagine yourself being very calm and relaxed.

Visualisation Technique

- Choose a quiet place where you will have a minimum amount of disturbance.
- Sit in a chair, get comfortable, while keeping your back straight and upright to prevent your mind from becoming lethargic or drowsy.
- Now stay very still and quiet, with no distractions around. Your body should be comfortable and relaxed.

- Turn your entire attention and focus to your breathing. Allow yourself to breathe naturally. Don't try to adjust your breathing. Don't consciously try to make any changes. Just let yourself breath. Keep observing your breath.
- Look around the room, and choose an object to focus your attention on. Now focus your eyes onto that object. Stare at it. Look at it clearly, pick up all the details. Colour, texture, shadow, everything about what it looks like.
- At the same time, concentrate your hearing on all the sounds you can pick up. Whether in the distance, such as birds chirping, cars rushing by, distant voices, or closer by, such as the ticking of a clock.
- Now concentrate your entire focus on your breathing, Turn your entire attention and focus to your breathing. Allow yourself to breathe naturally. Don't try to adjust your breathing. Don't consciously try to make any changes. Just let yourself breath. Keep observing your breath.
- Begin to take some deep breaths in. Then breathe fully out. Keep this going for a minute or two, deep breaths in, then out. Notice any sensations in your nostrils. Sense the feelings as you breathe in through your nose and then out through your mouth.
- Move your attention to your eyes. Notice every blink of your eyelids. Feel each time your eyes close, then each time they open.
- You are feeling very relaxed, calm and at peace. Close your eyes.
- You are now going to imagine yourself in a very relaxing, calming place. On a beautiful tropical island, exotic beach, spectacular waterfall, floral garden. Wherever you would feel at peace. Keep this picture in your mind for a few minutes.

- Now... imagine yourself standing on a beautiful balcony at the top of a marble staircase. You can see the marble steps in front of you, leading downwards from the balcony, wide strong steps, a banister on each side, totally floodlit. You are now about to count down from ten to one ... and with each descending number you will take a single step going down, and with each step you will feel more calm, more relaxed. As you take each step, you will go deeper into a relaxing state. It is a magnificent feeling, a total state of relaxation... and as you little by little go down these stairs... you will feel a sense of complete relaxation... all through your whole body... You can feel the steps beneath your feet and when you reach the bottom, you feel exceptionally tranquil with a sense of excited expectation...
- 10 ... relax, 9 ... relax, 8 ... relax, 7 ... relax, 6 ... relax, 5 ... relax, 4 ... relax, 3 ... relax, 2 ... relax, 1 ...now step off the last step. Look around and you find yourself in your very own private cinema.
- Take a seat in front of your large movie screen. This large movie screen is forward of you, in front of your eyes, and raised at an angle of around 20 degrees. The screen is 6 feet in front of you.
- See yourself sitting in the cinema, the lights dim, and then the movie starts. It is a movie starring 'YOU'. See as much detail as you can create, including your clothing, the expression on your face, small body movements, the environment and any other people that might be around. Add in any sounds you would be hearing — traffic, music, other people talking, cheering. And finally, recreate in your body any feelings you think you would be experiencing as you engage in whatever the activity you are doing.

- Take a minute to free yourself of whatever you are seeing at that moment. Slowly erase the surrounding, erase everything, let go of your thoughts.
- Witness yourself on the screen where you become an observer to the actions as they happen.
- Take 10 minutes to visualize your situation or event, what needs to be done to achieve the outcome you desire, what else do you have to do to achieve it, feel yourself achieving it, think of what you can do after achieving it, feel the euphoria rush, happiness, excitement and accomplishment when you achieve it. Hold the feeling, rejoice in the feeling, and be happy that you can achieve your goal and what it represents. See the whole experience, smell it, touch it, hear it, and taste it.
- To really enforce the impact of this visualisation technique, you could also do the following:
- Now place yourself actually into the picture, so that you are now directly involved, an actor instead of the observer of the events.
- Mentally, get out of your chair, walk up to the screen, open a door in the screen and enter into the movie. Now experience the whole thing again from inside of yourself, looking out through your eyes. This is called an "embodied image" rather than a "distant image." It will deepen the impact of the experience. Again, see everything in vivid detail, hear the sounds you would hear, and feel the feelings you would feel.
- Take 5 minutes to slowly bring yourself back to awareness, slowly feel the environment around you, let your visions merge back to reality but keep the positive feelings in your heart. Now you are ready to accomplish your goals!

- Start to count slowly from one to ten. 1 ... 2 ... 3 ... 4 ... 5 ... 6 ... 7 ... 8 ... now open your eyes, 9 ... 10 ... You now feel fully awake and totally alert. Stand up, stretch out, and feel great.

Mental Imagery

Taking visualisation to the next stage, we move on to mental imagery. When you picture soothing mental images in your mind, your body will benefit through being physically relaxed. To make this relaxation most effective, you need to bring all the five senses into your image: touch, sight, smell, taste and sound. To practice this exercise, allow for 10 minutes of uninterrupted time in a quiet place. Begin by becoming very familiar with this script until mental pictures are formed.

Throughout this exercise allow yourself to enjoy the feelings of calmness and peace. Let yourself feel really good. Bring your entire body into a relaxed state, letting this relaxation flow through you, energising both your mind and body fully.

Mental Imagery Technique

- Choose a quiet place where you will have a minimum amount of disturbance.
- Sit in a chair, get comfortable, while keeping your back straight and upright to prevent your mind from becoming lethargic or drowsy.

- Now stay very still and quiet, with no distractions around. Your body should be comfortable and relaxed.
- Partially close your eyes, leaving them only slightly open to allow enough light in to keep your brain alert in order to avoid sleep mode setting in.
- Turn your entire attention and focus to your breathing. Allow yourself to breathe naturally. Don't try to adjust your breathing. Don't consciously try to make any changes. Just let yourself breathe. Keep observing your breath.
- Breathe in through your nose, hold it for a second, and then slowly breathe out through your mouth. As you let each breath out, feel yourself going deeper and deeper into a state of relaxation. Breathe in and out, in and out. Relax.
- Now using all your senses, touch, sight, smell, taste and hearing, start to imagine yourself on an exotic tropical island. You are strolling along a palm-covered remote beach, on a beautiful summer's day, gliding across the soft sand gleaming like silver dust. It is late in the afternoon, you can see the sun, a golden blazing yellow ball, slowly dropping in the distance. The sky is a brilliant blue, and not a cloud in sight.
- You feel the cooling, wet, silver sand cushioning your feet. Smell the sea weed from the ocean in the air. Taste the salty water from the spray which the breeze brings on to your lips. You listen to the sound of the rolling waves crashing on the beach, hearing the soft sound of birds in the background. Watching the birds as they fly through the sky....seeing them dive down into the sea and then flying off again.
- You keep walking along, to the far end of the beach, where you come across a sand dune, a hill of pure white sand, You stop, and

sit down by the side of the dune. You look out over the ocean, taking in the view of the waves crashing against the rocky shores and sandy beaches. The waves persistently crashing against the rough rocky coastline, while frothy swells gently roll toward the shore onto the sandy beach, the waves rise upward along the beach forming an impression of white foam and then slowly drop down retreating back out into the ocean. Only to be replaced by another wave that crashes against the shore – working its way up the beach...and slowly retreating back out into the ocean.

- With each movement of the waves as they roll in and as they roll out, you find yourself feeling more and more relaxed, more and more calm, more and more peaceful. The waves are rolling in ... the waves are rolling out. The waves are rolling in... the waves are rolling out. The waves are rolling in ... the waves are rolling out. You find yourself feeling more and more relaxed, more and more calm, more and more peaceful. The waves are rolling in ... the waves are rolling out. You are more and more relaxed.
- You gaze far into the distance; the sun is continuing to drop down into the horizon. You see the sun beginning to sink down into the ocean, you feel more and more relaxed, more and more calm, more and more peaceful. The sun is moving down ... down ... down, as it does you relax more and more. As the sun is setting, the sky turns into amazing different colours, pink, orange and red. You are watching the transformation. As the sun is setting, moving down ... down ... down ... into the ocean, you feel more and more relaxed, more and more calm, more and more peaceful.
- As you watch the sun setting down into the ocean; feel the cooling, wet, silver sand cushioning your feet; smell the sea weed

from the ocean in the air; taste the salty water from the spray which the breeze brings on to your lips; listen to the sound of the rolling waves crashing on the beach, hearing the soft sound of birds in the background.; watching the birds as they fly through the sky....seeing them dive down into the sea and then flying off again; you feel more and more relaxed, more and more calm, more and more peaceful.

- Now relax ... let yourself relax ... you feeling very soothed, very calm, very serene. You are at peace.
- To bring yourself out of this image, start to count slowly from one to ten. 1 ... 2 ... 3 .. 4 ... 5 ... 6 ... 7 ... 8 ... now open your eyes, 9 ... 10 ... You now feel fully awake and totally alert. Stand up, stretch out, and feel great.

You now have a special place to go whenever you feel the need to relax.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation



***‘Sometimes a headache is all in your head.
Relax’ ~ Hartman Jule***

This is one of my favourite techniques, and I feel one of the most important in your armoury against the effects of stress. I have found this relaxation technique a tremendous way to calm my body and mind, helping me to experience a less

stressful state. You will also find it benefits you in all areas of your life. My suggestion to you is - make the time for relaxation, set aside time for it every day. It will make a world of difference.

When you don't make the time for relaxation, your stress remains unhindered, creating higher and higher levels of stress hormones within your body; your blood pressure rises; your memory declines, as do the healing processes in your body. Without finding time for relaxation, you will suffer from physical, emotional and mental stress.

So a relaxation technique is essential if you are to reach your true potential and enjoy a feeling of wellbeing and relaxation rather than feeling overwhelmed. Relax deeply once a day for 15-20 minutes. Even if you can't manage every day, you will soon notice how much better you feel and how much more capable you are when following this method.

I truly believe that you can't afford to find excuses for not incorporating relaxation time into your life. It needs to become part of your lifestyle. Once it has become a regular habit, you will never stop, because the results you'll see will leave you in no doubt of the benefits of doing this simple exercise.

A Relaxation technique is any method or activity that helps a person to relax; to attain a state of increased calmness; or otherwise reduce levels of anxiety, stress or tension. Relaxation techniques can help to decrease muscle tension, lower the blood pressure and slow heart and breath rates, among other health benefits.

There are so many benefits of using a relaxation technique; here are just a few:

- Advances rest, healing and recovery

- Calms your mind
- Develops coping skills
- Enables you to think more clearly and perform well even when under pressure.
- Guards you against mental health problems
- Helps memory and learning
- Improves immune system
- Lowers blood pressure
- Reduces tension in your muscles
- Relieves your emotional state
- Returns your body back to normal after the effects of the fight-or-flight, stress response on your body.

The technique I use is Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR), which is the combination of deep breathing with the intentional contraction and relaxation of muscles to bring about relaxation. It's a very simple technique, where you first tense a muscle, tightly contracting it, keeping it under intense tension for a short time. Then you relax your muscle normally, and then consciously relax the muscle even further.

A good way of demonstrating this is:

Make a fist, and clench your hand tightly as possible for a few seconds. Then relax your hand, followed by intentionally relaxing it again so that it is as slack as possible. You will experience a deep relaxation in your hand.

With the Progressive Muscle Relaxation technique you will relax your muscles through a simple two-step procedure.

1. You intentionally tense a specific muscle.
2. You deliberately discontinue the tension and let the tension flow away as you relax the muscle.

You are going to do one sequence of tension and one of relaxation for each muscle.

Tip

- Throughout this exercise you will be alternately tensing a muscle and then relaxing it. By doing this your muscle will be much more relaxed than it was at the start of the exercise. Concentrate your attention on how the muscle feels at all times, feeling the reduction in tension after relaxation.
- Keep your breathing natural throughout. Hold the muscle tension for 10 seconds... 1000, 2000, 3000, 4000, 5000, 6000, 7000, 8000, 9000, 10000. Do the same for muscle relaxation.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation Technique

- Choose a quiet place where you will have a minimum amount of disturbance.
- Sit in a chair, get comfortable, while keeping your back straight and upright to prevent your mind from becoming lethargic or drowsy.

- Now stay very still and quiet, with no distractions around. Your body should be comfortable and relaxed.
- Partially close your eyes, leaving them only slightly open to allow enough light in to keep your brain alert in order to avoid sleep mode setting in.
- Turn your entire attention and focus to your breathing. Allow yourself to breathe naturally. Don't try to adjust your breathing. Don't consciously try to make any changes. Just let yourself breathe. Keep observing your breath.
- Breathe in through your nose, hold it for a second, and then slowly breathe out through your mouth. As you take each breath out, feel yourself going deeper and deeper into a state of relaxation. Breathe in and out, in and out. Relax
- Empty your mind of all its thoughts. Just let it quieten down. Let your thoughts gradually quieten down.
- Sense your body as a whole, including the places where it contacts the surface of the seat. Notice how your body feels at this precise moment. Observe which body parts feel tense and which ones feel relaxed.
- Concentrate on your breathing, hold this focus for a couple of minutes.
- Take a deep breath in. Then a full breath out. Keep these going for a minute. Deep breathe in. Then a full breath out. Notice any sensations in your nostrils. Sense the feelings as you breathe in through your nose and then out through your mouth.
- Take a deep breath in for the count of three, 1001, 1002, 1003. Tense as many of the muscles in your body as you can for the count of three, 1001, 1002, 1003. Now exhale by pushing out all

your breath, and relax all the tension you can feel for the count of three, 1001, 1002, 1003. Feel how great it is to be relaxed.

- Now you are going to work through your muscles one by one. Tensing each muscle group. Let go slowly, feel the tension drain away, and blood flowing freely, keep breathing.
- Forehead - Start by wrinkling, tightening your forehead into a frown, tense it up. Hold for 10 seconds. Let the tension build. Now release. Say 'Let go' and relax. Focus on the relaxing feeling for 10 seconds. Let the tension flow out of your body.
- Eyebrows - Now raise your eyebrows as high as you can. Hold for 10 seconds. Let the tension build. Now release. Say 'Let go' and relax. Focus on the relaxing feeling for 10 seconds. Let the tension flow out of your body.
- Eyes - Now open your eyes as wide as you can and stare at a point on the ceiling. Keeping your head still little by little move your eyes to the right as far as they will go, then return back to centre. Then little by little move your eyes to the left as far as they will go, then return back to centre. Now squeeze both eyes tight shut. Hold for 10 seconds. Let the tension build. Now release. Say 'Let go' and relax. Focus on the relaxing feeling for 10 seconds. Let the tension flow out of your body.
- Mouth - Now turn your attentions to your mouth and open your mouth as wide as possible. Hold for 10 seconds. Let the tension build. Now release. Say 'Let go' and relax. Focus on the relaxing feeling for 10 seconds. Let the tension flow out of your body. Bring your lips tightly together. Hold for 10 seconds. Let the tension build. Now release. Say 'Let go' and relax. Focus on the relaxing feeling for 10 seconds. Let the tension flow out of your body.

- Teeth - Now clench your teeth together tightly. Hold for 10 seconds. Let the tension build. Now release. Say 'Let go' and relax. Focus on the relaxing feeling for 10 seconds. Let the tension flow out of your body.
- Tongue – Open your mouth wide, and extend your tongue out as far as you can. Hold for 10 seconds. Let the tension build. Now release bringing it back into your throat resting it at the base of your mouth. Say 'Let go' and relax. Focus on the relaxing feeling for 10 seconds. Let the tension flow out of your body.
- Jaw - Close up your jaw muscles tightly, press together bringing your back teeth clasped together. Hold for 10 seconds. Let the tension build. Now release. Say 'Let go' and relax. Focus on the relaxing feeling for 10 seconds. Let the tension flow out of your body.
- Chin - Drop your chin down toward your chest slowly. You will feel the tension in your neck and shoulders. Hold for 10 seconds. Let the tension build. Now release. Say 'Let go' and relax. Focus on the relaxing feeling for 10 seconds. Let the tension flow out of your body.
- Face - squeeze up your face making a scowl and hold it there. As you squeeze together your eyes, mouth and nose let the tension build. Hold for 10 seconds. Let the tension build. Now release. Say 'Let go' and relax. Focus on the relaxing feeling for 10 seconds. Let the tension flow out of your body.
- Hands & Arms – Make a tight fist with your right hand, really clench it. Hold for 10 seconds. Let the tension build. Now release by extending the fingers. Say 'Let go' and relax. Focus on the relaxing feeling for 10 seconds. Let the tension flow out of your body. Lift your right arm up to about the height of your shoulder,

and extend it fully out. As you bend your hand back at the wrist and keep your arm stretched. Hold for 10 seconds. Let the tension build. Now release your arm and let it drop slowly down at your side. Say 'Let go' and relax. Focus on the relaxing feeling for 10 seconds. Let the tension flow out of your body. Now raise your right lower arm from the elbows to fingers, keeping the upper arm still, make your bicep muscle tense, bulging. Hold for 10 seconds. Let the tension build. Now release drop your arm limp back to the side of your body. Say 'Let go' and relax. Focus on the relaxing feeling for 10 seconds. Let the tension flow out of your body. Lift your right arm straight up, and bend it backwards at the elbow, feel your tricep muscle, contract the muscle more. Hold for 10 seconds. Let the tension build. Now release drop your arm limp back to the side of your body. Say 'Let go' and relax. Focus on the relaxing feeling for 10 seconds. Let the tension flow out of your body.

- Repeat for other side: Now make tight fist with your left hand,, really clench it. Hold for 10 seconds. Let the tension build. Now release by extending the fingers. Say 'Let go' and relax. Focus on the relaxing feeling for 10 seconds. Let the tension flow out of your body. Now lift your left arm up to about the height of your shoulder, and extend it fully out. As you bend your hand back at the wrist and keep your arm stretched. Hold for 10 seconds. Let the tension build. Now release your arm and let it drop slowly down at your side. Say 'Let go' and relax. Focus on the relaxing feeling for 10 seconds. Let the tension flow out of your body. Now raise your left lower arm from the elbows to fingers, keeping the upper arm still, make your bicep muscle tense, bulging. Hold for 10 seconds. Let the tension build. Now release drop your arm

limp back to the side of your body. Say 'Let go' and relax. Focus on the relaxing feeling for 10 seconds. Let the tension flow out of your body. Lift your left arm straight up, and bend it backwards at the elbow, feel your triceps muscle, contract the muscle more. Hold for 10 seconds. Let the tension build. Now release drop your arm limp back to the side of your body. Say 'Let go' and relax. Focus on the relaxing feeling for 10 seconds. Let the tension flow out of your body.

- Neck (lateral) - Keeping your shoulders relaxed and straight, turn your head slowly to the right, as far as you can. Hold for 10 seconds. Let the tension build. Now release, return to centre. Say 'Let go' and relax. Focus on the relaxing feeling for 10 seconds. Let the tension flow out of your body. Then turn your head slowly to the left, as far as you can. Hold for 10 seconds. Let the tension build. Now release, return to centre. Say 'Let go' and relax. Focus on the relaxing feeling for 10 seconds. Let the tension flow out of your body.
- Neck (forward) - Drop your chin down toward your chest slowly. Hold for 10 seconds. Let the tension build. Now release, raise up your head. Say 'Let go' and relax. Focus on the relaxing feeling for 10 seconds. Let the tension flow out of your body.
- Neck (Back). Now tensing your back of neck by stretching your head up as if your chin could touch the ceiling. Hold for 10 seconds. Let the tension build. Now release. Say 'Let go' and relax. Focus on the relaxing feeling for 10 seconds. Let the tension flow out of your body.
- Shoulders - Curl your Shoulders back and up towards your ears. Hold for 10 seconds. Let the tension build. Now release. Say 'Let

go' and relax. Focus on the relaxing feeling for 10 seconds. Let the tension flow out of your body.

- Chest - Now tighten your Chest Muscles. Hold for 10 seconds. Let the tension build. Now release. Say 'Let go' and relax. Focus on the relaxing feeling for 10 seconds. Let the tension flow out of your body.
- Back - Push the small of your Back towards whatever surface you are sitting or lying on. Hold for 10 seconds. Let the tension build. Now release. Say 'Let go' and relax. Focus on the relaxing feeling for 10 seconds. Let the tension flow out of your body.
- Arch your spine, tighten it from top to bottom. Hold for 10 seconds. Let the tension build. Now release. Say 'Let go' and relax. Focus on the relaxing feeling for 10 seconds. Let the tension flow out of your body.
- Stomach - Suck in your stomach tight as far as you can, as though you were preparing to take a punch in the stomach.. Hold for 10 seconds. Let the tension build. Now release. Say 'Let go' and relax. Focus on the relaxing feeling for 10 seconds. Let the tension flow out of your body.
- Buttocks - Tense the butt tightly, clench your Buttocks together and try to raise pelvis slightly off surface. Hold for 10 seconds. Let the tension build. Now release. Say 'Let go' and relax. Focus on the relaxing feeling for 10 seconds. Let the tension flow out of your body.
- Legs - Lift your right leg, while you tense both your thigh and calf muscle and pull your toes in toward you. Hold for 10 seconds. Let the tension build. Now release let your leg back down. Say 'Let go' and relax. Focus on the relaxing feeling for 10 seconds. Let the tension flow out of your body. Now, point your toes and curl

them under on your right foot. Hold for 10 seconds. Let the tension build. Now release. Say 'Let go' and relax. Focus on the relaxing feeling for 10 seconds. Let the tension flow out of your body.

- Repeat for other side: Now, raise your left leg, while you tense both your thigh and calf muscle and pull your toes in toward you. Hold for 10 seconds. Let the tension build. Now release let your leg back down. Say 'Let go' and relax. Focus on the relaxing feeling for 10 seconds. Let the tension flow out of your body. Now, point your toes and curl them under on your left foot. Hold for 10 seconds. Let the tension build. Now release. Say 'Let go' and relax. Focus on the relaxing feeling for 10 seconds. Let the tension flow out of your body.
- Now lift both your legs together, tightening both your calf and thigh muscles as you point out your toes straight ahead as far as you can. Hold for 10 seconds. Let the tension build. Now release let your leg back down. Say 'Let go' and relax. Focus on the relaxing feeling for 10 seconds. Let the tension flow out of your body.
- Whole body - Clasp your feet and fists. Draw your shoulders up. Squeeze in your jaw and face. Now at the same time contract your entire body. Hold it for as long as you can until you feel your body tremble. Then say 'Let go' - let yourself go...
- For the next couple of minutes, go over in your mind all your muscles. Sense how each muscle feels throughout your body. Experience how relaxed and rested each muscle feels. Sense the restfulness that you now feel from having released the tension in your muscles.

- Close your eyes. In your mind see yourself peacefully lying on a beautiful sun drenched beach. Safe and at peace. Repeat to yourself, 'I am in a relaxed state now... my legs are relaxed... my buttocks are relaxed, my thighs are relaxed, my abdomen is relaxed... my back is relaxed, my arms are relaxed, my shoulders are relaxed, my jaw is relaxed, my face is relaxed and my eyes are relaxed... I feel no tension.
- Take a long deep full breath, 1001, 1002, 1003, 1004, 1005. Now hold this for a count of two, 1001, 1002, and now let out all the air feeling any remaining stress just float away
- To bring yourself out of this relaxed state, start to count slowly from one to ten. 1 ... 2 ... 3 ... 4 ... 5 ... 6 ... 7 ... 8 ... now open your eyes, 9 ... 10 ... You now feel fully awake and totally alert. Stand up, stretch out, and feel great.

This simple technique will not only improve your physical well being, but will improve your mental state by reducing stress, anxiety, irritability, and depression. Trust me here, this is a MUST DO for your stress management tool box. This is an awesome technique.

Get into Centre



'To be "on edge," you are literally not centered - not being in your spiritual center'
~ Carrie Latet

Modern life struggles challenge our centre every day. Losing our centre can create an inability to manage stress successfully.

This technique will enable you to tap into the power that's inside you. I refer to this as "the centre". This power within you can dramatically change anything in your life - literally in a moment. All you have to do is start to use it. Centring is a method of getting your body and mind into peak state and therefore generating peak performance in everything you do.

We all have the ability to get ourselves into peak state. It is the time when we perform at our very best. When we are in this peak state, in the zone, we feel brilliant; everything we do feels effortless; everything is perfect! Centring allows your mind and body to work together to let you get into the groove, to perform at peak state..

When you are centred you will experience:

- An inner clarity
- A feeling of being in the moment and focused on the present
- A sense of serenity with no anxiety
- No sense of effort - it just happened

The way you use your physiology – the way you breathe and hold your body, your posture, your facial expressions, the nature and quality of your movements – actually determines what state you're in. The state you're in then will determine the range and quality of the behaviours you're able to produce.

When a stressful event arises in your life use centreing to put your state of mind into a positive setting. By focusing on your body and getting it centred, creates the strength within you to deal with almost anything. It feels like you could run through a wall.

When you can live at centre, or can turn it on when needed, you will generate a new impetus in your life, the ability to take immense, unswerving, and intelligent action to create the results you truly desire in your life.

Most people take very little conscious action to direct their states of being. They wake up depressed or they wake up energized. Good breaks lift them up, bad ones bring them down.

This method gives you a way to alter your state of mind by changing your body and its movement. When you get your whole body to say: 'I'm at my best!' by getting it strong and powerful, you feel as you do when everything seems to be working for you, the feeling that you can do no wrong. It is in this state that you can change things and achieve excellence. It is surely the way you want to feel always, in a peak physical and mental state.

The Centreing Technique Method

- Choose a quiet place where you will have a minimum amount of disturbance.
- Stand up straight positioning your feet about shoulder width apart, with your arms hanging loose by your side keeping your back straight and upright.

- Shake down your body from your shoulders down to your toes. Your body should be comfortable and relaxed.
- Partially close your eyes, leaving them only slightly open to allow enough light in to keep your brain alert in order to avoid sleep mode to set in.
- Turn your entire attention and focus to your breathing. Allow yourself to breathe naturally. Don't try to adjust your breathing. Don't consciously try to make any changes. Just let yourself breathe. Keep observing your breath.
- Notice your breath coming in and out of your body. Does it come in your mouth and out your nose? Notice your chest and tummy rising as you breathe. Just sit still and pay attention to your breathing. If your thoughts turn away from your breath, simply bring them back.
- Now breathe in deeply through your nose, deep down within you from your abdomen, notice your stomach expand. Concentrate on the movement of your breath. Follow it from entering your body through your nose, its path through your body, then its exit out through your mouth. Do this for one minute.
- Pay attention to your body now. Notice any tension you feel in your body, your head, face, neck, chest, shoulders, legs, arms, back. Now return your awareness back to your breathing, continue following its path, and now envision that each breath is magically dissolving any tension or knotted places within your body. Every breath you exhale, imagine all that tightness you revealed being expelled from your body. Do this for two minutes.
- Return your attention to the movement of your breath. Simply focus on your breathing and note its spontaneous nature, how it takes place naturally and unconsciously. Inhale naturally through

your nose; exhale through your mouth. Keep following its path throughout your body. . Notice how each breath in expands your tummy out and each breath out makes your tummy recede Now start to notice where the breath path stops. This point at which you feel your breath stops, where it has reached the end of its path, is your point of centre (normally just between your chest and below your neck). Do this for one minute.

- Now go back to just giving your centred attention to your breathing. Maintain your attention on your point of Centre. No need to do anything else—just pay attention to your breath. Let your breathing be natural, deep, quiet, and regular. Do this for one minute.
- Now breathe in deeply through your nose, deep down within you from your abdomen, notice your stomach expand. Breathe out through your mouth, while putting your tongue between your teeth so that the tip of your tongue is touching the tips of your top teeth, then making a hissing sound, while squeezing your abdominal muscles tightly, and contracting your buttock muscles. Repeat this for 2 minutes.
- Stop using the abdomen to breathe and start to breathe in slowly using your chest and the expansion of your rib cage. This is Thoracic breathing achieved by the movement of the rib cage as a whole. Thoracic breathing uses the middle lobes of your lungs through the expansion and contraction of the rib cage. Feel your ribs moving outward and upward, while they draw air into your lungs. Push your chest out as much as you can.
- Breathe in slowly and deeply through your chest. Do not use the diaphragm. Breathe out by relaxing your chest muscles, and feel

your rib cage contracting, forcing the air out of your lungs.

Continue thoracic breathing for one minute.

- Breathe powerfully in through your nose. Feel the air moving up from your waist filling your lungs reaching and ending at a point just between your chest and below your neck, your point of Centre.
- Straighten your head. Lift your shoulders. Make your body powerful. Charge yourself. Feel the strength rippling through it, so much so that you could walk through a wall. Think of a time when you excelled, when you were at your very best.
- Bring the fingers of both hands into your palms, and just exert a little pressure, squeeze your clenched hands, by your side.
- Return to inhaling deeply from your abdomen and continue to breathe calmly and deeply maintaining your focus on your body.
- Bring your body upright, become more aligned, feet flat on the floor, your upper body upright; imagine you are being suspended from a thick cord attached to the top of your head, pulling you up. See in your mind's eye that gravity is flowing through you, where you are weightless, yet grounded.
- With eyes closed, gently rock from side to side, from one foot to the other. Use this pendulum motion to help find just the right point of balance for your body. Allow the head to rock until it finds a balance, too. Gradually slow the motion until the body is still, feeling the balance of the head on top of your spine. Concentrate on the pelvis acting as an anchor for the body, with the legs grounding the body to the earth, and the spine resting on top of the pelvis. Feel the spine in alignment, and the head resting on top of the spine. Focus on the shoulder blades and feel them like a crossbar, balanced off the spine. There is no need to

hold the shoulders; they are balanced from the spine, and the arms fall in relaxation from the shoulders. How does it feel to find your Centre this way?

- After a few minutes, you can consciously allow your breathing to slow down and deepen, and become more quiet and more regular. To support this, you can use an image of an ocean gently flowing onto a sandy beach (inhalation) and gently receding back to itself (exhalation). Let the breath, like an ocean, take its time, and notice the easy, slow transition between exhaling and inhaling.
- Now concentrate on your body. Feel how strong and powerful it feels. You feel fully charged, totally energised, and ready for a fantastic day ahead.
- Take an explosive action. Pump your fists by your side a couple of times and know your engine is started, fully revved and ready to take action.

Auto-Suggestions

Your mind can influence your body in a beneficial way helping to develop the way you feel. Your subconscious mind is extremely powerful, it has the power to not only sustain and build your body, but also to repair and heal it. You can support and kick start these activities by influencing your subconscious mind through suggestions made at a time of deep, focused concentration.

Suggestions operate powerfully when an idea is presented to the mind from within. This process has been given the name Auto-Suggestion. Auto-suggestion can be defined 'as a self-imposed narrowing of the field of consciousness to one

idea, by holding a given thought in the mental focus, to the exclusion of all other thoughts'.

Autosuggestion is a process by which you instruct your subconscious mind to believe something. This is achieved through repetitive, constant self-affirmations, by presenting one's mind with repetitive thoughts (negative or positive), until those thoughts become internalized.

An individual who wants to change his or her life or the actions they take can do this through auto-suggestion.

The auto-suggestion needs to be made over and over again, repeated mentally not with a sense of stress, but calmly and with belief. The best time for using auto-suggestion is preceding sleep or following waking. This is when the mind is most impressionable. Rome wasn't built in a day, and with this you need to be persistent. Don't set yourself up for failure by expecting instant results. Change takes time, but positive change is worth persisting with.

You are in control, both through your use of this technique, and particularly the benefits you achieve from it.

Here's a technique that works well.

You are going to demonstrate through this exercise the power of auto suggestion, by using this technique to feel heaviness and relaxation in your muscles.

- Choose a quiet place where you will have a minimum amount of disturbance.
- Choose one of two postures:

- Sitting down with head, legs, and arms well supported (armchair)
- Reclining with head raised, arms at side
- Now stay very still and quiet, with no distractions around. Your body should be comfortable and relaxed.
- Stare at a point on the ceiling (when lying down) or on the facing wall (if sitting), until they start to feel heavy, so that they begin to shut.
- Turn your entire attention and focus to your breathing. Allow yourself to breathe naturally. Don't try to adjust your breathing. Don't consciously try to make any changes. Just let yourself breathe. Keep observing your breath.
- Feel the whole of your body, including the places where it contacts the surface of the seat. Notice how your body feels at this precise moment. Observe which body parts feel tense and which ones feel relaxed.
- You are now going to use the five deep breath method., where you breathe in and slowly five times.
- Breathe in ... mentally repeat "This tension is all...." breathe out ... mentally repeat"....going away".
- Breathe in ... mentally repeat "This tension is all...." breathe out ... mentally repeat"....going away".
- Breathe in ... mentally repeat "This tension is all...." breathe out ... mentally repeat"....going away".
- Breathe in ... mentally repeat "This tension is all...." breathe out ... mentally repeat"....going away".
- Breathe in ... mentally repeat "This tension is all...." breathe out ... mentally repeat"....gone away".

- Now let the feelings of relaxation overcome you and spread throughout your body.
- Mentally say the following statements several times each at a slow, steady pace:
- My eyelids are getting heavier.
- My eyes are feeling heavy and weary and they can no longer stay open.
- My eyes are closing.
- Return to your natural breathing.
- Repeat mentally: 'On every breath, I am becoming more relaxed'.
- Feel yourself getting more and more relaxed
- Now focus on your muscles, and simply repeat 3 times the following phrases.
- My hands are becoming relaxed and heavy. (3X)
- My arms are becoming relaxed and heavy. (3X)
- My shoulders are becoming relaxed and heavy. (3X)
- My neck is becoming relaxed and heavy. (3X)
- My face is becoming relaxed and heavy. (3X)
- My head is becoming relaxed and heavy. (3X)
- My chest is becoming relaxed and heavy. (3X)
- My stomach is becoming relaxed and heavy. (3X)
- My back is becoming relaxed and heavy. (3X)
- My legs are becoming relaxed and heavy. (3X)
- My feet are becoming relaxed and heavy. (3X)
- Then, mentally repeat:
- Every breath I take, the feeling of heaviness gets more and more.
- Take a deep breath and upon the inhale, say, "I am", exhale, and say, "calm". Repeat 3 times.

- To exit this exercise say to yourself "I am now coming back to full awareness".
- Start to count slowly from one to ten. 1 ... 2 ... 3 .. 4 ... 5 ... 6 ... 7 ... 8 ... now open your eyes, 9 ... 10 ... I feel great in every way, feeling better than before!
- You now feel fully awake and totally alert. Stand up, stretch out, and feel great.

Here is something to instruct your subconscious mind. Keep repeating this suggestion with a concentrated mind:

“Minute by minute, Hour by hour and day by day, I am getting better and better in every way”.

Fun, Laughter, and Play

All work and no play ... get a life. Look, I know in this day and age, we all have to put so much of our time and effort into work. Of course, no one else will pay your bills. But you just have to take some time out. Your health requires it.

You have to do things that you find enjoyable and relaxing. It is paramount for your health, and your battle with stress to include in your life activities that you enjoy. Without them you have little chance to balance your life and neutralize stress. You can only offset the causes of stress in your life by doing things you find enjoyable, pleasing, and gratifying, on a regular basis. When you don't achieve this type of balance your health and contentment suffer.

Fun

When you're busy and your schedule is packed, you can forget to schedule time for fun into your calendar. Make it a habit to look ahead and reserve regular time for family dinners, trips to the park, visits with friends, seeing a funny movie, and doing fun things alone and with others. Having fun keeps you healthy, happy, and re-energized. It is important to schedule time for fun into your calendar. I'm not going to treat you like an idiot. There is no list here of the fun things you can do. No way could you have forgotten how to have fun. Sure, you haven't given yourself the time for it, but you know what things you enjoy doing, that in your mind are fun. So schedule some time, and do whatever is you think of as fun.

Laughter

Humour is a great way to release tension and rid yourself of a bad mood. It can also make each day more fun.

Use humour to lighten up a difficult situation

- Look for opportunities to laugh with your colleagues. Start a joke-of-the-month competition
- Clip and post cartoons that make you laugh
- Don't be afraid to laugh at yourself

Every time I watch National Lampoon's Animal House with John Belushi, I laugh my head off, and none of my problems or stresses enter my head. This amusing film has the ability of not only making me laugh, but also to distract me from

any problems I may have. This is because Humour is a fabulous way of reducing stress, distracting you from your normal stressed mindset, taking your thoughts completely away from those things that stress you.

Almost everyone will feel totally different, and notice a complete change in their mindset when they are laughing. All it takes is something funny, humourous to distract you. Even when this is just for a short time, you will feel the benefit. So laugh your way to beat stress.

Benefits of Laughter :

- Lowers blood pressure
- Reduces hypertension
- Reduces stress hormones
- Cleanses the lungs and body tissues of accumulated stale air as it empties more air than it takes in
- Increases muscle flexion, relaxation and fluent blood circulation in body
- Triggers the release of endorphins—body's natural painkillers
- Produces a general sense of well-being

All this means a stronger immune system, as well as fewer physical effects of stress

When you laugh you experience a physical and emotional release. It takes your focus away from any negative emotions you may be feeling, such as stress. Laughter creates within you strong, positive feelings. Laughter gives release from stress and tension. Laughter also has beneficial health effects.



'Laughter is a gift of God that brightens our good times and lightens the rough ones. Cultivate the spirit of celebration in your life by making room for laughter' ~ Emilie Barnes

Play

As I've said before, it's essential for your stress levels that you have a regular activity that you do just for fun. Playing games helps people to cut down their stress. By just playing games you can benefit by lowering your stress levels by reducing blood pressure, slowing your breathing and lowering your heart rate. By adopting a regular games night, you are giving yourself a good stress reliever, as well as a great way to have fun. Many years ago, I used to participate in a Risk War Game group.

We would play the game once a week. I found this a really great way of breaking away from the normal pressures a 6th former at school would feel, and found it a superb way of having fun, as well as letting off steam. As with everything in life I play to win, and this was no exception. So during the game I would be totally absorbed in the game, nothing outside that room mattered. I experienced close to a meditative state, which would have brought positive benefits to my mind and body. Win or lose, I found that I was on a high, but relaxed state at the end. It was my chill out time, escaping from my familiar reality.

A puzzle is a problem that challenges your initiative. Puzzles are both a type of entertainment, and a great stress reliever. Solving puzzles is a great way of taking

your mind off the things stressing you. At the same time, most puzzles develop your brain power, so when you return to your problems, you go back to them with a clearer, stronger mind, helping you handle your stressors more effectively. For example: Crosswords, Jigsaws, Rubik Cubes, Sudoku.

I personally love doing Sudoku puzzles. I'm certainly not going to claim that I'm any good at doing them, but they certainly allow me to get away whenever I need to. They challenge my mind, get me very focused, and nothing else enters my mind when I'm solving them. The frustrations I feel sometimes when I can't find the next number to write, is short lived, and causes me no long term harm. Mind you, the pen sometimes goes on a rough flight across the table. When finished, completed or not, I am always more ready to go back to whatever it is that needs to be done.

Recently my eldest daughter, Laura Jayne, underwent major back surgery. During her initial recovery, particularly once they removed the morphine drip, Sudoku was able to take her mind away from both the pain, and her inability to get out of bed. She would be lying there in a trance, trying to complete puzzle after puzzle.

So find a game or two that could just as easily divert your attention, and give you not only enjoyment, but mental stimulation.

Powernap

Take a quick nap. You will derive enormous benefit from a midday nap. It is a great way of recharging and re-energising. Taking a powernap will relax you

during your day, and goes some way to wiping away the pressures and negative feelings you carry with you throughout the day. It's the norm in the Mediterranean, where people take a siesta during the day. Evidence suggests this contributes to a higher life expectancy and reduction in heart disease. A power nap would involve taking just a 10-30 minutes' sleep or rest.

People such as Winston Churchill and Margaret Thatcher took power naps. They found it a great way to recharge their mind and keep their brain functioning well. It gave them an opportunity to just take a break from their conscious thinking, and gave their subconscious the chance to do some thinking for them.

So sometime during your day, take some time out to relax in a chair or sofa. And drift off into what is called the "twilight state" which is somewhere between being awake and asleep.

Thomas Edison, another power napper, to avoid falling into a complete state of sleep, held in his hand ball-bearings, which would drop noisily onto the floor and awaken him if he did fall fully asleep.

So start to power nap in order to recharge your brain as well as providing yourself a mental, emotional and physical pick up, enabling you to perform at your best.

Put that Do Not Disturb sign on your office door, park up safely in a lay-by, or find a bench in your local park, and get napping.

Use Positive Affirmations



'I figured that if I said it enough, I would convince the world that I really was the greatest' ~ Muhammad Ali

Affirmations are simple statements we say to ourselves, positive thoughts, information, and proclamations, frequently repeated to ourselves, to instill them in our mind, to inspire us and positively influence our subconscious mind. By intentionally using positive affirmations, you will give yourself the best chance to avoid negative thinking.

Everything you think and say is an affirmation. Your inner dialogue is a torrent of affirmations. You know what I'm talking about, that voice in your head. It's always talking to you, isn't it? Those words and thoughts are constantly, subconsciously affirming the way you are, and the life you live. Too often we say things in our minds over and over again that are negative about our situations, and the events we live, which brings about more of the same - unwanted situations. If you are constantly repeating thoughts of doom and gloom, generated by your negative self-talk you are building a life you don't want.

The words we use, and the thoughts we have can bring either good or bad results. Developing a positive mindset is a powerful strategy. You must start to become aware of the thoughts you have and the words you use in your daily life. It is important that you start to think happier, positive thoughts. This is where the use of positive affirmations can be so important.

Positive affirmations are influential, positive statements that create positive internal dialogue within us. When you are time after time reiterating positive affirmations to yourself, you will be producing positive subconscious thoughts in your mind. These positive thoughts will create a more constructive, motivating, positive internal-image of yourself and the life you are living.

So it's very important that you begin to use these types of Affirmations, to make positive statements describing your desired situation, and which then you repeat many times, with attention, conviction, interest and desire, which in turn will activate your subconscious mind and prompt you into taking positive action.



'It's the repetition of affirmations that leads to belief. And once that belief becomes a deep conviction, things begin to happen' ~ Claude M. Bristol

Whatever way you look at it, by substituting negative, debilitating thinking with positive, motivating thinking, you cannot fail to benefit. The most miraculous change that will occur is within your subconscious mind, which will now start to access the infinite resources that it has available to it and you will find yourself charged with far more positive energy. From this point forward, what you create

in your outside world will be far more affirmative and therefore so inspiring, than what has been before. If necessary, just take my word for this, believe, using positive affirmations will change your subconscious thoughts which in return will change your life incredibly for the better.

Your subconscious mind can be compared to the computer you use. It is reliant upon the information you give it, to determine what it is you want it to do. Remembering back to my computing classes at school, my teacher's favourite expression was garbage in, garbage out. So a computer responds to the input you give, it then processes it, and returns an output. It does not behave like a terminator the film computer, where it has a mind of its own. It just responds to what you tell it. That is exactly how your subconscious works. All your thoughts and words are picked up by your subconscious; it then processes it, and gives you back what you've asked for. So instead of feeding your subconscious with thoughts of doom and gloom, negative expectations and beliefs, start providing it with nourishing, positive, inspiring information.



'Any thought that is passed on to the subconscious often enough and convincingly enough is finally accepted' ~ Robert Collier

In order to bring about significant changes in your life, affirmations have to be done several times a day till such time that they become a reality. It's a great idea to write down a list of your affirmations, so they're easy to grab hold of and read. By writing one per post-it-note, and then displaying them around

your computer monitor, on your fridge, or anywhere you'll see them regularly, which will keep them in your sight at various times of the day, so that you can read them time and again.

Louise L. Hay in her book "You Can Heal Your Life" introduces the Mirror Technique where you stand front of a mirror, look into your own eyes and repeat the affirmations with passion and energy a few times. You should repeat this a number of times daily. Her suggestion is that you repeat your affirmation when you wake up, say them about 20 times, then do the same again before going to sleep. These will help you get into a positive state of mind.

When you are stressed or upset about any situation in your life, begin repeating your affirmation over and over again. You will feel your body relax as the negative feelings are replaced with positive ones. These positive thoughts, which are simply replacing the negative thoughts, can be repeated while you dress, shower, and exercise, while you are sitting at your desk, or as you are dropping off to sleep.

It has been demonstrated that just saying, thinking or writing positive thoughts make us stronger in every way. Believe me, Affirmations can be a key tool in bringing about change in your life.



'You will be a failure, until you impress the subconscious with the conviction you are a success. This is done by making an affirmation which "clicks."' ~ Florence Scovel

Examples of affirmations:

- As I begin to love myself I find it easy to forgive
- Every day in every way, I'm getting better and better. (Emile Coue)
- Forgiveness is a gift I now give to myself and those around me
- I am a money magnet, and prosperity of all kinds is drawn to me
- I choose to be in touch with my own needs and desires, I release the need to please others and know that I have a right to all my feelings and emotions
- I choose to live my life in a way that makes me happy and I am free
- I deserve all good in my life and that includes prosperity
- I know that I can only think and focus on one thought at a time, so I deal with each issue of my life, one at a time, before moving on to the next. (Art Stanley)
- I love and accept myself as I am knowing that by doing this I can love others more fully and they can love me
- I naturally make choices that are good for me, I take loving care of my body and my body responds with health, an abundance of energy and a wonderful feeling of well-being
- I now receive the treatment I need in the perfect time, place and way for me
- I release all disease from my body and welcome health, love and happiness into my life
- I release the need to be right all the time and to judge others and I am free
- Money flows to me from expected and unexpected sources

- My past is nothing more than the trail I've left behind. What drives my life today is the energy that I generate in each of my present moments. (Wayne Dyer)
- My work is enjoyable and fulfilling, and I am appreciated
- New opportunities to increase my income open up for me now
- Positive thoughts bring me the benefits I desire. Negative thoughts have no influence over me
- The past has no power over me, I forgive all those that need my forgiveness and I forgive myself
- Wonderful new opportunities are opening up for me to use my unique creative skills and abilities



'The human body has been designed to resist an infinite number of changes and attacks brought about by its environment. The secret of good health lies in successful adjustment to changing stresses on the body' ~ Harry J. Johnson

Some more methods

Yoga - is the bringing together of the physical, emotional, and spiritual parts of yourself. Yoga relieves stress, makes you more "mindful" and aware, helps improve concentration, helps you feel more peaceful and calm, as well as makes your body feel good; improves balance, flexibility of the joints and muscles; and relaxes stiff, tight muscles.

Get a massage – having a massage is a great way to clear your mind, soothe sore muscles, and feel more relaxed.

Great Music - listening to music is another good way to relax. Music can motivate us, divert us from our worries, arouse our brains, and help us relax. Put together your own “feel good” music collection and play it when you need a lift or distraction.



'Rest is not idleness, and to lie sometimes on the grass under trees on a summer's day, listening to the murmur of the water, or watching the clouds float across the sky, is by no means a waste of time ' ~ J. Lubbock

STRESS MANAGEMENT

TECHNIQUE 3:

REDUCE YOUR

DEMANDS

Pick Your Battles



'Stress is the trash of modern life - we all generate it but if you don't dispose of it properly, it will pile up and overtake your life' ~ Danzae Pace

Every day feels like a battle? There are too many things and people placing demands on you. Not enough time to get everything done. Money is tight, bills arrive, your children are fighting for attention, and friends are relying on you for advice. Your phone is ringing, your email in box is filling, friends are popping in for coffee, you have the weekly shopping to do, the kids need picking up from school, the house is in a mess and needs a tidy up, and you've got to prepare dinner too, and the car has been playing up and you need to get it into the garage. Does this sound like a typical day in your life?

We face so many demands in our lives, so much needs to be done. Yet isn't it such a common occurrence, that at the end of each day we just feel as though we haven't had enough time to do everything we wanted to? It is hard to keep it together with everyone and everything pulling you in different directions. Some days you just find yourself getting down. You find yourself in free fall. It gets too much for you. You don't know where to start. Sound familiar?

You have to adopt a different approach and do things differently. The best thing you can do at this point is to pick your battles.

Pick your battles means that you would be well-advised to select a few specific issues of importance to focus on, rather than trying to deal with too many things at once. If you pick your battles well, you can defuse problems along the way as you address the most important issues first.

The point is to reduce your stress as much as possible. Devise a plan of action that is designed to eliminate your stress, by picking your battles. You can't do everything, no one could. Some things you just have to leave until tomorrow. I'm sorry to have to tell you this, but you're not superman or superwoman.

Your time is limited. You've only got 24 hours in a day. Eight of those you should be sleeping through. So it is so important for you, particularly when combating stress, that you are selective about which battles you choose to fight each day, leaving the others to another time. Don't feel guilty that you couldn't do something today. Be realistic about what you can achieve, and just be satisfied by what you do accomplish.

Don't react immediately

When people are stressed they often end up saying something that they regretted later. It may have been a heated word or two to a loved one when a conversation wasn't going as they wished, or it may have been saying yes to somebody asking them to do something, which in reality they would have been better off refusing. At times you agree to things that after consideration you regret. So it is important, if you do this, that you start thinking about a situation and try to see it from all points of view, before you make a decision, react, or respond. Don't let your automatic programming operate your brain.

Whenever you feel stressed or under pressure due to some sudden problem or some comments made by somebody, you must avoid reacting immediately even though you may automatically feel that you are subject to some form of provocation. Allow some time to pass and refrain from doing or saying anything as long as the disturbance persists in your mind.

Temporarily avoid any response. Instead, inwardly count backwards, giving yourself time to not only cool down, or react automatically but to also subconsciously examine calmly all the pros and cons. 1010 ... 1009 ... 1008 ... 1007 ... 1006... 1005 ... 1004 ... 1003 ... 1002 ... 1001.

This is a very simple technique that buys you time to calm down and respond sensibly. Try it. It's better than having to bite your lip, and certainly better than the instant reaction we're trying to stop.

Say 'no' at times

So do you always take on too many tasks, never able to say 'no' when others ask you to help, or to do something? Learning to occasionally use the word 'no' is one of the most beneficial habits you can develop to reduce your demands.

As a life coach, I recently worked with somebody that was frequently stressed out at how busy she was on a daily basis. She realised that she had no time for herself at all, because she was constantly running around after other people. All her husband, children, mother, friends had to do, was ask her to do something for them, and she would go into automatic response and say 'yes'. And they were all asking her constantly to do things for them. It left her no time for herself.

When you try to take on too much, taking responsibility upon yourself to deal with the demands coming at you from so many different directions, the end result is often that you get stressed, or worse ill.

I recently worked with a guy. His life over a 6 month period just got too much for him. He was putting in over 12 hours at work, coming home and doing paperwork, with just enough time to eat, and grab about 6 hours sleep. He had to forego his exercise routine, which previously had seen him in the gym 5 days a week. He was grabbing difficult. This guy was stressed. He only realised that he had to start a sandwich, and worse, often eating nothing during the day. If he had an energy dip, he would grab a chocolate bar. He kept going by consuming teas and coffees by the bucket load. Through this period, his eldest daughter was having health problems, and was going off track in her life. His relationship with his wife was becoming very strained, when his energy levels disappeared totally, and the doctor diagnosed him with a very high blood pressure.

The first thing he had to do, was learn to say no. Whether to his boss, his children, his wife, his clients, his friends, or anybody else that saw him as the man that would be able to assist them, or do something for them, sometimes he just had to say 'no'. Up until this point he would always say 'yes' to them, no matter how busy he already was. He was taking on everybody's problems. Now he had to accept that there were limits to what he could do, and at times he now had to say 'no'.

'No', one little word, yet such an impact. His stress levels, and health dramatically improved. So learn to say 'no' at times.

Of course it's easier to say yes. But it's not always the right thing for you to do. Often from a stress relief point of view it's important at times to say 'no'. Sometimes you are already piled too high with work deadlines and other obligations, that there's no time to squeeze anything else in. Too often you try

to squeeze too many activities into too little time. This creates much stress upon you, and that little word 'no' can help you out significantly.

There are so many things just waiting to eat up your free time and increase your stress. It's easy to create stressful situations in your life if you don't turn down requests for your time. Saying no will free up time to complete tasks you are already committed to.

When you over commit yourself you put yourself under a lot of stress, and you're susceptible to becoming ill, exhausted or simply frustrated, and you then take it out on others, which neither helps you nor those in your life.

Examine your current obligations and overall priorities before making any new commitments. Prioritise the things that are important to you. Saying no helps you. You'll gain time that you can commit to the things that you really want to do, and leads to a less stressful life. Saying yes all the time only leads to additional stress in your life.

When you are tempted to say 'Yes' automatically to a request, instead say 'I'll think about it and get back to you', or some other phrase that gives you time to assess the situation.

Or be even more direct:

NO, I am not able to help you with that

NO, sorry. I am afraid I have to decline because I have no spare time

NO, I can't do this right now.

NO, thanks. Not this time. Thank you for asking.

Sorry, but NO

Learn to say NO.

Problem solving

Do you have disturbing, stressful thoughts that constantly circulate in your head, upsetting your peace of mind, keeping you tossing and turning at night and distracted throughout the day?

There is sometimes no avoiding difficult and stressful times. Problems can come from many directions: from home; at work; with partners, children, friends, work colleagues; with finances; with health or in many number of areas in your life. I suppose an easy answer is to ignore the problem, and hope it goes away. I'm sure you've tried this on occasion. Did the problem just evaporate, go away nicely? I bet not. It just doesn't, does it? Burying problems under the carpet really doesn't work. In fact, more often than not, the problem just gets bigger, and more difficult to resolve than it would have when it first materialised.

So now let me introduce you to The Problem Solving Stress Management Technique. This is a powerful tool to add to your stress management toolbox. To alleviate a stressful situation you must identify the issues causing it (the problem), and then look for solutions, options and ways forward, to create strategies to solve this problem.

1. Identification of the Problem

The first step is to identify a problem. Don't dwell on the emotional reactions produced by the situation, simply use these reactions as clues to tell you more about this particular problem.

Earlier on we took some time to look at your life, and determine those issues which bring stress into it. What was the cause of your stress? What issues are

you most stressed about? One of the first things for you to do when starting to introduce stress management tools to your life, is to look clearly at everything you're dealing with and identify the problems you face (your stressors) and getting to the bottom of all these issues, because only then will you be properly prepared to tackle the challenges that lie ahead, then create strategies and implement solutions.

So you know you're stressed. You can just feel things aren't right with you. You know you're over reacting to certain situations. But you can't put your finger on what is the problem. You ask yourself the question what is it in your life right now, that's bringing you stress. Well you need to ascertain what is bringing stress to your life. A great way for you to determine this is to ask yourself some questions. The quality of the questions you ask is vital, because the answers you get depend on how you ask the questions.

Here are some questions to ask yourself:

- What's the cause of my stress?
- What exactly is the problem?
- Is the problem really that big? Would others think so?
- Am I using this problem to avoid dealing with a much bigger one?
- Is there any part of the problem over which I have control?
- You have to:
- Identify the obstacles you face and the lessons you need to learn.
- Think about what you see. Picture the life you want to live. Determine what you need to change to enable you to get closer to your goals.
- What are the things in your life right now that you would like to change?

You need to take this opportunity to examine everything in your life that you feel stressed out about. Put them on paper. At this time, don't try to work out

how to handle them, and don't let yourself get upset about them, just distance yourself from them.

As you identify something, write it down but don't think about it in detail.

Here is what to do:

You're going to make a personal inventory and list everything that's causing you stress. List the stresses from which you are suffering. Write them all down. Here are some more questions, to get your mind focused on your problems. It sounds a strange thing to get you to do, but unless you can identify them as they really are, how can you solve them?

- Are you feeling run down, totally exhausted all the time?
- Are you feeling disenchanted with your life as it is?
- Do you feel on edge, ready to explode, letting silly things really get to you?
- Do you have any power to change these things?
- Is there an important imminent event that is making you stressed?
- Are you having relationship problems with other people?
- Are you weighed down with a massive workload?
- Is your main stressor coming from your home life?
- Are you leading an unhealthy lifestyle, e.g bad diet, lack of exercise?
- Are you getting enough sleep?
- Is your mind full of negative thoughts?

Spend some time here, go back through these questions, and identify the problems that exist in your life. Those which are causing you distress! So step one is to identify the problems that are bringing you stress.



'A problem well stated is a problem half solved' ~ John Dewey

2. Clarify the Problem

Now you need to collect and analyse everything you know about your life as it is. No longer must you run away from your problems. It's time to face them. Which one or two things are the real problems in your life, bringing you the most stress, that you now need to focus on? Come on, dig deep. What are the real issues that you need to sort? Clarifying and understanding the problem accurately will determine the nature of the solutions required and the best course of action to take.

Is it your job, your marriage, your kids, your health, your finances that is causing you the most stress? Once you know the main area, then you have to delve deeper. What is it about this situation are you finding so hard to handle? Sometimes we have to make brave decisions. Only once you truly know what the problem is can you consider potential solutions. You must discover the root causes underlying the problems.

You need to determine how severe a problem it really is. Is it putting you under constant pressure, so that there's never a moment when you're not thinking about it; or is it only affecting you sometimes, intermittently?

How can you possibly sort anything out, until you really know what it is? They say you can't fix what isn't broken. Well, you certainly can't fix what you don't know is broken. By really looking at those things in your life that are causing you problems, and really breaking them down, clearly describing them to yourself, the better chance you have of dealing with them. So be specific, really analyse your problems. What is it? When does it happen? Where does it occur? How does it come about?

Ask yourself these questions:

- What is happening with this?
- What isn't happening with this?
- Will this problem eventually resolve itself?
- Is this problem important enough for you to commit time to solving it?
- What would make the problem go away?
- What are my feelings about this situation?
- When does this happen?
- What do you need to help you solve this problem?
- What do you want to happen?
- What do you not want to happen?
- What are you attempting to do to solve the main problem that is causing you stress, or have you lost sight of the real stressor?
- Is the problem having serious effects?
- Is the problem growing?
- Are the obstacles growing?
- Is there a deadline?

3. Create/ Generate Ideas.

Now that you have a well-defined problem it's time to start thinking about solutions. Brainstorm like crazy. Think of all the possible solutions by which you could solve the problem. This is the brainstorming stage where you will generate a variety of ideas. What is it you can do about this problem? What benefits will you gain by dealing with it? What will be the consequences if you do nothing?

Brainstorming helps develop highly creative solutions to a problem. It is particularly helpful when you need to break out of stale, established patterns of thinking, so that you can develop new ways of looking at things. It will enable you to find better solutions to the problems you face, and make better decisions.

Come up with ideas and thoughts that maybe seem at first to be a bit off the wall or mad. You can then change and refine them into ideas that are stunningly original, and that will work. During brainstorming sessions there should therefore be no criticism of ideas. You are just opening up possibilities. Judgments and analysis at this stage will stunt idea generation.

Write down all the solutions you can think of, actions you can take, in relation to the issues you have identified, consider everything that pops into your head - even ideas that initially seem silly.

You have to throw out ideas and see where they land. I first heard the term "throwing mud at the wall to see what sticks" from a friend many years back. So by generating lots of ideas, some of it will slide back down because it's not the right solution, but some of your ideas are going to stick, and that means they're worth following through.

If you want to take away some of the pressures you have in your life, doing this exercise will certainly achieve that.

4. Plan for Action

Now its time to create an action plan to address your problems. Create a clear action plan that will produce lasting positive results for the specific problems you're dealing with. Working out all the action steps that you need to take so as to be able to implement your solution. You will create an action plan, where you simply list the specific steps to take and giving yourself a timetable to follow. Every great action begins with a single step. Your action planning will include all the personal actions that you can take. Break down every step you need to take in this plan before you can get moving.

An action plan is nothing more (or less) than carefully listing all the things that you need to do. It outlines your strategy for dealing with each of the listed areas. An Action plan will make what you are doing more intentional, and give you something to hold yourself accountable to.

Of all your creative ideas which make the most sense? Select the best strategies from your brainstorming list to solve the problems, and put them into your action plan.

You need to identify all the steps to deal with your stressors, and to create a list of action steps, so as to work towards them in order to ensure your impact is a positive one.

Of all your creative ideas — silly or serious — which make the most sense?

Ask yourself:

- What will likely happen if you choose this specific path?
- How will using this solution make you feel in the end?
- How will it make others feel?
- What are the possible positive and negative consequences?
- Will you be able to carry it out?
- Do you realistically think it will solve the problem?

By making a plan, and determining all the steps you need to take, you are giving yourself the best chance of succeeding in resolving your problem.

So when you put your plan together, list:

- All the actions you need to take
- Timetable these actions
- List all the resources you will require
- Decide whether anybody else needs to be involved
- Manage this timetable ensuring that you follow it
- Monitor the success of each step
- Change the plan where necessary

After narrowing down your options pick the best ones and believe in them.

5. Implement.

Now execute the plan. Implementing the plan will take effort and commitment to keep everything on track. This is the time when you are most at risk of getting distracted. Don't let your action plan join the list of good intentions. Believe in yourself, be brave and try your solutions out.

You might encounter obstacles along the way. That's normal. Remember, with strength and perseverance you can succeed. You have to work to achieve your goals and initiate positive change in your life.



'It's not that I'm so smart, it's just that I stay with problems longer' ~ Albert Einstein

6. Evaluate.

This is the final step in your problem solving procedure. You have to have a method of monitoring the results, determining whether the action plan resolves the problem or shows you when the action plan needs improvement.

Whatever you are trying to do in life, when you are putting time and effort into doing something, it is important to pay attention to whether your actions are moving you in the desired direction or whether they're moving you in the wrong direction. It's important that you know whether you are on target at all times.

Even the best solution may require fine-tuning. Evaluate the outcome of the solutions you choose on a weekly basis. If some of your solutions have not worked try alternative ones. Keep doing this each week for 6-8 weeks and things should improve naturally. When you solve one problem, however small, this will give you the confidence to tackle bigger ones.

Will you be less stressed in the end, or will the solution create new problems?

What might go wrong? Can you correct this part of the plan?
Do you have the proper resources and, more important, the nerve and will to carry out your plan?
Is your solution appropriate for the problem at hand?
Did your solution effectively solve the problem?
Is it solved well?
If not, what new plan might work?

Mind Mapping

I'm going to introduce you to a tool at this point. It's called Mind Mapping. Mind Mapping was originated in the late 1960s by Tony Buzan.

I was very fortunate to come across this method at a reasonably young age. You can certainly still purchase Tony Buzan's books, and to learn this technique fully would be a brilliant investment.

Mind Mapping is the tool I always use for brainstorming, solving problems and working out my action plans. It offers a powerful graphical method that can be applied to any situation in which clearer thinking is needed. It allows for ideas to just flow out of you creatively, and start seeing links created between things.

Mind mapping allows the left and right sides of our brain to work together. Our left brain works in a matter-of-fact, logical, regimented, detailed way, while our right brain works in a creative, insightful, creative way.

A completed mind map looks like a tree, with roots and branches coming of the trunk, and twigs coming of the branches. A mind map starts with a central topic, your main idea. From this main idea, you then work outwards in all directions,

creating branches with associated ideas, and then another branch can run off from this, producing a growing and organized structure composed of key words and key images. These branches are the most significant part in a mind map since they connect the pieces of information, and create the structure of your topic.

Mind Mapping is a non-linear technique using key words and phrases instead of long wordy sentences.

Steps to creating a Mind Map

- Begin with the main topic - the name of your mind map. On a large piece of paper write the title of the topic you're exploring in the centre of the page, and draw a circle around it. This is the idea around which you want to focus your thought.
- Now write in the sub-categories from this topic by connecting to the main topic sub-headings of the topic that relate to the subject by drawing branches/lines out from the central circle. Label these lines with these sub-headings. You can generate as many new ideas from this topic as you want by freeing your mind and letting your thoughts flow. These branches are directly associated to the main topic through the direct link.
- As you delve further into the topic uncovering further levels of information associated to the sub-headings, draw further branches/lines linked to the subheading branch. These are your sub-sub-headings. You can create a huge amount of ideas for every sub-heading in your mind map.
- Keep repeating steps 2 and 3 until your ideas dry up. A complete mind map will have branches radiating in all directions from the centre, and further branches radiating from them with sub-topics and facts.
- You should now see the big picture, with a structure to it, everything being linked together.

Activity Logs

How often have you thought to yourself, "I would accomplish so much more if I had just another few hours each day"? How effectively do you use your day?

An activity log will help you to determine how you actually use your time, what times of the day you perform at your best, and activities that you waste your time on.

When you first use an activity log you will almost certainly be surprised at how much time you are probably wasting.

Each time you switch activities, record the time you start the new activity. Use the activity log, not only to record your activities, but also to note fluctuations in your energy levels, attentiveness and efficiency throughout the day. Do this at regular intervals throughout the day.

By logging your activities for a week, you will be able to recognize and eradicate time-wasting or low-productivity tasks. You will also distinguish the times of day during which you are most efficient, so that you can carry out your most important jobs at these times.

By doing this you will be able to free up additional time in your day.

Time Management

- Taking work home nightly
- Constant interruptions during the day

A common stressor experienced by many people is when they feel as though they don't have sufficient time in the day to accomplish what they need to accomplish. Do you feel the need to be more organized and/or more productive? Do you spend your day in a frenzy of activity and then wonder why you haven't accomplished much?

Time — or the lack of it — is a big stressor to many people. Many people are controlled by time rather than being able to control it. One way to reduce stress is to learn to manage your own time and reduce the number of distractions and time-wasting factors.

Stress frequently results from a build up of time pressures. Work deadlines, long working hours, time spent commuting to and from work, and domestic responsibilities once you get home all mount up to create stress. Are you always rushing around, feeling overwhelmed, miss deadlines, have difficulty making choices, pass over private time needed for relaxation and rest and confuse “keeping busy” with truly being productive and getting results.

Symptoms of ineffective time management include:

- Missing deadlines
- Feelings of constant rushing
- Indecision about taking action
- Non-productive activity
- Being overwhelmed by demands or details
- Feeling fatigued or listless
- Not enough time for things you'd like to do
- Over-involvement in other's problems

- Lack of delegation to others
- Procrastination on tasks
- Facing the day without a plan or goals
- Feeling that you are neglecting family or friends

Time Management Quiz

Place a tick in the yes or no box.

	Yes	No
1. Do you always write your weekly objectives down on paper?		
2 Do you know how many hours you are being productive at work?		
3. Do you know what your time is worth by the minute?		
4. Do you keep and maintain a 5-year plan for personal and professional growth?		
5. Do you feel that you use your time efficiently?		
6. Do you feel that you have enough time to do the things that you want to do?		
7. Do you keep a running list of all your most important projects?		
8. Do you always complete your tasks when they are due?		

9. Do you feel that you are earning to your fullest potential?		
10. Do you spend most of your time on the things/tasks that matter the most?		
11. Do you feel that you spend enough time on professional training?		
12. Do you complete your workload during normal business hours?		
13. Do you handle tasks on time without procrastinating?		
14. Do you write out your goals?		
15. Do you feel that you squeeze the most value from each minute that you have?		
16. Do you feel that you have enough time to relax?		
17. Do you feel that you have enough time to spend with family and friends?		
18. Do you plan for the next day by writing a task list the day prior?		
19. Do you delegate or outsource activities that cost less than your hourly rate?		
20, Do you keep your personal and professional space neatly organized?		

Score yourself

YES = 1 Point

NO = 0 Points

17-20 You do a great job managing your time.

14-16 You manage your time well, but there's room for improvement.

11-13 You need some time management training.

0-10 You need some serious time management help.

Now you know how well you manage your time, and if like so many others time management is not one of your areas of strength, well now it's time for you to do something about it.

When you manage time well, you make better use of your time; in fact you will make more time for yourself. This will allow you to spend more time with your family and friends and increase your performance and productivity in all walks of life. This will help reduce your stress. Using time effectively involves making wise choices that will produce positive results, and reduce the stress. You can't change the fact that you've only got 24 hours in a day, but it can help you get so much more out of them.

Effective time management eases the pressure on you and improves your stress levels. It will enable you to plan and organise your life so much better. One of the most effective methods for handling daily stress is to practice skills that help you use your time far better.

The first thing you have to do is accept that indeed there are only 24 hours in a day. Nothing you can do will change this. It is vital that you manage yourself, and the things you do with the time available to you.

How much time are you wasting? On what things are you using your time that are neither productive or useful in any way. In my coaching practice, I have a client, who, prior to coaching, couldn't understand why he was achieving so little every day. There was so much he wanted to get done, but never seemed to have the time to do it.

He has so much potential and possesses so many talents. What we discovered was that most of his day was wasted in a form of day dreaming. Worse than that, he was stuck at his computer, obsessed with internet chat rooms. He would get up in the morning, spend a few hours passing time in the room. He would constantly, throughout the day, pop back in, and then spend another hour or more. He would carry this throughout each day, and each evening.

In a way it was a form of escapism. It kept him from trying to make things happen in his life, and thereby averted the fear of failure.

Once we dealt with this issue, and removed this as a time consumer, his progress was unbelievable. Suddenly he structured each day, and made fantastic headway.

So you have to change your behaviours in order to make the most of your time, You have to start by getting rid of your personal time-wasters. Start now by setting specific goals with regards to the activities you're going to cut out, and start by monitoring for one week your success at not doing these things. Keep track of this massive change. It's going to be hard at first, breaking habits always is, particularly bad ones, but the rewards will be worthwhile.

What are your time-wasting activities that steal the time that you could be using much more productively? Be honest here, paint yourself a true, accurate picture of what you actually do with your time. To physically manage your time you

have to know how you're using it now, and then plan how you're going to use your time in future.

You have to free up time, and the best way to do this is to stop spending time doing needless things that accomplish nothing, other than wasting time. Also you have to eliminate the temptation to worry over those things you cannot change – another waste of time. Now, you have to make the best use of your time.

What you really should be doing is focusing your time on high priority activities. Put that limited time that you have into the areas that will provide long term benefits. You have to ensure you have time to do all the important things. When it is important, you have to be able to make time to do it. Later we will discuss your personal lifetime goals, definitely an area where you are going to want to concentrate a significant amount of your time.

Maintain and develop a list of specific things to be done each day. Set your priorities and get the most important ones done as early in the day as you can. Evaluate your progress at the end of the day briefly. Establish your daily routine activities.

As touched on when we were talking about 'your environment' you have to make sure you are organised. Don't waste time looking for the things you need. From your car and house keys, to paperwork, files on your computer, clothes, and everything else you need on a daily basis, get organized to the point that you can quickly lay your hands on what you need.

Your time is worth everything. So you can no longer afford to squander any of your time on wasteful activities. No longer allow yourself to waste time because you don't realise your time to be of value. Every second counts.

When you are thinking about doing an activity, think in terms of what it will cost you in pounds and pence, rather than in hours and minutes. If you train your mind to think of time as money, you will undoubtedly become more conscientious about how you spend your time.

Use the following time management plan to plan your tomorrow's.

TIME MANAGEMENT PLAN							
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6-7							
7-8							
8-9							
9-10							
10-11							
11-12							
12-1							
1-2							
2-3							
3-4							
4-5							
5-6							
6-7							
7-8							
8-9							
9-10							
10-11							
11-12							

Make time for you

Every day you should make some 'you' time. Where you can just escape from everyone. This personal time is good for your body and soul—it's your time to relax, reflect, and think about life and your goals. It's a time to clear your head and be at one with yourself.

- Try to spend some time alone every day. Quiet time alone allows you to tune in to the present moment.
- Spend your time alone doing something useful, like your morning "power up" session where you do things like power walking, visualisation etc.
- At the end of the day sit alone and do your progressive muscular relaxation

Planning

When you work long hours, and every day you are rushing through trying to get more and more done, where your personal life seems to move further into the background, and you have no time for your family, let alone yourself, you are a prime candidate for stress. So if you've noticed that you've been getting headaches, feeling exhausted, showing a lack of enthusiasm for things, getting irritable easily, you've reached the point of stress, and need to make positive changes in your life.

With all the massive demands and responsibilities you face in life, you can not hope to get through intact unless you start planning your time, and it is not possible to manage your time unless you have a plan.

We've all heard about creating 'To Do Lists', undoubtedly many of you have used them before. Making a list every day of what needs to be done! Writing it down! Keeping it at your fingertips! Marking off each item after you've completed it.

This allows you to organise and tick off the tasks that you need to complete each and every day. I have found that keeping a written To Do list, increases my productivity, keeps me focused, and prevents me from both wasting time on unimportant things, and ensures that I spend time on what is important. By doing this I avoid the stress that would otherwise be created. Planning will give you a sense of purpose for your day. It makes sure that you're not just unconsciously taking random actions.

The difference in the way I suggest you go about creating this To Do List, is by providing a compelling reason behind all your actions within your plan. You would do well to start by taking an extra moment to consider what you want to achieve today. What are the most important things you need to do? What at the end of the day, do you want to have done with your time that will make you feel fulfilled and proud of your accomplishments? What actions would mean that at the end of the day, you've actually achieved something satisfying and rewarding?

So to start you need to focus on three things to then be able to produce results in your life through your daily plan:

1. Initially determine what you want to achieve - the results that you are committed to producing.
2. Know why you want it - the compelling purpose that gives you the drive to persevere.
3. Know how to make it happen- calculate what you need to do.

Everything you do should be designed around your goals in life, whether they be professional or personal. For you to make progress towards your goals it is essential that you spend time working on them.

Planning immediately reduces stress, enabling you to transform overwhelming situations into a sense of certainty that you can achieve everything that you want to. Don't just focus on a massive list of items. Plan your day based on the three key questions to focus you at all times on what it is you want to achieve. Always keeping your goals in mind will ensure that you stick to an effective action plan which will keep moving you forward toward your goals.

How often does your work completely take over your life? Well start planning your days to ensure it doesn't and you are making time for other things and other people. When you find yourself focusing on just one area of your life, at the expense of the others, this is not only bad for your health, but also demonstrates you don't take the trouble to plan out what you are going to do with your time. For a healthy, stress free life, you need to start right now creating a balance in all the areas of your life.

With the fact that you have so many different things competing for your attention, it makes it all the more essential that you make the conscious effort to take control of your life, and plan in advance what you will focus on, so you no longer live in response to the demands of the moment. When you put your focus in the wrong place, or completely onto one thing, this creates stress for you.

A Positive focus will change the way you think, the way you feel, and what you do in any moment. When you change your focus, you change your life. In producing your plan you have to determine what are the most important things you want to achieve in your life, so that you can focus on what's most important to you when planning your time.

Do not set yourself unrealistic deadlines, which you cannot possibly keep, and remember to always make time for yourself in your routine.

Thinking and planning ahead can be very beneficial in removing the stress associated with leaving things to the last minute.

A simple method to manage your time more effectively is to sit down at the end of each day and write down the six most important things you can do the next day. Spend 5-10 minutes each evening on planning your activities creating a daily To Do list for tomorrow.

Ask yourself two questions: (i) what one thing could you do (that you are not doing now) that if you did on a regular basis would make a huge difference to your personal life? and (ii) in your work, what would produce similar results? Now list all the tasks you have decided you need to do tomorrow.

Go over each task on your job list and determine the respective importance of each of them. Grade them according to the following:

"A's" - Tasks that must be carried out

"B's" - Important but less urgent; to do after completing all "A's".

"C's" - only to do if you find time left .

If something unplanned crops up, list it on your job list, and grade it, before doing anything else about it.

Break down your To Do List into small, manageable action steps. When tackling complex tasks break them down into simple smaller steps, which then you can approach one after the other

When you complete each task, take the time to mark it off your list.

Prioritize ruthlessly. You should start each day having the night before prioritised the tasks for the day ahead. Plan your day the night before and set priorities for yourself.

Plan something to look forward to.

When you plan ahead an event that you look forward to, the anticipation can bring optimism to your life. Plan a:

- Fun family holiday for next summer
- A weekend away with your loved one
- A theme park trip with your child
- Visit an old friend
- A celebration of your birthday or wedding anniversary
- A night at the Theatre
- A day at the beach

Stress-busting notebook

A stress-busting notebook helps you identify what is going wrong in your life. Keep a notebook that you can keep with you at all times to record your stressful moments. Write down and rate each moment. Give the least stressful times one star, and the most stressful ten. Record the stressful events that take place, your reaction, and how you coped. This is no different to when you are in hospital, and the nurse asks you how bad the pain is- one for virtually none, ten for the maximum that you can endure.

With this information, you can identify the sources of stress in your life and see what coping strategies you need to help you to make the necessary changes finding better ways to cope with these stressful events.

There is evidence that writing about stressful events and circumstances may help relieve stress.

Think of the 80/20 Principle.

Are you wasting time on activities that may not create beneficial results, or are you spending time productively, in a way that will produce big results? The big question is are you just keeping busy, or are you really being productive?

A great way to reduce your demands, and in return reduce your stress, is to determine the 20 tasks that are the most important for you to do, and do them. The other 80 tasks that aren't that important, and that wouldn't bring significant positive results, just forget about them. Doing this will create more time in your life to relax, and will help reduce the stress caused by being overworked and overwhelmed.

This is what the 80-20 rule is all about. The 80/20 principle states that 80% of the most important results come from 20% of the tasks you do. So you must choose carefully where you concentrate your efforts, and focus on the important not the trivial.

Focusing on, and doing the important things in life will make a huge difference to your achievements. If you look at your current things to do list, out of every 10 items you have on there, I predict you'll find that completing 2 of the items will have more value than the other 8 put together. It is those 2 things you must get done. Don't leave them anymore. More than likely, these 2 things are the

hardest items on your list. You keep putting them off. The pressure keeps you've done them, they don't mean much or produce a lot. I don't believe building. This causes you stress. But you keep picking off the list the easy things, but they're also the meaningless things, even when the adage, that doing something is better than doing nothing is applied. You've got to do those 2 big tasks, because the pay off will be big, it will make the difference. So do those 2 tasks, they're must do's, and the other things can be given to someone else to do, planned for another day, or ignored altogether. Don't concentrate any longer on just being able to tick things off from your things to do list.

With effort, and applying the 80-20 rule, you can save a lot of your emotional and physical energy and concentrate more on tasks that really matter and would enrich your life.

Take a look at your normal workload. Examine those activities you do on a regular basis to see which of them you believe contribute most to the results you want to achieve. Keep breaking it down till you find those key activities, which by concentrating more on will make a major difference to your life. I promise you by carefully examining everything you do, you will find those

activities that you are currently spending 20% of your time on which produce 80% of your results.

When you're working on the twenty percent that really matters:

- It makes you feel good because you are doing what you always wanted or you know it'll help with your goals
- You are doing the tasks that you'd like to procrastinate over but know that they are essential
- You delegate tasks to others that you aren't good at.
- You are doing something that uses your creativity

When you aren't utilising your time effectively:

- You are doing things that other people want you to do
- You are doing things that you aren't good at
- You are doing things you don't enjoy doing (provided that it doesn't also contribute to your goals)
- You are doing things that always take you a lot of time and energy

STRESS MANAGEMENT

TECHNIQUE 4:

RELAX YOUR MIND

The ABCDE Model



'Sometimes when people are under stress, they hate to think, and it's the time when they most need to think' ~ Bill Clinton

A major step in managing stress in your life is to firstly identify, and then to change your:

Limiting Beliefs - those things you believe about yourself that place limitations on your abilities. They may be conscious or unconscious.

Negative Thoughts - those negative counterproductive thoughts that make you see things in a worse light, and generally make you feel bad.

Debilitating Emotions - a state of consciousness that disturbs your inner peace

Destructive Behaviours - actions that harm others or harm oneself.

If I take my self back 20 years and remember the thoughts and feelings that were bouncing about between my ears, I shudder at the memory. The way I saw myself then, what I kept telling myself, the pain that I held on to, and my explosive reactions when it all got the better of me, was post traumatic stress at it very worst. This technique was one of the most important tools in helping me to understand what I was doing, and how to make the changes.

Cognitive behaviour therapy introduces the ABCDE model which provides a technique where you can learn to break these negative ways of being. It helps you to look at your stressful thinking and recognize, dispute and change it so as to replace those thoughts with a more positive thinking pattern. It allows us to test our thoughts and feelings for their accuracy.



'Human beings are relentlessly capable of reflecting on themselves. We can habitually think things, and then reflect on what we are thinking. We can ask ourselves (or sometimes we get asked by other people) whether we know what we are talking about. To answer that we need to reflect on our own positions, our own understanding of what we are saying, our own sources of authority. We might start to wonder whether what we say is 'objectively' true, or merely the outcome of our own perspective, or our own 'take' on a situation' ~ Simon Blackburn

We spend a lot of time thinking about adverse events and situations which occur in our lives, exploring them in our mind, playing them over again and again, constantly mulling over their negative meaning. All this achieves is the strengthening of their negative impact. Then you just keep beating yourself up with them. Boy are we as humans good at doing this!

It's important for you to actually change the way you allow your mind to just wander, frequently focusing more on negative thoughts and interpretations, and instead be more realistic, seeing how things actually are, free from distortions in your thinking and not always seeing or expecting the worse. You need to find constructive ways of handling your problems and stressful situations with the expectation that things will eventually turn out for the best. Once identified, beliefs that don't make sense can be disputed or changed.

The ABCDE model is a great tool for doing this:

'a technique in which people can learn how to break their habits of automatically thinking negative thoughts and instead introduce affirming, remembered, wellness inducing thoughts'. ~ Professor Herbert Benson MD

When we are stressed we have a tendency to be more negative, and the more stressed we get, the more negative we become. In truth it is a vicious circle, our stress causes us to be negative, and this negativity fuels our stress.

The ABCDE model will help you to break this cycle enabling you to see each situation correctly, ascertaining accurately the good and bad in each situation.

If any event produces stress, you must question the beliefs you hold about this event.

Are the beliefs valid?

Are they reasonable?

Are they rational?

The ABCDE model will help you to identify how your beliefs influence the stress you feel, and show you the beliefs that don't actually make sense, to then enable you to dispute them or even to change them. When this happens, better results and feelings are possible. This technique will enable you to stop the destructive thinking patterns that create so much of the stress in your life.

Lets take a look at the ABCDE model:

- A The activating event. Your objective description of the situation and your subjective account of the most troubling aspect of the situation
- B The self-limiting/defeating beliefs triggered by A
- C Consequences: emotional; physical; cognitive(thoughts and images)
- D Disputing or examining these self-defeating beliefs:
- E New and effective outlook

A (Activating Event) stands for the external situation or event. Your mind in response to A, creates B, the way you interpret this situation, which then brings about your reaction which is C. When (B), the belief is an irrational belief (An irrational belief refers to a belief that is false and rationally unsupported), it causes a negative emotional state. A does not cause C, but contributes to it; B largely determines C.

So let me make this absolutely clear. It is not the EVENT itself that causes the CONSEQUENCES, such as your thoughts, the pictures you see, the way you react. It is the BELIEFS you internalise due to the EVENT that brings about these CONSEQUENCES.

An example of how to use the ABCDE model:

Activating Event Getting caught in a traffic jam going to work. Once upon a time living in suburban London and commuting to the City, it wasn't unusual to be stuck in jams for up to 45 minutes, or even longer, and for a journey of less than 15 miles to take me over two hours.

Beliefs Your mind will fill with negative thoughts and feelings. "It is my fault for not leaving earlier." "This is a waste of time." "My boss will be angry about this." "I'm stupid." 'I'm going to miss that meeting, and lose the client'. 'I've really messed up here'.

Consequence Tense, feeling anxious, irritable and having negative thoughts. You start to perspire. You mentally beat yourself up. You start to blame yourself for being so stupid. You may even blame others, such as your wife, for asking you to put the bins out before you left. All the work that you have waiting for you will build the pressure, knowing that you have to make some really important calls, or that a client will turn up for a meeting with you, and find you're not there. You begin to panic.

Dispute: "That's not right, this happens to everyone at one time or another. I'll use this time for some planning of my day's activities. If I get anxious now, it may affect me when I do get to work." I'll pull over to the side of the road, at first opportunity, and use my mobile phone, and call who I need to avoid any major problems. Everyone knows these things happen. "Why is it catastrophic?" "And why is that bad?" Keep going till you see ... hey I'm being a bit silly about this!

Effect Relaxed, positive, in a good mood. Made good use of time spent in traffic jam. Plan your day, think through a project you're working on right now, use a Dictaphone and make some verbal notes, listen to some relaxing music, or a personal development tape. Use this as some extra 'you' time.

EXERCISE: A-B-C-D-E MODEL

Think back to a recent event that made you stressed or worried. Close your eyes and picture it for 30 seconds. Now using the ABCDE model you are going to change it's emotional impact, how to think differently and improve the outcomes.

Activating Experience (the event): What event made you stressed or worried?	Belief(s) (thoughts or interpretations of the event) What thoughts did you have about this event?	Consequence(s) (the negative emotional result of your self-defeating belief)?
Disputing self-defeating belief you identified in "B". (Start with a phrase like, "That's not right...." and add a positive statement, so as to interpret the Event in a positive way)	Effect of disputing your self-defeating belief – How do you feel now having challenged your negative thoughts?)	

Be Aware of Your Thinking ... Think positively not negatively



*'We become what we think about' ~
Napoleon Hill*

So when you wake up in the morning do you immediately take charge of your thoughts, or do you just wake up, open your eyes, see the time on the alarm clock, and then try to sleep a little longer? You have no desire to get out of bed, and your mind begins instantly to play negative thoughts. Then for the rest of the day, your mind is busy with more and more negative thinking.

A really important stress management method is to understand what is going on in your mind, to no longer just let thoughts wander in and out, with you remaining passive. You must now start to focus on your thoughts and become aware of how your thoughts hold you back.

One of your greatest stressors will no doubt be your excessive, negative mind chatter. This mind chatter is an endless monologue which constantly goes through your mind, made up of a stream of negative thoughts, anxieties and

worries. It results in you expecting the worse, seeing dangers and threats that do not actually exist. As Mark twain said *"I've experienced many terrible things in my life, a few of which actually happened."*

The author Earl Nightingale puts forward that 92% of our worries are uncalled for because they are about things that will never happen, and about things that have already happened, so cannot be changed, no matter how much time you waste on them.

These negative thoughts and emotions:

- Depress your mind and body
- Steal your energy
- Disempower you
- Lower your immune system putting you more at risk of ill health
- Tire you out and discourage you
- Undermine your confidence and enthusiasm
- Lower your ability to perform effectively in the important areas of your life
- The more you think about them, the more negative, angrier and unhappier you become
- Stress you out!

From the second you wake up you must mentally watch your thoughts. You are at the mercy of these thoughts! Once you become aware of them, watching out for them, you become the gatekeeper of your own mind. You will live in a constant state of awareness.

By developing a positive mental attitude, controlling your negative emotions, you will provide yourself with the aptitude to direct your mind onto what you want and not on the things you don't.

A simple technique to stop your negative thoughts in an instant is as follows:

An unpleasant thought occurs. Close your eyes and focus on the thought. Count to three. Yell the word "STOP!" as loud as you can. Then move straight onto a positive thought. I know this sounds too simple, or maybe a little silly. But hey, give it a try, and I'll let you in on a secret, it works.

By reducing your negative thoughts you will improve your physical and mental health, and you will most certainly reduce your stress levels. So as you notice you are having a negative thought, shout the word STOP, even if it is inside your head and not out loud, because you may get a few strange reactions if you doing it standing inside a shopping centre.

When you notice a negative thought entering your mind, immediately remove it by thinking of something positive to replace it. Let your mind become filled with positive, uplifting thoughts and ideas.

"You are what you think." If you think constantly about failure, you are going to fail. If you think constantly about success, you are going to succeed. The person with a positive determination will succeed and prosper. Which way would you rather live?

Change your thinking... change your reality... change your life.



*'Our life is what our thoughts make it' ~
Marcus Aurelius*

In "The Secret", a book written by Rhonda Byrne, she puts forward what she calls 'the most powerful law in the universe, the law of attraction'.

The law of attraction postulates that every thought you have, the images you hold in your mind, and all those feelings you have will admit into your life everything you are thinking about.

Some definitions of the law of attraction include:

- Like attracts like
- You get what you think about, whether wanted or unwanted
- You are a living magnet
- You get what you put your energy and focus on
- Everything draws to itself that which is like itself
- Thoughts attract corresponding situations and circumstances
- You get what you think about
- You attract into your life whatever you focus on

- Positive thoughts attract positive events. Negative thoughts attract negative events.
- If you keep thinking and expecting success, and don't allow doubts enter your mind, you will eventually achieve success.
- It is not enough just to wish for something, you need strong desire and faith to manifest what you want.

The law of attraction simply says that you attract to yourself whatever you think about. Your dominant thoughts will find a way to manifest themselves in reality. Your desires, given life through your thoughts.

Everything that is coming into your life, you are attracting into your life. It is attracted to you by virtue of the images you are holding in your mind. It's what you're thinking. Whatever is going on in your mind you are attracting to you. Everything we think, everything we feel, is creating our future, by bringing more of it into our lives.

What you think about on a consistent basis, is what is creating your reality, which simply means that we tend to attract the things that we think about or focus on in our lives. Our minds become magnetized with the central thoughts we cling to in our minds and these attract to us the forces, the people, and the circumstances of life which harmonize with those thoughts.

You have to start to think about what you desire, and withdraw your thoughts from what you don't want. Thinking about your desires feels good, and thinking about what you don't want makes you feel bad. When you notice yourself feeling bad, you've caught yourself thinking about something you don't want. Turn your focus back towards what you do want, and your emotional state will improve rapidly. As you do this repeatedly, you'll begin to see your physical reality shift too, first in subtle ways and then in bigger leaps. If we change our

thinking we can minimize the unhealthy emotional and physical symptoms of stress.

Keeping a positive attitude certainly isn't an easy thing to do. Each day, people will tell themselves many negative things. These can become the very cause of their own problems! By focusing on the negative, the negative comes to pass.

I know how difficult it may be for some of you to truly believe what I'm saying here. When I first came across this concept, I admit I was extremely sceptical. Maybe, it requires you to be at the point in your life, where you believe things can't get any worse, where you allow yourself to believe in this. So, even if you're not at the point of entering the last chance saloon, open your mind, and believe. Accept that the results you have experienced in your life thus far are directly correlated to all of the thoughts you have held on to on a consistent basis. So on this basis, you are where you are right now in your life as well as being who you are at this very moment down to all of the thoughts you have had in your life to this point. In this reality, you have been the movie producer and director of your very own life story.

Knowing this, and let me repeat, believing in this, gives you some exciting information. That is, if you don't have what you want already in your life, then you can make some big changes to your being by just changing what you are thinking. From this moment forward, understand the power of your mind, and the energy of your thoughts.

Your mind contributes to a huge extent to the successes and failures you experience at any time in your life. Your mind is your most precious resource. Your ability to think, plan, decide, and take action is the most powerful force for good in your life. This power is the starting point of every good thing that happens to you. When you take full control over your thinking, your entire world changes.

Your ability to decide and then take action determines everything that happens to you. And your ability to choose your own thoughts and reactions is the one thing over which you have complete control.

You can create a totally new life by changing your pattern of thought, you will start getting totally different results. This is what I believe to be the power of positive thinking. Let me also assure you, that by thinking of positive outcomes, of a brighter future, your energy levels and health are sure to improve, when for so long all you have done is allow yourself to suffer under the weight of the negative thoughts obsessing your mind.

So from this time onwards, keep that mind of yours focused on what you want and direct it away from what you don't want. I repeat, your health and happiness will benefit big time.

So how can you use the Law of Attraction? Do you have to take a massive leap of faith to believe in it? Maybe! Is it worth it? Definitely! You want to move your life on, make it better than it is, and feel less stressed. So you have nothing to lose, but everything to gain. So start believing in the law of attraction. Start to let your mind only focus on the positive things you want, and feel, instead of the negative.

Your personal thoughts have a major impact on your well-being, and effect how you deal with the stressors you face. If you constantly think negatively, criticize yourself for things you do, you are generating more stress, on top of other stresses we face day after day.

Are you going through a period of your life where situations, circumstances or relationships are adding to your stress? Do you feel trapped? Are you knocking

your head against a brick wall? Are you lacking in motivation? Suffering from a lack of energy? Just can't see the wood for the trees? You're down in the dumps?

If it is your thoughts that are bringing you so much misery and problems in your life, causing the stress that you have, then by changing your mind, you will then change your reality, and in turn will change your life.

Now take a look at the following exercise, and begin to clean up your thoughts.



'If you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change' ~ Wayne Dyer

EXERCISE: CLEAN UP YOUR THOUGHTS

My Negative thoughts: Complete a list all of your thoughts, behaviours and actions that you know are negative. This is your opportunity to look at all the negative things that you do, and to notice all the negative ways you think, which ultimately are in part responsible for your stress.

My Positive thoughts : Complete a list all of your thoughts, behaviours and actions that you know to be positive. It is these positive thoughts, behaviours and actions that you want to predominantly follow, replacing the above negative ones. So build on what positives you already have.

Daily health check: At the end of every night, look back over your day and determine your thoughts, behaviours and actions to determine which were negative, which were positive, and what percentage of your day did you retain your positive focus.

The Law of Suggestion



'If you think you can or if you think you can't, you are right' ~ Henry Ford

Following on from the Law of Attraction, I now bring you the Law of Suggestion. This states, that who you are today, and whatever failure or success you have achieved in your life, is in direct proportion, to the thoughts you have about who you are and what you can achieve. So it's who you think you are, and what you think you can achieve, that determines what you do, and how successful you are at doing them.

Our senses, what we see, hear, taste, smell or feel, are suggestive. A suggestion is an unambiguous, specific insight, thought, or mental representation, of adequate force to make an impression on our unconscious mind.

So, in your life, are you unhappy with your circumstances, in the situation you find yourself in. Are you trapped?

- Trapped in a dead end, boring job
- Trapped in a unloving, argument filled relationship
- Trapped in a house that brings you no comfort
- Trapped in a body 5 stone over weight
- Trapped in financial struggle

Well, now you need to take another leap of faith, you can start turning it all around by the next thought you have. Your success is waiting to be aroused and awakened by the power of your own suggestion! You need to start delivering to yourself strong, positive messages.

So, how often do you tell yourself these are the cards fate gave you? There is nothing that you can do to change things. This is as good as it gets. Well, I want you to stop telling yourself that. It's time that you start to rethink.

The best way to start changing your life is by changing the way you use your mind. In the book *The Secret*, the most powerful thing that I took from it were the words, 'Ask, believe, receive'. What you ask for, if the mind believes it possible, you will receive. So start changing your auto pilot. How often do you catch yourself putting yourself down? 'I can't do that', 'I'm no good at that'. As a fitness instructor, it is not uncommon, when in a personal training session, I instruct a client to do lets say 15 press ups, they will tell me multiple times, that they can't. Guess what? Often they can.

Here is what I now want you to believe. What I want to drive you to achieve is to discover so much more in your life than you have so far. You have all it takes to be anything and anyone you choose to be! To bring success to your life, The minute you start to engage in positive self-talk and positive affirmations you will start to move your life in the direction you want. So are you prepared to fight for what it is you want? It all begins with your very next thought.

Refuse to think negatively anymore. Replace every negative with a positive affirmation. Keep doing this. Keep turning your negatives into positives. Create the habit of doing this. Take both the law of Attraction and the Law of suggestion, absorb them, and keep them both at the forefront of your mind. Know that to change your life, the starting point for everybody is to change the way they think. Accept as truth, that 'you are what you think about most of the

time'. So just take care about what you think, because it is these thoughts that shape your life.

Realise that it's never too late.

Until you're six foot under, no matter where you are today, you can still achieve so much more in your life than you have so far. But you've got to believe this is true. Once you start to realise that indeed you could achieve more, this will give you motivation, and the impetus to get moving.

So where are you right now? You've not achieved all your goals, or is it that you've achieved virtually none of them? You've become a bit of a sourpuss, you don't laugh as much as you used to, in fact you're close to tears much of the time. You've given up going to the gym, you hardly go out at all, when you're not working long hours burning the candle at both ends, you're watching television, yet in the morning you don't even remember which programmes you saw. You hardly spend any time with your partner or your children, and those things you used to love doing that gave you enjoyment, you just no longer have time for them. Your fuse is a little shorter, you show irritability with the people at work, you scream at other drivers on the road. Your life seems to be focused, everyday, on mundane tasks. Those things that are important to you are the things you are able to spend the least amount of time and energy on.

Maybe some of this reflects your way of being right now. Well take this as your wake up call, say 'No more', you can change. It's never too late. Tell yourself now that your life no longer has to be this way. You can find your dreams again.

So, just accept it's not too late and start to imagine and dream about the life you want. Reawaken your visions of the future and focus on creating that exact lifestyle, but make sure you give yourself the time to enjoy it. Let this positive

future inspire you to dig deep down, to find the strength to move in the direction of your dreams, and to charge through and remove the negative effects of life's pressures and burdens.

It's never too late to:

- Spend more time with your children
- Learn a new skill
- Get in shape
- Go back to school
- Start a diet
- Start exercising
- Go somewhere you've never been
- Tell your partner or parent or child or a friend, "I love you"
- or to achieve your BIG goals

Love Yourself



'You, yourself, as much as anybody in the entire universe, deserve your love and affection' ~ Buddah

Do you find yourself criticizing your body, intelligence, clothes, ability to do your job, and just about anything about yourself? We all have that voice inside us, our inner critic, the one that can take anything about ourselves or something that we did and make it into something terribly wrong or bad.

I've been in the fitness industry for many years now. It never stops amazing me how people think and talk about themselves. They seem to find it so easy to beat themselves up. This is a sign of low self-esteem and its effects can be devastating. Are you fed up with criticizing yourself, and simply feeling bad about yourself? Have you decided its time to let go of all your self-criticism and start liking yourself? Well I want you not only to like yourself, but to love yourself. Face facts, how can anybody else love you, if you don't love yourself?

So let's get you on the road to truly loving yourself, who you are, what you are, and what you can now become. To love yourself requires that you accept yourself as you are. Hold your head up; let your self-esteem increase, along with your self-respect and a positive self-image. You may not yet be the finished article that you want to be, but you are who you are. It's you. There's only one of you, so start loving that person, and respect yourself and know, that now, you can launch yourself to become exactly the person you want to be.

The most important relationship you will ever have is the one you have with yourself. Yet, how often have you heard yourself say, "I am my own worst enemy"? Oscar Wilde once stated, *"To love oneself is the beginning of a life-long romance."*

When you decide who you are and what you want is important, then you begin to love yourself. When you begin to love yourself, you are creating an inner state of being which will connect with your dreams and support you with positive thoughts and empowering behaviours.

A phrase that I have used countless times as a gym instructor is 'you only have one body, so you best look after it'. Well following from that, you are the only "you" that you've got, so be the best you can be.

You've got to start by accepting yourself. In fact you need to go a step further, and begin to love yourself. Until you do not only will you be unable to truly love anyone else, you will not possibly be able to find happiness or contentment. A bonus of stress management is that it gives you the opportunity to work on your personal growth and development, driving you to become the best you can be. By loving yourself you routinely take care of your physical, mental and emotional self. You make sure you look and feel your best.

Right now make a list of the things you like about yourself. No matter how small they may be. What things have you done today that have made you feel good about yourself? What have you done that has made somebody else feel good? Start recognising the good things about you, because it will feed your self worth.

So like the Queen in the Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs story, consult your Magic Mirror, 'Magic Mirror on the Wall, Who is the fairest one of all?'...and know the Mirror always answers, 'You are the fairest one of all.'

Stop Living in the Past

Do you sometimes get trapped in your past, thinking about things over and over again that took place a long time ago, but even now you can't put out your mind, and spend so much time just thinking about them? How much time do you spend analysing past events in an attempt to solve them, dreaming they could have turned out differently? Is there an event from your past that you can't get over, and because of it you're not ready to move on with life? Well let me tell you, by holding on to the past you are just letting life pass you by. So start living in the present.

Stop hanging on to the past events of your life and using them to explain your predicament as it is right now. Right now you have the chance to say Enough! The past does not make the future. No longer look behind you to see where you were, but look ahead to see where you want to go. Those past events are gone. Only you are still hanging on to them.

Of course, if you have suffered from painful, traumatic life experiences, you need recovery time, but don't let a lifetime pass you by while you keep using these events as your excuse. I am not being unsympathetic or hard, I have myself gone through great loss, and traumatic events, but at some time you have to decide to let go, and start living again.

You can't go back and fix things, or change things. By focusing on the past you are denying yourself a future. So make the decision to let go of the past and start living in the now and creating the life you want.

Once you allow yourself to leave your past behind, and no longer give it your attention, your life will start to move ahead, and you will begin developing a healthy, happy and fulfilled life. Remember that every day offers you a fresh opportunity.

Get focused on what you want in life, release the past and embrace the future. The past is in the past. It has no bearing on what is happening to you right now. The past has gone. It is no more. It's somewhere back there behind you. It has no control over your life right now, or the life you want to build. Think carefully, is it really you that wants to hold on to the past memories? You just don't want to let them go? They're ingrained in your memory!

Then just let them go. So what, you were a combat soldier. Saw terrible things. Did terrible things. Well how many years have you tried to come to terms with it? To understand it? To try and forgive yourself, or forgive others? Is it that you

want others to forgive you? It doesn't actually matter. What's done is done. Move on in your life. Do it now! When I took this step, it moved my life on at a tremendous speed, in the direction I wanted to go in.

Maybe you're holding on to that relationship that ended, that business you owned that went bust, a great job that you lost, your parent that passed away, that putt you missed in the big tournament. Well, whatever it is, it's in the past.

It is so important that from now you start to leave the past in the past. To do this you have to shift your focus to the present time, and keep it there. Let the past go, and hold on to the now, and start building your vision for the future.

When you find yourself slipping back to those past memories, to events from way back, just say to yourself: 'STOP! That's the past. I'm focusing on my new life now!'

Ask the right questions



'Who questions much, shall learn much, and retain much' ~ Francis Bacon

What you are thinking about and how you are feeling at any time depends on the questions you are asking yourself. It is these questions that determine what

your mind focuses on, and ultimately affects how you feel. You are asking yourself questions all day long.

Unfortunately it is often the case that people use a pattern of self defeating, stress-producing, destructive questions to direct their mind. Have you ever heard yourself ask 'Why does this always happen to me'? The quality of our questions determines the quality of our answers. Disempowering questions produce disempowering answers while empowering questions generate empowering answers. Much of the success we have in life is the result of the questions we ask!

An important stress management technique is for you to take consistent daily control of your mental focus by asking better questions. You must create the habit of asking questions that are more empowering and positive. The ability to question yourself on an ongoing basis is a fundamental key to stress management, so long as the questions are thought provoking, and empowering. Questions are keys that unlock answers, as well as the way to focus the mind on your goals.

The most powerful way to direct your life is through the questions you ask. The process of thinking or evaluating any situation, is simply the practice of asking and answering questions. Questions concentrate our mind and determine what we feel and do. More often than not we are not conscious about the questions we ask ourselves.

If you ask better questions, you will come up with better answers and achieve better results.



'Questions are the laser of human consciousness. They concentrate our focus and determine what we feel and do' ~ Anthony Robbins

- What am I going to dedicate my life to?
- What can I do right now to take a massive leap forward in my life?
- What can I do today to bring my goals, desires, and dreams closer?
- What will improve my mental and physical health?
- What must I stop holding on to that will free me from where I am today?
- What is preventing me from getting what I want?
- What have I learned today, that I did not know yesterday?
- What things should I do more often?
- What do I really want to achieve in my life?
- What do I want to accomplish today?
- What is it that I have been avoiding that I can do today?
- What is most important to me in life?
- What is the most important thing that I must do today?
- What would make me feel really good right now?
- What new, positive habit am I going to start today?
- What must I avoid doing?
- What can I do to live a healthier lifestyle?
- What is happening in my life now that excites me and makes me happy?
- What is it I can do today to move me closer to my major goals?
- What will I learn and read today to improve me as a person/teacher/parent/mentor/friend?
- What would I do as the world's best dad?
- What would I do if I knew I couldn't fail?

- What's the most powerful thing I can do right now, today to improve my business?
- Who can I talk with today help my personal growth?
- Will this bring me long-term fulfilment or short-term satisfaction?
- Will this action move me toward an inspiring future or keep me trapped in the past?
- Is this the best place for my focus?
- Am I making a contribution to the world I live in?
- How can I perceive more meaning in my life?
- How can I share my gifts now?
- How did I make a difference today?
- How do I live my life following my life's purpose?
- How will I make today great?
- What am I doing better today than I did yesterday?
- What am I grateful for?



'You can tell whether a man is clever by his answers. You can tell whether a man is wise by his questions' ~ Naguib Mahfouz

When you face a challenge, you should spend 20% of your time focusing on identifying your problems or challenges, then 80% of your focus on finding effective solutions. You need to see that your problems are no more than challenges. Every challenge has an answer. You just have to find it. The best way to do this is to ask yourself positive, empowering questions:

- What is good about it?

- What can I learn from this?
- What else could this mean?
- What is a positive way to look at this?
- What is the best thing I could do right now?
- How have I benefited from this so far?
- Who else has benefited from this?
- What conditions created this situation?
- Am I ready for a different situation?
- What do I want to bring into my life?
- What can I do now to change this?

So using the power of questions, starting right now: What is the number one question you're going to ask yourself today? Find the question that will boost you, drive you, give you the momentum to succeed.



'For true success ask yourself these four questions: Why? Why not? Why not me? Why not now?' ~ James Allen

Be Assertive

What type of personality do you have? There is one type of personality that is shown to cope with stress the best, and avoids many of those situations that bring stress to many. I am talking about assertiveness. An assertive person thinks and behaves in a way that allows them to stand up for their rights, yet still able

to respect the rights of others. Being assertive will enable you to increase your self-confidence and help you control stress.

Alternatively, you may be a Passive person. Generally a passive person is not committed to their own rights, allowing other people to violate their rights instead of standing up for themselves and speaking out when necessary.

Another type of personality is the Aggressive type. Aggressive people are always ready to defend their rights. They are very focused on their personal goals but don't consider other people. They ignore the needs and opinions of others. They try to bully, embarrass or even humiliate others.

To be assertive is about standing up for yourself, saying what you need or want without fear, or to protect yourself from what it is you do not want, while always respecting the rights and needs of others. Being assertive enables you to communicate appropriately in a direct, open and honest way. An assertive person does not allow the needs, opinions or judgments of others to become more important than their own. It is a positive, confident attitude, valuing themselves and others, seeking congenial communication with others, but setting boundaries, to guard themselves from abuse or aggression, and always feeling entitled to defend them if they are attacked.

An assertive person:

- Stands up for their own personal rights
- Says 'Yes' when they mean 'Yes', and 'No' when they mean 'No'.
- Show that they have self-respect and self-esteem
- Protects their self-interests
- Communicate effectively
- Calmly expresses their thoughts, feelings and needs
- Can give and receive both compliments and criticisms, learning from both.
- Takes responsibility for their decisions and actions

- Respect both themselves and others
- Feel good about themselves
- Manages stress more effectively

An assertive person doesn't:

- Allow others to take advantage of them
- Let a fear of conflict silence them
- Agree to things they don't like, or give up things they do like, in order to make others happy
- Let others walk all over them
- Try to control others, or allow others to control them
- Surrender the control of the situation to other
- Sound accusatory or seek to apportion blame

Being assertive allows you to direct and control your life, and:

- Increases self-confidence and self-esteem
- Help you to feel good about ourselves and others
- Understand and recognize your feelings
- Develops mutual respect with others
- Stops us disagreeing and upsetting other people
- Improve communication
- Create win-win situations
- Enables us to make better decisions
- Create honest relationships
- Gain more job satisfaction
- Minimizes anxiety and stress
- Protects us from being taken advantage of by others

Change your language

The words we use are often a reflection of how we feel and what we feel about ourselves. They show whether we think we are in control of our lives, or whether we think we are being controlled by others or events and circumstances. When we feel out of control (Obligated, Helpless, Burdened, Remorse, Dejected, Cheated, Encumbered, Wishful, Pessimistic) we feel stressed.

Words of Distress Feeling	Words of Control Feeling
I can't	I can
I am trying	I will
I have to	I choose to
When you	When I
I always	Up until now
It's useless	There's always a chance
I should have	I'll be glad to
Why didn't they	They still could
Why am I always the one who	I'll be the one who
If only	It's going to work
I was forced to	I'm eager to

I could have done more	I'm doing my best
------------------------	-------------------

Get fresh air

Get yourself outdoors! Breathe in some fresh air. Take yourself for a walk in the countryside, go to a park, have a stroll along a beach. Walking in a relaxing environment will go along way to soothing your mind. We tend to feel healthier and more energized if we can walk somewhere which is an attractive, natural and tranquil setting. You will feel less stressed, and hey remember, exercise is good for you.

Take regular breaks at work

Taking sufficient breaks during what are often your long working hours is a good method of combating stress, getting you out, even for a short time, from continual workplace stress. You need to stop your continuous rushed lifestyle, and if this means taking a tea break, or a lunch hour, then do it! It in fact this will improve your performance at work. Start looking after your mind and body, and in its own small way, this is a good way. Try to take regular breaks at work and at least a 30-minute break for lunch. "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy", and how long do you think Jill will put up with it?

Live with gratitude



"Through the mindfulness practice of gratitude, you are able to rejoice amidst all life's suffering" ~ Phillip Moffitt

Do you hear yourself complaining constantly about how miserable you are? Do you focus continuously on what you don't have? Do you ever have time to appreciate those good things in your life?

If you gave a friend a gift for their birthday, and you didn't get a thank you, how happy with them would you be? You would probably be on a bit of a downer with them. Well, if you look at only the negative things in your life you're going to feel the same way about yourself.

An attitude of gratitude is essential to stress management. Gratitude is a 'feeling of thankfulness and appreciation'. It can give a massive boost to your emotions. You need to see every day as a new opportunity, and begin it with gratitude. Take 5 minutes early each morning to give thanks, to whoever or whatever you're grateful for. Early morning is a powerful time of day to charge your mind. Acknowledge and appreciate what is already going well in your life.

By taking this time to look at your life and show gratitude for the things you already have will give you a positive start to the day. By showing gratitude you will put yourself into a positive mindset. Gratitude will help you find some inner peace, and support you in dealing with the current circumstances of your life.

"If you learn to appreciate more of what you already have, you'll find yourself having more to appreciate."

No matter how bad you see your life at this time, I'm sure if you think about it hard enough, you will find things you can be grateful for. Showing gratitude doesn't mean you have to deny the troubles you have in your life. You can always find positives to every situation although sometimes they are hard to find. Look and you will see them. The more you search for the good things, and then focus on them, the more positives will come from them. It can be a superb pick-me-up for you when you allow your mind to look for the good things that are happening in your life already, then focusing on them and giving thanks for them.

Lets look at what you've got to be grateful for. What things do you have in your life for which you can show gratitude?

- a roof over your head
- your material possessions
- your car
- your health
- your relationships
- your family
- your job
- your talents
- your life
- a new day
- the opportunities you have ahead of you

Set aside at least 15 minutes, and on a piece of paper make a list of all the things you could be grateful for in your life right now. If things are really bad for you,

then dig deep until you find the things in your life that you know you should and could be grateful for. No matter where you are in life right now, you have things to be grateful for. Go through the eight areas of your life as used in the Wheel of Life, and determine what you are thankful for in each of them. Find something, no matter how small, to be grateful for. Think deeply about each of these areas of your life and begin to write in detail the good things that you have.

- Family & Personal Life
- Finance & Money
- Friends & Relationship
- Fun & Recreation
- Health, Fitness & Well Being
- Lifestyle Possessions
- Personal Growth & Education
- Work & Career

By compiling a list of things to be grateful for in your life, and then focusing on them on a daily basis, and taking the time to appreciate them, brings your consciousness to the good, positive things that you are experiencing in your life, and removes your focus from the negative things. It takes your mind away from both the future and the past, and brings you back to the now. The more we focus on what we have to be grateful for in our lives, the easier it will be to deal with the challenges and tests that we may face as well.

It's difficult to get stressed over paying your bills when you are focusing on your children being alive and healthy.

Once you have determined what you are grateful for, make sure that every morning you spend 5 minutes giving thanks for each and every one.

I'm happy to share with you my morning "gratitude dialogue":

'I am grateful for my health, my family, my friends, my mentors, opportunities to learn and grow, opportunities to coach and develop others. Thank you for helping me wake up early every day and having the energy and determination to get up and get going. I'm grateful for my sleep and all of its restorative power. Thank you for those who are so supportive in everything I do. Thank you for the beautiful home we have to house our family in comfort and luxury. Thank you for my parents, who nurtured me through the years of development. Thank you for all the books I read, which challenged me to think of all that I wanted to achieve and to start achieving it! Thank you for The Secret, the book that changed my life and gave me the courage to step up and finally complete my Lifestyle Plan. Thank you for my beautiful children, Laura Jayne and Carly, who are so sweet and loving and supportive. Thank you for my mind, my vision, and my body. Thank you for my amazing, wonderful, powerful, fantastic, joyful life. Thank you for the energy, youth, and enthusiasm I feel when I am running and exercising. Thank you for the time we have as a family. Thank you for the love and the joy I feel in my heart. Thank you for all the people who love me and support me. Thank you for my physical body and all I have learned and continue to learn as I get better at taking care of it. Thank you for the opportunity to touch so many people doing something I love. I am grateful for the inner strength I have found to deal with my challenges. I am grateful for the opportunities that my life holds. Thank you for my health Thank you for my life. Thank you thank you thank you.....!!!!'

Show gratitude to others

Today, show some gratitude to others. By showing gratitude to another person, you can bring happiness to them as well as probably make their day. By just saying 'thank you' to someone, is such a simple thing, costs you nothing, but the power of being appreciated, can go a long way to make others feel good about

things. In this modern age, it's so easy to say thank you. You not only can do it by visiting them, but also telephoning someone, emailing them, texting them. Making someone else happy will make you feel good about yourself. So take the time to say, "Thanks!"

Every day, make sure you show someone else appreciation, e.g -

- Send a Card or Email. ('Just thinking of you today.')
- Make a Phone Call. ('How are things going today?')
- Give a box of chocolates
- Buy someone Lunch
- Take someone out for a cup of coffee
- Give someone a compliment ('You look great today!')
- Show caring (I hope you are ok today')
- Wish someone luck ('Good luck at your interview today')
- Offer Private Gratitude. ('Bless this person with good health.')

Toot Your Own Horn

If you actually start to look, I assure you, you will find good things about yourself. Aren't you a little tired, of finding only negative things about yourself?

The best way to rid yourself of a negative self-image is to step back and decide to look at your successes. Come on, find the things you do that make you proud. Make a list of them. Start to see all the great things you do everyday.

Muhammad Ali was an expert at tooting his horn; here are a few quotes from him:

"It's hard to be humble, when you're as great as I am."

"Its lack of faith that makes people afraid of meeting challenges, and I believed in myself."

"Eat your words! Eat your words! I am the greatest."

Make real time for people

How much of your communication takes place by telephone, email, instant messenger through internet programmes such as msn and yahoo, or mobile phone texting? If the teenagers I know are a good measure of this, a majority of your contact takes place through these methods.

Actual face to face human contact is important to your overall emotional well being. So you need to get back to doing things where you actually spend time with people, face to face, having real conversations.

Here are just a few suggestions for you;

- Take a break from calling or e-mailing co-workers to talk in person.
- Read to your children and have talks before bedtime.
- Plan to visit family when you'll have time to enjoy each other's company.
- Go on a date with your partner or spouse so you have time to talk and be together. Re- connecting with each other will make you both feel good.
- Pop around to a friend one evening.

STRESS MANAGEMENT

TECHNIQUE 5:

CHARGE YOUR MIND

Introduction



‘When you find yourself stressed, ask yourself one question: Will this matter in 5 years from now? If yes, then do something about the situation. If no, then let it go’ ~ Catherine Pulsifer

Waking up each morning, bursting with excitement, full of energy and jumping for joy for the new day will help you develop a powerful and positive mental attitude, which is an essential element if you want to lead a life full of success, health, and happiness, free from the negative effects of stress. Of course, if you prefer waking up each morning feeling drowsy, anxious and fearful, stay as you are, and let stress maintain its control over you.

Clarity is Power

Clarity is defined as vision or meaning free from obscurity and easy to understand. Developing absolute clarity about what you want in and from your life will create an intensity of focus that will drive you towards your goals. Without clarity, you will drift through life constantly caught up with circumstances, challenges and situations, continually fluctuating from one idea to another. Does this sound familiar?

Clarity is critical for you! Being clear on what you want from your future is an essential key to your success in life. Spend time really thinking about what you

want your future to be like. The clearer your goals are, the greater the chance of you achieving them.

Developing clarity requires you to take time out of your busy schedule so that you can actually stop for a while, and just give some time for clear thinking. Spend this time to think about the life you want, and start creating a motivating picture of your future. Create the picture of where you want to go in your life, what you want to do, what you want to achieve, what you want to have. Make it so exciting that it will motivate you, make it such a brilliant life, full of promise, that the image will drive you forward all the time, and for it to never allow you to slip backward, that you will constantly take the actions that will drive you towards achieving the pictures you have created.

Once you have achieved this clarified vision of the life you want by creating for yourself a motivating big picture of your life, you can then identify the specific steps you need to take to start making it happen.

You must achieve clarity in your vision of the life you want. This section is going to help you!

Make your life one where you follow your own dreams and goals.



‘Start to live your life by design rather than chance or circumstance!’ ~ Rod Moore

Persistent positive focus

If you're stressed, it's greatly influenced by where you are putting your focus. Focus is the power that you have within you that can change the way you think and the way you feel. By altering your focus, you can completely transform your life. What is focus? In the Merriam-Webster Dictionary it states 'a state or condition permitting clear perception or understanding'.

The one thing that human beings have total and complete control over is how they focus their mind, but most of the time we are doing it unconsciously. It's happening on autopilot. We let our mind wander, and often we focus on the negatives in our lives, and the things we fear.

Whatever you focus on you are likely to get, but alas too many people do not focus on what they do want. So much of their time is spent focusing on the things that they fear, the things that they want to keep away from, the things that they do not want. If this describes you, by focusing on what you don't want, the price you have to pay, the work involved, you will not succeed. In fact this will result in you creating a life that you do not want. Can you see this trait within yourself? Ultimately, focusing on the negativity in your life leads to stress, and disappointment.

There are so many things competing for and demanding your focus in life. Thus, if you don't make a conscious effort to control your focus and decide in advance which things you are going to focus on (i.e. where you're going to put your emotions, time, and energy), you'll live in reaction to the demands of the moment.

By focusing constantly on what you want, you will obtain it! It will make you put a plan into place, which if you consistently follow through on it, you will gradually move towards where you want to go. What you consistently focus on in your life, you will achieve.

You have to deliberately and purposely focus your mind instead of allowing it to just focus automatically. A persistently positive focus creates a consistently positive mind. Focus gives you powerful leverage over your mind. When you focus on a thought, it forces your mind to look in the direction of that thought.

Focus on what's truly most important to you in life. When you do you will begin to not only produce extraordinary results, but more importantly, you will experience an amazing level of personal fulfilment in the process.

Consistently focus on three things to produce the results you want in your life:

1. **Know what you want:** (the Target or Result you are after). You must be 100% absolutely clear on what it is you want and be in no doubt whatsoever that you will receive it!
2. **Know why you want it:** (the compelling Purpose that gives you the drive to follow through). This creates a laser-like focus within you, arousing your desire and commitment to achieve your goal.
3. **Know how to make it happen:** (Design a Massive Action Plan that is flexible to get you there). Set clear priorities among the competing demands on your time. Focus single-mindedly on the things you can do at any given time to achieve the best results possible in that area.

When you are absolutely clear about what it is you want and why, the reasons you want it, you will become more focused, more fervent, more steadfast, more imaginative, more flexible, and more content in the process. You will be now

creating an incredible drive in your life. The rewards for living this way are incredible.

Your ability to focus clearly on your goals, and to concentrate determinedly on them until they are complete, will give your life a whole new energy. So now let's start getting your focus laser sharp by taking a look at your goals.

Be Goal Directed

Through goal setting you can go from where you are right now, to where ever it is you want to be in the future. Goals are important to your success because without them, you are not in control of your life, leaving it susceptible to external events, situations and people. By surrendering control over your life you end up living a discontented life—always wondering what could have been, but never taking the steps necessary to turn those dreams into reality. Lacking control over your life is a major reason for stress plaguing your life. You have to take responsibility, and take charge

Do you know where you are going with your life? Do you have an exciting vision that will keep you going when the going gets tough?

Picture the life you've always dreamed of having, with no limits. Imagine living every day with passion. You need goals to inspire you to produce massive results that will change your life forever. Goals that are big enough to drive you, excite you and move you forward to where you want to be, instead of settling for anything that just shows up in your life. Exciting goals have the power to move you, to transform your life. You want to manage stress; well get in control of your life, determine what you want, and strive to get it.

As soon as you set goals something happens. Through goal setting, your conscious mind sets a goal via a thought and your subconscious sets out to make it happen.

Goals will direct your thoughts and your mind and help you focus on what you desire in life. Being goal directed is a powerful way to focus your efforts in life and will change radically for the better.

You need to set goals in each of the areas of your life that are important to you. This helps you to set clear priorities among the competing demands on your time.

Goal setting affects every single area of your life, including:

- Contribution
- Education
- Emotional
- Family
- Financial
- Health
- Knowledge
- Leisure Time
- Material
- Personal
- Physical
- Relationships
- Retirement
- Spiritual

Which of these areas matter to you?

By setting goals you can:

- Achieve more in your life
- Improve your overall performances in life
- Increase your drive to achieve the most out of life
- Increase contentment in your achievements
- Improve your self-confidence
- Provide a passion for your actions

People who use goal-setting effectively:

- Suffer less from stress
- Concentrate and focus better
- Show more self-confidence
- Perform better in all areas of life
- Are happier and more satisfied with life

To produce lasting results you just have to start taking the right steps. This section will provide you with a goal setting process that will bring to your life a momentum driving you forward to the achievement of your goals. Completing this exercise will furnish you with a clear picture of the life you want to live. Having built the big picture of your life, you will then create a simple, step by step plan of action that will excite you, stimulate you, and keep moving you forward. This will provide you with the drive required to make the changes.

The importance of goals is best demonstrated by a Study carried out at the Harvard Business School in 1979. A group of graduates were asked whether they had set clear, written goals for their future. The results were as follows:

- 84% had set no goals at all

- 13% had set goals, but had not written them down
- 3% had written goals, and produced a plan to achieve them

In 1989, some 10 years later this same group were questioned again. The findings demonstrate the power of goals, and show why it is essential that you not only determine what your goals are, but you also make a plan of how you are going to achieve them.

The 13% who had set goals, but had not written them down were making twice as much as the 84% who had set no goals at all.

The 3% who had written goals, and produced an action plan to achieve them were making 10 times more than the other 97% together.

So, get clear on what you want!



'What ever the mind of a man can conceive and believe it can achieve' ~ Napoleon Hill

So many people feel they just have no time left for anything. They work so hard, burn the candle at both ends, yet never seem to be happy with where life takes them. At some point, you just have to stop, and ask yourself 'is there more to life than this?' Then you need to find what it is you really want to achieve in your life. So take some time and do this exercise.

EXERCISE: GAINING CLARITY ON YOUR LIFE

Step 1: Brainstorm.

In a motivated, excited state, write down every goal that you would desire to achieve in the next 20 years. Include anything you want to do, be, have and give. Include all areas as above. No matter how ambitious they may seem, this is the time for you to dream without restrictions.

Here are several questions that you should ask yourself:

- If you had a magic wand that gave you the magical power to have anything you wanted, what would you want?
- What would the perfect lifestyle for you be like?
- What is it you would want to be doing with your time each day, each week, each month, and each year?
- If you won a million pounds cash, tax free, what changes in your life would you make immediately?
- If you only had a couple of months left to live, what would you do with the time you had left?
- You find a genie in a bottle, who will grant you three wishes, what is it you will wish for?
- What's your big dream, what is it if you were 100% guaranteed of succeeding that you really want?
- What job would not only utilise your best skills, but that you would also love to be doing?
- What would you want to be remembered by? What would your epitaph (a summary statement of commemoration for a dead person) read?
- What do you really love to do? What gives you the greatest feelings of value, importance, and satisfaction?
- What would you really want to do with your life, especially if you had no limitations?

- What would your ideal family life like?
- What would you be doing for a dream job?
- What house would you be living in? Describe it?
- What part of the county would you be living in? What type of area? Would you choose to live abroad?
- What car are you driving? Is it a motor bike?
- How much money would you have in the bank?

Don't hold yourself back, dream the dream. Here you have no limitations, create the life you would really want!

You get the idea, ask yourself what you want to achieve in your life. Start writing your goals!

This image shows a full page of handwriting practice paper. It contains ten identical rows of horizontal guidelines. Each row is composed of three lines: a solid top line, a dashed middle line, and a solid bottom line, providing a structured space for practicing letter formation and alignment.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.[illegible]

Step 2: By When will you achieve these goals

Now go over the goals above and to the right of each of them put down the number of years you would like to achieve each goal in (1 year, 2-3 years, 5 years, 10 years, or 20 years).

Step 3: Get a passionate Focus.

Out of all the goals you have written, which do you want the most? Look through them all, and list the top five one year goals that, if you knew you could achieve them no matter what, would get you out of bed early and keep you up late at night, motivated and excited? Write down these top five one year goals.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Step 4: Get Totally Committed.

Now build your commitment. Take each of these top five one-year goals, and create a statement about why it is a priority, a must do for you. What reasons do you have to that makes you totally committed to achieving this? Once you have determined the reason behind the goal, the theory is that then you will start to

find the answers of how to achieve it. So right now write why you want each of these goals?

- [illegible]

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal black ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

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Step 5: Plan.

Choose one goal that will produce the maximum positive results if you were to achieve it?"

So you've read about goals before. You've set goals in the past, but they never came to fruition. Well here is the technique that will actually make any goal reality.

If you lived in Cornwall and wanted to visit your friend in Scotland, you wouldn't just jump in the car having made no preparation. You would have made sure that you had the full address to which you were going, your friend's telephone number if you needed some guidance, the car would be full of petrol, and you would have cash or credit card to purchase anything you need. You would have worked out your journey, estimated the time it would take, and have an estimated time of arrival. I could go on, but my point is, if you want to get somewhere, then you need to plan and prepare.

No battle has been won without a master plan. No amazing building has been constructed without first a designed plan being drawn. So why would achieving your goals be any different. Once you know what you want, you then have to put some thinking time in, to ensure you can achieve it.

So now let's take a look at how with your main goal in mind, you can set about making it happen.

EXERCISE: GOAL PLANNING WORKBOOK

Step 1: State Your Goal

Write a specific goal you want to achieve, write it in the present tense as though you have already achieved it, include the major benefits of its achievement, and include a realistic deadline for its completion.

e.g. "I weight 14 stone (196 pounds), I have lost 5kg of body fat. I look and feel fantastic, I can fit my favourite jeans size 36, I am incredibly healthy with lots of energy and the date is the 17th December 2009!"

The date is ____/____/____ and I

Step 2: Charge your goal with positive emotion

Empower your goal with powerful emotional energy by describing what you will see, hear and feel upon the completion of your goal.

Step 3: Sell Your Goal to Yourself

So, why do you want to achieve this goal? Detail all the motivating reasons why you want to achieve this goal for yourself. This list should be a list of key benefits that will improve your life when your goal is completed.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____
- 6) _____
- 7) _____
- 8) _____
- 9) _____
- 10) _____

- 11) _____
- 12) _____
- 13) _____
- 14) _____

Step 4: Detail the Required Resources for Your Goal

Make a detailed list of all the necessary resources for achieving your goal. These resources will need to be put together before your goal can be realized.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____
- 6) _____

Step 5: Detail the Required Knowledge & Skills for Your Goal

Write down all the knowledge and skills you need to acquire in order for you to achieve this goal.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____
- 6) _____

Step 6: Detail Any Possible Barriers and Solutions For Your Goal

There will always be barriers, challenges and roadblocks in the way of achieving your goal. You can avoid untimely setbacks by anticipating those challenges and having a possible solution already on hand.

Barriers to Your Goal	Solution to these Barriers
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4

Potential Sabotage	Solution to these Sabotage
Surroundings & System	
Emotions & Thoughts	
Lifestyle Habits	
Friends, Family, Peers	

Step 7: Detail the Role-Models For Your Goal

The chances are that someone has already done what you want to do, or have done something very similar to what you want to do. You can use their experiences to propel you towards your goal faster than you could by starting from scratch.

Who has already done what I want to do?

What core values did they have that kept them focused on their goal?

What consistent actions or habits did they do on a regular basis that made it possible for them to realize their goal?

What do I need to start doing or thinking in order to be more like them?

Step 8: List Your Milestones

Milestones are mini-goals, within your major goal. Milestones serve as a way of breaking down your goal into pieces that are not too difficult to handle. Milestones make your goal manageable and they give you motivation to keep on going after you complete a milestone.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

6) _____

7) _____

8) _____

Step 9: List the Action Steps For Your Goal

A goal is comprised of many small action steps. Create a list of all the action steps necessary to achieve your goal. The order is not necessary at this point.

	Action Steps Needed to Reach Your	Target	Completed
1			YES / NO
2			YES / NO
3			YES / NO
4			YES / NO
5			YES / NO
6			YES / NO
7			YES / NO
8			YES / NO

9			YES / NO
10			YES / NO
11			YES / NO
12			YES / NO
13			YES / NO
14			YES / NO
15			YES / NO
16			YES / NO
17			YES / NO
18			YES / NO
19			YES / NO
20			YES / NO
21			YES / NO
22			YES / NO
23			YES / NO
24			YES / NO
25			YES / NO
26			YES / NO
27			YES / NO
28			YES / NO
29			YES / NO
30			YES / NO

Step 10: List Your First Five Action Steps

Decide on five things that you can do right now towards achieving this goal. By writing down the first five action steps towards your goal, you give yourself some direction towards your goal and overcome the initial resistance of getting started. Commit yourself towards taking these five action steps, regardless if you're unsure they are in the right direction. You can always re-evaluate and re-orient yourself afterwards. Anthony Robbins says that you should 'never leave the site of setting a goal without taking some action toward its attainment'.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____

Step 11: How Will You Celebrate Your Goal?

Every goal requires a reward at the completion of it for all the hard work you put into it. Create a list of possible ways you will reward and celebrate your new success.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Step 12: Ten Year Letter

Directions: Imagine it is ten years into the future and everything that you have planned in your life for those ten years has gone according to plan. You have learned to set and achieve goals, and now you're seeing the benefit. You are writing a letter to a friend describing the milestones and achievements in your life during those ten years. Please be as specific as possible in regards to the goals, accomplishments, awards, relationships and events that took place in your life during those ten years.

This image shows a full page of blank primary-ruled paper. It features multiple sets of horizontal lines. Each set consists of two thin outer lines and one thicker middle line, creating uniform writing spaces across the entire page. There are no margins, text, or other markings present.[illegible]

Step 13: Commit Yourself 100% To Your Goal

This is perhaps the most important part of the goal-achievement process. You **MUST** commit 100% of yourself towards the fulfilment of this goal. You have to be willing to burn all the bridges behind you and keep moving forward regardless of anything that happens along the way. This is a binding commitment towards the commitment that you are giving yourself and this goal. **DO NOT SIGN THIS UNLESS YOU ARE 100% COMMITTED!** Remember, this is a promise to yourself, so make it a meaningful one.

By signing this contract, I am agreeing to give myself and my goal 100% of my commitment, dedication and heart and I will see this goal through to its completion.

Signed: _____

Date: ____/____/____

Do this for yourself, if you are truly serious about attaining your goals, creating a great life. Ultimately how you live your life and the actions that you take to get what you want will determine your stress levels to a large extent.

Vision Board

A tool that I have found very helpful in my life is a Vision Board. It allows you to portray your dreams and goals in a dramatic, pictorial way, and helps you achieve them. It keeps words and pictures that represent your visions in front of you each day so you never forget your dreams. Your motivation stays strong.

This is so important. So often your goals are pushed into the back of your mind, or worse totally forgotten. There are so many other things demanding your attention that you lose the time to dream,.

The purpose of a vision board is that your pictures and words will constantly charge your emotions with passion, and the drive to make them come true. You will be reminded of what you want every time you look at it. So I suggest you place it somewhere you'll see it every single day. Just looking regularly at your vision board will keep your dreams in clear focus.

A vision board is a visual representation or collage of the things that you want to have, be, or do in your life.

It consists of a poster with cut-out pictures, drawings and/or writing on it of the things that you want in your life or the things that you want to become. The images represent your desires, objectives, dreams and goals.

Step 1—Compile your pictures.

Your starting point is to find pictures that represent your goals. Look through newspapers and magazines, and pull out the pictures you want. Look on the internet, using a search engine, where you can select search for images only, and print off those you find. Build up as many pictures as you can that represent

your goals, where these images excite you by just looking at them, about the prospect of having what they represent in your life.

These questions may help in determining the pictures you want to represent your goals:

Where would you travel?

Where would you live?

What would you wear?

What things would you own?

What kind of vehicle would you drive?

What would you do for work?

Who would you help?

Who do you love, and who loves you?

What do you want for them?

Step 2—Sort out your pictures.

Now you have a pile of pictures in front of you. Sort through them and select the ones that really get you motivated. Carefully cut around the image to lose whatever is around it, so only the specific image is left. Throw away the pictures you don't want on your board.

Step 3—Set up your board

Take the remaining images and start to lay them down on a board. Be creative. Lay out your pictures in a way that will give you an emotional lift every time you see it. Play around with this, move the pictures all over until you think to yourself, yes this looks great, and it inspires you, seeing everything in place that you desire in your life.

Once you are pleased with the display, glue all the pictures in position. Now you can add headlines, words and drawings if that will add to your inspiration.

Step 4—Put it on display

You must place your vision board in a place that will provide you with maximum visual exposure to it throughout the day. You want to look at it frequently so that it constantly fills your mind with motivation.

Step 5 – Look at it daily

Let your vision board inspire you and charge you with passion every time you look at it. Look at your Vision Board daily with focused desire. Use the image to strengthen and develop your internal thoughts. Let them trigger your visualization. See yourself as having everything you see on your board, in your life right now.

Step 6 – Keep it fresh.

As you grow, and develop, you will bring into your life some of the images from your vision board. There will be changes as well in the things you want. Some of the images may no longer represent you the way they once did. It is natural for your goals and dreams to change over time. If this occurs update your vision board with new fresh images that do motivate you. Always keep it current reflecting where you want to go, today. Keep fine tuning and clarify your dreams as you advance towards them.

Step 7 – Have fun doing it

A vision board will begin moving you in the direction of your dreams. This process of creating your vision board should be inspiring. From searching for the pictures to gluing them down you should be excited. You should also have fun doing it. You are bringing to life your goals through pictures. We know a picture counts for a thousand words. These pictures will now tell you the story of your life in the future.

Take action

By setting your goals you are beginning to seize the day, everyday! You will be taking control of your life having accepted responsibility. You will now be living a more proactive than reactive life, no longer allowing your day to take control of you. It is essential that you do something every day to move you towards your most important goals. Keep taking action, moving yourself forward, and you will ultimately achieve your goal. So having set your goals, make sure you keep taking action. My childhood initially pointed this out to be a crucial way of living, as my favourite, ever present toy was an ‘action man’.

You are going to become your own cruise (guided) missile. You will set your goal, lock onto the target, and continually adjust course and direction until you hit what you are aiming for.

Don't now having done the previous exercise, go back to living day by day dealing with just what occurs. Every day do something aimed at leading you towards your main goals. Little by little you will work your way through every step, until you have achieved them.

Keep a Journal

A journal is a daily written record of personal experiences, events and observations. Your journal should include reflections on what takes place and express emotions and understandings about them, exploring your thoughts, feelings and behaviours. Write in detail about any stressful events in your life.

Journaling is both an important self-knowledge tool providing a first class method of clarifying your thoughts and feelings, exploring and releasing emotions, as well as a high-quality problem-solving tool dealing with problems and coming up with solutions.

By getting your thoughts out of your head and putting them down in writing, you gain insights you'd otherwise never see.

Determine your Values

Values are those things we would not want to live without, the things we hold precious. Values are defined as the beliefs of a person in which they have an emotional investment. They give us a distinctive set of core beliefs by which we measure our priorities in life. Some important values may be love, security, health, wealth, family, humour, integrity, honesty, freedom, respect, success, stability, excitement, justice. Values are an essential part in keeping our life on track. When we clarify our values, we begin to lay down a direction for all our decisions. They help us to navigate as we face future crossroads in our life.

Your values are at the heart of who you are. They are ingrained beliefs and principles that direct your behaviour, the decisions you make, the actions you

take, and the way you react to things. They are your measuring stick of life. They exist within your subconscious and are strongly woven in everything you do. What you value determines what life means to you, what actions you will take, what you will move towards or away from. You live by them either consciously or unconsciously. They are the driving force behind your life. Your personal code of values is what's important to you.

We all have values. Many people are not consciously aware of what their values are. It is extremely important that you discover your personal values, because then you will be able to make choices and decisions that are right for you, and sit comfortably with who you really are.

Trying to find your way around a dark, blacked out room, is how life may seem to you, if you are unaware of what values lay at the centre of your belief system.

Identifying your values is a key way of managing stress. Being clear about your personal values reduces stress. When your life and your actions are in alignment with your values you will start to experience a life of contentment. It's hugely important to live according to what is most important to you. So you must know what is truly most important to you.

When you come disconnected from your values, you lose your motivation, find yourself on auto pilot, wondering where time went. You regret what you haven't done, letting too much of your life slip through your fingers. It is because you haven't identified your most important values and done everything you could to fulfil them, instead wasting time on petty pursuits. Living a life which violates your values can lead to confusion, frustration and depression. For example, if you are a person who values your family but you are working long hours which mean you spend little quality time with them, you will be violating your values. If you value respect yet, at work you do not feel that your opinions and views

are listened to or if you value your health but take no exercise, you are living a life which is in conflict with a value.

If we don't fulfil our values, we experience disappointment, emptiness. Values measure the meaning life holds for us. All our goals, dreams, and desires are simply the vehicles for fulfilling our values.

What do you value in life? What drives you? Are you living out of line with what you truly value? When you focus on what you value, and align your lives with these values, you feel happier, calmer and more fulfilled. Living out of line with your values, you feel uncomfortable, and the nagging discomfort grows over time until you are completely out of balance. The things we value are always floating in our subconscious mind, influencing us whether we acknowledge them or not. When we pay attention to what they are, we can shape them, and live by them.

You need to get your most important values right in front of you. It will also connect your values with your actions, so you'll spend more of your time on what you really want to achieve.

So now it's time to take a look at your values, and know which are the ones that are at the centre of 'you'.

EXERCISE: VALUES ELICITATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Instructions

Your values provide you with the driving force for your life. This questionnaire will help you find what is important to you.

1. What people do I think highly of or regard as role models in my life?

2. What are some general qualities of the people I admire?

3. What is one value that you would be prepared to die for if you had to?

4. What are your top three roles in life (i.e. businessman, father, friend, mentor, etc.)

5. What value would you place before each of those roles?

6. What drives me?

7. What brings me the most joy, satisfaction or pleasure?

8. What am I greatly fascinated in?

9. What do I want more than anything else in my life?

EXERCISE: VALUES IDENTIFICATION WORKSHEET

Go through the list below and circle 12 values that you feel express who you are and that are important to you. Then enter these values on the following page. Note that this is not a comprehensive list of values. You may add any that are not listed here.

Abundance – Acceptance – Accuracy – Accountability –
Accomplishment – Achievement – Adaptability – Adventure –
Affection – Aggressiveness – Agility – Altruism – Assertiveness –
Attractiveness – Availability – Awareness – Balance – Beauty –
Belonging – Bliss – Boldness – Bravery – Brilliance – Calmness –
Camaraderie – Capability – Caring – Challenge – Charm – Change –
Chastity – Clarity – Cleanliness – Cleverness – Closeness –
Collaboration – Comfort – Commitment – Communication –
Community – Compassion – Competence – Competition –
Concentration – Congruency – Confidence – Continuous Improvement
– Conviction – Cooperation – Courage – Courtesy – Creativity –
Credibility – Curiosity – Decisiveness – Dependability – Desire –
Determination – Discipline – Discovery – Diversity – Drive – Duty –
Education – Effectiveness – Efficiency – Equality – Empathy –
Excellence – Excitement – Extravagance – Extroversion – Exuberance –
Fairness – Faith – Fame – Family – Fearlessness – Ferocity – Fitness –
Flexibility – Focus – Fortitude – Freedom – Friendship – Frugality – Fun
– Generosity – Goodness – Gratitude – Growth – Guidance – Happiness

– Hard Work – Health – Heart – Heroism – Holiness – Honesty –
Honour – Humility – Humour – Hygiene – Imagination – Independence
– Influence – Ingenuity – Inner Peace – Innovation – Integrity –
Intelligence – Intimacy – Intuition – Investing – Joy – Justice – Kindness
– Knowledge – Learning – Leadership – Liberty – Logic – Loyalty – Love
– Mastery – Maturity – Meaning – Merit – Mindfulness – Modesty –
Money – Motivation – Neatness – Non-violence – Openness –
Opportunity – Optimism – Order – Organization – Outcome
Orientation – Outstanding Service – Passion – Peace – Persistence –
Personal Growth – Persuasiveness – Philanthropy – Pleasure – Poise –
Popularity – Positive Attitude – Power – Practicality – Preparedness –
Preservation – Privacy – Professionalism – Progress – Prosperity –
Punctuality – Purity – Quality – Quiet – Rationality – Recognition –
Reliability – Religion – Resilience – Resourcefulness – Respect –
Responsibility – Risk Taking – Romance – Sacrifice – Safety –
Satisfaction – Security – Self-control – Self-discipline – Selflessness –
Seriousness – Service – Sexuality – Simplicity – Sincerity – Skill –
Solitude – Speed – Spirit – Spirituality – Spontaneity – Stability –
Strength – Style – Success – Support – Supremacy – Sympathy –
Synergy – Systemization – Teamwork – Thrift – Tidiness – Timeliness –
Tolerance – Tradition – Tranquillity – Trust – Truth – Uniqueness –
Unity – Utility – Valour – Variety – Victory – Virtue – Vision – Vitality –
Warmth – Wealth – Well-Being – Winning – Wisdom – Wittiness –
Wonder – Youthfulness – Zeal

MY 12 PERSONAL DEFINING VALUES

From the previous pages, copy your 12 selected values onto the list provided. There is no need to order them at this point. Simply copy them down.

	My Value List
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	
11	
12	

CLARIFYING YOUR VALUES

While many people might choose similar values for themselves, those values might not mean the same thing to everyone. Therefore, it becomes important for you to clarify what those twelve values you have chosen mean to you by defining their meaning. This also creates a sense of ownership of those values to you. In this worksheet, write down each of the twelve values you chose and then clarify that value by writing out what it means to you.

Value 1 _____

Clarifying Statement

Value 2 _____

Clarifying Statement

Value 3 _____

Clarifying Statement

Value 4 _____

Clarifying Statement

Value 5 _____

Clarifying Statement

Value 6 _____

Clarifying Statement

Value 7 _____

Clarifying Statement

Value 8 _____

Clarifying Statement

Value 9 _____

Clarifying Statement

Value 10 _____

Clarifying Statement

Value 11 _____

Clarifying Statement

Value 12 _____

Clarifying Statement

MY CORE VALUES

Now compare each value and make a objective decision on which ones are more important to you. Keep going through them until you come up with your top three values. These are your core values.!

	My Value List
1	
2	
3	

Living a Balanced Life



'No success in public life can compensate for failure in the home' ~ Benjamin Disraeli

Keeping life in balance requires effort. It means watching where your time is spent and making a conscious effort to maintain a balance. If the demands at work are high, those demands need to be balanced by enjoyable activities both at work and outside of work.

To achieve a happy, contented, successful life, you need to attain a level of balance..., physically, emotionally, socially, mentally and financially.

It may well be the case that up to now you find it difficult to imagine a life that allows for all the things you would like to do, with the constant demands from work and also from your family, making you feel pressurized and stressed. Often people put other's needs ahead of their own, but this proves to be a mistake in the long run. Burnout, depression, and loss of health are often the price we pay for not making balance a priority in our lives.

It's important to have balance in your life. Instead of living to work, work to live. When your work and personal life are not in of balance, your stress will be

running high. Living to work will mean that you do not have a gratifying personal life.

When we face challenges in our personal life, like caring for an elderly parent, coping with marital difficulties, struggling with financial problems, dealing with an out of control teenager, overcoming health problems, concentrating on your work can be difficult. And thus your personal life dominates and holds you back in your career. When you are carrying a heavy work load, with deadlines looming, pressures from clients, constant emails, phone calls and meetings, then your family life doesn't get the attention or time it needs to flourish.

Very much at the centre of any stress management solution is to make sure you achieve a work life balance, because when your work and your personal life are not in balance, stress is the result.

Juggling the demands of your career and personal life is an ongoing challenge to reduce stress and maintain balance in key areas of your life. Often you feel overwhelmed with all the demands you face, whether from your job or personal life. You are probably working harder today than ever before, yet you are getting less satisfaction and enjoyment from what you do.

When our lives get too hectic, and all our energies seem to be focused on dealing with problems, it's all too easy to find ourselves "off balance", and as a result not able to give attention to some of the key areas of our lives. At this time our life is out of balance, neglecting certain areas. Family and health are often the first areas neglected, and this leads to frustration and intense stress.

The Wheel of Life

The wheel of life is a tool that will allow you to determine whether you are concentrating too much on particular parts of your life and so neglecting others. It allows you to take a "helicopter view" of your life, and recognise where it's out of balance, identifying areas that need more attention, as well as the areas where you maybe spending too much time, making it possible to bring your life more into balance.

Areas of your Life

The Wheel of Life is divided into different sections corresponding to some of the typical areas in life:

- Family & Personal Life
- Finance & Money
- Fun & Recreation
- Lifestyle Possessions,
- Mental: Personal Growth & Education
- Physical: Health, Fitness & Well Being
- Social: Friends & Relationships
- Work & Career

Scoring yourself

Score each area of your life as it is right now. Consider each category - how happy are you with each area of your life? Decide your level of contentment from 0 to 10 on the Wheel of Life evaluation. After scoring yourself then make your mark on the Wheel.

10 = totally happy - full satisfaction and achievement;

0 = totally unhappy – completely dissatisfied.

This is going to give you a picture of how balanced your life is right now.

Take the centre of the wheel as 0 (totally dissatisfied) and the outer edge as 10 (totally satisfied).

Rank your satisfaction with each area of your life by putting a cross on the relevant spoke of you Life Wheel.

Draw a line to join the crosses together around the circle.

Interpreting Your Wheel.

How bumpy would the ride be if this were a real wheel? When your life is out of balance, you tend to experience more bumps in the road.

What do you notice?

Does your life wheel look and feel balanced?

How balanced does it show your life being?

Which areas are you happy with?

Which areas need development?

What changes in your life would make a difference?

As you are reading this, and stress is currently playing a part in your life, I can be pretty certain that you are out of balance in your life. You will find that most of your stress and unhappiness comes in the area where you give yourself the lowest score. Once you identify that area, you can determine the specific steps you need to take to get that area under control. Ask yourself - what things do I need to start doing to regain balance? In the areas that currently sap your energy and time, what can you do to make things better? By creating a balance in life you can achieve much more than you have to this point.

Remember you are always growing. Part of you will be happy and driven, but you will always feel a level of dissatisfaction, in that you want to achieve more, and this gives you the drive to grow even more.

So take this knowledge, focus on and improve the areas that need change to transform your life and create a more balanced life.



‘When you work, work and when you play, play. Don’t get the two mixed up’ ~ Jim Rohn

Start getting your life in balance right now!



'The mark of a successful man is one that has spent an entire day on the bank of a river without feeling guilty about it' ~ Unknown

EXERCISE: LIFE BALANCE ASSESSMENT FORM

This assessment is designed to give you a visual representation of where you are currently in your life. The wheel of life assessment is a tool to give you an overview of the areas of your life that you are doing really well in as well as those areas that might be lacking.

This is a very powerful assessment that can determine how balanced your life is currently. This assessment provides an excellent visual analysis of the areas in an individual's life that are strong and weak.

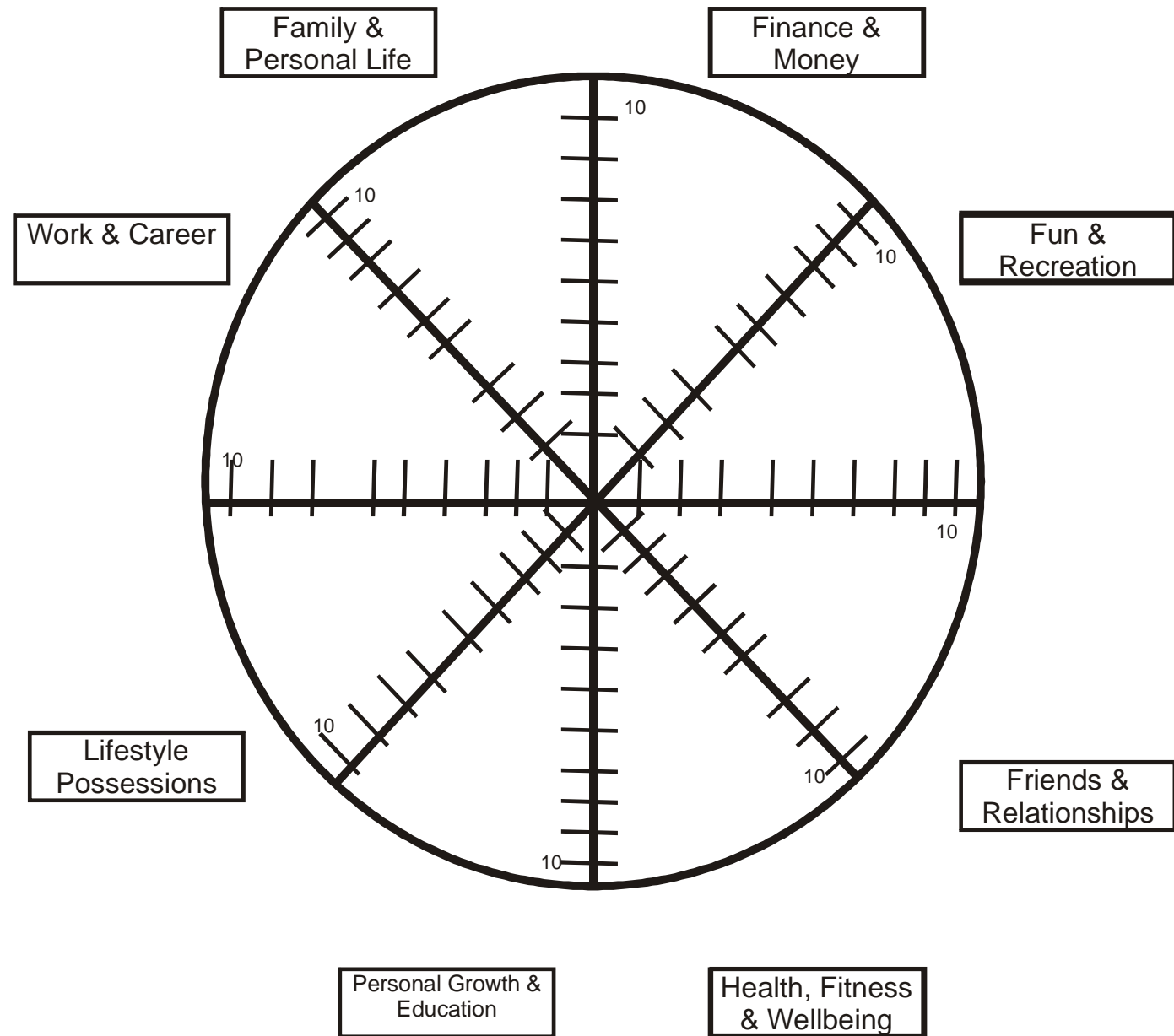
Directions: Assess your level for each component of the wheel of life from 0 to 10 and shade in those sections with your corresponding grade. Use the assessment key to help you choose the best grade. Remember that honesty counts, so be true to yourself.

Interpreting Results: After shading in each section, look at your resulting wheel and ask yourself how well it would roll on the ground. Is your wheel balanced enough to roll smoothly, or is it uneven enough to ensure a bumpy ride?

LIFE BALANCE

ASSESSMENT KEY

- 0 = I experience none of this value
- 1 = Next to nothing
- 2 = Very much lacking in my life
- 3 = Only a little bit
- 4 = Could use more, but getting by
- 5 = Neutral, neither good nor bad
- 6 = Adequate amount in my life
- 7 = I'm content with what I have
- 8 = I'm more than content
- 9 = Generous abundance in my life
- 10 = It can't get any better than this



Take Control, you are Responsible

Accept personal responsibility for all that you are, all you will ever be, and all that you think and feel. Accepting complete responsibility for your life means that you don't make excuses or point your finger at others for those things you are not happy about in your life. From now on, stop criticising others for anything. Refuse to complain about your situation or about what has happened in the past. You eliminate all your if-onlys and what-ifs and focus instead on what you really want and where you are going.

By taking control of your own mind and keeping your thoughts focused on where you want to go, you will avoid the negativity and worry that is common to most people.

To accept complete responsibility for yourself, your life, and the results you produce, with no excuses, is key to a stress free life, so remember no matter what happens to you, take responsibility.

If you are not content with any part of your life, say, "I am responsible" and get around to changing it. If things go wrong, take responsibility and start looking for answers. If you are not happy with your current income, accept responsibility and begin doing the things that are necessary for you to increase it. If you are not happy with the amount of time you are spending with your family, accept responsibility for that and begin doing something about it.

By accepting responsibility you feel a remarkable sense of control over yourself and your life, it builds within you confidence, energy and belief within yourself, it brings a sense of high self-esteem

In life, to reduce stress, you have to take responsibility for everything. The minute you pass responsibility to another person, you are surrendering control over your life. Making excuses and blaming others gives your power away. When you start to feel you are not responsible for your life, or the events and situations that take place, you begin to feel like a victim.

So, keep saying 'I am responsible'. No more excuses, no more pointing the finger, with you in control of your life, anything is possible.

Completing all your urgent and important work

Life can be such a juggling act, where, we try to keep to many balls moving around at the same time. This is no good unless you are a juggler. Life is so hectic these days. Living in such a fast paced world, with so many pressures coming at us from so many directions, it can be hard to keep your attention on your key priorities in life. Living like this more often than not results in stress, and its negative effects.

Stephen Covey in "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People" classifies the things we need to do by whether they are important or urgent. He recommends

that we prioritise tasks that are ‘important but not urgent’. Urgent means it’s demanding our attention (NOW!) Important means it’s worth doing. He suggests four quadrants in which to divide your activities::

Quadrant 1: Urgent and important

This is where those pressing matters get looked after, such as meeting deadlines, handling crises, reacting to unexpected situations. Here is where we spend too much of our time, trying to avoid or dealing with emergencies, resolving problems or reacting to the demands of other people.

Quadrant 2: Not urgent, but important

This is where you should be spending as much time as possible. These activities are those that you would benefit from by prioritising. Spending time doing those things that are important but not urgent, means that you are focusing on your goals, because they are what is important to you. By making those important things your priority, you are dealing with them before they then become urgent. To determine what in your life, is important but not urgent, ask yourself the following question:

‘What activities can I be spending time on, that will create a major and long-lasting positive effect’.

Or

‘What one thing could I do in my personal and professional life that, if I did on a regular basis, would make a tremendous positive difference in my life?’

Quadrant 3: Urgent, but not important

You must discipline yourself to stop doing the things that are urgent but not important. Being interrupted by meetings and telephone calls, reading and replying to emails.

Quadrant 4: Not urgent and not important

These are those time wasting activities which achieve nothing and provide no worth while results for you in your life.

So, concentrate as much of your time on what is IMPORTANT.

Stay out of Quadrants 3 and 4 because, urgent or not, they aren’t important, also reduce activities in Quadrant 1 spending more time in Quadrant 2.

Have a purpose

One view of life is that each one of us has a purpose which is uniquely ours, referred to as our life purpose. Purpose is what gives life a meaning, a reason for living and an expression of who you are.

When you have a purpose, you have a compass to guide you. You will be doing things that not only are you good at, but what you love to do. When you live in agreement with your purpose, you enhance your self-esteem and start to make a difference in the world.

My purpose is to inspire and empower others to live a healthy, happy lifestyle. I design and run workshops, I am an author, speaker, and I coach individuals. I make the difference to people's lives for the better.

What's yours?

Here's a simple way to find your purpose:

Write down your two best unique qualities.

Write down two ways you already express these qualities when interacting with others.

Describe how the world would be if it were perfect, as a statement in the present sense.

Combine your three answers into a single statement

Now set out to make your life fulfil this purpose. Make your life purpose the central focus of your daily thoughts and actions, because when you do you are living with passion, and are in control of who you are and what you are doing, a great antidote to stress.

Daily Thinking Time

So how do you make sure everyday, you are on course to developing a great future for yourself? We've talked about setting goals, and the power of asking

questions. Well my final suggestion, is to take 10 minutes a day to ask yourself one extremely powerful question, and that is: What do I want to achieve in my lifetime, that if I don't, I will be extremely regretful at the end of my life?

When you are doing this turn your mind inwardly to just this question. Turn off all the normal excess noise and cluttered thoughts from your mind, shut out all other questions and the constant barrage of internal chatter, and just think about what you want to be, have and do.

You are taking your thoughts to the future, bringing a forward focus to your mind, away from looking back, and allowing the past to stand in your way. This is a time to let go of all your negative and destructive thoughts, and design the life that you really want.



'We enjoy our work so much we get up when the sun comes up. The stress in our life is non-existent' ~ Catherine Pulsifer

Aim for Contentment



'Poor is not the person who has too little, but the person who craves more' ~ Lucious Annaeus Seneca

I have always been very goal driven. I set myself targets to achieve goals from a very early age. Life to me was about setting my sights on the things I wanted, and to take action to make them happen. So, when a wonderful lady, Sue Percival put forward her ideology that life should be aiming for contentment, I found this a really difficult concept.

She said to me: 'Are you suggesting that people will always be dissatisfied and want more? How do they recognize the end goal? Who wants to always have more and more? That's not the key to happiness. Contentment is'.

My belief is that life is always about wanting and achieving more. Her belief is that it is joy and happiness through contentment that should be our ultimate goal. I researched the meaning of contentment. I searched for the understanding I needed to be able to discount her concept, support my own views or take hers on board.

I realised almost straight away that life was about finding the right balance between two equally legitimate but competing views.

I realise that there will always be periods in people's lives when they are not happy, a time when things appear gloomy, when they wish that they have more than they have already. Maybe their job isn't going well, or their relationships, their finances, their health is in a bad way. Things can get really awful when they're afflicted with major illness, or when a loved one passes away. At these times when they are unhappy, they focus on all the bad, negative things in their life.

Others who have great jobs, great relationships, great finances and great health also are unhappy. Their whole existence, the life they live is all about acquiring possessions and achieving goals. At times they feel short-lived contentment; maybe after a good meal, while soaking in a hot bubble bath, after sexual release, the end of a good gym workout, having drunk a superb glass of wine, after a visit to the opera (or your favourite group) or following a job well done. But after a short time they are discontented again and go back to chasing their dreams.

It seems to be a human trait where we are always dissatisfied, wanting to achieve more. So what is contentment? Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia suggests that Contentment refers to the 'neuro-physiological experience of satisfaction and being at ease in one's situation'. Contentment is a matter of being happy with what you have, instead of wishing you have something else.

Buddhist' define contentment as 'the freedom from anxiety, want or need. Contentment is the goal behind all goals because once achieved there is nothing to seek until it is lost'.

To feel contentment in life you have to be able to notice all the good that is in your life at this time. It necessitates you to no longer crave for things to be different to the way they are right now. It takes awareness on your part of seeing the good in your life as it is now. So even when you are struggling with your job, relationships, finance and health, there are still good things that you can focus on instead, and by focusing on these, you will maintain a positive outlook, which will combat stress.

I'm definitely a goal-oriented person — I always have my eye on a goal, whether that's writing a book, owning my own gym, improving my body, waking early, losing weight, or one of a dozen other goals I've had (and usually achieved) in my life. And once I've achieved a goal, I begin looking for another. Setting effective goals is inspiring. Working towards my goals wakes me up in the morning feeling that something wonderful will happen today. It's what brings passion to my life.

But this does not mean I am not a contented person. I'm extremely content with my life, with what I have, and with who I am. I will always be motivated towards goals, enjoy the challenges life throws at me, and enjoy the journey that life is. The true power of goal setting, is not so much the attainment of the goal, but the journey you must take to achieve it.

We have already discussed that our thoughts and behaviour are vital to our lives. The journey of life should be to seek contentment, as our priority goal. Together with this our energy and motivation are fuelled by desire to learn, grow and achieve goals. The key here is to ensure no matter how much more you want to have and be in your life, that right now, at this very time, you experience happiness and yes contentment with what you already have.

So contentment to me, means to be content with your situation in life, content with what you have, but to realise it is within the human consciousness to have the desire to make improvements, no matter how happy we are with our lives. If we don't improve, grow, help make the difference to the world, the people around us, our communities, then we have given up on life. So contentment is a matter of being, being content with what we have and who we are, but always trying to improve.

Sue gave me a vital piece of the jigsaw of life. To balance my goal driven personality, with the feeling of contentment with the now, provided me with the fuel, to improve my life and those whom I touched. The more you focus on being contented, the more contentment you create for yourself. The more power you have to achieve more.

There can surely be no better tool in your armoury against stress. To achieve your goals in the future it is essential to achieve contentment with your present. Feeling contentment with your present sends stress back to the past.



'True happiness comes from a sense of peace and contentment, which in turn must be achieved through the cultivation of altruism, of love and compassion, and elimination of ignorance, selfishness, and greed' ~ Dalai Lama

Section 4

YOUR STRESS

MANAGEMENT

TOOLKIT:

ACTION PLANNING

Take Action To Manage Stress



'Action is the antidote to despair' ~ Joan Baez

A certain amount of stress can be good, it gets you out of bed in the morning, makes you do things, and gets your mind alert, but when stress reaches the point where it negatively affects your normal every day life, then action has to be taken to manage this excess stress.

If no action is taken, well then there are going to be potentially serious repercussions for your health. The road to managing stress and changing your life for the better is to take very big, strong-minded action.

Start by setting your stress management goals and then begin to work towards them. If you want to make positive changes in your life, and deal with stress rather than letting it get the better of you, you need to stop taking a passive approach, and start taking action. If you want to succeed in life, at anything, you must develop a plan of action, and you must follow it diligently.

Don't wait for the right time to present itself before you get started, for if you're not willing to act now, the right time will never come. Take massive action! Decide to start right now. There will never be a perfect time to begin. So delaying until that perfect time arrives, only means that you will never get started.

So now it's time for you to plan what actions you will take in managing stress and then to take those actions to incorporate what you have learnt here into your life. Create an action plan that describes step by step how you are going to get from where you are now, to where you want to be, taking yourself out of the over stressed zone. Stress Management can only be truly effective if you make it a part of your daily lifestyle. If you take no action, then simply nothing will change.



'If you wait for the moment when everything, absolutely everything is ready, we shall never begin' ~ Ivan Turgenev

Making An Action Plan To Manage Stress

Now you understand your level of stress, know how it is affecting you, and the effects it's having on your wellbeing, and exactly what is causing your stress, the next step for you to take is to work out what you need to do to handle your stress successfully.

The ability to effectively manage stress is an essential skill for modern living. You must get the better of stress before it gets the better of you. You now have the tools and techniques that will help you understand and manage daily stress. You have to use these to reduce stress, and the best way to start is to create a personalised stress management action plan. I have shown you here many ways to cope and deal with Stress, but everyone is affected by it differently, so now

choose the strategies right for you, that will provide you with an effective personal stress management plan.

Make the choice today, to deal with the stress in your life, and be determined to make the necessary changes that will positively shape your health and well being. The minute you take responsibility, you will start tapping into your own personal power, and change your life for the better. So focus now on the ultimate reward of managing stress.

The best way of doing this is to make an Action Plan of all the actions you are going to take to manage your stress. People don't spend enough time planning - people don't want to "waste time" with the planning process. As a result, in the name of urgency, people fast forward into implementation skipping the planning process altogether, but failing to plan is most assuredly planning to fail. Create a comprehensive plan to help you manage stress, and then work that plan, by taking action, to achieve your desired outcome.



'If you do what you've always done, you'll get what you always got' ~ Mark Twain

So, it makes sense, doesn't it, to do something different.

An action plan will:

- ensure physical actions being taken;
- help you establish goals to achieve;
- help you prioritise your actions;

- demonstrate to yourself the importance of dealing with the stress in your life
- gives you something definite to appraise and re-examine.

Your action plan is key to stress management.

Developing a Personalised Action Plan

My views on Stress Management are that you need to be proactive not reactive. Being reactive, means that when you get overloaded with stress, you suddenly adopt a stress management technique, trying to find temporary relief from the stress, and once you feel your stress levels drop, you forget all about the technique you have been using. Proactive, effective stress management strategies require people to change their lifestyles so that they take proactive steps to avoid stress and enhance their health every day. You need to use your stress management techniques on a daily basis. You have to make and then sustain lifestyle changes.

Changing your lifestyle is not an easy thing to do, but it is in your best interests. To prevent you from reverting back to your old ways, I want you to take a deliberate, gradual approach towards lifestyle change rather than jumping into the deep end and totally changing everything all at once. How many times have you begun that diet on a Monday morning, gone for a run in the afternoon and joined the gym that night? Then by Wednesday you break the diet, skip the run, and give up on the gym. Make one change at a time, create a habit of doing it, before moving on to the next.

You need to decide what techniques you want to adopt, that are going to be suitable for you considering factors such as your likes and dislikes, as well as your current circumstances. Start by going through everything I have mentioned and writing down those that you're going to try initially.

The Strategies That Suit You Best

Throughout this book, I have given you tools, techniques, ideas and hopefully the motivation to manage stress and change your life. You are now coming to the end of this book and your choice is simple. Either take the knowledge you have acquired, pat yourself on the back for learning something new, and then do nothing with it; alternatively, use what you have learnt, and create a stress managed lifestyle, which is what brought you here in the first place.

Information and knowledge won't change your life on its own. Knowledge without action is almost useless. *"Knowledge without action is stupidity at its greatest" ~ Matthew Williams.* It doesn't help you in any way if you never do anything with that knowledge. What will change your life though is using it to take action. Use the ideas you have learned here, and apply them. It is the actions you now take that will go a long way to determining your future. These actions will provide you the key to open the door, which once you step through will transform your life.

Every step you take will be a step forward, encouraging you to take the next step, until you've got where you want to be, which is on top of stress, not collapsing under its weight.

There is a world of difference between living life in a way that you consciously choose, or simply reacting to the pressures, threats, events and circumstances that come your way.

Use the techniques you have found here, make the changes you want to make, to improve your life. Any change can be made in a moment; you just need the motivation, and a big enough reason.

Read through the strategies, techniques and tools one more time, and then determine which ones appear right for you. If there's a strategy that seems particularly appropriate, start working with it. Choose 3 or 4 strategies, and work on them. Practice makes perfect. After a week, see how you feel. Maybe adopt one or two more strategies. Aim to do a mix of things to move you forward. Maybe select one or two from each section.

Your Action Plan

This is your plan. Only you can make the decision of what you are going to do, or how important this is to you. As you decided to read this, I guess this is a truly important area for you to manage, and therefore you will not only create a list of the stress management techniques you wish to use, but you will also follow through on it. If you don't create a daily activity action plan, you won't make the necessary changes to get in control of your life.

To be effective your action plans will need definite objectives, times and dates so that your development can be calculated. When you can see that things aren't being carried out, you can then determine why they aren't, and settle on alternative actions to take.

Make a plan and stick to it!

Its time to free yourself from the cost of stressed living. Adopt a step-by-step action plan that you feel confident will succeed. The best method of achieving this is to write down your action plan.

Once you have created your action plan, let everything you have learned, and every positive belief that it has helped you create, empower you to stick with your action plan. To get in control of your life, you have to take consistent, daily actions. Don't let this be another time, where you make a start, but soon go back to your old ways. Dig deep, the outcome will be worth it. Remember how great life will be once you are in control of stress, and it no longer is in control of you

My Daily Action Plan – To Combat Stress The Healthy Lifestyle Way

In an Encyclopaedia of Public Health: Lifestyle is defined as:

'In public health, "lifestyle" generally means a pattern of individual practices and personal behavioural choices that are related to elevated or reduced health risk'.

If you are serious about getting more from your life you will find this step of massive value! It starts your journey, taking you from wherever you are today in your life, to the realisation of your full potential, living in control of your life. Taking action will bring about dramatic and immediate positive changes to your life. I use every technique and idea that I bring to you here and have transformed my own life by using them.

By focusing on consistent everyday habits, eventually they will become a routine and a regular part of your life, which is key to stress management. You need to change your existing everyday habits in order to adopt and maintain your new stress controlled lifestyle.

We are creatures of habit. Your morning routine is often just carrying out a programmed habit. The order of shaving, teeth cleaning, showering, eating breakfast, that morning tea or coffee, the order in which you do each of these is the same every day, every week. It is determined by your habit. Habits also very much effect the way you may deal with things, your reactions and responses to certain stimuli are always the same. Many of the things you do, are done because they are now habits. You need good habits that are life enhancing, not ones which hurt you and hold you back.

You can acquire and develop any habit that you consider desirable or necessary as long as you put the time and effort in to make them into habits. Equally those things that you do, that you know are self defeating, time wasting, distractions that you don't need, they can be stopped if you try hard enough to break them.

A habit is best described as 'an automatic or conditioned response to stimuli', something that you do without much thought or effort. So much of what you do is controlled by your habits. They are a very powerful part of you, and it can take a big effort and tremendous discipline to develop new habits of thought and behaviour. But once you have them firmly locked into place these new good habits will allow you to achieve much more, with less effort, than you have ever been able to do before. The effort is worth it. Good habits may at first be difficult to establish, but they will improve your life. Bad habits we can acquire easily, but they don't benefit us in the slightest.

Let me make this point really clear. Establishing really good habits, and getting rid of your bad ones will have a major positive impact on your life, and go some way to reducing the stress you are living with.

Creating a stress controlled life means altering your day to day routine. If you can repeat something for a sustained amount of time, eventually it will become a regular habit and part of your routine. You will have established rewarding habits to serve you.

Here are the daily actions I take to ensure that my life is not ruled by stress:

STRESS MANAGEMENT – DAILY ACTION PLAN

Task	Start/End Time	
GET INTO CENTRE - Tuning into my mental and physical clarity, harnessing my body and mind. (10 minutes)	6.00am	6.10am
DEEP BREATHING – Breathing correctly will flush out any bad energies and inhale fresh and positive energy. (5 minutes)	6.10am	6.15am
MOVE – Just a few minutes of stretching increases flexibility. (5 minutes)	6.15am	6.20am
GRATITUDE – Thinking with thanks on the things I have in my life. and allowing them to inspire a positive mental attitude to produce a dynamic day and to calm my mind and create energy for the day ahead. (5 minutes)	6.20am	6.25am
AFFIRMATIONS – Using positive affirmations to put myself into a highly motivated and confident state. (5 minutes)	6.25am	6.30am
VISUALISATION – Getting a mental picture of myself as I want to be. Visualising and imagining myself achieving a peak performance. (10 minutes)	6.30am	6.40am
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY – Helps me feel energised and strong for the rest of the day. I go for a power walk. I often do my gratitude, affirmation and visualisation session during this time. (50 minutes).	6.20am	7.10am
Ask my MORNING POWER QUESTIONS - I make a conscious effort to control my focus and decide in advance which things I am going to focus on (i.e. where I am going to put my emotions, time, and energy), instead of simply living in reaction to the demands of the moment. (10 minutes)	7.30am	7.40am
READ MY GOALS –review my goals so I am empowered to make better choices that help me get closer to achieving these goals. (10 minutes)	7.40am	7.50am
EAT A GOOD BREAKFAST - My body needs to be refuelled following a period of fasting. .It boosts my energy, improves my health, increases my attention span and mental function, leaving me feeling better. (25 minutes)	7.50am	8.15am
Keep to a HEALTHY EATING PLAN – I eat 6 small meals a day, Breakfast, lunch and evening meal, which I keep below 10 grams of fat each meal, and balance a portion of carbohydrates with protein, and I have 3 fruit snacks.		
DRINK WATER - It is important to hydrate your body throughout the day. I aim to drink at least 2 litres of water daily.		
BE AWARE OF YOUR THINKING – I keep a check throughout the day on my thoughts. When I notice myself feeling bad, negative, or thinking about something I don't want, I immediately turn my focus towards what I do want, or away from the negative thinking pattern into a POSITIVE MENTAL		
PAY ATTENTION TO WHAT'S IMPORTANT – always checking to see whether what I'm doing is according to my daily to do list, and is directed towards one of my goals		
Be Goal Directed - Being goal directed is a powerful way to focus my efforts in life. If I make being goal directed a habitual part of my daily life, then my life will change dramatically for the better.		
Write my DAILY JOURNAL -Within this I include my STRESS-BUSTING NOTEBOOK working through any activities or events of the day that may be troubling me. (15 minutes)	9.00pm	9.15pm
CREATE TOMORROWS TASK LIST - recording all the tasks I need to accomplish, It's my daily to-do list which is created each night. I prioritize my daily task list, by recording the tasks in the order of highest priority which indicates in which order to execute the tasks. (15 minutes)	9.15pm	9.30pm
PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION - Stress often builds up during the course of the day. By deliberately relaxing towards the end of my day ensures my mind and body is fully relaxed	10.00pm	10.20pm
MEDITATION - All day, every day, your mind will be whirling to the tune of its own internal drama. You are subject to constant sensory input, your reactions to every single incident, every scrap of memory, every concern about the future, all tumbling through your mind. This activity slows your mind	10.20pm	10.40pm
SLEEP (7 hours 15 minutes)	10.40pm	5.55am

			STRESS MANAGEMENT – DAILY ACTION PLAN																															
			Week 1								Week 2								Week 3								Week 4							
Task	Start/End Time		M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S				

Take Action

Now write up your own STRESS MANAGEMENT – DAILY ACTION PLAN on the template provided. The benefits for you of adopting stress management techniques will only start once you take action. The planning stage done well, makes implementing the actions as laid out in the plan, so much easier. Once done, all you have to do, is follow through on the things you've chosen to do.

WHAT COULD YOU BEGIN TO DO TODAY ON A REGULAR BASIS THAT WOULD MAKE A SIGNIFICANT POSITIVE IMPACT IN YOUR LIFE?

Be realistic about what's wrong and what you want to change then consider what you now want to do and act on it, be certain that by taking massive action you will get massive results!

You are on a journey towards managing stress by doing your best, and being a person of action. Don't wait until tomorrow to do what you can accomplish today. Lost time is never found again.



'Commitment leads to action. Action brings your dream closer' ~ Marcia Wieder

Monitor And Review

Once you have incorporated your stress management techniques it is vital that at times you review things, to ensure not only are you carrying out the actions you decided upon, but to see that indeed they are making a difference, to you, in a positive way.. So you need to review your action plan on a regular basis.

If you are following through on your action plan, taking the steps that you have chosen, then you are well on the way to a healthier and less stressed lifestyle. You developed a personal action plan and by executing this plan, you are no longer allowing stress to be the destructive force in your life, which it once was.

It is essential that you review results of any actions you take to tackle stress, in order for you to establish whether they are taking you forward and combating your stress successfully You must:

- Supervise your action plan to make certain you are carrying out your planned actions.
- Appraise the success of the actions you are implementing.

Make sure your action plan is working. Re-evaluate your progress. Do you feel as though you've overcoming stress and creating a Healthy Lifestyle? Are your stress symptoms being reduced? Are there any parts of your plan not getting done? Does it fit into your daily schedule and responsibilities? What can you do instead?

Change anything that isn't working for you. You control what you think, how you feel, and what you do. Now it is time to go do it. It's the time to take action. Create an action plan of all the things you will do to eliminate your stress. Then keep checking back to ensure they're working.

The Power Lies Within You

And... last but not least... the power of a stress managed, healthy lifestyle lies in YOU! It lies in your ability to use this information to inspire you, to motivate you, to get yourself to take action that leads to results. I hope I have inspired and motivated you to take that action.

That's it! We give you the tools; it's you that have to use them, because nobody is going to do it for you.

It's no secret that many people who attend workshops, or read books then do nothing to implement the ideas they have discovered. They get all excited on the actual day of a workshop, write a book full of notes and tell everyone who will listen that "this is it! I have found the magic pill that will transform my work and my life." But when returning to home that night, or work the next day, all that excitement, and good intentions quickly fade away. Exactly the same happens after completing reading a book. Once finished, the book gathers dust on the bookshelf, while all you read slowly disappears into the far depths of your mind. Well not this time!

This time you are going to answer a question, and that is:

"What am I going to do next?"



'You are now at a crossroads. This is your opportunity to make the most important decision you will ever make. Forget your past. Who are you now? Who have you decided you really are now? Don't think about who you have been. Who are you now? Who have you decided to become? Make this decision consciously. Make it carefully. Make it powerfully' ~ Anthony Robbins

Conclusion

The key message that I am bringing to you in the 'Combat stress – The Healthy Lifestyle way' is that through making adjustments to your lifestyle you will create natural defences against stress.

These defences will bring about improvements to your mood, the ability to cope with day-to-day pressures, and the elimination of things such as backache, headache, irritability, tiredness, general malaise where caused by stress.

I have included here many Healthy Lifestyle guidelines and methods which will help keep you healthy and improve your stress-busting abilities.

It is now down to you to adopt these techniques into your life to benefit from them. Once you have implemented them, before you know it, you'll be feeling better!

I know there seems to be so many Stress Management Techniques listed here, that your first thoughts are going to be, how can I possibly implement all of these.

In truth, implementing all the techniques I have brought to you at this time may be impossible and unnecessary

Review my advice with an eye towards what works with your lifestyle, and you will be on your way to reducing stress in your life. I suggest that you introduce one or two of the techniques every few days, see which work best for you, and then when you have found the tools which create less feelings of stress for you, build them into your lifestyle on a daily basis. Make them a habit, a natural part

of your life that you don't even have to think about. You will find that it was worth all the effort.

Don't leave it until you suffer from serious illnesses and conditions such as a stroke and heart disease. These stress management techniques offer you the opportunity for a stress free life. Your journey starts now.

A final word



'It is not death that a man should fear, but he should fear never beginning to live' ~ Marcus Aurelius

It is you that is in control of your life, and can make good things happen! By changing your beliefs and taking new actions you can alter anything in your life today.

So today decide to get rid of the negative belief that you can't do anything to alleviate stress or that you're helpless.

YOUR PAST DOES NOT EQUAL YOUR FUTURE. It doesn't matter if you've tried things in the past and they haven't worked. What matters is not yesterday, but what you do right now. Focus on what you can do today to make things better. Move your life forward and no longer let stress impact on your life. So don't put this away and forget what you've read. Reuse the information frequently.

No one strategy is preferable-you need to find what works best for you. Using these techniques regularly until they become habits that are part of your lifestyle is the key.

Now enjoy your less stressed life!

Thank you for reading Get started today!



'Give your stress wings and let it fly away' ~ Carin Hartness

**Just
DO
It.
- Nike**

About the Author

The author has helped thousands of people reach their wellness goals, implementing a healthy lifestyle and creating a new life beyond stress and illness. This book will help you learn ways to handle stress effectively.

His background is in stress management, life coaching and as a physical fitness trainer. He has worked in the health and wellness field for over 15 years.

For a time his life was like an emotional roller coaster ride. He experienced many difficulties, but survived. Having recovered from post traumatic stress disorder in his mid 20's, and living through his own sister's descent into addiction of prescription drugs, her constant battle to break out, culminating in her premature death, are events which created within him an unbreakable passion to make the difference to other people whose lives he touched.

He set out on a journey to bring the tools that he had been taught to rescue himself to help people learn about stress, and show them ways to manage it in their life, as well as enabling them to create healthy lifestyles. He wanted to contribute this knowledge to everyone.

He has written this book in order to share his knowledge with you and to introduce you to practical, easily applied tools and techniques that will help you and others in your life - friends, family members and work colleagues, develop stress combating skills.

He was determined to do something about helping others tackle stress, and lifestyle issues. He set out on a journey to bring the tools that once been taught to rescue him, to help others, and show them ways to manage stress in their life, as well as enabling them to create healthy lifestyles

Now he brings his skills to the world of coaching, personal development and self help through the written word.

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