

A
Handbook
ON
STRESS MANAGEMENT

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STRESS MANAGEMENT

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01: ‘Stress Management for Excellence & Health’

‘Stress’- the New Challenge

“A stress free person is a more efficient and effective person. Sprinters run faster, students earn higher examination score, salesmen sell better, managers manage better, workers work harder, parents respond more wisely to their children’s needs, individuals enjoy better health and prosperity. The quality of life improves.”

--- Himalayan International Institute, Honesdale, Pennsylvania, (USA)

Stress has become a major obstacle in the path of efficiency, productivity, profitability, overall excellence, growth and prosperity of individuals and business organizations. How? One does not need a management expert to tell us that even the initial symptoms of stress (**based on medical research**) like lack of concentration, irritability, poor inter-personal relations, propensity to make mistakes, indecisiveness, lack of clear thinking, procrastination, taking longer time to perform a task, tendency to get easily frustrated etc. can and do **play havoc with the efficiency of individuals at all levels, from the chief executive officer to the shop floor worker**. More visible adverse effects of stress in the form of psychosomatic diseases, social strains and poor mental health lead to absenteeism, increase in medical bills of the company, poor motivation, bad team work, low morale and consequently an overall low efficiency, poor output and low profits.

Human beings and their total environment are so complex that areas of stress extend far beyond the office and work. Stresses picked up from family and other areas invariably spill over constantly into the place of work and vice versa. So, no company environment or its people can remain untouched by stress.

Objectives - What Can this booklet do for You ?

- Make people stress free and consequently more efficient, more productive, better managers, better salesmen, better workers, better team mates and better individuals.
- Motivate people at all levels to give their very best to the organization.
- Result in ‘positive attitude’, better ‘inter-personal relations’ and superior ‘team building’.
- Work–Life Balance - Improve capability, creativity and performance at work and at home.
- Learn how to beat the accelerating pace of 21st Century and the Art of Goal setting.
- Reduce medical bills and absenteeism by improving mental and physical health.
- Increase profits, well being and prosperity.
- Generate a healthy & happy environment at work & home leading to better quality of life.
- Make you experience the peace of mind, a rare experience for the modern people.
- Overall personality development of individuals.
- Show the way to enhanced Managerial Effectiveness, Success and Prosperity

2. STRESS MANAGEMENT : Overview:

Stress Overview:

Health can be defined as our body's natural state of **physical wellbeing** and **emotional happiness**. This occurs when the body is able to maintain a balance between the demands made on us in life and our capacity and resources to meet those demands so that we remain safe, healthy and fine. Our physical and mental health are in a state of **homeostasis**.

Stress creates **tension** in this balanced state. It tips the scales. Sometimes the tension or stress is good because it **promotes growth** and personal development of our capacity to fulfill our potential. Sometimes stress is bad, though, because we experience an extreme imbalance where there are more demands being made on us than our resources can cope with. The result is a **deterioration** in physical and mental wellbeing and health.

Under certain conditions **laughter** can help us re-establish the balance when the scales are tipped too far in a negative direction where we feel we are unable to cope.

In this section we will focus on the physical and psychological reactions that can occur when you are feeling negatively stress (i.e. distressed), and will demonstrate how laughing can help us achieve better health and overall happiness.

Stress occurs when there is an imbalance between a **demand** made on a person and the **resources** available to respond to the demand. The demand may be real (i.e. things outside the person's control, such as a saber-toothed tiger, or the departure time of a plane and traffic) or perceived (how the person views the situation, i.e. within or not within his/her control or sphere of influence). Similarly, the resources may be real (fact) or perceived (what you think, feel, imagine, etc).

Resources include:

- **Physical ability:** health, fitness and strength
- **Intellectual ability:** capacity for complex thinking and problem solving
- **Emotional ability:** accurately identifying feelings and constructively meeting needs

The Stress

This section helps you to understand the current state of research into stress. We look at this so that you understand how soundly some of these ideas have been examined.

It also introduces you to the fundamental principles behind stress management. While the techniques on this booklet cover the most common sources of stress, a good understanding of the fundamentals will help you to adapt these tools and create new ones to handle unique situations.

Explaining the fundamentals...

Much research has been conducted into stress over the last hundred years. Some of the theories are settled and accepted; others are still being researched and debated. This section helps to understand some of the key concepts and theories from current psychological research. These are the foundation on which the tools and techniques within it have been designed.

We start by defining stress. We then look at the underlying mechanisms that cause it.

Stress and its impact on us...

Next, we look at the nature of stress and consider the relationships between stress and health, and between stress and work performance.

We see how stress can have very negative effects on our short- and long-term health, performance and career success, as well as on our personal happiness. This emphasizes the importance of good stress management.

Introducing stress management

Finally, we look at the three types of approach to managing stress:

- action oriented (reducing stress by taking action);
- perception oriented (dealing with attitudes and emotional responses to stress);
- and survival oriented (living and coping with stresses that cannot be otherwise resolved).

The concepts introduced here lie behind the tools and techniques that we will encounter elsewhere, helping us to manage stress constructively.

3. Stress: Definitions & Explanations:

Now, the most commonly accepted definition of stress (mainly attributed to Richard S Lazarus) is that “**stress is a condition or feeling experienced when a person perceives that demands (Pressure) exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize**”.

$$S = P > R$$

Where S for Stress

Where P for Pressure

Where R for Resources

People feel little stress when they have the time, experience and resources to manage a situation. They feel great stress when they think they can't handle the demands put upon them. Stress is therefore a negative experience. And it is not an inevitable consequence of

an event: It depends a lot on people's perceptions of a situation and their real ability to cope with it.

This is the main definition used in this article, although we also recognize that there is an intertwined instinctive stress response to unexpected events. The stress response inside us is therefore part instinct and part to do with the way we think.

STRESS DEFINITIONS:

Stress is difficult for scientists to define because it is a subjective sensation associated with varied symptoms that differ for each of us. In addition, stress is not always a synonym for distress. Situations like a steep roller coaster ride that cause fear and anxiety for some can prove highly pleasurable for others. Winning a race or election may be more stressful than losing but this is good stress.

Increased stress increases productivity – up to a point, after which things rapidly deteriorate, and that level also differs for each of us. It's much like the stress or tension on a violin string. Not enough produces a dull raspy sound and too much an irritating screech or snaps the string – but just the correct degree of stress creates a beautiful tone.

Similarly, we all have to find the right amount of stress that permits us to make pleasant music in our daily lives. One can learn how to utilize and transform stress so that it will make us more productive and less self-destructive.

STRESS, DEFINITION OF STRESS, STRESSOR, WHAT IS STRESS?, EUSTRESS?

If a dozen people were asked to define stress, or explain what causes stress for them, or how stress affects them, it would likely get 12 different answers to each of these requests. The reason for this is that there is no definition of stress that everyone agrees on, what is stressful for one person may be pleasurable or have little effect on others and we all react to stress differently. That's easily illustrated by the list of 50 Common Signs and Symptoms of Stress noted under **Effects Of Stress** and the attached diagram illustrating how it affects different parts of the body.

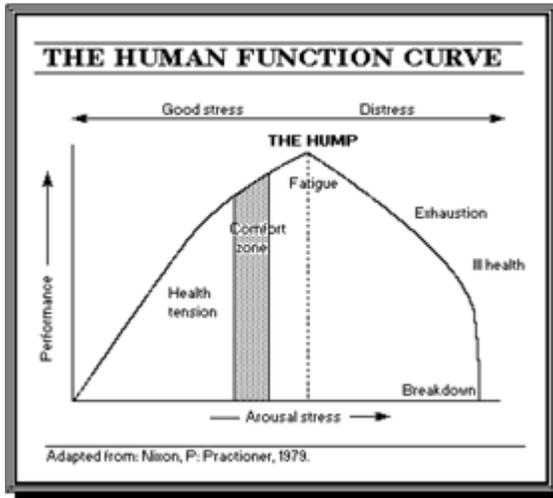
Stress is not a useful term for scientists because it is such a highly subjective phenomenon that it defies definition. And if you can't define stress, how can you possibly measure it? The term "stress", as it is currently used was coined by Hans Selye in 1936, who defined it as "**the non-specific response of the body to any demand for change**". Selye had noted in numerous experiments that laboratory animals subjected to acute but different noxious physical and emotional stimuli (blaring light, deafening noise, extremes of heat or cold, perpetual frustration) all exhibited the same pathologic changes of stomach ulcerations, shrinkage of lymphoid tissue and enlargement of the adrenals. He later demonstrated that persistent stress could cause these animals to develop various diseases similar to those seen in humans, such as heart attacks, stroke, kidney disease and rheumatoid arthritis. At the time, it was believed that most diseases were caused by specific but different pathogens. Tuberculosis was due to the tubercle bacillus, anthrax by the anthrax bacillus, syphilis by a spirochete, etc. What Selye proposed was just the

opposite, namely that many different insults could cause the same disease, not only in animals, but in humans as well.

Selye's theories attracted considerable attention and stress soon became a popular buzzword that completely ignored Selye's original definition. Some people used stress to refer to an overbearing or bad boss or some other unpleasant situation they were subjected to. For many, stress was their reaction to this in the form of chest pain, heartburn, headache or palpitations. Others used stress to refer to what they perceived as the end result of these repeated responses, such as an ulcer or heart attack. Many scientists complained about this confusion and one physician concluded in a 1951 issue of the British Medical Journal that, "**Stress in addition to being itself, was also the cause of itself, and the result of itself.**"

Unfortunately, Selye was not aware that stress had been used for centuries in physics to explain elasticity, the property of a material that allows it to resume its original size and shape after having been compressed or stretched by an external force. As expressed in Hooke's Law of 1658, the magnitude of an external force, or stress, produces a proportional amount of deformation, or strain, in a malleable metal. This created even more confusion when his research had to be translated into foreign languages. There was no suitable word or phrase that could convey what he meant, since he was really describing strain. In 1946, when he was asked to give an address at the prestigious Collège de France, the academicians responsible for maintaining the purity of the French language struggled with this problem for several days, and subsequently decided that a new word would have to be created. Apparently, the male chauvinists prevailed, and le stress was born, quickly followed by el stress, il stress, lo stress, der stress in other European languages, and similar neologisms in Russian, Japanese, Chinese and Arabic. Stress is one of the very few words you will see preserved in English in these and other languages that do not use the Roman alphabet.

Because it was apparent that most people viewed stress as some unpleasant threat, Selye subsequently had to create a new word, stressor, to distinguish stimulus from response. Stress was generally considered as being synonymous with distress and dictionaries defined it as "physical, mental, or emotional strain or tension" or "a condition or feeling experienced when a person perceives that demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize." Thus, stress was put in a negative light and its positive effects ignored. **However, stress can be helpful and good when it motivates people to accomplish more.**



As illustrated to the left, increased stress results in increased productivity – up to a point, after which things go rapidly downhill. However, that point or peak differs for each of us, so you need to be sensitive to the early warning symptoms and signs that suggest a stress overload is starting to push you over the hump. Such signals also differ for each of us and can be so subtle that they are often ignored until it is too late. Not infrequently, others are aware that you may be headed for trouble before you are.

Any definition of stress should therefore also include good stress, or what Selye called eustress. For example, winning a race or election can be just as stressful as losing, or more so. A passionate kiss and contemplating what might follow is stressful, but hardly the same as having a root canal procedure.

Selye struggled unsuccessfully all his life to find a satisfactory definition of stress. In attempting to extrapolate his animal studies to humans so that people would understand what he meant, he redefined stress as "**The rate of wear and tear on the body**". This is actually a pretty good description of biological aging so it is not surprising that increased stress can accelerate many aspects of the aging process. In his later years, when asked to define stress, he told reporters, "**Everyone knows what stress is, but nobody really knows.**"

As noted, stress is difficult to define because it is so different for each of us. A good example is afforded by observing passengers on a steep roller coaster ride. Some are hunched down in the back seats, eyes shut, jaws clenched and white knuckled with an iron grip on the retaining bar. They can't wait for the ride in the torture chamber to end so they can get back on solid ground and scamper away. But up front are the wide-eyed thrill seekers, yelling and relishing each steep plunge who race to get on the very next ride. And in between you may find a few with an air of nonchalance that borders on boredom. So, was the roller coaster ride stressful?

The roller coaster analogy is useful in explaining why the same stressor can differ so much for each of us. What distinguished the passengers in the back from those up front was the sense of control they had over the event. While neither group had any more or less control their perceptions and expectations were quite different. Many times we create our own stress because of faulty perceptions one can learn to correct. You can teach people to move from the back of the roller coaster to the front, and, as Eleanor Roosevelt noted, **nobody can make you feel inferior without your consent**. While everyone can't agree on a definition of stress, all of our experimental and clinical research confirms that the sense of having little or no control is always distressful – and that's what stress is all about.

Distress:

When we talk of bad stress (*Distress*), we're talking about something that is directly causing the brain and body to shrink in its working capacity, resulting in **low-performance levels**. It is caused when a person is feeling anxious, threatened (maybe embarrassed, pressed for time, loss of prestige) or overwhelmed with feelings of helplessness. This occurs when a person feels he or she:

1. Is being forced to face a challenge that he does not want to ("**I do not want to do it**");
2. Cannot think of a solution to the challenge ("**I do not know how to do it**");
3. Lacks the resources (internal, as in brain capacity, or external as in materialistic) to solve the challenge ("**I cannot do it**");
4. Has little or no control over the situation ("**I am helpless**").

These perceptions can be **real** (the person actually has no control or power over changing the situation) or **imagined** (the person could have influence over the situation) but the effects are the same: the person feels **threatened** and in **danger**. This danger could be physical safety or to his psychological state of mind

Stressors:

Stressors are those events or situations which cause one to feel **tense** or **strained** (stressed). There are numerous categories from which stressors stem, amongst them are: **frustrations, conflicts** and **pressures**.

Frustrations are felt when a person is **unable to meet his or her needs** and/or when a goal is blocked by obstacles. It also occurs when there is **no ultimate goal** in mind. Frustrations lead to **self-devaluation** and other feelings of low self-worth and incompetence. Frustrations can stem from:

(a) **Environmental/circumstantial frustrations:** such as experiences of prejudice (racism, sexism, bias toward handicapped people, etc), unfulfilling jobs and deaths of loved ones.

(b) **Internal frustrations:** such as perceived or real personal limitations, *inter alia* handicaps, perceived lack of value, competency and "likeableness".

Conflicting situations: these can be internal and/or external. External conflicts refer to those arguments/fights that one has with peers, families, spouses, etc. Internal conflicts occur when one has to make a choice between two or more options that have arisen. Once a choice is made, frustration can be felt because of the restrictions of that choice. During the choice-making process, the **cognitive** (thinking) and **emotional** minds are strained.

Pressures can also be internal or external and usually result in the need to speed up, **intensify** work or change the direction in which one is heading to achieve an ultimate goal.

An example of an external pressure is when a student goes through his school career being constantly pushed by his parents to do well. An internal pressure is when the person pushes himself to do well to the extreme. Self-induced pressure, or high motivation, sometimes results in unnecessary stress if time or energy is not managed and one's life becomes unbalanced (i.e. all work and no play!).

Just because stressors are placed in different categories does not mean that they are isolated. In real life, one stressor may have elements of all the categories, causing a higher stressful experience. For a more detailed list of stressors

4. EFFECTS OF STRESS :

Stress is difficult for scientists to define because it is a highly subjective phenomenon that differs for each of us. **Things that are distressful for some individuals can be pleasurable for others.** We also respond to stress differently. Some people blush, some eat more while others grow pale or eat less. There are numerous physical as well as emotional responses as illustrated by the following list of some 50 common signs and symptoms of stress.

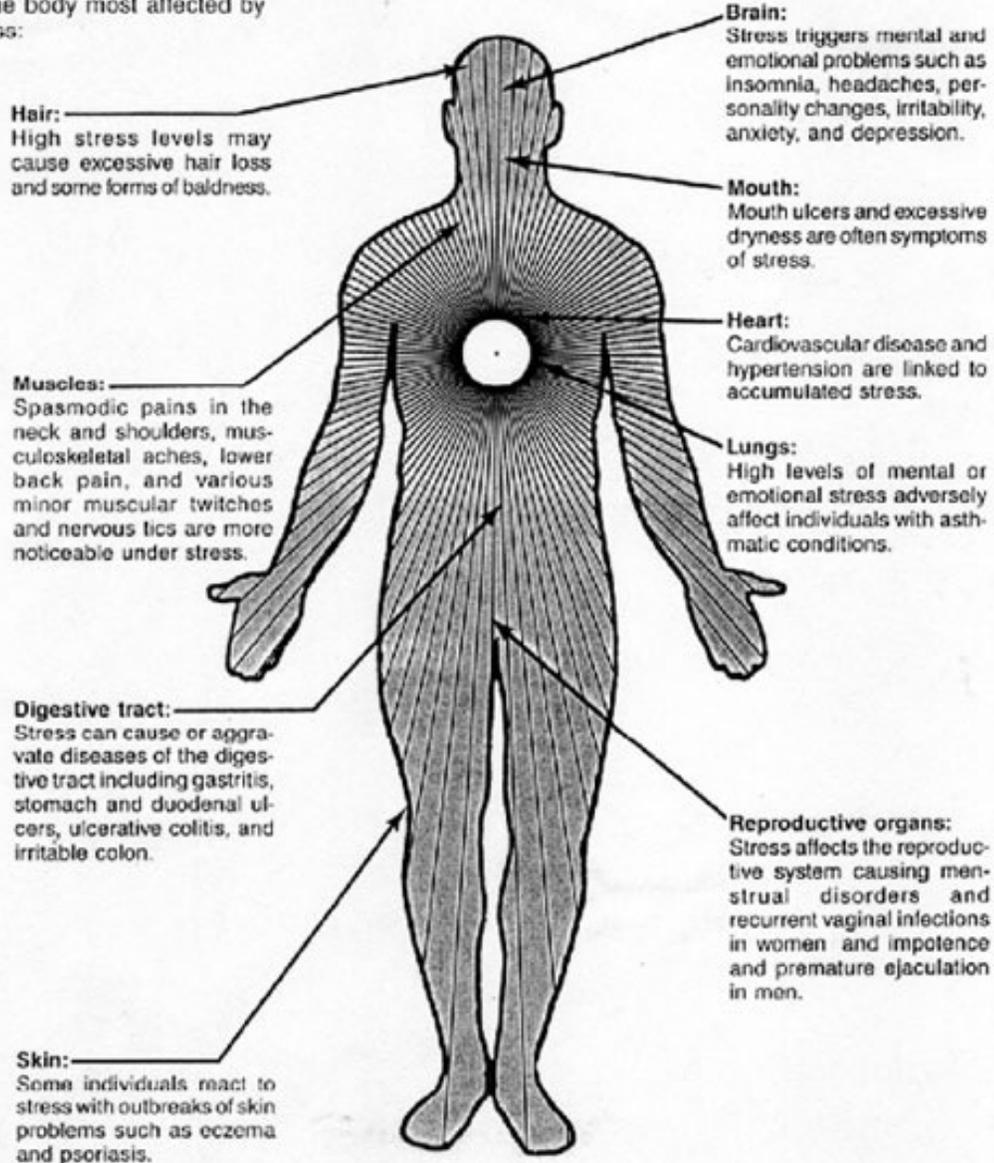
1. Frequent headaches, jaw clenching or pain
2. Gritting, grinding teeth
3. Stuttering or stammering
4. Tremors, trembling of lips, hands
5. Neck ache, back pain, muscle spasms
6. Light headedness, faintness, dizziness
7. Ringing, buzzing or "popping sounds"
8. Frequent blushing, sweating
9. Cold or sweaty hands, feet
10. Dry mouth, problems swallowing
11. Frequent colds, infections, herpes sores
12. Rashes, itching, hives, "goose bumps"
13. Unexplained or frequent "allergy" attacks
14. Heartburn, stomach pain, nausea
15. Excess belching, flatulence
16. Constipation, diarrhea
26. Insomnia, nightmares, disturbing dreams
27. Difficulty concentrating, racing thoughts
28. Trouble learning new information
29. Forgetfulness, disorganization, confusion
30. Difficulty in making decisions.
31. Feeling overloaded or overwhelmed.
32. Frequent crying spells or suicidal thoughts
33. Feelings of loneliness or worthlessness
34. Little interest in appearance, punctuality
35. Nervous habits, fidgeting, feet tapping
36. Increased frustration, irritability, edginess
37. Overreaction to petty annoyances
38. Increased number of minor accidents
39. Obsessive or compulsive behavior
40. Reduced work efficiency or productivity
41. Lies or excuses to cover up poor work

- | | |
|---|---|
| 17. Difficulty breathing, sighing | 42. Rapid or mumbled speech |
| 18. Sudden attacks of panic | 43. Excessive defensiveness or suspiciousness |
| 19. Chest pain, palpitations, Frequent urination | 44. Problems in communication, sharing |
| 20. Poor sexual desire or performance | 45. Social withdrawal and isolation |
| 21. Excess anxiety, worry, guilt, nervousness | 46. Constant tiredness, weakness, fatigue |
| 22. Increased anger, frustration, hostility | 47. Frequent use of over-the-counter drugs |
| 23. Depression, frequent or wild mood swings
Increased or decreased appetite | 48. Weight gain or loss without diet |
| 24. Increased anger, frustration, hostility | 49. Increased smoking, alcohol or drug use |
| 25. Increased or decreased appetite | 50. Excessive gambling or impulse buying |

As demonstrated in the above list, stress can have wide ranging effects on emotions, mood and behavior. Equally important but often less appreciated are effects on various systems, organs and tissues all over the body, as illustrated by the following diagram.

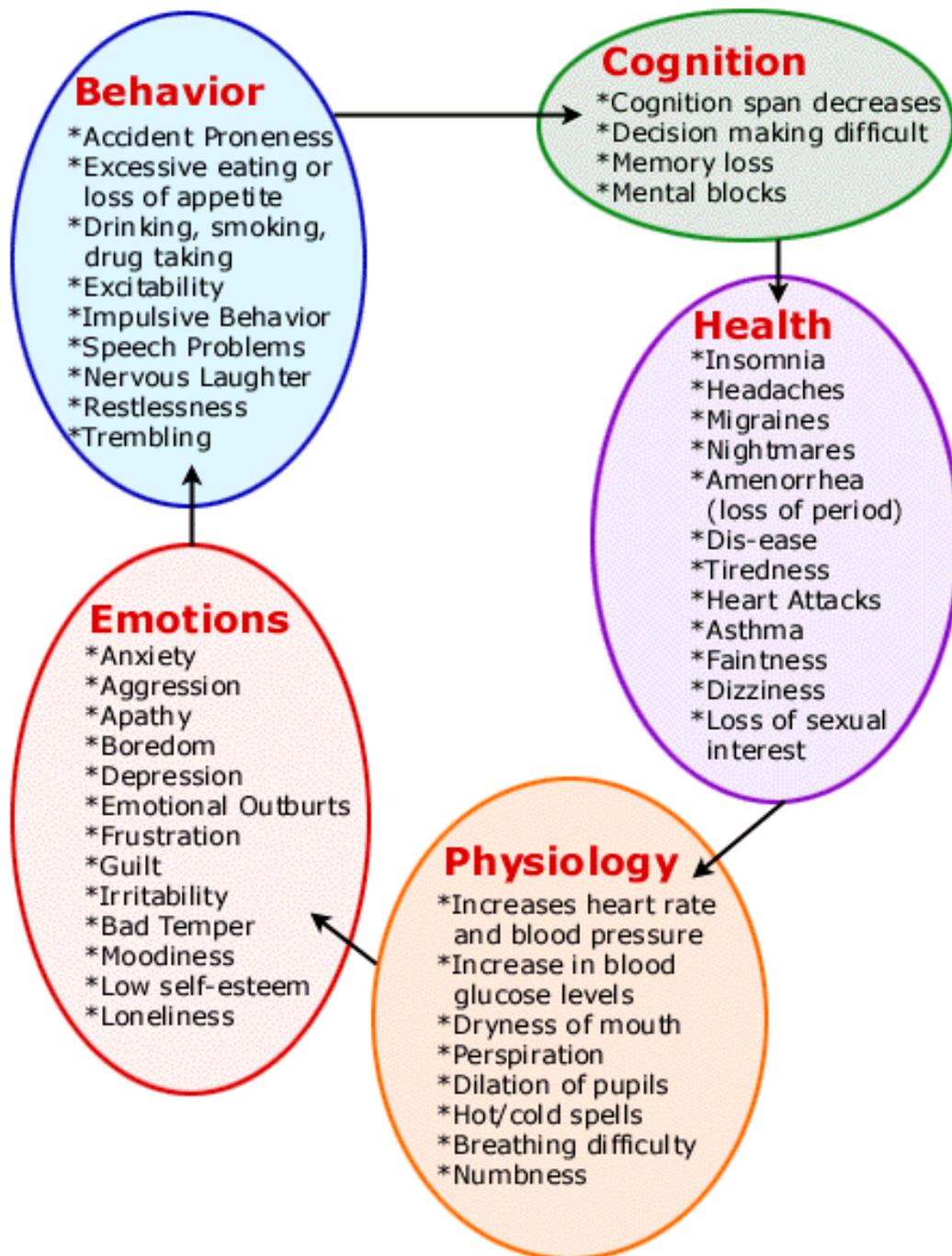
Physical or mental stresses may cause physical illness as well as mental or emotional problems. Here are the parts of the body most affected by stress:

The Effects of Stress



There are numerous emotional and physical disorders that have been linked to stress including depression, anxiety, heart attacks, stroke, hypertension, immune system disturbances that increase susceptibility to infections, a host of viral linked disorders ranging from the common cold and herpes to AIDS and certain cancers, as well as autoimmune diseases like rheumatoid arthritis and multiple sclerosis. In addition stress can have direct effects on the skin (rashes, hives, atopic dermatitis, the gastrointestinal system (GERD, peptic ulcer, irritable bowel syndrome, ulcerative colitis) and can contribute to insomnia and degenerative neurological disorders like Parkinson's disease. In fact, it's hard to think of any disease in which stress cannot play an aggravating role or any part of the body that is not affected (see stress effects on the body stress diagram) or. This list will undoubtedly grow as the extensive ramifications of stress are increasingly

The impacts of stress listed here may occur as a result of a stressor. The higher the level of stress experienced the more impact it will have on your body and mind.



5.: Emotions & Control Techniques:

Physical pain makes us aware that there is something wrong somewhere. When we experience anxiety, nervousness and tension, our body/mind is trying to give us an emotional message that we need to give our emotions some attention because all is not well. A build up of anxiety can result in **apathy, depression, frustration, irritability,** etc. and ultimately, the body can respond by malfunctioning and **breaking down.**

Positive Human Emotions

Adequate	Awe	Assured	Able
Capable	Certain	Charmed	Cheerful
Comfortable	Compassion	Courageous	Confidence
Determined	Delighted	Eager	Energetic
Enthusiastic	Excited	Exhilarated	Expectant
Elation	Empathy	Excellent	Fascinated
Glad	Good	Great	Grateful
Glorious	Glamorous	Graceful	Happy
Hopeful	Humorous	Inspired	Interested
Joyful	Magnificent	Lust	Love
Pleasure	Playfulness	Peaceful	Pleasant
Powerful	Pride	Positive	Relaxed
Relieved	Satisfied	Surprised	Sympathy
Stable	Sublime	Superior	Thrilled

At the same time, notice that sometimes your negative emotions may not be as intense as we think. It depends on how we label the emotion. Perhaps you are not angry, rather just irritated. Or not disappointed but just frustrated.

Negative human emotions

Annoyed	Anxious	Apprehensive	Agonize
Anger	Anxiety	Apathy	Bored
Burdened	Cautious	Competitive	Concerned
Confused	Contempt	Depressed	Destructive
Disgusted	Distracted	Doubtful	Disappointed
Exasperated	Exhausted	Embarrassment	Envy
Frustrated	Fear	Guilty	Greed
Grief	Harassed	Hesitant	Hostile
Ignored	Impatient	Indifferent	Intimidated
Isolated	Irritated	Jealous	Jumpy

Lonely	Mad	Manipulated	Miserable
Obnoxious	Overwhelmed	Panic	Pressured
Remorse	Revenge	Shame	Sad
Scared	Shocked	Suspicious	Stress
Tired	Uncomfortable	Uneasy	Used
Wary	Weary	Wasteful	

Emotions Control Technique:

Emotions are the most present, pressing and sometimes painful force in our lives. We are driven day by day by our emotions. We take chances because we're excited for new prospects. We cry because we've been hurt and we make sacrifices because we love. Without a doubt, our emotions dictate our thoughts, intentions and actions with superior authority to our rational minds. But when we act on our emotions too quickly, or we act on the wrong kinds of emotions, we often make decisions that we later lament.

Our feelings can alter between dangerous extremes. Veer too far to the left and you're bordering on rage. Steer too much to the right and you're in a state of euphoria. As like many other aspects of life, emotions are best met with a sense of moderation and logical perspective. This is not to say that we should stop ourselves from falling in love or jumping for joy after great news. These truly are the finer things in life. It is negative emotions that must be handled with extreme care.

Negative emotions, like rage, envy or bitterness, tend to spiral out of control, especially immediately after they've been triggered. In time, these sorts of emotions can grow like weeds, slowly conditioning the mind to function on detrimental feelings and dominating daily life. Ever met a person who's consistently angry or hostile? They weren't born that way. But they allowed certain emotions to stir within them for so long that they became inbred feelings arising all too frequently.

Controlling your emotions doesn't mean ignoring them. It means you recognize them and act on them when appropriate, not randomly and uncontrollably whenever you feel like it. Take control of your life by taking control of your emotions. It is important to control your emotions, but suppressing them or denying that they exist is entirely different. Suppressing your emotions can cause physical disorders and more emotional symptoms. Many emotional problems are so complex that they require the additional professional assistance of a licensed psychologist, counselor, or social worker.

Part 1: Controlling Emotions, Not letting Emotions control you:

1. **Know your emotions.** There are a million different ways you can feel, but scientists have classified human emotions into a few basics that everyone can recognize: joy, acceptance, fear, surprise, sadness, disgust, anger, anticipation *etc.*

- Jealousy, for example, is a manifestation of fear - fear that you're not "as good" as something else, fear of being abandoned because you're not "perfect" or "the best."
 - Know what kinds of situations cause which emotions, and be able to tell the difference between anger and fear; sometimes multiple emotions can bubble up at the same time, and the person going through the emotions might not be able to distinguish the two.
2. **Recognize that emotions don't just appear mysteriously out of nowhere.** Many times, we're at the mercy of our emotions on a subconscious level. By recognizing your emotions on a conscious level, you're better able to control them.
- It's also good to recognize an emotion from the moment it materializes, as opposed to letting it build up and intensify. The last thing you want to do is ignore or repress your feelings, because if you're reading this, you probably know that when you do that, they tend to get worse and erupt later.
 - Ask yourself throughout the day: "How am I feeling right now?" If you can, keep a journal. Write down situations that caused an interesting emotion in you. That way, you can help pinpoint the moment it appeared instead of letting its origin slip away.
 - Take ownership of your emotions. Don't blame them on other people. Recognize when you try to blame other people for your emotions, and don't let your mind get away with that trick. Taking full responsibility for your emotions will help you better control them.
3. **Notice what was going through your mind when the emotion appeared.** Stop and analyze what you were thinking about, until you find what thought was causing that emotion.
- Your boss may not have made eye contact with you at lunch, for example; and without even being aware of it, the thought may have been in the back of your mind, "He's getting ready to fire me!"
4. **Write down the evidence which supports or contradicts the thought that produced the emotion.** Start connecting the dots about why you reacted the way you did.
- When you begin to think about it, you might realize that since *nobody* gets along well with this particular boss, he can't afford to actually fire *anyone*, because the department is too short-staffed.
 - For example, you may have let slip something that you should not have said which angered him, but which it is too late to retract. His reaction at lunch may not be what you originally thought it was.
5. **Ask yourself, "What is another way to look at the situation that is more rational and more balanced than the way I was looking at it before?"** Explore all the different possibilities. If nothing else, thinking about other possible

interpretations will alert you to many different scenarios, and the difficulty of jumping to conclusions.

- Taking this new evidence into account, you may conclude that your job is safe, regardless of your boss's petty annoyances, and you're relieved of the emotion that was troubling you. If this doesn't work, however, continue to the next step.
6. **Consider your options.** Now that you know what emotion you're dealing with, think of at least two different ways you can respond. Your emotions control you when you assume there's only *one* way to react, but you always have a choice. For example, if someone insults you, and you experience anger, your immediate response might be to insult them back. But no matter what the emotion, there are always at least two alternatives, and you can probably think of more:
- Don't react. Do nothing. This approach is especially good when you know that someone is trying to egg you on or purposely frustrate you. Don't give in; when you fail to show an emotional reaction, the person egging you on will become frustrated and eventually stop.
 - Relax. Easy to say, hard to do, but there are some ways to relax that do not require lots of training, experience or will power. When we are angry or upset we clench our jaws and tense up. Taking a deep breath is an easy and effective way to tamp down the emotional upset. It won't dispel the anger but it can dial it down a notch or two, just enough to keep us from saying, or doing, something we'd regret later.
 - Do the opposite of what you would normally do. For example, you get bothered when your spouse regularly doesn't do the dishes. Instead of engaging them in an argument the second you notice the dirty dishes, calmly do the dishes yourself and tell your spouse — in a calm and collected way — that you'd appreciate help considering all you do in the household.
 - Remove yourself from the situation. Let's say that you are on a committee at work that includes people who are unfocused, angry and unproductive. You invariably get upset when attending the meetings. One strategy for dealing with this upset, frustration and anger is to ask to be re-assigned to a different committee. Basically, you remove yourself from a situation that you know will generate these strong, negative and unnecessary feelings.
7. **Make a choice.** When deciding what to do, it's important to make sure it's a conscious choice, not a reaction to another, competing emotion. For example, if someone insults you and you do nothing, is it your decision, or is it a response to your fear of confrontation? Here are some good reasons to act upon:
- Principles - Who do you want to be? What are your moral principles? What do you want the outcome of this situation to be? Ultimately, which is the decision you'd be most proud of? This is where religious guidance comes into play for many people.

- Logic - Which course of action is the most likely to result in the outcome you desire? For example, if you're being confronted with a street fight, and you want to take the pacifist route, you can walk away--but, there's a good chance that burly drunk will be insulted if you turn your back. Maybe it's better to apologize and keep him talking until he calms down.

Part 2: Recognizing Ideas that Cause Negative Emotions:

1. **Change your perspective.** The above steps show how to not let your emotions control your behavior on the spot. If you want to experience fewer negative emotions to begin with, change the way you see the world. If you learn how to be optimistic and lay back, you'll find that negative emotions make fewer appearances to be reckoned with.
 - Being optimistic is important. Instead of letting emotions take over because you pessimistically expect them to, try believing in the notion that the world is essentially good, and that people get what they deserve, and that you are a good person. You may start finding that outlook changes your emotions.
 - Acknowledge that there are certain things that you won't be able to change. Those things aren't worth getting frustrated at. You're probably not going to change the way that some people drive their car, for instance. It's not worth getting upset over. What you can change is your reaction to people who drive recklessly and selfishly.
2. **Eliminate many of the selfish core beliefs which give rise to your disturbing thoughts and negative emotions.** There are many irrational ideas that repeatedly upset us. They are all *false*, but many of us are inclined to believe at least some of them part of the time. Here are some preconceived notions about the self that are wrong because people think of themselves too highly:
 - "I must be perfect in all respects in order to be worthwhile." Nobody can be perfect in *everything* that we have to do in life. But if you believe that you're a failure unless you are perfect in every way, you are setting yourself up for a lifetime of unhappiness.
 - "I must be loved and approved of by everyone who is important to me." Sometimes you just can't help making enemies, and there are people in the world who bear ill will to almost everyone. But you can't make your own life miserable by trying to please them.
 - "When people treat me unfairly, it is because they are bad people." Most of the people who treat you unfairly have friends and family who love them. People are mixtures of good and bad. Maybe there is something about you that displeases them.
 - "It is terrible when I am seriously frustrated, treated badly, or rejected." Some people have such a short fuse that they are constantly losing jobs or

endangering friendships because they are unable to endure the slightest frustration. The world does not tick for only you. Be considerate of other people.

- "If something is dangerous or fearful, I have to worry about it." Many people believe that "the work of worrying" will help to make problems go away. They drive themselves crazy by making up things to worry about. "Okay, that's over. Now, what's the next thing on the list that I have to worry about?"
 - "It is terrible when things do not work out exactly as I want them to." Could you have predicted the course of your own life? Probably not. By the same token, you can't predict that things are going to work out exactly as you want them to, even in the short term.
3. **Eliminate many negative core beliefs about the self.** There are people who think of themselves not highly enough: Their self-esteem is essentially in the gutter, and their emotions are the result of not being able to love themselves adequately.
- "Misery comes from outside forces which I can't do very much to change." Many prison inmates describe their life as if it were a cork, bobbing up and down on waves of circumstance. You can choose whether to see yourself as an effect of your circumstances, or a cause. Take responsibility for your actions.
 - "It is easier to avoid life's difficulties and responsibilities than to face them." Even painful experiences, once we can get through them, can serve as a basis for learning and future growth. It's childish to go through life thinking that difficulties won't ever affect us.
 - "Because things in my past controlled my life, they have to keep doing so now and in the future." If this were really true, it would mean that we are prisoners of our past, and change is impossible. But people change all the time — and sometimes they change dramatically! You have the ability to be essentially who you want to be; you just have to believe in yourself.
 - "I can be as happy as possible by just doing nothing and enjoying myself, taking life as it comes." If this were true, almost every wealthy or comfortably retired person would do as little as possible. But instead, they seek new challenges as a pathway to further growth. You're tricking yourself into believing that you'd be really happy doing nothing. People need novelty to stay satisfied.

Part 3: Recognizing Ideas that Make Negative Emotions Worse:

1. **Learn to avoid the cognitive distortions which make things look worse than they really are.** Most of us have heard the expression, "looking at the world through rose-colored glasses." But when you use cognitive distortions, you tend to look at the world through *mud*-colored glasses! Here are some ideas that you should stop from rolling through your head if you catch yourself thinking them.

2. **Avoid negative ideas that come from feeling inadequate.** Inadequacy comes from low self-esteem, the idea that you aren't good enough to do something or deserve someone. Banish inadequacy from your emotions as much as possible, and you may find that it has been *keeping* you from accomplishing things.
 - All-or-nothing thinking. Everything is good or bad, with nothing in between. If you aren't perfect, then you're a failure. You procrastinate doing stuff because they are not perfect until you have no other choice than doing them.
 - Disqualifying the positive. If somebody says something good about you, it doesn't count. But if somebody says something bad about you, you "knew it all along."
 - Personalization. You believe that you were the cause of something bad that happened, when you really didn't have very much to do with it. And ask a friend to help you realize your emotions or worries so that you can have someone to rely on.
 - Mind reading. You think somebody is disrespecting you and don't bother to check it out. You just assume that they are. You do this because you feel like you don't deserve respect, and so are overly sensitive to people whom you think might not respect you.
3. **Avoid negative ideas that come from fear.** Humans can be afraid of a lot of things; we let fear take over our rational brains because we're convinced something bad is going to happen, even when we don't have evidence that it will.
 - Overgeneralization. A single negative event turns into a never-ending pattern of defeat. "I didn't get a phone call. I'll never hear from anybody again," or "She broke up with me; why would anyone want to date me?" You generalize not because of a pattern, but because you fear the pattern.
 - Labeling and mislabeling. This is an extreme form of overgeneralization. When you make a mistake, you give yourself a label, such as, "I'm a loser." When someone else's behavior rubs you the wrong way, you attach a negative label to him, "He's a louse." Mislabeling involves describing an event with language that is highly colored and emotionally loaded.
 - The Fortune Teller Error. You think that things are going to turn out badly, and convince yourself that this is already a fact. You have no evidence for the prophecy, but you're convinced anyways.
 - Jumping to conclusions. You make a negative interpretation even though there are no definite facts that convincingly support your conclusion. You think that preparing for the worst is better than hoping for the best, because you're afraid, not hopeful.
4. **Avoid negative ideas that come from other complex emotions.** Don't succumb to these defeatist emotional responses. Have faith in your ability to work things

through. Believe in your own self worth. If you catch yourself thinking any one of these thoughts, focus instead on a positive way of interpreting your worth.

- **Magnification or minimization.** Imagine that you're looking at yourself or somebody else through a pair of binoculars. You might think that a mistake you made or somebody else's achievements are more important than they really are. Now imagine that you've turned the binoculars around and you're looking through them backwards. Something you've done might look less important than it really is, and somebody else's faults might look less important than they really are.
- **Emotional reasoning.** You assume that your negative emotions necessarily reflect the way things really are: "I feel it, therefore it must be true." You want the world to be the way it feels to you because it will help you feel less powerless.
- **Should statements.** You beat up on yourself as a way of getting motivated to do something. You "should" do this, you "must" do this, you "ought" to do this, and so on. This doesn't make you want to do it, it only makes you feel guilty. When you direct should statements toward others, you feel anger, frustration, and resentment.

Part 4: Emotions Control Practice:

- 1. Don't react right away.** Reacting immediately to emotional triggers can be an immense mistake. It is guaranteed that you'll say or do something you'll later regret. Before refuting the trigger with your emotional argument, take a deep breath and stabilize the overwhelming impulse. Continue to breathe deeply for five minutes, feeling as your muscles untense and your heart rate returns to normal. As you become calmer, affirm to yourself that this is only temporary.
- 2. Ask for divine guidance.** Faith is our saving grace in our darkest moments. No matter your creed, developing a healthy relationship with the divine world will help you surmount your obstacles more easily. This is because when you believe in a higher force, you also believe in the power of divine intervention to show you what you must do, teach you why something is happening or even save you from a certain unwanted situation. When burdened with emotion, close your eyes, envision a positive solution to your problem, and ask the universe to illuminate the best path forward.
- 3. Find a healthy outlet.** Now that you've managed your emotion, you'll need to release it in a healthy way. Emotions should never be bottled up. Call or go see someone you trust and recount to them what happened. Hearing an opinion other than your own broadens your awareness. Keep a journal and transfer your emotions from your inner self onto the paper. Many people find it helpful to engage in aggressive exercises, such as kickboxing or martial arts, to discharge their feelings. Others meditate and chant to return to a tranquil state of being. Perform whatever activity is best-suited to you in order to liberate your being from pent-up sentiments.

4. **See the bigger picture.** Every happening of our lives, whether good or bad, serves a higher purpose. Wisdom means being able to see past the moment and discern the greater meaning of any given situation. You may not understand it in the beginning, but as time goes by, you'll begin to see the bigger picture falling into perfect order.
5. **Replace your thoughts.** Negative emotions bind us to recurring negative thoughts, creating cycles of downright negative patterns. Whenever you are confronted with an emotion which is making you feel or think something bad, force it out of your mind and replace it with a different thought. Imagine the ideal resolution to your problem playing out, think about someone who makes you happy or remember an event that makes you smile.
6. **Forgive your emotional triggers.** Your emotional triggers may be your best friend, your family members, yourself or all of the above. You may feel a sudden wave of anger when your friend "does that thing she does," or a stab of self-loathing when you remember something you could have done differently. But when you forgive, you detach. You detach from the resentment, the jealousy or the fury lingering within you. You allow people to be who they are without the need for escalating emotions. As you forgive, you will find yourself disassociating from the harsh feelings attached to your being.

7. **Change your mood; do something different:**

We tend to assume that moods just 'happen to us' and, like storms, the best we can do is waiting until they pass. But, unlike climatic storms, we can influence - even change - our moods without resorting to unhealthy means such as alcohol or drugs. Being able to manage and influence your own emotions is a powerful marker for good health, emotional maturity, and happiness.

One way to alter your mood is to instantly do something else. For example, if you feel flat and bored, continuing to watch uninteresting TV will deepen the mood. Switching it off and going for a walk in a new neighbourhood will inevitably change your mood. If you feel cross, consciously focus on three things in your life for which you can feel grateful. If you are anxious, start to imagine that what you are anxious about has already happened and gone much better than expected.

The important thing is just to do or think something different. Don't be passively carried along by the current of the mood. The quickest way to do this may be to simply imagine not feeling the way you are feeling. So if I'm feeling hacked off, I might close my eyes and take a few moments to strongly imagine feeling relaxed and comfortable and even in a good mood. This will, at the very least, neutralize the bad mood and may even put you in a good mood. Next time you're in a bad mood, listen to this free audio session below and see to what extent you can change the mood.

8. **Observe how others deal effectively with their emotions:**

We can learn so much from other people (as long as we look to the right people to learn from!). How do other 'emotionally skilled' people deal with their frustrations

and difficulties? You could even ask them: "How do you keep so cool when you're presenting to all these people? Why doesn't that make you angry? How do you keep smiling after such setbacks?" Their answers could actually change your life if you start to apply what you learn.

9. Change your physiology:

Some people assume that emotions are 'all in your head', whereas actually all emotions are physical responses. Anger pushes heart rate and blood pressure up, which is why having an angry temperament, is a predictor of heart disease; anxiety produces lots of physical changes; and even depression suppresses the immune system. So part of changing your emotional state involves dealing directly with the physical changes. Physical changes are led by the way we breathe. For instance, anger and anxiety can only 'work' if we are breathing quicker with shallow breaths. Take time to:

- Stop breathing for five seconds (to 'reset' your breath).
- Now breathe in slowly, focusing on your diaphragm, until your lungs are full of air.
- Then breathe out even more slowly (and whilst doing this, imagine that you are breathing pure rest and relaxation into your hands).
- Keep doing this and remember it's the out-breath that will calm everything down.

10. Use your Noggin:

Think of emotion as a strong but stupid being that sometimes needs your guidance and direction. We need some emotion to motivate us, but it needs to be the right emotion at the right time applied in the right way. The more emotional we become, the stupider we become. This is because emotions want us to react blindly and physically rather than to think or be objective and rational.

Being objective and rational when a lion was attacking wouldn't have been great from an evolutionary point of view - because it would have slowed us down. But much of modern life needs measured calm thought rather than blind and sloppy emotional responses.

If you force the thinking part of your brain to work when you start to feel emotional, then you can dilute and subdue the rampaging emotional part. You can do this by simply forcing yourself to remember three names of other students you went to school with or even running through the alphabet in your head. Try it - because it really will work.

11. Create spare capacity in your life:

We experience counterproductive emotions for different reasons. Maybe we have never learnt to control ourselves or perhaps we are living in such a way that makes it more likely we'll experience emotional problems.

Every organism, from amoeba to antelope and from bluebell flower to blue whale, has needs. And so do you. If these needs aren't met, then the organism will suffer. You have very basic needs for food, sleep, shelter, and water; if these needs aren't met properly, you will feel more emotional - no doubt. But you also have emotional needs. To be emotionally healthy, a person needs to:

- Feel safe and secure; feel they have safe territory.
- Regularly give and receive quality attention.
- Feel a sense of influence and control over their life.
- Feel part of a wider community.
- Enjoy friendship, fun, love, and intimacy with significant people.
- Feel a sense of status; basically, feel they have a recognizable role in life. This also connects to a sense of competence and achievement.
- Feel stretched but not stressed to avoid stagnation, boredom, and to enhance self-esteem and a sense of status in life.

When these are met adequately, we then feel our life has meaning and purpose. Not meeting basic needs leaves us feeling that life is pointless and meaningless and will leave us wide open to emotional problems.

When you live in a way that, to some extent, meets all or most of the above needs, then you'll enjoy greater emotional stability and control. Knowing what you need in life is the first step to creating 'spare capacity' to focus beyond your emotions. And you can see how not meeting the need for feeling secure or getting enough attention or feeling connected to people around you could cause you emotional problems. Really think about these needs and gradually pursue activities that are likely to help you fulfil them.

12. Some Important Tips:

- Learn to recognize and anticipate "triggers" that set you off.
- Don't let the fear from the past keep you distracted from your future.
- Make your first goal to keep a cool head - in public. Be secure in the fact that you can always safely address and calm your emotions however you want to in private.
- When you see your mood changing, leave from whatever is causing it and take several deep breaths, pray, think about what was done or said to upset and figure out another way of dealing with it instead of getting upset! Also ask yourself is it worth?
- Don't assume everything is about you if something goes wrong with someone else unexpectedly. Some people may just be having a bad day. Or you may have caught them at the wrong time.
- Think about how you will see your reaction in 5 years time. Will you be proud of yourself for walking away with your dignity intact or will you look back and remember falling apart? Choose now.
- Sometimes it's helpful to keep a binder with lined paper. Then at the end of the day when you're in bed you can write down all your thoughts and emotions.
- Some experiences like watching a film, hearing a sound or tasting a food (sensory input) can trigger or bring about good emotions. The more good ones you can recognize, pay attention to and be aware of, the easier it is to put your

self in that kind of a recognizable mood. It's far easier to get out of an angry or sad state of mind when you can know what happy or joyful state of mind is like.

- No matter what you choose to do, it's important to continue acknowledging the emotion. Just because you're not reacting to an emotion doesn't mean that emotion doesn't exist.
- Try making a list of a bunch of feelings you want to be aware of either feeling or avoiding. Each day leave a check or mark by them as you accomplish or fail to accomplish your goal.

A constant reminder of our ardent nature, emotions surge through us at every second of the day. But we often take wrong actions when wrong feelings filter through our mind without restraint. To avoid the burn of acting out during an emotional upsurge, take a few simple steps to calm your heightened spirit and quiet your uneasy mind. When the moment has passed (in hindsight), you'll be grateful you were able to be the master of your emotions.

Cognition:

As mentioned in Distress, **cortisol** can have a negative impact on the **hippocampus**. The hippocampus is an important part of the brain responsible for local memory, indexing systems (where the brain stores information) and the immune system. The release of cortisol can **weaken** the hippocampus, resulting in:

- The reduction of concentration span
- Decision making becoming more difficult
- Memory loss
- Mental blocks (you may have noticed this before or during a test/exam).

Behavior:

What one feels **inside** comes out in the way he acts or **behaves**. If you are feeling nervous or anxious, you might show this by being restless or by trembling. If you feel very down and out, feeling worthless, incompetent and unloved, you might end up taking drugs, drinking, smoking, stop eating (or eat excessively) and/or join a gang in order to meet your needs for **belonging**

6. : What Stress Is - The Underlying Mechanisms...

There are two types of instinctive stress response that are important to how we understand stress and stress management: the short-term "Fight-or-Flight" response and the long-term "General Adaptation Syndrome". The first is a basic survival instinct, while the second is a long-term effect of exposure to stress.

A third mechanism comes from the way that we think and interpret the situations in which we find ourselves.

Actually, these three mechanisms can be part of the same stress response – we will initially look at them separately, and then show how they can fit together.

“Fight-or-Flight”

Some of the early work on stress established the existence of the well-known fight-or-flight response. His work showed that when an animal experiences a shock or perceives a threat, it quickly releases hormones that help it to survive.

These hormones help us to run faster and fight harder. They increase heart rate and blood pressure, delivering more oxygen and blood sugar to power important muscles. They increase sweating in an effort to cool these muscles, and help them stay efficient. They divert blood away from the skin to the core of our bodies, reducing blood loss if we are damaged. And as well as this, these hormones focus our attention on the threat, to the exclusion of everything else. All of this significantly improves our ability to survive life-threatening events.

Power, but little control...

Unfortunately, this mobilization of the body for survival also has negative consequences. In this state, we are excitable, anxious, jumpy and irritable. This reduces our ability to work effectively with other people.

With trembling and a pounding heart, we can find it difficult to execute precise, controlled skills. And the intensity of our focus on survival interferes with our ability to make fine judgments based on drawing information from many sources. We find ourselves more accident-prone and less able to make good decisions.

It is easy to think that this fight-or-flight, or adrenaline, response is only triggered by obviously life-threatening danger. On the contrary, recent research shows that we experience the fight-or-flight response when simply encountering something unexpected.

The situation does not have to be dramatic: People experience this response when frustrated or interrupted, or when they experience a situation that is new or in some way challenging. This hormonal, fight-or-flight response is a normal part of everyday life and a part of everyday stress, although often with an intensity that is so low that we do not notice it.

There are very few situations in modern working life where this response is useful. Most situations benefit from a calm, rational, controlled and socially sensitive approach. Our Relaxation Techniques section explains a range of good techniques for keeping this fight-or-flight response under control.

The General Adaptation Syndrome and Burnout

Hans Selye took a different approach from Cannon. Starting with the observation that different diseases and injuries to the body seemed to cause the same symptoms in patients, he identified a general response (the “General Adaptation Syndrome”) with which the body reacts to a major stimulus. While the Fight-or-Flight response works in the very short term, the General Adaptation Syndrome operates in response to longer-term exposure to causes of stress.

Selye identified that when pushed to extremes, animals reacted in three stages:

1. First, in the Alarm Phase, they reacted to the stressor.
2. Next, in the Resistance Phase, the resistance to the stressor increased as the animal adapted to, and coped with, it. This phase lasted for as long as the animal could support this heightened resistance.
3. Finally, once resistance was exhausted, the animal entered the Exhaustion Phase, and resistance declined substantially.

Selye established this with many hundreds of experiments performed on laboratory rats. However, he also quoted research during World War II with bomber pilots. Once they had completed a few missions over enemy territory, these pilots usually settled down and performed well. After many missions, however, pilot fatigue would set in as they began to show “neurotic manifestations”.

In the business environment, this exhaustion is seen in “burnout”. The classic example comes from the Stock trading floor: by most people’s standards, life on a trading floor is stressful. Traders learn to adapt to the daily stressors of making big financial decisions, and of winning and losing large sums of money. In many cases, however, these stresses increase and fatigue starts to set in.

At the same time, as traders become successful and earn more and more money, their financial motivation to succeed can diminish. Ultimately, many traders experience burnout. We look at this in more detail in our section on burnout.

Stress and the way we think

Particularly in normal working life, much of our stress is subtle and occurs without obvious threat to survival. Most comes from things like work overload, conflicting priorities, inconsistent values, over-challenging deadlines, conflict with co-workers, unpleasant environments and so on. Not only do these reduce our performance as we divert mental effort into handling them, they can also cause a great deal of unhappiness.

We have already mentioned that the most common currently accepted definition of stress is something that is experienced when a person perceives that “demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize.”

Stress, a matter of judgment

In becoming stressed, people must therefore make two main judgments: firstly they must feel threatened by the situation, and secondly they must doubt that their capabilities and resources are sufficient to meet the threat.

How stressed someone feels depends on how much damage they think the situation can do them, and how closely their resources meet the demands of the situation. This sense of threat is rarely physical. It may, for example, involve perceived threats to our social standing, to other people's opinions of us, to our career prospects or to our own deeply held values.

Just as with real threats to our survival, these perceived threats trigger the hormonal fight-or-flight response, with all of its negative consequences.

Building on this, this booklet offers a variety of approaches to managing stress. The navigation bar in the left hand column offers a range of practical methods for managing these stresses by tackling them at source. It also offers some powerful tools for changing your interpretation of stressful situations, thereby reducing the perception of threat.

Pulling these mechanisms together – the integrated stress response...

So far, we have presented the Fight-or-Flight response, the General Adaptation Syndrome, and our mental responses to stress as separate mechanisms. In fact, they can fit together into one response.

The key to this is that Hans Selye's 'Alarm Phase' is the same thing as Walter Cannon's Fight-or-Flight response.

We can therefore see that mental stress triggers the fight-or-flight response, and that if this stress is sustained for a long time, the end result might be exhaustion and burnout.

7: Stress and Health :

We've already looked at the survival benefits of the fight-or-flight response, as well as the problems this caused for our performance in work-related situations. We have also seen the negative "burnout" effect of exposure to long-term stress. These effects can also affect our health – either with direct physiological damage to our body, or with harmful behavioral effects.

The behavioral effects of stress

The behavioral effects of an over-stressed lifestyle are easy to explain. When under pressure, some people are more likely to drink heavily or smoke, as a way of getting immediate chemical relief from stress.

Others may have so much work to do that they do not exercise or eat properly. They may cut down on sleep, or may worry so much that they sleep badly. They may get so carried away with work and meeting daily pressures that they do not take time to see the doctor or dentist when they need to. All of these are likely to harm health.

The direct physiological effects of excessive stress are more complex. In some areas they are well understood, while in other areas, they are still subject to debate and further research.

Stress and heart disease

The link between stress and heart disease is well-established. If stress is intense, and stress hormones are not 'used up' by physical activity, our raised heart rate and high blood pressure put tension on arteries and cause damage to them. As the body heals this damage, artery walls scar and thicken, which can reduce the supply of blood and oxygen to the heart.

This is where a fight-or-flight response can become lethal: Stress hormones accelerate the heart to increase the blood supply to muscles; however, blood vessels in the heart may have become so narrow that not enough blood reaches the heart to meet these demands. This can cause a heart attack.

Other effects of stress

Stress has been also been found to damage the immune system, which explains why we catch more colds when we are stressed. It may intensify symptoms in diseases that have an autoimmune component, such as rheumatoid arthritis. It also seems to affect headaches and irritable bowel syndrome, and there are now suggestions of links between stress and cancer.

Stress is also associated with mental health problems and, in particular, anxiety and depression. Here the relationship is fairly clear: the negative thinking that is associated with stress also contributes to these.

The direct effects of stress in other areas of health are still under debate. In some areas (for example in the formation of stomach ulcers) diseases traditionally associated with stress are now attributed to other causes.

Regular exercise can reduce physiological reaction to stress. It also strengthens heart and increases the blood supply to it, directly affecting vulnerability to heart disease.

Although we focus mainly on stress and work performance, many of the tools and techniques within it will help to manage stresses that would otherwise adversely affect our health. *However, if you suspect that you are prone to stress-related illness, or if you are in any doubt about the state of your health, you should consult appropriate medical*

advice immediately. One should always keep in mind that stress management is only part of any solution to stress-related illness.

So, Take stress seriously!

08.: Stress and Performance:

So far, we have seen that stress is a negative experience. We have seen the short-term negative effects that stress hormones can have on your performance, and have seen how stress can contribute to burnout.

The Positive Effects of Pressure

Sometimes, however, the pressures and demands that may cause stress can be positive in their effect. One example of this is where sportsmen and women flood their bodies with fight-or-flight adrenaline to power an explosive performance. Another example is where deadlines are used to motivate people who seem bored or unmotivated. We will discuss this briefly here, but throughout the rest of this study we see stress as a problem that needs to be solved.

And the Negative...

In most work situations jobs, our stress response causes our performance to suffer. A calm, rational, controlled and sensitive approach is usually called for in dealing with most difficult problems at work: Our social inter-relationships are just too complex not to be damaged by an aggressive approach, while a passive and withdrawn response to stress means that we can fail to assert our rights when we should.

Before we look further at how to manage stress and our performance, it is important to look at the relationship between pressure and performance in a little more detail, first by looking at the idea of the “Inverted-U”, and second by looking at “Flow”. This is the ideal state of concentration and focus that brings excellent performance.

Pressure & Performance – the Inverted U

The relationship between pressure and performance is explained in one of the oldest and most important ideas in stress management, the “Inverted-U” relationship between pressure and performance (see below). The Inverted-U relationship focuses on people’s performance of a task.

The left hand side of the graph is easy to explain for pragmatic reasons. When there is very little pressure on us to carry out an important task, there is little incentive for us to focus energy and attention on it. This is particularly the case when there may be other, more urgent, or more interesting, tasks competing for attention.

09.: Introducing Stress Management...

Our main definition of stress is that *stress is a condition or feeling experienced when a person perceives that demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize.*

With this in mind, we can now look at how one can manage all of the stresses that our career will bring.

From our definition, it can be seen that there are three major approaches that we can use to manage stress:

- **Action-oriented:** In which we seek to confront the problem causing the stress, changing the environment or the situation;
- **Emotionally-oriented:** In which we do not have the power to change the situation, but we can manage stress by changing our interpretation of the situation and the way we feel about it; and
- **Acceptance-oriented:** Where something has happened over which we have no power and no emotional control, and where our focus is on surviving the stress.

Action-oriented approaches - best where we have some control

To be able to take an action-oriented approach, we must have some power in the situation. If we do, then action-oriented approaches are some of the most satisfying and rewarding ways of managing stress. These are techniques that we can use to manage and overcome stressful situations, changing them to our advantage.

The early sections on the navigation bar to the left focus on action-oriented coping. These sections introduce skills that help to manage job actively, work well with boss and co-workers, and change surroundings to eliminate environmental stress. The Action-oriented sections of this chapter are:

- Cope with the Stress of Work Overload
- Survive the Stress of Problem Jobs
- Deal With Problem People
- Manage Environmental Stress
- Manage Performance Stress
- Avoid Burnout

Emotionally-oriented approaches - subtle but effective

If we do not have the power to change a situation, then you may be able to reduce stress by changing the way we look at it, using an emotionally-oriented approach.

Emotionally-oriented approaches are often less attractive than action-oriented approaches in that the stresses can recur time and again; however, they are useful and effective in

their place. The section on Reducing Stress with Rational Thinking explains some useful techniques for getting another perspective on difficult situations.

Acceptance-oriented approaches - when there's no valid alternative...

Sometimes, we have so little power in a situation that all we can do to survive it. This is the case, for example, when loved-ones die.

In these situations, often the first stage of coping with the stress is to accept one's lack of power. The section on Defenses against Stress looks at building the buffers against stress that help through these difficult periods. Arguably, the section on Useful Relaxation Techniques also falls into this category.

These different approaches to stress management address our definition of stress in different ways: the action-oriented techniques help us to manage the demands upon us and increase the resources we can mobilize; the emotionally oriented techniques help us to adjust our perceptions of the situation; and the acceptance-oriented techniques help us survive the situations that we genuinely cannot change

Recognize longer-term stresses as well as short-term stress

What you may not have thought about are the deeper, longer-term stresses in your life. For example, the transition from college to a new job involves radical changes in lifestyle, location and personal status that can be deeply stressful.

As another example, anyone changing jobs or roles will experience a formidable array of new challenges and difficulties – all of these can be intensely stressful. Similarly, the joys and upsets of relationships and families also have their stresses. Remember, all of these will have an impact on your ability to cope.

The first technique we will look at is the “Schedule of Recent Experience”. This helps to understand the longer-term stresses in life. It sets the broad context of your approach to stress management, and helps you to understand how to bring the long term stress in your life within manageable bounds.

Next, we look at keeping and analyzing a Stress Diary. Stress Diaries help you to understand the day-to-day stresses in your life so that you work out how to manage them.

We will then use a variant of SWOT Analysis to look at your use of stress management techniques.

In its normal usage, SWOT Analysis is used to look at your Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats in a situation. This variant will help you to understand where you are good at managing stress, and where you need to improve your skills. It also helps to ensure that you are using all of the resources you have available to you.

10.: The Schedule of Recent Experience:

Introduction:

The Schedule of Recent Experience (SRE) is a useful technique for understanding the long term stress that one is experiencing.

It looks at the major life events you have experienced during the last year, and allocates an appropriate score to each of these. These scores are then added together, giving a total that shows the amount of major stress you have experienced during the year.

This scale is useful because it helps to understand if you've got just too much going on in your life – if you show a very high score on the SRE, then you should take great care to keep your life as stable and stress-free as possible. If you fail to do this, then you risk stress-related illness and burnout, as well as experiencing all of the normal unpleasantness and loss of performance that comes with high levels of stress.

Using the Tool:

The SRE is a table showing the 42 most important stresses that people experience in normal life. These are shown in the table below. To use the tool, work through this list of life stresses, identifying those that you have experienced in the last 12 months.

There are two easy ways of doing this. Either work through the figure below on paper and calculate values manually; or download this Microsoft Excel template, and fill in values appropriately – this will automatically calculate scores for you.

As you work through, enter the number of times that the event has occurred in the last year in the 'Number of Times' column. If an event has happened more than four times during the year, give it a score of 4. For example, if you have been fortunate enough to go on vacation five times during the year, enter '4' in row 37.

If you are calculating this manually, multiply the number of times the event has happened by the number in the 'Mean Value' column. This gives you your score for that event type. Total this to give your score. In the example above, you will suffer a score 52 points on the SRE if you go on holiday five times in a year.

Different people cope in different ways, and to a different extent. However, scores of 200 or more on this scale may show that you are experiencing high levels of longer-term stress. You may be in danger of burning out, or at risk fo stress harming your health. This is particularly the case if your work is routinely stressful. Scores of 300 or more mean that you should take particular care.

And again, we stress the warning at the foot of this page. If you have any concerns over stress-related illness or are experiencing persistent unhappiness, then you need to see a health professional.

The Schedule of Recent Experience

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#	Events experienced in last 12 months	No. of Times	Mean Value	Score
1	A lot more or a lot less trouble with the boss.		x 23 =	
2	A Major change in sleeping habits (sleeping a lot more or a lot less or a change in time of day when you sleep).		x 16 =	
3	A major change in eating habits (eating a lot more or a lot less or very different meal hours or surroundings).		x 15 =	
4	A revision of personal habits (dress, manners, associations, and so on).		x 24 =	
5	A major change in your usual type or amount of recreation.		x 19 =	
6	A major change in your social activities (e.g., clubs, dancing, movies, visiting, and so on).		x 18 =	
7	A major change in church activities (attending a lot more or less than usual).		x 19 =	
8	A major change in the number of family get-together's (a lot more or a lot fewer than usual).		x 15 =	
9	A major change in your financial state (a lot worse off or a lot better off).		x 38 =	
10	Trouble with in-laws.		x 29 =	
11	A major change in the number of arguments with spouse (a lot more or a lot fewer than usual regarding child rearing, personal habits, and so on).		x 35 =	
12	Sexual difficulties.		x 39 =	
13	Major personal injury or illness.		x 53 =	
14	Death of a close family member (other than spouse).		x 63 =	
15	Death of spouse.		x 100 =	
16	Death of a close friend.		x 37 =	
17	Gaining a new family member (through birth, adoption, oldster moving in and so on).		x 39 =	
18	Major change in the health or behavior of a family.		x 44 =	
19	Change in residence.		x 20 =	
20	Detention in jail or other institution.		x 63 =	

21	Minor violations of the law (traffic tickets, jaywalking, disturbing the peace, and so on).		x 11 =	
22	Major business re-adjustment (merger, reorganization, bankruptcy and so on).		x 39 =	
23	Marriage.		x 50 =	
24	Divorce.		x 73 =	
25	Marital separation from spouse.		x 65 =	
26	Outstanding personal achievement.		x 28 =	
27	Son or daughter leaving home (marriage, attending college, and so on).		x 29 =	
28	Retirement from work.		x 45 =	
29	Major change in working hours or conditions.		x 20 =	
30	Major change in responsibilities at work (promotion, demotion or lateral transfer).		x 29 =	
31	Being fired from work.		x 47 =	
32	Major change in living conditions (building a new home or remodeling, deterioration of home or neighborhood).		x 25 =	
33	Spouse beginning or ceasing to work outside the home.		x 26 =	
34	Taking out a mortgage or loan for a major purchase (purchasing a home or business, and so on).		x 31 =	
35	Taking out a loan for a lesser purchase (a car, TV, freezer, and so on).		x 17 =	
36	Foreclosure on a mortgage or loan.		x 30 =	
37	Vacation.		x 13 =	
38	Changing to a new school.		x 20 =	
39	Changing to a different line of work.		x 36 =	
40	Beginning or ceasing formal schooling.		x 26 =	
41	Marital reconciliation with mate.		x 45 =	
42	Pregnancy.		x 40 =	
	Total Score			

Applying this tool:

Some of these stresses can be avoided. Others cannot.

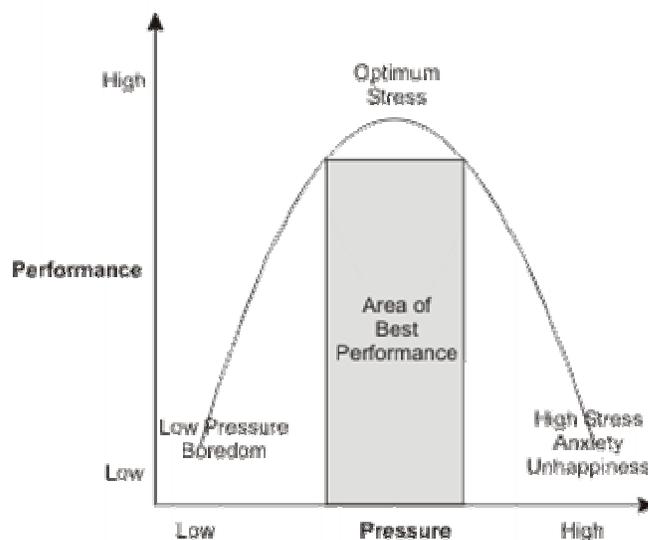
If you have a high score on the SRE, then do your best to avoid additional stresses. Ensure that you make good use of the stress management techniques explained in here. Take care of yourself.

Summary:

The Schedule of Recent Experience (SRE) is a well-validated technique for looking at the amount of longer-term stress that people are experiencing. Although it has been superseded in some areas, it is useful in predicting the likelihood that people will experience burnout or illness (including mental illness such as depression) based on the level of longer-term stress that they are experiencing.

To use the SRE, work through the table above, entering into the “Number of Times” column how often you have experienced particular stressors in the past year. Next, work through each row of the table multiplying this by the value in the “Mean Value” column. Write the result in the “Your Score” column. Finally, total the “Your Score” column.

Different individuals have different abilities to cope with stress. If, however, you score more than 200, then you should be aware that longer-term stress is something you need to pay careful attention to. If you score more than 300, then you should take great care, and should urgently try to minimize the amount of stress in your life. *This also includes looking at the shorter-term stresses in your life identified with the next tool, Stress Diaries.*



The Inverted-U relationship between pressure and performance

As pressure on us increases, we enter the “area of best performance”. Here, we are able to focus on the task and perform well – there is enough pressure on us to focus our attention but not so much that it disrupts our performance.

The right hand side of the graph is more complex to explain.

Negative Thoughts Crowd Our Minds

We are all aware that we have a limited short-term memory: If you try to memorize a long list of items, you will not be able to remember more than six or eight items unless you use formal memory techniques. Similarly, although we have huge processing power in our brains, we cannot be conscious of more than a few thoughts at any one time. In fact, in a very real way, we have a limited “attentional capacity”.

As we become uncomfortably stressed, distractions, difficulties, anxieties and negative thinking begin to crowd our minds. This is particularly the case where we look at our definition of stress, i.e. that it occurs when a person perceives that “demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize.” These thoughts compete with performance of the task for our attentional capacity. Concentration suffers, and focus narrows as our brain becomes overloaded.

As shown in the figure, this is something of a slippery slope: the more our brain is overloaded, the more our performance can suffer. The more our performance suffers, the more new distractions, difficulties, anxieties and negative thoughts crowd our minds.

Other research has shown that stress reduces people’s ability to deal with large amounts of information. Both decision-making and creativity are impaired because people are unable to take account of all the information available. This inability accounts for the common observation that highly stressed people will persist in a course of action even when better alternatives are available. It also explains why anxious people perform best when they are put under little additional stress, while calm people may need additional pressure to produce a good performance.

Notes on the research behind the Inverted-U:

While this is an important and useful idea, people’s evaluations of stress and performance are by necessity subjective. This has made it difficult to prove the ‘Inverted-U’ idea formally. Also, for ease of explanation, we show a smooth curve here. In reality, different people have different shaped and positioned inverted-Us at different times and in different circumstances. This is all part of “life’s rich tapestry”.

Entering a State of "Flow"

When you are operating in your “area of best performance”, you are normally able to concentrate, and focus all of your attention on the important task at hand. When you do this without distraction, it is described as a state of ‘flow’. This involves “being completely involved in an activity for its own sake. The ego falls away. Time flies. Every

action, movement, and thought follows inevitably from the previous one, like playing jazz. Your whole being is involved, and you're using your skills to the utmost".

You perform at your best in this state because you are able to focus all of your efforts, resources and abilities on the tasks at hand. While you are sufficiently motivated to resist competing temptations, you are not so stressed that anxieties and distractions interfere with clear thought.

This is an intensely creative, efficient and satisfying state of mind. It is the state of mind in which, for example, the most persuasive speeches are made, the best software is developed, and the most impressive athletic or artistic performances are delivered.

Helping self to Get Into Flow

One of the frustrations of management is that managers can feel that they lose the 'right' to these periods of deep concentration when they must be readily available to others, and be able to deal with the constantly changing information, decisions and activities around them. Studies of good managers show that they rarely get more than a few minutes alone without distraction. This alone can be frustrating, and can contribute strongly to managerial stress.

In jobs where concentration is a rare commodity, there are various solutions to creating the periods of flow that sustain good performance. Solutions include working from home, or setting aside parts of the day as quiet periods. Another solution might be to delegate the activities that require the greatest levels of concentration, allowing the manager to concentrate on problems as they arise, serving to create a flow of its own. One of the key aims of this book is to help you manage stress so that you can enter this state of flow, and deliver truly excellent performance in your career.

11.: Stress Diary :

Introduction:

Stress Diaries are useful for understanding the causes of short-term stress in your life. They also give you an insight into how you react to stress.

The idea behind Stress Diaries is that on a regular basis you write down how stressed you're feeling, so that you can understand these stresses and then manage them. This is important because often these stresses flit in and out of our minds without getting the attention and focus that they deserve.

As well as helping you capture and understand the most common sources of stress in your life, Stress Diaries help you to understand:

- The causes of stress in more detail; and
- How you react to stress, and whether your reactions are appropriate and useful.

Using the Tool:

Stress Diaries are useful in that they gather information regularly and routinely, over a period of time. This helps you to separate the common, routine stresses from those that only occur occasionally. This helps you understand the pattern of stress in your life.

Make regular entries in your Stress Diary (for example, every hour). If you have any difficulty remembering to do this, set an alarm to remind you to make your next diary entry. Also make an entry in your diary after each incident that is stressful enough for you to feel that it is important.

Every time you make an entry, record the following information:

- The date and time of the entry.
- How happy you feel now, on a scale of -10 (the most unhappy you have ever been) to +10 (the happiest you have been). As well as this, write down the mood you are feeling.
- How stressed you feel now, again on a subjective scale of 0 to 10. As before, 0 here would be the most relaxed you have ever been, while 10 would show the greatest stress you have ever experienced.
- The most recent stressful event you have experienced
- The symptom you feel (e.g. “butterflies in your stomach”, anger, headache, raised pulse rate, sweaty palms, etc.)
- The fundamental cause of the stress (being as honest and objective as possible)
- If you're recording an event, how well did you handle it: Did your reaction help solve the problem, or did it inflame it?

You will reap the real benefits of having a stress diary in the first few weeks. After this, the benefit you get will reduce each additional day.

If, however, your lifestyle changes, or you begin to suffer from stress again in the future, then it may be worth using the diary approach again. You will probably find that the stresses you face have changed. If this is the case, then keeping a diary again will help you to develop a different approach to deal with them.

Analyzing the Diary

After two weeks, take the time to look through your diary in detail:

- First, look at the different stresses you experienced. Pick out the stresses you experienced most frequently, and write them out in order.
- Next, prepare a second list with the most unpleasant stresses at the top of the list and the least unpleasant at the bottom.

Looking at your lists of stresses, those at the top of each list are the most important for you to learn to control. The stress planning tool helps you plan how

to deal with these stresses, and how to identify the techniques that are most effective for managing them.

Working through the stresses, look at their underlying causes, and your appraisal of how well you handled the stressful events. Do these show you areas where you handled stress poorly, and could improve your stress management skills? If so, list these.

- Next, look through your diary at the situations that cause you stress. List these (this book also helps you prepare for these situations so that you can manage stress effectively).
- Finally, look at how you felt when you were under stress. Look at how it affected your happiness and your efficiency, understand how you behaved, and think about how you felt. The section on Reducing Stress with Rational Thinking will show you how to improve your mood and manage your emotions.

Having worked through your diary, you should understand more fully what the most important and frequent sources of stress are in your life. You should appreciate the levels of stress at which you are happiest. And you should also know the sort of situations that cause you stress so that you can prepare for them and manage them well.

You should also have more of an understanding about how you react to stress, and the symptoms that you show when you are stressed. When you experience these symptoms in the future, learn to use appropriate stress management techniques.

However, remember how dangerous stress can be. Do pay attention to the warning at the foot of this page: If you have any concerns over stress-related illness or are persistently unhappy as a result of stress, you need to see your doctor.

Summary

Stress Diaries help you to get a good understanding of the routine, short-term stresses that you experience in your life. They help you to identify the most important, and most frequent, stresses that you experience, so that you can concentrate your efforts on these. They also help you to identify areas where you need to improve your stress management skills, and help you to understand the levels of stress at which you are happiest, and most efficient.

To keep a stress diary, make an entry on a sheet like the one shown on a regular basis. For example, you may do this every hour. Also make entries after stressful events.

After, say, two weeks, use the diary to identify the most frequent and most serious stresses that you experience. Use it also to identify areas where you can improve your management of stress.

You can then use the Stress Key to find helpful stress management techniques, and then plan a stress management program. Your Stress Diary also provides important information for the next technique, Stress SWOT.

12.: Stress SWOT Analysis :

Introduction:

SWOT Analysis is a useful technique used for understanding an organization's strategic position. It is routinely used to identify and summarize:

- **Strengths:** The capabilities, resources and advantages of an organization.
- **Weaknesses:** Things the organization is not good at, areas of resource scarcity and areas where the organization is vulnerable.
- **Opportunities:** The good opportunities open to the organization, which perhaps exploit its strengths or eliminate its weaknesses.
- **Threats:** Things that can damage the organization, perhaps as people exploit its limitations or as its environment changes.

The Stress SWOT tool is a variant of this technique, focused on helping you to understand your unique strengths and weaknesses in the way you manage stress. It also helps you to identify the resources you have available to you, and points out the consequences of managing stress poorly.

Strengths:

To use the tool, start by listing your strengths. Write down:

- Your personal strengths – things you are good at and people respect you for, your areas of good experience, etc.;
- Your support network – family, friends, professional or other networks, government services, powerful contacts, co-workers, your team, etc.; and
- The resources you can draw on – money, assets, power, etc.

Next, work through your stress diary and look at the times where you managed stress well. Write down the practical skills you used to do this – these are likely to be your stress management strengths.

Finally, look back into the past, and think about times when you handled intense stress successfully. Again, write down how you did this.

Weaknesses:

Next, list your personal weaknesses and the limitations in your position. Write down:

- Personal weaknesses – areas where you are aware that you are not strong, or things that people fairly criticize you for;
- Lack of resources – where other people at your level have access to these resources, or where the absence of resources is impacting your situation; and
- Bad situations – where you are experiencing problems with your job or relationships, or where you have a poor living or working environment.

Challenge these weaknesses rationally to ensure that they are fair and genuine, and that you are not being excessively harsh and self-critical. At the same time, challenge whether you could realistically expect more resources to be available.

Then work through the stress diary again, looking at the times where you did not handle stress well. Identify where you have problems managing stress. Again, look into your past at stressful situations. Where you think you handled stress poorly, write down why you think this was the case.

By cataloging all of these, you are identifying possible areas of change in your life, and are spotting where you need to develop new skills. In the next section, we will bring these into your Stress Management Plan.

Opportunities:

In the Opportunities section, brainstorm the opportunities you have available to you.

First, work your way through the strengths you have identified. Ask yourself how you can draw on these strengths to help you manage stress. For example, are there people whose job it is to help you? Are there people whose help you could call on? Could you pay people to take on tasks you do not have time for? Are you fully using the tools or assets you have available? Could you use your skills and strengths in one area to help yourself in another area?

Second, work through the weaknesses you have identified. These are opportunities for positive change and for development of new skills.

Finally, consider the real world, practical opportunities that would be open to you if you took advantage of these opportunities to improve your stress management.

Threats:

In the threats section, consider the consequences of leaving your weaknesses uncovered. Consider the damage to relationships, career and happiness that would come from failing to manage stress.

Use this consideration of the downside as a spur to ensure that you take stress management seriously!

Summary:

A Stress SWOT Analysis helps you to understand your unique position with respect to stress management.

By looking at strengths, you ensure that you recognize all of the personal strengths, skills, resources and social networks that can help you manage stress. By looking at your weaknesses, you identify areas you need to change in your life, including new skills that you need to acquire.

By looking at opportunities, you should be able to better see how you can take advantage of your strengths to help manage the stress in your life. You should also understand the rewards of good stress management. By looking at threats, you should recognize the negative consequences of managing stress poorly, and this should be a potent source of motivation!

13.: Self-Help Tool Finder & Plan:

This chapter helps you find the techniques which are most likely to help you deal with a specific source of stress.

***Please note:** This is not a diagnostic technique, it is merely a quick reference guide helping you find your way around the book. In using it, please pay attention to the warning at the foot of this page: If you have any concern over stress-related illness or are experiencing persistent unhappiness, then visit an appropriately qualified medical examiner.*

The Stress Management Key

To use the key, start at row 1. If your answer to the query in the ‘Question’ column is yes, follow the instructions in the ‘If Yes...’ column. If your answer is no, do the same with the instructions in the ‘If No..’ column. The key will quickly route you to the area of this book most likely to help you.

#	Question	If yes...	If no...
1	Do you feel exhausted, run down or disillusioned with your career?	See our Burnout section, then go to row 2	Go to row 2
2	Do you have <i>any</i> power to change the situation?	Go to row 3	Go to row 11
3	Is the importance of an upcoming event the main source of the stress?	See our Performance Stress section	Go to row 4
4	Does the stress come from relationship difficulties with other people?	Go to row 5	Go to row 7
5	Does this person/do these people have significant power over you?	See our Powerful People section	Go to row 6
6	Are you experiencing relationship difficulties with your co-worker(s) or team member(s)?	See our Co-worker Stress and Powerful People sections	See if any of the techniques in our Co-worker Stress and Powerful People sections help. If not, seek further help.
7	Are you overloaded with work or does stress come from the design of the job or inconsistencies with it?	Go to row 8	Go to row 9
8	Does your job seem rationally and consistently designed, and does it have clear career paths?	See our Work Overload section	See our Problem Jobs section, and then see our Work Overload section.

9	Are you experiencing stress, discomfort or distraction from your environment?	Visit our Environmental Stress section	Go to row 10
10	Are you living a healthy lifestyle and getting enough sleep?	Review all sections of our site. If these do not help, improvise.	Go to row 11
11	Are unhappy or negative thoughts associated with the stress you are experiencing?	Visit our Rational Thinking and Defenses Against Stress sections	Visit our Defenses Against Stress section

Making A Stress Management Plan

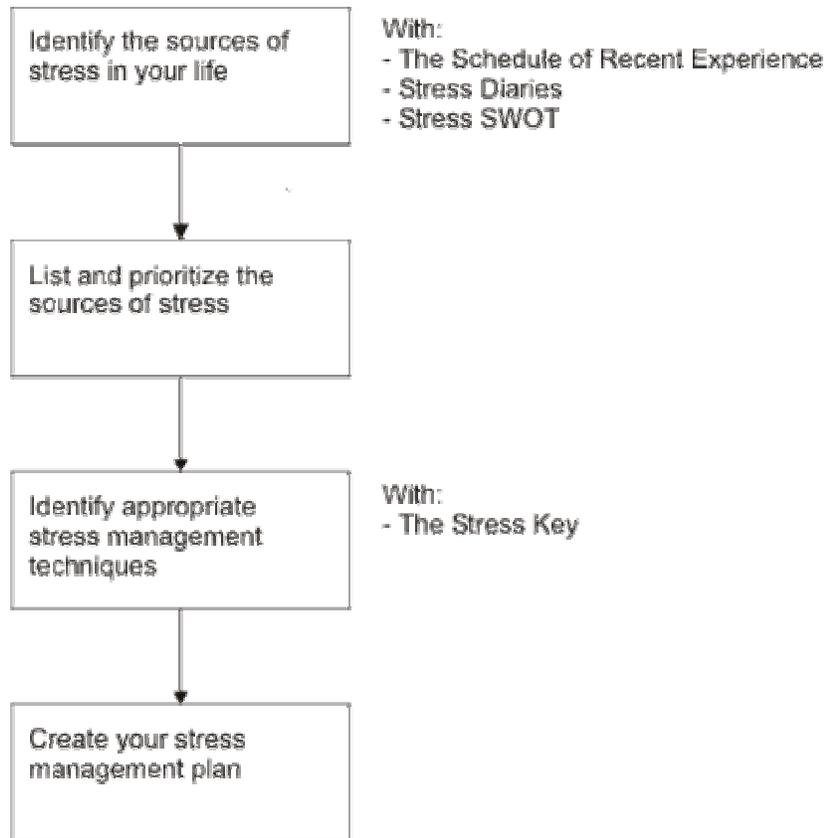
So far in this section, we have looked at the Schedule of Recent Experience, Stress Diaries and Stress SWOT.

In this section, we use the self-knowledge you have gained with these techniques to think about how you can manage stress. By making a stress management plan, you can focus your attention on the most serious sources of stress in your life, so that you can work on bringing these under control.

Introducing Your Stress Management Plan

The diagram below shows the stages of the stress management planning process:

The Stress Planning Process



We looked at the first stage of this process in our articles on the Schedule of Recent Experience, Stress Diaries and Stress SWOT. If you have used the tools we discussed, you should already have a good idea of the most important sources of stress in your life.

13. A: List and Prioritize the Sources of Stress in Your Life:

The next step is to prioritize these sources of stress so that you can separate the important stressors that must be dealt with from the minor, infrequent irritations that do not need as much attention.

Start by writing down a list of the sources of stress that you identified with the Schedule of Recent Experience. To this list, add the most frequent and serious sources of stress you identified with your Stress Diary. Finally, add the weaknesses and threats you identified with Stress SWOT.

Review this consolidated list and redraft it in order with the most important things at the top. The items at the top of the list should be the most important for you to resolve, while the ones at the bottom of the list can wait until you have the time to deal with them.

Once you have done this, the next step is to think about how to deal with each source of stress.

Work out How to Target Each Source of Stress

A good way of doing this is to work through the most important stressors on your list one-by-one. For each source of stress, work through the Stress Key. This will help you find the techniques that are most relevant.

Also, think about what you learned about yourself when you used Stress SWOT Analysis. As part of this, you may have identified people or resources that can help you in managing stress – co-workers, friends, mentors, team members or many other people, or additional resource. Make sure that you make appropriate use of all of the help, skills and resources that you have access to. Also, make a note of the skills that you need to acquire to manage stress effectively.

And then think through for yourself whether these are the most effective techniques or skills to use, or whether others may be more appropriate.

Bringing This Together: Your Stress Management Plan

Then, based on this, write down what you are going to do to manage each of the important sources of stress that you have identified. This is your Stress Management Plan.

As you create your plan, make sure that you do not over-stretch yourself: The last thing you want is to get stressed-out by failing to meet the timetable of your stress management plan!

Next, make entries into your diary reminding you to review your plan, and keep it fresh in your mind. With your plan, you should now have a good idea of what you have to do to manage the stress in your life. All you now have to do is implement this plan!

13B.Coping with Work Overload Planning:

This study would introduce you to some of the skills that are needed to manage a heavy workload.

Workload issues lie behind much of the stress we experience. Not only can a heavy workload be tiring in its own right, it often drives us to work much longer hours than we would really like. This means that we spend time working that we'd prefer to use for the things that give life value. It also means that we're working when we should really be resting. Worse than this, a heavy routine workload leaves us little time to deal with the emergencies that come up from time-to-time. This adds to the feeling of being "out of control" that is so much part of stress.

Successful workload management is therefore vitally important for your job satisfaction.

The list will help you to learn to handle work overload. Check here to read the introductory tips.

Job Analysis	- Assess the long term stress in your life
Time Management	- Reduce stress by managing your workload
Valuing Your Time	- Find out what your time is worth
Activity Logs	- Identify where time is wasted in your working life
To Do Lists	- Focus your efforts on the most important tasks
Effective Planning	- Manage the intense stress of complex projects
Delegation	- Getting the help you need with your workload

Plan work load :

Workload issues lie behind much of the stress we experience. Not only can a heavy workload be tiring in its own right, it often drives us to work much longer hours than we would really like. This means that we spend time working that we'd prefer to use for the things that give life value. It also means that we're working when we should really be resting.

Worse than this, a heavy routine workload leaves us little time to deal with the emergencies that come up from time-to-time. This adds to the feeling of being "out of control" that is so much part of stress.

Successful workload management is therefore vitally important for your job satisfaction.

The first tool we look at, Job Analysis, helps you to look at your job and to understand which tasks are essential, and which are distractions. This gives you the information you need to prioritize effectively.

The next set of tools we look at are Time Management skills. First, we look at time management as a subject to introduce the overall frame of mind needed to use time efficiently. Then, we look at specific time management techniques – use of a time valuation tool, Activity Logs, and To Do Lists. These help you to cut away inefficient, unproductive tasks, and concentrate on the high value jobs that will deliver the greatest returns. This helps you to increase your productivity.

This is followed by a brief introduction to task and project planning. The skills here allow you to make a credible assessment of the amount of time that will be needed to complete complex tasks, and help you to manage these along with your other ongoing work.

This is important because it helps you to “push back” against unrealistic workload expectations, and manage what people expect from you. This helps you to develop a

reputation for reliable delivery while also shielding you from what can be nightmarish deadline stress.

Finally, we look at basic delegation skills. You need to understand these if you are to be able to cope with a workload greater than that possible for one person to manage.

All of these skills work together to help you perform well, while at the same time keeping your workload within reasonable bounds.

13C: Job Analysis - Understand the reality of your job:

Introduction:

To do a good job, you need to fully understand what is expected of you. While this may seem obvious, in the hurly-burly of a new, fast-moving, high-pressure role, it is oftentimes something that is overlooked.

By understanding the priorities in your job, and what constitutes success within it, you can focus on these activities and minimize work on other tasks as much as possible. This helps you get the greatest return from the work you do, and keep your workload under control.

Job Analysis is a useful technique for getting a firm grip on what really is important in your job so that you are able to perform well. It helps you to cut through clutter and distraction to get to the heart of what you need to do. And it shows you the tasks you should try to drop.

Using the Tool:

To conduct a job analysis, go through the following steps:

1. **Review formal job documentation:**
 - Look at your job description. Identify the key objectives and priorities within it.
 - Look at the forms for the periodic performance reviews. These often show precisely the behaviors that will be rewarded and, by implication, show those that are not respected.
 - Find out what training is available for the role. Ensure that you attend appropriate training so that you know as much as possible about what you need to know.
 - Look at incentive schemes to understand the behaviors that these reward.

2. **Understand the organization's strategy and culture:**

Your job exists for a reason – this will ultimately be determined by the strategy of the organizational unit you work for. This strategy is often expressed in a mission statement. In some way, what you do should help the organization

achieve its mission (if it does not, you have to ask yourself how secure the job is!) Make sure you understand and perform well the tasks that contribute to the strategy.

Similarly, every organization has its own culture – its own, historically developed values, rights and wrongs, and things that it considers to be important. If you are new to an organization, talk through with established, respected members of staff to understand these values.

Make sure that you understand this culture. And make sure that your actions reinforce the company's culture, or at least do not go against it. Looked at through the lens of culture, will the company value what you do?

Check that your priorities are consistent with this mission statement and the company culture.

3. **Find out who the top achievers are. Make sure you understand why they are successful:**

Inside or outside the organization, there may be people in a similar role to you who are seen as highly successful. Find out how they work, and what they do to generate this success. Look at what they do, and learn from them. Understand what skills make them successful, and learn those skills.

4. **Check that you have the people and resources to do the job:**

The next step is to check that you have the staff support, resources and training needed to do an excellent job. If you do not, start work on obtaining them.

5. **Confirm priorities with your boss:**

By this stage, you should have a thorough understanding of what your job entails, and what your key objectives are. You should also have a good idea of the resources that you need, and any additional training you may need to do the best you can.

This is the time to talk the job through with your boss, and confirm that you share an understanding of what constitutes good performance in the role.

It is also worth talking through serious inconsistencies, and agreeing how these can be managed or corrected.

Summary:

Job analysis is a five-step technique for:

- Understanding and agreeing what you need to do to perform well in your job;
- Ensuring that you and your boss agree on the areas you should concentrate on when time gets tight; and the areas that can be de-emphasized during this time; and

- Making sure that you have the resources, training and staff needed to do a good job.

By using the Job Analysis technique, you should gain a good understanding of how you can do your job well. You should have a clearer view of the things that you must do, and the things that you can drop. And if, after reviewing your workload you are still overloaded, it gives you much of the information you need to negotiate for more help.

13D: Time Management :

Tips to reduce stress and improve productivity:

Effective time management is a primary means to a less stressful life. These practices can help you reduce your stress and reclaim your personal life.

Do you find yourself overwhelmed by the number and complexity of projects you have that need to be completed at work each day? Do you often feel the day flies by without your devoting the necessary attention to each assignment because other tasks keep landing on your desk, co-workers interrupt you with questions or you can't get it all organized?

You probably know that effective time management will help you get more done each day. It has important health benefits, too. By managing your time more wisely, you can minimize stress and improve your quality of life.

Good time management is essential if you are to handle a heavy workload without excessive stress. By using time management skills effectively, you can reduce work stress by being more in control of your time, and by being more productive. This ensures that you have time to relax outside work.

The central shift of attitude within time management is **to concentrate on results, not on activity.**

To this end, it embraces a range of skills that help you to:

- Assess the value of your time, understand how effectively you are using it, and improve your time use habits;
- Focus on your priorities so that you focus on the most important jobs to do, delegate tasks where possible, and drop low value jobs;
- Manage and avoid distractions; and
- Create more time.

Time Management helps you to reduce long-term stress by giving you direction when you have too much work to do. It puts you in control of where you are going, and helps you to increase your productivity. By being efficient in your use of time, you should

enjoy your current role more, and should find that you are able to find the time to relax outside work and enjoy life.

The next few tools we look at are some of the most immediately important time management skills.

This will not, however, go into much more detail than this on these skills, as the skills are diverse and warrant a site in their own right. *Make Time for Success!*,

Valuing Your Time - Find out what your time is worth

But how do you get back on track when organizational skills don't come naturally? To get started, choose one of these strategies, try it for two to four weeks and see if it helps. If it does, consider adding another one. If not, try a different one.

- **Plan each day.** Planning your day can help you accomplish more and feel more in control of your life. Write a to-do list, putting the most important tasks at the top. Keep a schedule of your daily activities to minimize conflicts and last-minute rushes.
- **Prioritize your tasks.** Time-consuming but relatively unimportant tasks can consume a lot of your day. Prioritizing tasks will ensure that you spend your time and energy on those that are truly important to you.
- **Say no to nonessential tasks.** Consider your goals and schedule before agreeing to take on additional work.
- **Delegate.** Take a look at your to-do list and consider what you can pass on to someone else.
- **Take the time you need to do a quality job.** Doing work right the first time may take more time upfront, but errors usually result in time spent making corrections, which takes more time overall.
- **Break large, time-consuming tasks into smaller tasks.** Work on them a few minutes at a time until you get them all done.
- **Practice the 10-minute rule.** Work on a dreaded task for 10 minutes each day. Once you get started, you may find you can finish it.
- **Evaluate how you're spending your time.** Keep a diary of everything you do for three days to determine how you're spending your time. Look for time that can be used more wisely. For example, could you take a bus or train to work and use the commute to catch up on reading? If so, you could free up some time to exercise or spend with family or friends.
- **Limit distractions.** Block out time on your calendar for big projects. During that time, close your door and turn off your phone, TV and e-mail.
- **Get plenty of sleep, have a healthy diet and exercise regularly.** A healthy lifestyle can improve your focus and concentration, which will help improve your efficiency so that you can complete your work in less time.

- **Take a time management course.** If your employer offers continuing education, take a time management class. If your workplace doesn't have one, find out if a local community college, university or community education program does.
- **Take a break when needed.** Too much stress can derail your attempts at getting organized. When you need a break, take one. Take a walk. Do some quick stretches at your workstation. Take a day of vacation to rest and re-energize.

6 Tips for Better Time Management

The simple, unpleasant truth is that we are probably busier than we ever have been. Notwithstanding the fact that little science backs up this notion, the anecdotal evidence is overwhelming. We start things and don't finish them and are constantly nagged by the idea that we've forgotten to do something, but we're not sure what it is.

That people awash in labor- and time-saving devices, from robotic vacuum cleaners to microwave ovens to computers, would feel so harried so often seems counterintuitive. But what technology gives, it also takes away.

"As we have increased the numbers of time-saving devices and products to make our lives easier we have found ways to fill the time," and a chronic lack of time leads to stress.

Think about it as adding an extra hour to your day through time-management techniques.

Something as simple as "knowing where your keys are in the morning, knowing where your kid's library book or homework is, will reduce a lot of stress," Some of time management tips.

Make a Time Diary:

Take a week and plot out what you do every day. Be honest. If you watch 25 hours of TV each week, write it down.

"This is a painful awakening for most people," says Jana Jasper. "You have to include everything --- gym time, eating, driving, weekly meetings, all of it. It can be upsetting to see how little unstructured time we allow ourselves. But it's difficult to make intelligent decisions about using your time more effectively if you don't know what you're doing with your time now."

Learn to Say "No"

Turn off your cell phone, TV and beeper. When someone asks you to do something that you really don't have time to do, say so, politely, but firmly. And don't allow yourself to feel guilty.

"One reason we are feeling so busy all the time is that we are worse at setting personal boundaries around what we'll say 'no' to," . Part of declining to do things, is focusing on your goals. Your time diary can help in this regard. Once you've blocked time for important, but often not scheduled activities, sign on for only those things that are important, family, friends and health. Once you know exactly what you have time to do, turning down things that don't fit into your priorities is easier.

Time-Based, To-Do List:

"Create a to-do list that includes how much time you'll spend on each item on the list." Lists are always helpful, but when you add how much time each task should take, it helps prioritize how you go about the tasks. When you prioritize tasks you naturally focus on those that you can do immediately.

Let Your Computer Help:

Technology helped get you into the time bind in the first place, so use it to help get you out. Try some of the many personal scheduling software programs that allow you to keep a calendar, 'to-do' lists, and phone and address books on your computer.

"It's not enough to be efficient anymore." "The goal here is to use the technology to get rid of all the paper in your life. I can't stress enough how important this is."

Much of organizing, these experts say, comes from streamlining your life. The more clutter you have in your life -- phone numbers on slips of paper, business cards in notebooks, a desk piled high with calendars and lists -- the more likely you are to waste time trying to stay organized and on top of things,

Multitask:

Is there a more overused buzzword today? We all combine several activities into one all the time. Some multitasking is dangerous. Talk on the phone while driving and your chances of being involved in a traffic accident rise dramatically. That being said, lots of activities can be effectively and safely combined. Listen to books on tape while commuting. When you watch television, pay your bills.

"Women are better able to multitask than men." "Even if both partners work full time, the woman usually is able to still think about the children's schedule, the home, the meals. Men are better able to focus in on one task at a time -- and women can learn from this at times."

Don't Be a Perfectionist:

There's nothing wrong with being ordinary. Perfectionism, otherwise known as paying excessive attention to every detail, important or not, is a kind of procrastination.

"Set rational goals for yourself." "It's a fine thing to strive to be your best. It's counter productive to try to be the very best."

Setting unattainable expectations of yourself just adds stress to your life.

Reward Yourself:

Finally, don't let any progress, however small, go unrewarded.

"Use your time diary to make decisions about how you want to organize your time better." "As you make progress in prioritizing and saying 'no,' let yourself enjoy that. It doesn't have to be a big reward, maybe it can be as simple as spending some time by yourself or getting a massage important to acknowledge and enjoy your success."

To Do Lists - Focus your efforts on the most important tasks

Introduction:

Keeping a To Do List is one of the most fundamental but important working skills that people can have. To Do Lists help people to deliver work reliably, without letting tasks "slip through the cracks." This obviously helps in reducing the stress of having failed to do something important.

To Do Lists are essential when you need to carry out a number of different tasks or different sorts of task, or where you have made a number of commitments. If you find that you are often caught out because you have forgotten to do something, then you need to keep a To Do List.

While To Do Lists are very simple, they are also powerful, both as a method of organizing yourself, and as a way of reducing stress. Often, problems may seem overwhelming, or you may have a seemingly huge number of demands on your time. This may leave you feeling out of control, and overburdened with work. Keeping a To Do List guides you in your approach to work, puts the work into context, and gives you a starting point for negotiating deadlines.

Just as importantly, by prioritizing your To Do List, you can ensure that you focus on the highest value tasks, helping to ensure that you deliver the greatest possible value.

Creating Your To Do List:

A 'To Do List' is a simple list of the tasks that you need to carry out, consolidating all the jobs that you have to do into one place.

To create a To Do List, write down the tasks that face you, and if they are large, break them down into their component elements. If these still seem large, break them down again. Do this until you have listed everything that you have to do, with all tasks shown as manageable pieces of work.

Make sure that you put all of the tasks you have to do down on your list, so that you do not have the stress of trying to remember tasks that are "buzzing around" in your memory.

Then Prioritize It...

Once you have created your list, run through the tasks and allocate priorities from A (very important) to F (unimportant). Where you have several tasks of the same priority, number them in order of priority (for example, "B2" may be the second most important B priority task).

Base your assessment of priorities on two criteria: the urgency of the task and the importance of the task. Some little tasks can be urgent and must be done. For example, paying an electricity bill is a small task, but if you have reached the payment date, it is a task that needs to be completed; otherwise, your power may be cut off! Other tasks will be important and have a high value. Use your own judgment to prioritize your list.

Remember, you should consider the results of your Job Analysis when prioritizing your To Do List. Ensure that you are doing all the important tasks that you should be doing.

If too many tasks have a high priority, run through the list again and demote the less important ones. Once you have done this, rewrite the list in priority order.

Tip 1:

To Do Lists are very personal, and different approaches to them are valid for different people at different times, and in different jobs. Paper lists, for example, are very portable and easy to change; however, they are laborious to write out and order. You may find that you prefer to keep your list on your PC, perhaps as a document, spreadsheet, or on To Do List software. If this suits the way you work, this will make it easier to keep the list and sort it into order.

What To Do If You're Overloaded...

If you have too many tasks to do in too short a time, then work through the list and see if there are any tasks that can be delegated to someone who is not as overloaded as you may be, and who can help you.

Alternatively, negotiate with affected people to see if they are prepared to give more time. You should find that being able to show your To Do List helps in these negotiations.

Tip 2:

"Negotiate" is an overloaded word, conjuring up images of sophisticated ploys and subtle gamesmanship. While this can be true in very important negotiations with a great deal at stake, what "negotiate" normally means is "find a mutually acceptable solution". This is easy and is something we do all the time!

Tip 3:

If you know that you are unlikely to be able to deliver something to someone by a deadline, let them know why you cannot do it as early as possible, and give them a date

by which you expect to deliver. It is usually much better to do this up front than to let someone down when they are relying on you.

As you consider your use of time and your ability to deliver tasks, remember to leave contingency time for unexpected activities and for appropriate teamwork.

Your To Do List should now be a sensible, small-scale plan that you can use to manage your workload.

Using Your To Do Lists

Different people use To Do Lists in different ways, and in different situations: if you are in a sales-type role, a good way of motivating yourself is to keep your list relatively short, and aim to complete it every day.

In an operational role, or if tasks are large or dependent on too many other people, it may be better to keep one list and “chip away” at it. This may mean be that you carry low priority tasks from one To Do List to the next. You may not be able to complete some very low priority tasks for several months. Only worry about this if you need to. If you are running up against a deadline for them, raise their priority.

If you have not used To Do Lists before, try them: they are one of the keys to being truly productive and efficient.

Summary:

To Do Lists are fundamentally important to efficient work. By using To Do Lists, you ensure that:

- You remember to complete all necessary tasks;
- You tackle the most important jobs first, and do not waste time on less important tasks; and
- You do not get stressed by taking on too many unimportant jobs.

To draw up a To Do List, list all the tasks you must carry out. Mark the importance of the task next to it, with a priority from A (very important) to F (unimportant). Use your judgment to assess these priorities. They should be based on a combination of task importance, urgency, and contribution to your job objectives.

Then redraft the list into priority order and work your way through the tasks on your list in order. By doing this, you will do the most important jobs first, and will make the best use of your time.

A hidden benefit of using To Do Lists properly is that by the end of the day, hopefully only relatively unimportant and non-urgent jobs should remain. This makes it much easier to go home on time with a clear conscience!

Effective Planning

- Managing deadline stress on complex projects

To Do Lists are important tools for daily planning. They are, however, not sufficiently powerful for planning large or complex jobs. This difference is most notable when jobs have high visibility, must be completed to a deadline, or involve coordinating many people to achieve a single goal. For these, some level of planning is appropriate.

Action Plans (simple lists of tasks that need to be completed to achieve a goal) are useful for smaller tasks, when jobs or particular projects are to be completed mainly by one person, and do not need to be completed by a fixed date. With Action Plans, tasks are written down in the order that they need to be completed. By estimating how long each task will take, you can quickly estimate how long the plan will take to complete.

Formal project management techniques become essential for more complex work that involves coordinating several people, or for work that needs to be completed to challenging deadlines. The techniques for doing this are beyond the scope of this chapter; however, the Mind Tools project planning section gives useful information on this.

By planning a project properly, you can work out the resources needed, when you need them, and for how long you need them. From this, you can work out realistic delivery times.

This is important for your reputation and for your stress levels, as there is nothing more likely to create excruciating stress for both yourself, and for your co-workers, than trying to meet an unreasonable deadline. Similarly, failing to hit a high visibility deadline will not be good for your career!

Tip:

Project Management is a profession in its own right. If you need to run very large or extremely complex projects, you may benefit from good formal training in project management, or you may want to hire a professional project manager.

13E: Delegation - Getting the help you need, when you need it:

Introduction:

There is a limit to the amount of work that you can do on your own. There is only so much value that you can deliver to your organization without the help of other people.

If you are successful in your career, at some stage the demands on you will become greater than you are able to cope with on your own. As they do, you must learn to delegate parts of your work to be able to manage your increased workload, and further expand the value you can deliver.

Delegation is the skill that you must acquire to manage this work, and to ensure that it is successfully delivered. It is also a skill you can use to bring other people's expertise to bear in your your work, particularly in areas where you do not have the skills or the temperament to do the best possible job. Furthermore, the transfer of responsibility involved with delegation develops your staff, and can increase their enjoyment of their roles.

Using the Tool:

Delegation involves passing responsibility for the successful delivery of work to other people, while retaining a suitable level of control over the process and the finished product. To delegate work, go through the following stages:

Decide What to Delegate:

A good place to start with this is your Activity Log. Look for tasks in your Activity Log that can be quickly taught to someone else, or can be done by someone else who already has the necessary skills.

Also, look for tasks that can be done better by someone with a different set of skills. For example, if you are a self-employed consultant, a trained bookkeeper is more likely to do a better job handling your accounts than you are.

As far as possible, delegate complete jobs. Complete jobs are much more satisfying to work on than unconnected fragments of work. By doing this, you are also more likely to get back well-thought-out, properly integrated deliverables.

Find the Right Person to Delegate to:

Find someone who is capable and willing to do the work, and who has the time to do it properly. Ideally, find someone who is trained to do the job and has been successful in doing it in the past.

Sometimes you will have to delegate to someone who does not have the necessary experience. Where this happens, bear in mind that inexperienced people will take time to train and will initially need close supervision to get the job completed to the correct standard. You should also expect that it will take several iterations before the task is completed satisfactorily, and should allow time for this in the commitments you give to other people.

View this as an investment: as this person learns the job, he or she will complete it more and more effectively, consuming less and less of your time.

Explain the Purpose of the Job and What You Expect:

Explain:

- Why the job needs to be done, and how this will help the client, the company or the team;
- What needs to be done and what needs to be delivered;
- The resources available and the constraints within which work needs to be carried out;
- When the work needs to be completed by;
- The check points during the project at which you will review progress; and
- Your willingness to give information or coaching where needed.

Then let go!

Tip 1: The setting of appropriate check points is key to effective delegation. By setting the expectation of what you want to see at each checkpoint, you can check the progress that is being made towards the end goal.

By setting early and regular checkpoints you can quickly pick up problems, offer coaching or take corrective action while there is still plenty of time for these to be effective.

As you become more confident in the person you are delegating to, you can reduce the number of checkpoints you use and give the person more autonomy in what they are doing.

Managing the Job:

Once you have decided to delegate a task to someone, let him or her get on with it. Review the project at the agreed project check points, but do not micromanage the task: Accept that there may be different ways of achieving it.

Be available to answer questions or to give coaching where appropriate.

Meet at the agreed-upon checkpoint times and review progress. Be aware that you may need to take contingency action if things are not going as well as you hoped. Pragmatically (and particularly when you first delegate work to someone) you can expect that work will not be completed fully to your liking. Leave time for rework if appropriate.

Only Accept Back Good Quality Work:

When a job is delivered back to you, allow enough time to check it through thoroughly.

If you are able to, only accept it back when you are satisfied with it: If you accept back partly completed work, then you will have to invest time in completing it, and the person you have delegated to will not have learned to do the work to the required standard.

The 80/20 rule holds for many jobs: what seems like 80% of the work takes 20% of the time to complete, while what seems like the remaining 20% of work (which includes

tidying up, polishing and proofing) can take 80% of the time to complete. If you accept partially finished jobs, you can end up taking back a lot of the work you have delegated.

If Appropriate, Reward the Effort:

If someone has done good work for you, let that person know. Appropriate praise will help to build their self-confidence and efficiency next time they do the job for you.

Tip 2: When you first start to delegate work, you will often find that people take much longer than you to complete it. This is because you are an expert at doing the work, while the person you are delegating it to is still learning how to do it. You may even find that you are spending more time supervising work than you would take to do the task yourself. Be patient and persist!

If you choose the right person to delegate to, and you are delegating correctly, you will find that he or she quickly becomes competent and reliable.

On the other hand, if the person you delegate is not up to the job, then they will slow you down and reduce your ability to manage your workload. Managing this is a real chore!

Tip 3: Don't worry too much about asking for help. Most managers have been in the position of having so much work that they need to delegate some of it. This is expected when you are under pressure.

Also, by working with people and delegating work to them, you are training them. This increases the capability of these members of staff, and therefore often benefits the organization.

Summary:

Delegation is an important skill for helping you to manage a heavy workload. If you do not delegate, you will quickly reach a stage where you stop progressing in your career because you simply cannot take on any more work.

Use this process when you delegate work:

1. Decide what to delegate;
2. Find the right person to delegate to;
3. Explain the purpose of the job and what you expect;
4. Let the delegated person get on with the job and review work at appropriate checkpoints;
5. Only accept back good quality work; and
6. If appropriate, reward the effort.

13F: Assertiveness - Getting What You Want, In a Fair Way...

Introduction:

If you are using the time management skills explained in our Work Overload section, then you are probably working efficiently and effectively. If you have fully clarified your job using the Job Analysis tool described in our Problem Jobs section, and are acting appropriately, then you can be reasonably confident that you are concentrating your efforts on the right activities.

If you still find you are working longer hours than you think is fair, if you find that your working conditions are unreasonable or unhelpful, or if your workload is still excessive, then you need to communicate this and change the situation.

You can do this well and you can do this badly.

One bad approach is to be passive in the way you handle this, taking an inferior position and emphasizing the power of the person you are approaching. The advantage of this approach is that it seems to minimize any potential conflict arising from the request. By acknowledging the power of the other person, you make the granting of your request a “favor” which can be granted or denied irrespective of reason or right. This weak approach is obviously bad for your self-esteem and will mean that you frequently do not get your way. This will particularly be the case if other people are applying stronger pressure in the opposite direction.

A second bad way of doing this is to be aggressive in your approach. Here, you actively state what you want, and seek to force the other person into giving it to you. While this is sometimes successful in the short-term (particularly where there will be no ongoing relationship), it can damage long-term relationships severely. This is clearly a problem if you are dealing with your boss.

The best approach is to communicate assertively. With an assertive approach, you ask for what you want clearly and openly and explain rationally why you want - all without trying to use inappropriate emotional leverage. By negotiating rationally with the other person, you show respect for your working relationship and ensure that you make a fair contribution to the decision making process. Assertive communication is “grownup” communication. Without clear and open communication, your boss will not know what you want from your job. He or she will therefore not be able to help you to achieve it.

Using the Tool:

Among its many other good sections, The Relaxation & Stress Reduction Workbook (see our righthand sidebar) introduces a useful approach to assertiveness with its LADDER mnemonic, the approach we use in this chapter.

LADDER describes a six-stage process for handling problems in an assertive way. These are:

- L** – Look at your rights and what you want, and understand your feelings about the situation
- A** – Arrange a meeting with the other person to discuss the situation
- D** – Define the problem specifically
- D** – Describe your feelings so that the other person fully understands how you feel about the situation
- E** – Express what you want clearly and concisely
- R** – Reinforce the other person by explaining the mutual benefits of adopting the site of action you are suggesting.

We look at these in more detail below:

L – Look at your rights and what you want, and understand your feelings about the situation

The first stage of the process is to look objectively at the problem. Do what you can to cut away the emotion involved with it. Try to understand why you feel that your rights are being violated, or why you feel that something is wrong with the situation. You may find that the Emotional Analysis tool in our Rational Thinking section helps you with this.

Also helping you to understand your rights, the Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook has a useful table showing traditional incorrect assumptions and how these compare against the legitimate, fair rights that you can reasonably expect to have. This is shown in the table below.

As we grow up, we are exposed to many views of how we should conduct ourselves. These come from many different sources. Some of these are appropriate for us as children, but not as adults. Others reflect old fashioned or autocratic ways of thinking that have more recently been superceded. Others arise from the many inconsistent and conflicting belief systems we are exposed to in daily life. All of these can lie at the root of these incorrect assumptions.

Your Legitimate Rights

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	Mistaken Traditional Assumption	Your Legitimate Rights
1.	It is selfish to put your needs before others' needs.	You have a right to put yourself first sometimes.

2.	It is shameful to make mistakes. You should have an appropriate response for every occasion.	You have a right to make some mistakes. Mistakes are inevitable, particularly when you are stretching yourself to do something new or original.
3.	If you can't convince others that your feelings are reasonable, then the feelings must be wrong, or maybe you are going crazy.	You have a right to be the final judge of your feelings and accept them as legitimate. [See the Mind Tools Emotional Analysis Tool for more on this]
4.	You should respect the views of others, especially if they are in a position of authority. Keep your differences of opinion to yourself. Listen and learn.	You have a right to have your own opinions and convictions.
5.	You should always try to be logical and consistent.	You have a right to change your mind and decide on a different site of action.
6.	You should be flexible and adjust. Others have good reasons for their actions and it is not polite to question them.	You have a right to protest against unfair treatment or criticism.
7.	You should never interrupt people. Asking questions reveals your stupidity to others.	You have a right to interrupt in order to ask for clarification.
8.	Things could get even worse. Don't rock the boat.	You have a right to negotiate for change.
9.	You shouldn't take up other people's valuable time with your problems.	You have a right to ask for help or for emotional support.
10.	People don't want to hear that you feel bad, so keep it to yourself.	You have a right to feel and express pain.
11.	When someone takes the time to give you advice, you should take it very seriously. They are often right.	You have a right to ignore the advice of others.
12.	Knowing that you did something well is its own reward. People don't like show-offs. Successful people are secretly disliked and envied. Be modest when complimented.	You have a right to receive formal recognition for your work and your achievements.
13.	You should always try to accommodate others. If you don't, they won't be there when you need them.	You have a right to say "No".
14.	Don't be anti-social. People are going to think you don't like them if you say you'd rather be alone instead of with them.	You have a right to be alone, even if others would prefer your company.

15.	You should always have a good reason for everything you feel and do.	You have a right not to justify yourself to others.
16	When someone is in trouble, you should help them.	You have a right not to take responsibility for someone else's problem.
17.	You need to be sensitive to the needs and wishes of others, even when they are unable to tell you what they want.	You have a right not to have to anticipate others' needs and wishes.
18.	It is always good policy to stay on people's good side.	You have a right not to always worry about the goodwill of others.
19.	It is not nice to put people off. If questioned, give an answer.	You have a right to choose not to respond to a situation.

A – Arrange a Meeting with the Other Person to Discuss the Situation

By arranging a formal meeting with the other person, you show the importance of the situation to you. You also ensure that due time is allocated to discussing it. Note that in spontaneous situations it may be appropriate to discuss the problem straight away.

D – Define the Problem Specifically

In defining the problem, keep information objective and uncolored by emotion. Make sure that your comments are correct, and that they are supported by facts where appropriate.

In talking about the facts underlying a situation, you give the other person an opportunity to give you additional information. This may change your perception of how things are.

D – Describe Your Feelings So That the Other Person Fully Understands How You Feel About the Situation

Once you have explained the facts of the situation, explain how you feel about it. This helps the other person to understand how important it is that the situation is resolved in a satisfactory manner.

In doing this, do not attack or blame the other person for the problem. Explain how the situation affects you.

Tip:

If you find that you start to get emotional when you describe your feelings, use imagery to help you out. For example, if you start to get upset, imagine that you move your feelings into a box on the table beside you. Then describe the contents of the box to the other person. You should find that this helps you to dissociate yourself from your feelings so that you can talk about them objectively.

E – Express What You Want Clearly and Concisely

Say precisely what you want to happen to resolve the situation. Keep your message short, clear, direct and unambiguous. Be polite in your expression of this; however, do not confuse your message.

R – Reinforce Your Message to the Other Person

Explain the benefits of the site of action that you want to the other person. Show him or her how doing what you want will improve the situation.

Be careful in expressing negative consequences of not taking the action, as making threats can damage working relationships. In some cases, however, the negative consequences of not taking action may need to be spelled out.

Summary:

Using an assertive approach to communicating is a fair and adult way of raising, and dealing with, difficulties in your relationships with powerful people. In using an assertive approach, you avoid both the weakness of passivity and the relationship and career damage that comes from excessive aggression. Assertive approaches avoid the game-play of passive and aggressive communication. They promote clear communication and, because all relevant facts and emotions are considered, are more likely to bring about a successful resolution of the situation.

By being able to communicate clearly, you can bring stress-creating problems and issues to the attention of people who have the power to do something about them. Most managers are rational human beings who want to keep their teams happy recognizing that this actually helps teams to perform well. Often, the main obstacle to this is that people do not communicate problems. You may be surprised by how willing powerful people are to help you out.

13G: Coping With "Unreasonable Demands"

Introduction:

Demands that seem unreasonable can be a tremendous source of stress.

These often arise when innocent situations come together and reinforce one another to create stressful, extreme, and unfeasible demands on you. For example, if you are in a customer service role, several customers can be clamoring for completion of large jobs at the same time. This becomes intensely stressful when you only have the resource to service a few of them.

Similarly, enthusiastic middle managers can amplify the importance of simple, low priority requests from senior managers, creating unwarranted pressure on implementation teams. In other situations, requirements can be misunderstood when transmitted from person-to-person, the importance of deadlines can be overstated, and requests can be made in ignorance of key pieces of information.

Obviously, real emergencies can also occur. Resolving these can often require extreme and unpleasant levels of activity from all involved.

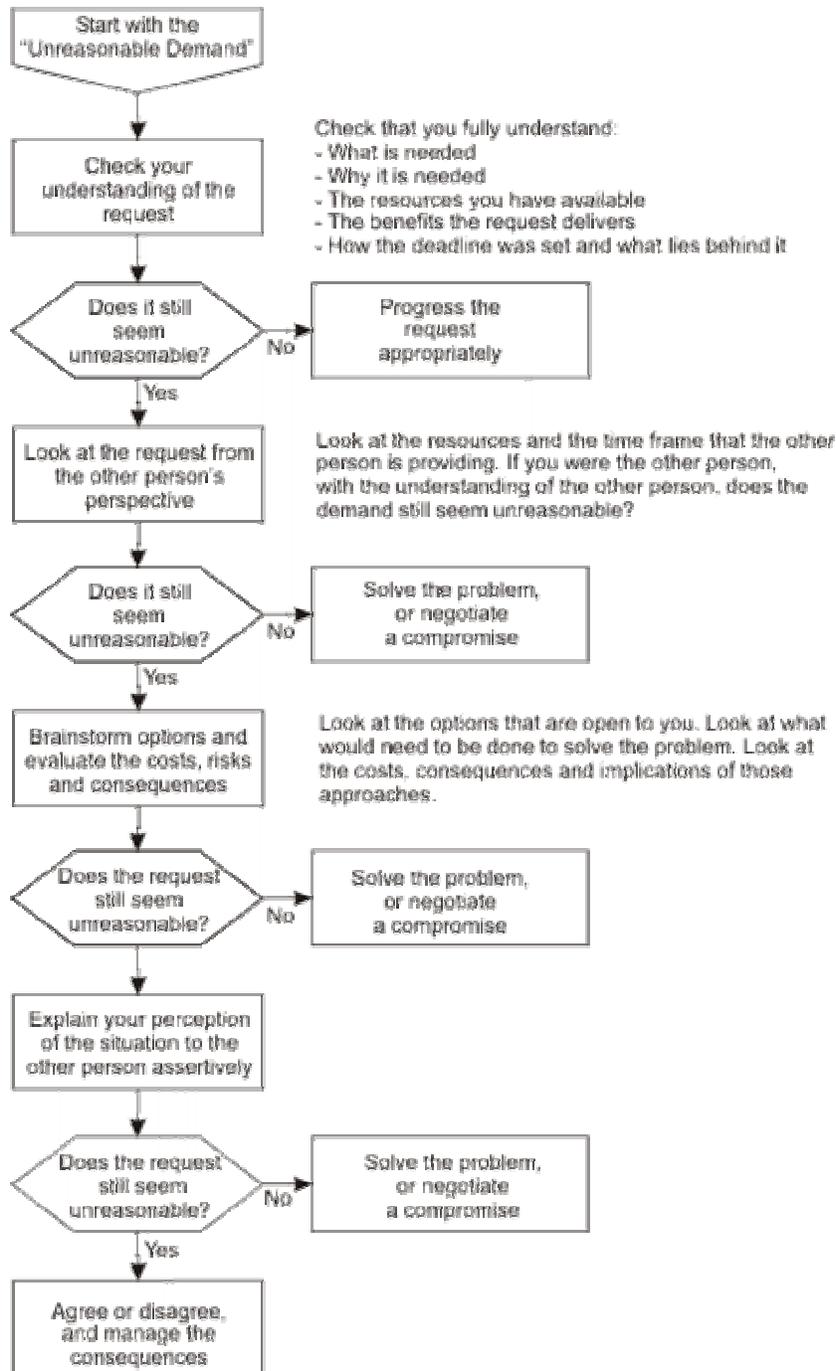
In all of these cases, and in many others, reasonable people can make unreasonable demands with or without knowing it. If you add into this the concept of “stretch goals”, the fact that people making requests may not have correctly appreciated the situation, and the fact that that people may be playing normal commercial games, you can see how problems arise.

This tool helps you to work through apparently unreasonable demands to understand what lies behind them, and develop appropriate solutions to them. It helps you to work effectively with the person making the demand to find a satisfactory solution, rather than just assuming that the other person is “difficult and unreasonable”. This helps you to reduce the stress that these situations can cause.

Using the Tool:

The Diagram below shows you a process for working through apparently unreasonable demands.

Managing "Unreasonable" Demands



By using this process, you can ensure that:

- The situation has not arisen as a result of a misunderstanding;
- You have fairly tried to understand the other person's position;
- You have explored all reasonable ways to meet the demands; and
- You have tried to negotiate a fair compromise.

Each step in the diagram is explained below:

1. Check Your Information and Assumptions:

The first stage of this process is simply to make sure of your information. Check that you have not made any incorrect assumptions. Then check that you fully understand what you are being asked to do. Finally, confirm when it needs to be delivered. If you are set a deadline, understand why that deadline has been set, and what happens if it is not met. You may find that deadlines are actually much more flexible and arbitrary than they initially appear.

2. Look From the Other Person's Perspective:

If things still seem unreasonable, try looking at the situation from the other person's perspective. Make sure you are fully aware of all of the facts. For example, if you are working at full capacity and someone asks you to take on more priority work, they might not know how much work you have on. Explain the situation to them, and try to negotiate an appropriate solution.

Tip:

"Negotiate" is an overloaded word. It conjures up images of sophisticated ploys and subtle gamesmanship. While this can be true in very important negotiations with a great deal at stake, what "negotiate" normally means is "find a mutually acceptable solution". This is often easy, and is something we do all the time.

It is also quite possible that what seems unreasonable to you, might seem fine to someone else. For example, if you are new to a company, it might have a longer hours culture than you are used to. As another example, a client needing to place a priority order may expect it to be turned around in a reasonable time - the fact that your production process is backlogged may not interest them. Come to a fair view of what is right in the set circumstances with which you have to work, and then manage the situation appropriately.

3. Explore Your Alternatives and the Cost of the Alternatives:

If the demand still seems unreasonable, think through all the ways in which you might try to meet it. A little lateral thinking may help you to find a solution. Evaluate the impact of any possible solution.

4. Explain Your Perception Assertively:

Using the techniques we described in our assertiveness article, arrange a meeting and explain the situation as you see it in an assertive manner.

5. Agree or Disagree, and Manage the Consequences

By this stage, you will have done everything that you can reasonably be expected to do to meet the unreasonable demand.

It is still quite possible that you may not have agreed on a fair way forward. The other person may be trying to squeeze you to get a better deal than is normal. This is quite often the case in tough commercial negotiations (particularly where the other person does not expect to have to do business with you again).

Alternatively (this is unpleasant) they may have political “hidden agendas” and may want you to fail or be disadvantaged.

This is where you need to know your “BATNA” – your Best Alternative To a Negotiated Agreement. This is the course of action or outcome that is open to you if you do not agree to meet the unreasonable demand. You also need to have an idea of what the future value of the relationship might be, as making a sacrifice now may bring strong benefit in the future.

If your BATNA is good, then the other person may have little power to impose the demand on you. Either use your BATNA to negotiate good compensation for coping with the unreasonable demand, or reject it.

If your BATNA is poor, then you may have to agree to the demand. Even if this is the case, try to negotiate some form of fair compensation for any pain you have to accept.

If you choose to turn down the demand, make sure that you manage this with all of the stakeholders who will be affected - this gives them the opportunity to support you and help to manage the consequences.

Summary:

It is far too easy to immediately jump to the conclusion that someone is a “bad person” when they make an unreasonable demand of you. In reality, people can make unreasonable demands for a whole range of good and bad reasons.

This tool gives you a process for working through seemingly unreasonable demands. This involves the following stages:

- Checking your information and assumptions;
- Looking from the other person’s perspective;
- Exploring the alternatives;
- Explaining your perceptions assertively; and
- Agreeing or disagreeing, and managing the consequences.

If you choose to turn down the demand, make sure that you explain the reasons for this to all appropriate stakeholders. We talk about this next.

13H: Team Negotiation Skills :

- Finding An Acceptable Compromise

Introduction:

Negotiation skills help you to resolve situations where what you want conflicts with someone else's interests. As we discussed with in the assertiveness skills section, there are wrong ways of handling these situations: With an aggressive approach, you could seek to overpower the other person to give what you want. This is clearly damaging to subsequent teamwork. With a passive approach, you could simply give in to the other person's wishes. This is clearly not good for you.

The aim of negotiation is to explore the situation, and to find a solution that is acceptable to both people.

Different Styles for Different Situations...

There are different styles of negotiation, depending on circumstances. Where you do not expect to deal with people ever again, and you do not need their goodwill, it may be appropriate to play hardball. Here you may seek to win a negotiation, while the other person losing out. Many people go through this when they buy or sell a house, which is why house buying can be such a confrontational and unpleasant experience.

Similarly, where there is a great deal at stake in a negotiation (for example, in large sales negotiations), then it may be appropriate to prepare in detail, and use gamesmanship to gain advantage.

These approaches are usually wrong for resolving disputes within a team. If one person plays hardball, then this puts the other person at a disadvantage. Similarly, using tricks and manipulation during a negotiation can severely undermine trust, damaging subsequent teamwork. While a manipulative person may not get caught if negotiation is infrequent, this is not the case when people work together on a day-by-day basis. Honesty and openness are the best policies in team-based negotiation.

Preparing for a successful negotiation

Depending on the scale of the disagreement, a level of preparation may be appropriate for conducting a successful negotiation. For small disagreements, excessive preparation can be counter-productive because it takes time that is better focused on reaching team goals. It can also be seen as manipulative because just as it strengthens your position, it weakens the other person's.

If a major disagreement needs to be resolved, preparing thoroughly is warranted, and worthwhile. Think through the following points before you start negotiating:

- **Goals:** What do you want to get out of the negotiation? What do you expect the other person to want?
- **Trading:** What do you and the other person have that you can trade? What do you and the other person have that the other might want? What might you each be prepared to give away?
- **Alternatives:** If you don't reach agreement with him or her, what alternatives do you have? Are these good or bad alternatives? How much does it matter if you do not reach agreement? Does failure to reach an agreement cut you out of future opportunities? What alternatives might the other person have?
- **The relationship:** What is the history of the relationship? Could or should this history impact the negotiation? Will there be any hidden issues that may influence the negotiation? How will you handle these?
- **Expected outcomes:** What outcome will people be expecting from this negotiation? What has the outcome been in the past, and what precedents have been set?
- **The consequences:** What are the consequences for you of winning or losing this negotiation? What are the consequences for the other person?
- **Power:** Who has what power in the relationship? Who controls resources? Who stands to lose the most if agreement isn't reached? What power does the other person have to deliver what you hope for?
- **Possible solutions:** Based on all of the considerations, what possible compromises might there be?

Style is critical...

The best approach for negotiation within a team is to adopt a win-win approach, i.e. one in which both parties feel positive about the situation when the negotiation is concluded. This helps to maintain a positive working relationship afterwards.

This governs the style of the negotiation. Histrionics and displays of emotion are clearly inappropriate because they undermine the rational basis of the negotiation and bring a manipulative aspect to it.

Despite this, emotion can be an important subject of discussion. For a team to function effectively, the emotional needs of team members must be fairly met. If emotion is not discussed where needed, the agreement reached can be unsatisfactory and temporary. Be as detached as possible when discussing your own emotions. Perhaps it would be best to discuss your emotions as if they belonged to someone else.

Negotiating successfully...

The negotiation itself is a careful exploration of your position and the other person's position, with the goal of finding a mutually acceptable compromise that gives you both as much of what you want as possible. Note that the other person may quite often have very different goals from the ones you expect!

In an ideal situation, you will find that the other person wants what you are prepared to give, and that you are prepared to give what the other person wants.

If this is not the case, and one person must give way, then it is fair for this person to try to negotiate some form of compensation for doing so. The scale of this compensation will often depend on the many of the factors we discussed above. Ultimately, both sides should feel comfortable with the final solution if the agreement is to truly be considered a win-win agreement.

The next technique, the formal setting of team rules, comes into play where both assertiveness and negotiation have failed to build good working relationships...

14: Stress Planning:

14A. Anger: How to transform it:

Anger is energy, an emotion, and it is part of the experience of life. Anger can become your greatest enemy of health and well being or your greatest ally toward freedom and personal empowerment. It all hinges upon your relationship with your emotions. Before we explore this root emotion, it is important for me to clarify the terms positive and negative emotions.

Emotions are a part of our feedback system about how to live our lives

They inform us of what we need to do in order to survive. As a society we have judged our emotions and placed them into basically 2 categories, positive (good) and negative (bad) emotions. We tend to label any feelings that are constrictive (ie. fear, guilt, loneliness) as bad and any emotions that are expansive (love, joy, fulfillment) as positive. The challenge is to redefine your relationship to all of your emotions and maturing the way you relate to each of them. Here is how to do that.

New Way to Relate to Your Emotions:

Negative Emotions are any emotion (love or fear) that you Ignore, Deny, Repress inside of you. Regardless of their names, all emotions become negative when you refuse to feel them. I have often said anger never hurt anyone, repressed anger has killed millions of people in the course of our history. Because eventually repressed anger explodes into a rage. The repression of the anger is what causes it's destructiveness. Likewise, love that goes unexpressed is just as destructive as fear or anger. They are all energy and meant to be felt.

Positive Emotions are any emotion that you Feel, Express and Release.... Appropriately! When you respect your anger as much as you do the love inside of you, you will have matured your emotional relationship and begin to take dominion over this part of your life.

Anger is one of the most misunderstood, repressed and denied emotions within our living experience. When you can understand the nature of anger, and are willing to feel it, you can begin to harness a lost power that is key to creating permanent and positive changes in your life.

Everyone has anger, but very few people are actually feel it. We have been taught from our childhood to judge anger as a negative emotion. It is not! Like all emotions, anger is meant to be felt, expressed and released... appropriately.

Regardless of whether we feel it or not, repressed anger has a negative impact in our lives. Yet within all anger is a trapped hidden resource of willpower. The energy and power to change the negativity and take charge of our life. That is the greatest benefit that anger can offer us... when we learn to feel and release it, appropriately. When we deny anger, we also automatically deny a part of our power and ability to create change in our lives. Addictions, worry, self doubt, and confusion and powerlessness all emerge when anger is repressed.

How do we create a healthy and functional relationship with this emotion that is a vital key to your inner strength? It is important to understand that anger isn't a bad

emotion, it is a messenger in our lives telling us that change is needed. Anger that is handled responsibly is a powerful resource for change. When we honestly feel and deal responsibly with it, expressing and releasing it from our hearts and minds, then anger becomes a constructive emotion offering us untold willpower and renewal of your life force.

4 steps to Transform Anger into Willpower:

The 1st step is to own the fact that you have it. Taking responsibility for your anger and being willing to feel it, allows it to come into your consciousness so you can connect with it and begin transforming it into a positive experience. When we judge our anger as bad and wrong we repress it unconsciously. That is why it is important to change the definition of your emotions and to mature your relationship to them. It is the realization of this truth, that will begin lifting anger out of it's repressed state.

The 2nd step is to express anger by using a writing technique. Here is how it works. Take a notebook of blank paper and write at the top of the page, "Me and My Anger". Begin writing the first thing that comes to your mind about anger. Write free association style. Don't worry about sentence structure or spelling. Express what you feel about anger, taking that feeling from your mind and writing it onto the paper. For example, write down whatever feelings you have at that moment. "This exercise is stupid. I don't believe I'm doing this! I wish I would have never have read that article. Anger, is so frustrating, I feel like I'm back in fourth grade....yada, yada, yada" Let it out! Whatever pops into your mind, write down onto the paper. Write how you feel about having to do this exercise. Before you know it, you will start tapping into the anger inside of you and begin expressing it. You'll be amazed at how much is hidden inside of you. Then all of a sudden the feelings will stop. Take a break and do something you enjoy.

The 3rd step, which is to release and forgive yourself and others. This is a vitally important step which involves using your imagination. Your subconscious mind does not know the difference between something you imagine and something that really happens to you. Sit back where you won't be disturbed, and close your eyes. Imagine the person that you're angry with standing before you. This person may have died long ago, it might be a parent, or a relative who mistreated you, it might be a part of yourself. Tell them in your mind how angry and upset you are. If you need to act it out, act it out-imaginatively! If you were so angry you could have spit and screamed, then in your imagination, spit and scream!

Remember that the energy in your imagination follows your intention. If your intention is "I'm going to release and get beyond my anger and transform it into a positive energy", then, that's what will happen. Imagining your boss in front of you and you yelling at him and throw him through the window, isn't about hurting your boss. You're intention is to let go of this emotion, not to hurt your boss! Once your subconscious mind has vented that anger, you can easily forgive. You can really let it go with dignity and grace.

The 4th step is to transform this energy into a positive force in your life. I want to transform this anger into determination, or self-discipline and positive motivation.

Visualize what you want to change, imagine yourself with renewed inner strength, and feel the changes happening that you desire. Breathe deeply as you allow this new energy to integrate deep into your heart and mind, renewing your inner strength.

When you release the old angers of your past, you strengthen your power in the present moment and your life becomes full and rich with greater love, happiness and peace. The more anger you own, process and release the more clear, happy and alive you will feel. You won't believe how much of your life force energy is hidden within the depth of your anger.

Some important tips to help get your anger under control:

Note: These rules are for you. Please do not apply them on others.

1. **Take a 'timeout.' Start Counting** Although it may seem cliché, counting to 10 before reacting really can defuse your temper.
2. **Get some space.** Take a break from the person you're angry with until your frustrations subside a bit.
3. **Learn to postpone: Once you're calm, express your anger.** It's healthy to express your frustration in a no-confrontational way. Stewing about it can make the situation worse. Otherwise too it is suggested that **“A good deed should be done immediately and a bad deed be postponed”**
4. **Observe Silence:** Keep Silence for some time whenever you frustrate to release anger.
5. **Get some exercise.** Physical activity can provide an outlet for your emotions, especially if you're about to erupt. Go for a brisk walk or a run, swim, lift weights or shoot baskets.
6. **Think carefully before you say anything.** Otherwise, you're likely to say something you'll regret. It can be helpful to write down what you want to say so that you can stick to the issues. When you're angry, it's easy to get sidetracked.
7. **Identify solutions to the situation.** Instead of focusing on what made you mad, work with the person who angered you to resolve the issue at hand.
8. **Use 'I' statements when describing the problem.** This will help you to avoid criticizing or placing blame, which can make the other person angry or resentful — and increase tension. For instance, say, "I'm upset you didn't help with the housework this evening," instead of, "You should have helped with the housework."
9. **Forgive: Don't hold a grudge.** If you can forgive the other person, it will help you both. It's unrealistic to expect everyone to behave exactly as you want.
10. **Use humor to release tensions.** Lightening up can help diffuse tension. Don't use sarcasm, though — it's can hurt feelings and make things worse.

11. **Practice relaxation skills.** Learning skills to relax and de-stress can also help control your temper when it may flare up. **Practice deep-breathing exercises, visualize a relaxing scene, or repeat a calming word or phrase to yourself,** such as "Take it easy." Other proven ways to ease anger include listening to music, writing in a journal and doing yoga.
12. **Water Therapy**
13. **Mirror Therapy**
14. **Take a Decision: that I want to control my anger. Decide that “my anger is inappropriate for me”**
15. **Accupressure**

14B. Stress relief from laughter:

When it comes to relieving stress, more giggles and guffaws are just what the doctor ordered. Whether you're overcome with giggles during the most hysterical moments of a Monty Python movie or you twitter away at the highbrow humor of a New Yorker cartoon, laughing does you good. Laughter helps you deal with a variety of maladies, including the stresses of daily life.

Laughter's health benefits are no joke. A good sense of humor can't cure all ailments, but data are mounting about the positive things laughter can do.

Short-term benefits

A good laugh has great short-term effects. When you start to laugh, it doesn't just lighten your load mentally, it actually induces physical changes in your body. Laughter can:

- **Stimulate your organs.** Laughter enhances your intake of oxygen-rich air, stimulates your heart, lungs and muscles, and increases the endorphins that are released by your brain.
- **Activate and relieve your stress response.** A rollicking laugh fires up and then cools down your stress response and increases your heart rate and blood pressure. The result? A good, relaxed feeling.
- **Soothe tension and stomachaches.** Laughter can also ease digestion and stimulate circulation, which helps reduce some of the physical symptoms of stress.

Long-term effects:

Laughter isn't just a quick pick-me-up, though. It's also good for you over the long haul. Laughter may:

- **Improve your immune system.** Negative thoughts manifest into chemical reactions that can impact your body by bringing more stress into your system and decreasing your immunity. In contrast, positive thoughts actually release neuropeptides that help fight stress and potentially more-serious illnesses.
- **Relieve pain.** Laughter may ease pain by causing the body to produce its own natural painkillers.

- **Increase personal satisfaction.** Laughter can also make difficult situations a little bit easier.

How to have — or gain — a sense of humour

Are you afraid you have an underdeveloped — or nonexistent — funny bone? Developing or refining your own particular sense of humour may be easier than you think.

- **Put humour on your horizon.** Find a few simple items, such as photos or comic strips, that elicit a chuckle from you or others. Then hang them at home, in your office or even on the visor of your car.
- **Laugh and the world laughs with you.** Find a way to laugh about your own situations and watch your stress begin to fade away.
- **Think positive.** Look for the positive or the humorous in every situation and surround yourself with others who do the same.
- **Knock-knock.** Browse through your local bookstore or library's selection of joke books and get a few rib ticklers in your repertoire that you can share with friends.
- **Know what isn't funny.** Don't laugh at the expense of others. Some forms of humour aren't appropriate. Use your best judgment to discern a good joke from a bad, or hurtful, one.

Laughter is the best medicine

Go ahead and give it a try. Turn the corners of your mouth up into a smile and then give a laugh, even if it feels a little forced. Once you've had your hearty chuckle, take stock of how you're feeling. Are your muscles a little less tense? Do you feel more relaxed or buoyant? That's the natural wonder of laughing at work.

14C. Discover your Destiny:

The concept of destiny can excite and stimulate you at the core of your being and can also become a source of frustration that renders feelings of impotencia and longing. Destiny is a simple word with much meaning and misunderstandings attached too it. Destiny can become a confusing concept when you approach it from the perspective of "predetermination". Understanding the true nature of destiny can unravel its mysteries and magic.

Destiny is your destination, it is where you are headed-toward a future plan, that has meaning and significance to you. Destiny is also the design of your life. The way you go about your daily life and the style of living you engage in. Destiny is the direction in which your growth is unfolding, either toward fulfillment and love or toward confusion and despair. Destiny is the direction, the design and the destination of your future that you hold in consciousness right now. Misunderstanding the concept of destiny causes it to become elusive. Many erroneously define destiny as a lofty spiritual goal, that only a few are chosen to fulfill. Destiny is seen as a mission that is predestined and must be figured out in order to evolve. It is often thought of as a burden to bear. Destiny is usually considered something to do and not a state of being. This is where many get stuck in the misconceptions of destiny.

True destiny involves both doing and being, it is a form and a function. Let me explain. The function of "teaching" can be somebodies destiny. It can express itself through many forms. The function of destiny is the permanent part which is "predestined" it never changes. However, the forms of destiny are always a choice and are flexible and

changing. For instance, a person whose function of destiny is teaching, may become a college professor for many years and then write a book (another form of teaching), may quite teaching school and begin lecturing to audiences about his book (another form of teaching) and then is offered a radio talk show to educate more people (another form of teaching). The function of teaching is always present, it is a part of his nature, yet the forms of teaching will shift and change from a classroom to a book, lectures and radio.

The function is real and the forms are illusion. Looking for the form of destiny and never knowing your function leads to frustration. The function is the way in which you go about living your life. Out of the function of your destiny many forms will appear. The major paradox of destiny is that it is both predestined and a choice.

Understanding the function of your life, provides the greatest freedom to begin fulfilling your destiny. How do you function in the living of your life? Are you a natural born teacher? Healer? Comedian? Problem solver? Motivator? Listener? What is natural to you, is a part of your nature, and becomes the way you function in life? Review your past history, what was the common denominator in all the jobs you had that you really enjoyed? Look at your relationships, what is the heart of the matter, that gives you a sense of purpose and significance? Listen to what people have told you about your strengths, talents and gifts. Thinking about these areas of your life can reveal the function of your destiny. Take time to explore what comes naturally too you.

The question isn't, "Do I have a destiny?" Everyone has a destiny. The question needs to be, "Who is going to reveal my destiny? My ego or my soul?" Some allow their ego to design and direct their lives, avoiding fears and confrontations, avoiding challenge and change. The destiny of the ego is survival, at all cost. When we allow our ego to partake in our destiny, we end up with little growth and much frustration. We end up feeling meaningless and constantly searching. Here are some clues to know if your allowing your ego to interfere with your true destiny? The ego wants to think that destiny is only a predetermined form that you must somehow figure out. The ego wants destiny to be simple without any challenges. It seduces you into believing that destiny is a "turn key" answer to all your problems. These ideas about destiny are never true.

Following your Soul's direction will lead you toward greater fulfillment and love in your life. It is set in motion when you act upon what really matters to you about living your life. What opens your heart and mind to dream? The soul's path of destiny is one in which you give meaning to your life versus trying to get meaning out of life. True destiny always challenges you to overcome your greatest fears and to embrace a deeper love than you've ever known. It requires that you open up to change and growth. Your destiny will always provide greater meaning about who you really are- an empowered spiritual being, that is more than capable of overcoming a challenge.

Destiny isn't a free ride into your future, it involves responsibility, choice and action. It demands that you participate with your whole being, spiritually, mentally, emotionally and physically. How well do you respond to a challenge? How willingly do you allow change? Honestly answering these questions will measure how easily you will allow your Soul to carve and create your destiny rather than your ego. Your Souls path of destiny will give you the strength and power to achieve the success and fulfillment that is beyond anything your ego can imagine.

14D: Fight Your Fear: Take Control of your future:

The greatest obstacle we encounter with stress and anxiety is the fear of the future. This fear has always been surging in the hearts and minds of man. The unknown has always threatened the ego with self doubt and produces restlessness, anxiety and insomnia. It is important to decide what you are going to do with your fear and self doubt around issues of your future. Will it be the foundation of your future? Or will you transform it's energy into new power to augment a future that can resolve your negativity and fulfill your dreams and desires?

The choice will be yours. It always has been. Unlike the past, however, you can be more conscious of your choices. Too many in our world will wait and see what the future holds, this is were powerlessness and insomnia emerge. A successful person doesn't wait and see what the future holds but begins focusing their mind on a vision of the future even in the midst of chaos and crisis. What future vision do you hold in your mind? If you don't have one, then the anxiety of the unknown can produce insomnia and added stress in your daily life. It is easy to begin dreaming of a life filled with love, joy, happiness and success? If not, why not?

It is vital to begin thinking, imagining and feeling the promise of a future that is positive. For that is where all creation and peace of mind begins.

Nothing exists in this world without first being in the imagination. In many ways your imagination is the birth canal of everything in the world. Think about it. The shirt your wearing, the computer you are looking at had to first be in the imagination of someone before it could be made physical. The same with your future. Not consciously thinking and imagining your future is a way to remain powerless and to create added stress and restlessness in your life.

We each have many potential futures that loom upon the horizon. Both light and dark. It is up to you to dismantle your potential dark futures and to energize the positive ones. Unfortunately, fear sells and some people are fixated upon their negativity. We tend to identify ourselves by our negative patterns of living. Too many hold a self image as something they've done, versus who they really are.

For instance, some people hold an image of themselves as an alcoholic or recovering addict. That may be a part of what they've done in their past... but it is not really a part of who they are. Because you've experienced it doesn't make it who you are, unless you choose to hold onto that identity and thus limit the possibility of your future. You can't afford to continue giving your power away to your fears and to fill your mind with negativity. What you decide to fill your mind with today is going to build the future you live, tomorrow.

Avoiding the potential fear and negativity that life presents is the not answer to this dilemma. That is just another tactic fear uses to run your life. Avoidance doesn't resolve your personal negativity it only augments it. Our ego likes the simple answer and thus will run and hide from anything negative or unpleasant, erroneously thinking it is "being positive". Avoidance is always born of fear. Love seeks to understand your fears or negativity and then to transform them. It is this approach that truly resolves fear and can give birth to a deep sound sleep.

Changing the Course of Your Future:

1. Write down your dark future. The most hideous and negative future you can imagine. Think about it. What is the darkest of futures that could possibly happen to you? Homeless, cancer, betrayal, abandonment, humiliation? Think about what your ego has as its fear-based future. When you don't bring this fear to consciousness it often feeds your anxiety and keeps you restless and awake.

2. Write down your light future. What is your personal dream? What could be the most positive future you can imagine living? Expand the possibilities in your mind and heart. How would love manifest in your life? Think of the joy, peace and success of living an abundant life. What kind of relationships do you want to have? Career? Financial security? Spiritual fulfillment? Open and dream of the possibilities.

3. Unplug the negative and activate the positive future. This third step is so powerful. It is a meditative technique. Close your eyes and imagine a bubble hovering in front of you. Like a large crystal ball that holds within it the energy of the dark, negative future that you fear. Look inside and see your life as pure hell. Where the darkness prevails and everything goes wrong. Imagine it, feel the fear and panic, sorrow and pain. Get involved emotionally. When you can't stand it anymore. Say out loud, "NO! I take my power back from this future. I refuse to create this negative reality!" Sense the future becoming weaker and falling apart. Like you have dismantled the foundation and it is crumbling. Because that is exactly what you've done. Choice is the foundation, as you consciously choose to NOT create that nightmare then you begin automatically taking back your power.

4. Empower the positive future. While still in meditation, imagine you are popping that dark bubble. Having gathered your power from it, create another shimmering bubble filled with light (the positive future). Step into this bubble and imagine the most beautiful, successful and love filled future you can. Stretch your mind and feel your life becoming a magnificent expression of joy and love. Imagine you have resolved all of your negative problems and are joyously living your destiny. Sense yourself surrounded with rewarding friendships and loving relationships. You don't have to see the details as much as you need to feel the energy of this future that holds all of your dreams and desire.

5. Connect with your future image. Imagine that you now stepping inside of this bubble and connecting with your future self. How would you like to be in the future? Confident, trusting, alive, abundant, happy, successful and at peace. You don't need to know what you will be "Doing" as much as choosing how you are going to be "Being". I want to BE happy, free, alive and vibrant. Choose the state of being first and allow the form that it will take to manifest in alignment with your destiny. For some being happy might involve being "in" a relationship, for others it might involve being "out" of a relationship. That is the form, which is important, but choosing the essence of your being is critical to manifesting your dreams and desires.

This technique can work miracles in your life. I have used it personally for several years and it has always brought about positive changes within my life within 3-4 days of the experience. The secret is to face your fears, and say no, take back your power and

give the power (like electricity) to your positive future and then expand the feelings of love, hope, peace and joy. Feeling it in your mind and heart is more important than visualizing it. The choice is yours. Insomnia is fostered by feeling like there is nothing you can do. Hopelessness and despair are at the root of what many experience as insomnia. This technique will give you what you need to begin to resolve this dilemma.

Don't wait and see what your future is going to be, a nightmare or a dream. Both potentials are possible. Choose for yourself a personal dream. Your personal future sculpts and creates the collective future of mankind. The choice is yours and this is how you can make a powerful choice to begin again and to resolve your insomnia once and for all!

14E: Secrets of forgiveness:

Forgiveness: Letting go of grudges and bitterness:

When someone you care about hurts you, you can hold on to anger, resentment and thoughts of revenge — or embrace forgiveness and move forward.

Nearly everyone has been hurt by the actions or words of another. Perhaps your mother criticized your parenting skills or your partner had an affair. These wounds can leave you with lasting feelings of anger, bitterness and even vengeance — but if you don't practice forgiveness, you may be the one who pays most dearly. By embracing forgiveness, you embrace peace, hope, gratitude and joy. Forgiveness is the ornament of a brave man. There is no meaning if any weak person forgives someone. Forgive and forget, let go and lighten your load. A grudge can be a heavy weight to bear.

What is forgiveness?

Generally, forgiveness is a decision to let go of resentment and thoughts of revenge. The act that hurt or offended you may always remain a part of your life, but forgiveness can lessen its grip on you and help you focus on other, positive parts of your life. Forgiveness can even lead to feelings of understanding, empathy and compassion for the one who hurt you.

Forgiveness doesn't mean that you deny the other person's responsibility for hurting you, and it doesn't minimize or justify the wrong. You can forgive the person without excusing the act. Forgiveness brings a kind of peace that helps you go on with life.

What are the benefits of forgiving someone?

Letting go of grudges and bitterness makes way for compassion, kindness and peace. Studies have shown that there are measurable benefits to forgiveness:

- Forgiving is good for your health. Studies show that people who forgive report fewer health problems while people who blame others for their troubles have a higher incidence of illness such as cardiovascular disease and cancers.
- Forgiving is good for your peace of mind. Scientific research shows that forgiveness often improves your peace of mind. A 1996 study showed that the more people forgave those who hurt them, the less angry they were.

- Two studies of divorced people show that those who forgave their former spouse were healthier emotionally than those who chose not to forgive. The forgivers had a higher sense of well being and lower anxiety and depression.

Thus Forgiveness can lead to:

- Healthier relationships
- Greater spiritual and psychological well-being
- Less stress and hostility
- Lower blood pressure
- Fewer symptoms of depression, anxiety and chronic pain
- Lower risk of alcohol and substance abuse

Why is it so easy to hold a grudge?

When you're hurt by someone you love and trust, you may become angry, sad or confused. If you dwell on hurtful events or situations, grudges filled with resentment, vengeance and hostility may take root. If you allow negative feelings to crowd out positive feelings, you may find yourself swallowed up by your own bitterness or sense of injustice.

What are the effects of holding a grudge?

If you're unforgiving, you may pay the price repeatedly by bringing anger and bitterness into every relationship and new experience. Your life may become so wrapped up in the wrong that you can't enjoy the present. You may become depressed or anxious. You may feel that your life lacks meaning or purpose, or that you're at odds with your spiritual beliefs. You may lose valuable and enriching connectedness with others.

How do I reach a state of forgiveness?

Forgiveness is a commitment to a process of change. A way to begin is by recognizing the value of forgiveness and its importance in your life at a given time. Then reflect on the facts of the situation, how you've reacted, and how this combination has affected your life, health and well-being. When you're ready, actively choose to forgive the person who's offended you. Move away from your role as victim and release the control and power the offending person and situation have had in your life. As you let go of grudges, you'll no longer define your life by how you've been hurt. You may even find compassion and understanding.

Forgiveness can be challenging. It may be particularly hard to forgive someone who doesn't admit wrong or doesn't speak of his or her sorrow. If you find yourself stuck, it may help to write in a journal, pray or use guided meditation. You may want to talk with a person you've found to be wise and compassionate, such as a spiritual leader, a mental health provider, or an unbiased family member or friend. You may also want to reflect on times you've hurt others and on those who've forgiven you. Keep in mind that forgiveness has the potential to increase your sense of integrity, peace and overall well-being.

If the hurtful event involved someone whose relationship you otherwise value, forgiveness may lead to reconciliation. This isn't always the case, however. Reconciliation may be impossible if the offender has died or is unwilling to communicate with you. In other cases, reconciliation may not be appropriate, especially if you were

attacked or assaulted. But even in those cases, forgiveness is still possible — even if reconciliation isn't.

If you haven't reached a state of forgiveness, being near the person who hurt you may be tense and stressful. To handle these situations, remember that you have a choice whether or not to attend specific functions and gatherings. Respect yourself and do what seems best. If you choose to attend, don't be surprised by a certain amount of awkwardness and perhaps even more intense feelings. Do your best to keep an open heart and mind. You may find that the gathering helps you to move forward with forgiveness.

What if the person I'm forgiving doesn't change?

Getting another person to change his or her actions, behavior or words isn't the point of forgiveness. Think of forgiveness more about how it can change your life — by bringing you more peace, happiness, and emotional and spiritual healing. Forgiveness takes away the power the other person continues to wield in your life.

Consider admitting the wrong you've done to those you've harmed, speaking of your sincere sorrow or regret, and specifically asking for forgiveness — without making excuses. Remember, however, you can't force someone to forgive you. Others need to move to forgiveness in their own time. Simply acknowledge your faults and admit your mistakes. Then commit to treating others with compassion, empathy and respect.

Forgiveness is a gift you give yourself:

The insights and comments from our readers on the issue of forgiveness and letting go are clearly from the heart. In my simple view, forgiveness is an act of caring for myself. When you've been hurt by someone, it can take an almost superhuman effort to move forward. But I've learned that if I dwell on that past event, I'm surrendering and giving over my serenity and peace of mind. That's not a wise thing to do.

Of course, we want to others to embrace accountability and repentance, but we can't make that happen. And if amends aren't forthcoming, it's best for us to move on. As the scripture says, "Whoever will not receive you or listen to your words, go outside that house or town and shake the dust from your feet."

Forgiveness tips:

It is common for angry people to think, "I want to forgive, and I know I should, but I don't know how." Here are some starting points:

Tip 1: Remember, forgiveness is a process that takes time and patience to complete. You must be ready. Realize that forgiveness is for you - not for anyone else.

Tip 2: Realize that forgiving does not mean you are condoning the actions of the offender or what they did to you. It does mean that you will blame less and find a way to think differently about what happened to you.

Tip 3: Refocus on the positives in your life. A life well lived is the best revenge. People who find a way to see love, beauty and kindness around them are better able to forgive and get past their grievances.

- 1. There is no such thing as an unforgivable act.** So don't let your fear of what you did, or rage about what was done to you, dissuade you from either seeking or granting forgiveness.
- 2. Mind your own business.** We can only grant forgiveness for that which was done to us and should only seek forgiveness for that which we have done.
- 3. Stay balanced.** The number of apologies you seek should be proportional to the number you are willing to offer, because the doing of each nurtures the capacity for the other.
- 4. Know that you are never alone.** From God's perspective, sincere effort to correct the past renders earns any of us what my kids call a do over.
- 5. Honor the past, but don't let yourself be imprisoned by it.** Don't allow your fear of forgetting what was done to you keep you from forgiving those who did it.
- 6. Allow love to triumph over logic.** There will always be a good reason to keep doing what you are doing or to withhold your forgiveness from someone else. But real issue is whether or not you love them enough to go beyond that logic.
- 7. Keep it simple.** Apologize for, or forgive, one thing at a time. There is always more to the story, but this is not the moment to explore it.
- 8. The answer doesn't always have to be yes.** We are not always ready to forgive and that is okay. But the answer shouldn't always be no, either. Consider what you loose by saying no, and be concerned if that has become your default response.
- 9. Remember that forgiveness is not always the end of the process,** but the beginning of a new level of relationship which may continue to be shaped by those past acts which demanded forgiveness.
- 10. Celebrate the moment of forgiveness** in some way that rewards both the one seeking forgiveness and the one who grants it. A hug, a kiss, perhaps something even more intimate. A drink or a shared meal. Whatever it is, you have both accomplished a major thing, so make the most of it.

14F: Body-Mid-Spirit Healing:

Throughout childhood, we've thought of healing as a means to fix and cure. Our culture teaches us that healing happens as a reaction to illness or something to do when we're sick. Many of the traditional methods of healing are about fighting and conquering illness and disease. However, the fundamental flaw with these approaches is that they consider healing static. I believe that holistic healing is a dynamic function of the way I choose to live each moment of my life. Holistic healing is a state of being at peace with ourselves and our lives. There is a saying that, "a person is alive, but not really living". Traditional healing is about keeping the body alive, the healing I am referring to, is about creating a life worth living. Let's explore what it means to live holistically on a daily basis.

True healing begins within the four levels of our existence: physical, emotional, mental and spiritual. These four levels are what contribute to wholeness and health. Every moment of every day we are either choosing to contribute to our healing and

wholeness or we are choosing illness. It's important we understand that healing is at the core of our search for personal fulfillment. Fulfillment occurs when we align all four levels of our being into balance thus creating a state of wholeness. Genuine healing is about the whole self and it's complex levels that make-up the beauty of being human. It is important to evaluate your own current state of healing on all four levels of your being. This will help you to augment the changes in your life order to want to get well and create a more fulfilling life.

The 1st level of healing begins with the physical body. It's the most visible aspect of our being. We can easily identify with it. Unfortunately, many people use it as their only barometer of whether they have health or not. Since healing begins with being conscious and making choices to care for our body, use the following questions to evaluate your relationship to your body. How do you relate to your body? What do you do to nurture your body and give it what it needs to be in harmony with your life-style?

Our Bodies Need:

- Exercise to provide stamina and energy to all our internal organs
- Nourishing foods that have life-force energy contained within them
- Abundant quantities of fresh oxygen to breathe which renews our energy
- Sunlight and time to rest and revitalize
- Pleasure to remind us of the joy and wonder of living in the physical world
- Acceptance for their limitations as well as their awesome adaptive abilities

The second level of healing is about the emotional body. The core of many health problems are due to not questioning what society has taught us and why we hide our feelings rather than expressing and releasing them. In childhood, we learned to separate and divide our feelings into categories of good and bad emotions. The socially acceptable emotions are the ones we have deemed worthy of expressing. On the other hand, the emotions deemed unacceptable, we tend to repress and ignore. Redefining what constitutes a positive emotion versus a negative one, is the way to begin healing the second level of our being. When we discover that our relationship to our feelings is what determines their positive or negative influence in our lives, then genuine healing is underway.

Creating a positive relationship to our emotional nature is about our willingness to feel and express our emotions honestly and then to release and let go of them. Whether it's anger, hurt, love, or joy. Likewise, any emotion we refuse to feel, we must deny and it becomes repressed. Its energy is then stored in our body and our subconscious mind. The relationship of denial and repression becomes negative and eventually destructive to our overall health. The way we relate to emotions determines their alignment in our lives. Love can be negative emotion, if we refuse to feel and express it. It can clog the heart and actually cause heart-attacks. Love on an emotional level is energy. When we refuse to let energy flow, it backs-up and can cause physical disease. Anger can be extremely positive energy in your life. Anger that we feel (honestly), express (responsibly) and release, can be the key to creating changes in our lives. Anger often holds the energy of our willpower. When we are in touch with anger and we use it constructively, we can discover the renewal of our personal will power.

Unresolved emotions are the number one reason why people experience illness. (Note: I think the most important lesson I've learned concerning my emotions, is that dealing with them isn't a choice. I will deal with my anger and hurt. My choice is how am I going to deal with those feelings. Will it be emotionally by feeling, expressing and releasing it? Or by dealing with it physically via poor health and eventually disease). Repression only buys us time before we have to deal with the feeling. The price we pay is reflected through our health via an array of illness and diseases that are the physical expressions of an emotion we refuse to feel. The real question is "How will I express anger? Emotionally? Or physically?"

Many have become experts at repressing and denying their emotions and they argue they can't feel them. That becomes the problem. It's not a question whether we have anger or hurt; as human beings, we do. The question becomes, are we going to live a healthy life-style by feeling emotions and clearing them out on a regular basis? Honoring our emotional nature is about knowing that from time to time we may feel anger, and it's okay to deal with anger as an emotion. We need to give ourselves permission to feel our emotions. It may take some practice, but it will ultimately lead to a healthy expression of our authentic selves.

The third level of healing is on the mental level. There are many different expressions of health on a mental level, but it boils down to a personal choice of valuing our imagination and the power of our thoughts, beliefs and attitudes.

We can choose:

1. To believe our thoughts are what generate our beliefs and activate our emotional nature which then attracts and creates our experiences in life or,
2. We can believe that it doesn't matter what we think and believe about ourselves. Life isn't a choice, it is only an experience that we have to react to and defend against, rather than respond to, learn and grow from.

If we deny our thinking and imagination, we are out of alignment with our power on this third level of our being. Thus, in dis-ease on a mental level of expression.

As healthy individuals, we honor the thinking process and understand the influence of thoughts and beliefs in living our lives with fulfillment. We also know that the way to change thoughts and beliefs is through the utilization of our imagination. We value the sacred relationship with our imagination. Unhealthy individuals believe that the imagination is just "pretend" and it doesn't matter. When we engage our imagination and visualize the healthy expression of ourselves in our minds, we will create the blueprint for our future. A way to establish a healthy reality is to start by changing the image of ourselves and visualizing what we want, versus what we don't want,

The last and most important level of holistic healing is our relationship to our spiritual nature. Depending upon how mature our relationship to God is, becomes the foundation through which we can establish the permanent healing and the activation of our life-force. Spirituality is the way we live our lives. It is not a ritual we do on Sunday and it's not a book with rules and regulations. Spirituality is our personal relationship with God. If God is, all-that-is, then our spirituality is our personal relationship to everything in our lives. Spirituality is our relationship with our selves, our family and friends.

When we honor our relationship with God as a mature responsible adult, we begin to recognize that our free-will to choose to love God, is about choosing to love ourselves and our lives. Healing is about loving ourselves enough to:

- Nurture our bodies and honor the temple that houses Soul and Spirit
- Express our human nature by honoring our feelings and handling them appropriately
- Value the power of our mind as the key to changing our lives
- Know that spirituality is about choosing to love or not
- Ask God for the healing and inner strength needed to reach our potential
- Remembering that God isn't separate from the physical world.

Creating heaven on earth is about sensing God within everything. Only then will wholeness, health, and healing become as natural as breathing. Holistic Healing becomes the way we live our lives, not just a temporary cure to extend life!- Michael Patrick Bovenes.

14G: Overcome Resistance to Change:

Spring has silently made her debut as the light, cool breezes dissolve into the summer's embracing heat. Reminding us once again of the simple lesson nature offers us about change and growth. Some people welcome the change of the seasons while others resist it. Those who resist the change of seasons the most, have greater difficulty with seasonal illness. We all know that we can not stop the seasons from changing, but you can heal your relationship to the nature of change itself. You can overcome your personal resistance to change.

The flow of our individual lives is a series of continual changes. The movement of change in our lives can ultimately lead us into our growth and evolution when we learn how to cooperate with this unyielding force. We all desire change. Change is inevitable. Yet as we reach for change, a part of us recoils and holds us back. When our recoiling becomes stronger than our reach, we end up procrastinating. When we resist change too much, we experience struggle, crisis and pain in our lives. Likewise, when we understand that change is inevitable, we can form a new relationship with change; one that functions with freedom, creativity and joy. You can become a partner with the force of evolution called change and never have to struggle with changes again.

The awareness that growth stimulates change is the 1st secret. Growth is the process of reaching for something new while releasing or letting go of the old. Whether that is a new relationship, a new belief or a new experience in our lives, change is a shifting from old to new and it produces personal growth. Growth is the foundation for evolution. Growth always produces change, however, change does not necessarily produce growth. We can create the illusion of change but not really change our emotions inside of us, growth doesn't result from those kind of changes.

The 2nd secret is that change requires healing the depth of our emotions. Some people are addicted to the appearance of change, always changing the forms of their realities without changing the feelings. When someone thinks change is only about changing the form (new haircut, wardrobe, mate, house, etc.) they often do not

experience personal growth. However, when someone changes the feeling which is the fuel of their motivation, then growth is produced and the forms will change automatically.

For instance, a client of mine was stuck in a relationship pattern of feeling powerless. The pattern had haunted him for many years. His ego attempted to fix this problem by changing the person he was dating about every six months (looking for a new form) but never changing the feelings inside of him that attracted those individuals in the first place. Once he understood that the feeling's of powerlessness needed to change before he could attract someone truly different, then he was easily able to change his relationships and attract someone who reflected his feelings of being powerful.

The foundation beneath every form, is built upon our emotions. That is what needs to change before genuine change can occur. The ego is only concerned with changing the forms on the outside, the soul wants to change and heal the feelings on the inside. When you begin inside out, change becomes effortless.

The 3rd secret of change is understanding a simple truth: All change produces chaos. Chaos and change must work together. It isn't change that you resist, it's your ego's attempt at avoiding chaos. When change occurs in your reality it is always preceded and followed by chaos. We each yearn for change and recoil from it's chaos simultaneously. It is a push-pull reaction. We have been taught by society that chaos is bad and to be avoided, yet even the most incredible changes we desire: i.e. that job promotion or loving relationship-will also produce chaos. Chaos is also at the core of true creativity and passion and is a part of love.

The ego within all of us will do everything to avoid chaos, while our soul loves chaos and thrives upon it's mystery. Chaos threatens our ego's defense mechanisms and it's delusions of being in control. Thus the tug of war between our ego and our soul that fosters our resistance to change. Life is not to be controlled, especially by our ego, it is to be mastered by our soul and spirit. Ego wants to control change, which it can't, however we can influence the direction of change and our relationship to it's chaos. Giving our power to our soul rather than our ego's games, begins this process toward achieving peace.

One way to empower our soul is to get in touch with our feelings that lie beyond the forms we desire to change. Surrender to chaos, and you will survive! You might even take a evolutionary leap into your future when you learn to dance with chaos and create positive changes.

The fourth and final secret is about working with the force of change in your life. Focusing your mind upon the direction you want change to occur in your life is essential to overcoming the ego's feeling of being out of control. Many people wait to see what the future is about, rather than creating it. How often do you think about what you don't want to happen versus what you do want? We are all conditioned with old patterns of behavior that were taught to us and we need to reestablish the humility to allow positive changes to occur and begin to visualize, expect and desire the futures we do want versus the ones we

don't. Don't just watch the changes as an observer, after all it is your life. Begin to work with them.

You can direct the changes by using affirmations and visualization techniques, using your mind to influence the direction of those changes. Too often we wait to see what the future holds or are looking for someone else to tell us rather than creating what we want that future to be. Ask yourself these questions and write down your responses. What changes do you desire in your life? Break it down into categories, Health, Career, Relationships, Money, Living Space, etc. Next, do a meditation in which you imagine that you have already moved into your future with those changes already in place. In meditation, generate the emotions you would feel as if those changes had indeed physically occurred. Connect with your future self. The more emotions you add to your vision of change, the quicker those changes will manifest. Repeat this on a regular basis, at least once a week. You will have begun changing the course of your future. As you implement these four secrets, you will harness the power of change and become the master of your destiny.

14H: Relaxation techniques: Learn ways to reduce your stress:

Relaxation techniques can reduce stress symptoms and help you enjoy a better quality of life. Explore relaxation techniques you can do on your own.

Relaxation techniques are an essential part of your quest for stress management. Relaxation isn't just about peace of mind or enjoying a hobby. Relaxation is a process that decreases the wear and tear on your mind and body from the challenges and hassles of daily life.

Whether your stress is spiraling out of control or you've already got it tamed, you can benefit from learning relaxation techniques. Learning basic relaxation techniques is easy, often free or low cost, and poses little risk. Explore these simple relaxation techniques to get you started on de-stressing your life and improving your health.

The benefits of relaxation techniques:

With so many things to do, relaxation techniques may take a back seat in your life. But that means you might miss out on the health benefits of relaxation.

Practicing relaxation techniques can reduce stress symptoms by:

- Slowing your heart rate
- Lowering blood pressure
- Slowing your breathing rate
- Increasing blood flow to major muscles
- Reducing muscle tension and chronic pain
- Improving concentration
- Reducing anger and frustration
- Boosting confidence to handle problems

Relaxation techniques: Learn ways to reduce your stress

Types of relaxation techniques

In general, relaxation techniques involve refocusing your attention to something calming and increasing awareness of your body. It doesn't matter which relaxation technique you choose. What matters is that you try to practice relaxation regularly to reap the benefits. There are several main types of relaxation techniques, including:

- **Autogenic relaxation.** Autogenic means something that comes from within you. In this relaxation technique, you use both visual imagery and body awareness to reduce stress. You repeat words or suggestions in your mind to help you relax and reduce muscle tension. You may imagine a peaceful place and then focus on controlled, relaxing breathing, slowing your heart rate, or feeling different physical sensations, such as relaxing each arm or leg one by one.
- **Progressive muscle relaxation.** In this relaxation technique, you focus on slowly tensing and then relaxing each muscle group. This helps you focus on the difference between muscle tension and relaxation. You become more aware of physical sensations. One method is to start by tensing and relaxing the muscles in your toes and progressively working your way up to your neck and head. Tense your muscles for at least five seconds and then relax for 30 seconds, and repeat.
- Other common relaxation techniques include:
 - Yoga
 - **Visualization**
 - Tai chi
 - Listening to music
 - Exercise
 - Meditation
 - Hypnosis
 - Massage
 -

As you learn relaxation techniques, you'll become more aware of muscle tension and other physical sensations of stress. Once you know what the stress response feels like, you can make a conscious effort to practice a relaxation technique the moment you start to feel stress symptoms. This can prevent stress from spiraling out of control.

Remember that relaxation techniques are skills. And as with any skill, your ability to relax improves with practice. Be patient with yourself — don't let your effort to practice relaxation techniques become yet another stressor.

Also, bear in mind that some people, especially those with serious psychological issues and a history of abuse, may experience feelings of emotional discomfort during some relaxation techniques. Although this is rare, if you experience emotional discomfort during relaxation techniques, stop what you're doing and consider talking to your health care professional or mental health provider.

14I: Yoga:

Tap into the many health benefits of yoga

Chronic stress can lead to a variety of health and emotional problems. Yoga can be an effective method to reduce stress and anxiety. See how to get started.

Your kids are demanding the latest video game, your boss wants that report done yesterday, and your partner wants to know what's for dinner. Stress and anxiety are everywhere. If they're getting the best of you, you might want to make like a cobra or a mountain and try yoga.

Yoga's series of postures — some with names from nature — and controlled breathing exercises are a popular means of stress management and relaxation. Today, yoga classes teaching the art of breathing, meditation and posing are offered nearly everywhere — from trendy health clubs in big cities to community education classes in small towns to hospitals and clinics.

Yoga is considered a mind-body type of complementary and alternative medicine practice. Yoga brings together physical and mental disciplines to achieve peacefulness of body and mind, helping you relax and manage stress and anxiety. Traditional yoga philosophy requires that students adhere to this mission through behavior, diet and meditation. But if you're just looking for better stress management — whether because of life's daily hassles or a health problem you're facing — and not an entire lifestyle change or way of life, yoga can still help.

Yoga has many styles, forms and intensities. Hatha yoga, in particular, may be a good choice for stress management. Hatha is one of the most common styles of yoga, and some beginners find it easier to practice because of its slower pace and easier movements. But most people can benefit from any style of yoga — it's all about your personal preferences.

The core components of hatha yoga and most general yoga classes are:

- **Poses.** Yoga poses, also called postures, are a series of movements designed to increase strength and flexibility. Poses range from lying on the floor while completely relaxed to difficult postures that may have you stretching your physical limits.
- **Breathing.** Controlling your breathing is an important part of yoga. In yoga, breath signifies your vital energy. Yoga teaches that controlling your breathing can help you control your body and quiet your mind.

The health benefits of yoga

The potential health benefits of yoga are numerous and may include:

- **Stress reduction.** With its quiet, precise movements, yoga draws your focus away from your busy, chaotic day and toward calm as you move your body through poses that require balance and concentration.
- **Increased fitness.** As you learn and refine new poses, you may enjoy improved balance, flexibility, range of motion and strength. And this means you're less likely to injure yourself in other physical endeavors or in your daily activities.
- **Management of chronic health conditions.** Yoga might help with a variety of health conditions, such as cancer, depression, pain, anxiety and insomnia, by

- helping with sleep problems, fatigue and mood. Yoga also can help reduce heart rate and blood pressure.
- **Weight loss.** If you're overweight or have binge-eating disorder, yoga may help you make the healthy lifestyle changes necessary to gain control of your eating and drop those extra pounds.

While you shouldn't expect yoga to cure you or offer 100 percent relief, it can help some health conditions when combined with standard treatment. And if you already enjoy good health, yoga can be an enjoyable supplement to your regular fitness routine.

Yoga is generally considered safe for people of all abilities, even if you use a wheelchair or you're severely overweight. But there are some situations in which yoga might pose a risk. You may need to find an alternative to yoga or scale back your yoga poses.

See your health care provider before you begin yoga if you have any of the following conditions or situations, since complications can arise:

- Balance problems
- Uncontrolled high blood pressure
- Certain eye conditions, including glaucoma
- Severe osteoporosis
- Pregnancy
- Artificial joints

You may be able to practice yoga in these situations if you take certain precautions, such as avoiding certain poses or stretches. Regardless of your health status, start slowly and gently. If you develop symptoms or concerns, see your doctor to make sure you're getting benefit and not harm from yoga.

If you've decided to try yoga, whether for stress management or other health benefits, look for classes in your area. Although you can learn yoga from books and videos, beginners usually find it helpful to learn with an instructor. Classes also offer camaraderie and friendship, which are also important to overall well-being.

Remember, regardless of which type of yoga you practice, you don't have to do every pose your instructor demonstrates. If a pose is uncomfortable or you can't hold it as long as the instructor requests, don't do it. Good instructors will understand and encourage you not to exceed your personal limits. Spend time sitting quietly, breathing deeply until your instructor moves the class on to another pose that's more comfortable for you.

At the end of a yoga session, you should feel invigorated, yet relaxed and calm. If this isn't the case, talk to your instructor. He or she might have suggestions for you. Otherwise there may be another yoga class better suited to your needs for stress management and relaxation

14J: Meditation: advices & Tips:

There are a few misunderstandings about the nature of meditation that keep people from attempting to pursue this extremely valuable life-changing skill. Meditation is not what most people imagine. You do not have to sit cross-legged with a purple dot painted on your forehead while you repeat the word ohm over and over, like a bad song you can't seem to release from your mind. Meditation is about connecting with your inner self by

slowing down your activities and quieting your mind. Meditation is making time to listen to your inner being.

Meditation is a process that has many forms. Meditation can take the form of long distance running, gazing into a fireplace (while there is a fire burning, of course), sunbathing at the beach, tai-chi and, even weight-lifting are some common examples of moving meditations. These forms allow your thoughts to slow down and your mind to become reflective. We all have the capacity to train our minds to have the same effect without running ten miles or driving to the beach. Moving meditations do have one drawback, the individual must still give attention to the physical world, thus reducing the clarity and guidance that would otherwise be there if they were to close their eyes and shift their full attention inward.

Meditation, considered a type of mind-body complementary medicine, produces a deep state of relaxation and a tranquil mind. During meditation, you focus your attention and eliminate the stream of jumbled thoughts that may be crowding your mind and causing stress. This process results in enhanced physical and emotional well-being.

Silent or Guided meditation is about finding a comfortable position somewhere where you will not be disturbed, closing your eyes and pulling your attention away from the outside world to your inner world, reflecting, relaxing and receiving. This becomes what I call the art of meditation. There are many guided meditation tapes that will assist you in moving into that inner space effectively, and can be helpful as a beginner. Regardless which form of meditation you decide, it becomes helpful to understand the function of meditation. The function is common to all the many different forms of meditation.

The first function of meditation is to slow down your brain wave activity which in turn, slows down your thinking process. Notice I didn't say to eliminate or to stop thinking. It is impossible to eliminate your thoughts. I find this myth, one of the most common reasons beginners give up this wonderful skill. They erroneously think if they have one thought pop into their head, they have just ruined the experience. Meditation allows you to shift your attention away from your thoughts and to slow down your thinking process. As your thinking slows down the silent space in-between each thought is where you can receive a flash of insight from your Soul. The insight would always have been there, but you wouldn't have noticed, due to the steady stream of thoughts that often dominate the mind.

Understanding the function of your life, provides the greatest freedom to begin fulfilling your destiny. How do you function in the living of your life? Are you a natural born teacher? Healer? Comedian? Problem solver? Motivator? Listener? What is natural to you, is a part of your nature, and becomes the way you function in life? Review your past history, what was the common denominator in all the jobs you had that you really enjoyed? Look at your relationships, what is the heart of the matter, that gives you a sense of purpose and significance? Listen to what people have told you about your strengths, talents and gifts. Thinking about these areas of your life can reveal the function of your destiny. Take time to explore what comes naturally to you.

Don't be frustrated as you begin, know it is natural to have many thoughts during meditation. Here are some effective ways to remedy the situation. For example, You are attempting to meditate and your ego's keeps worrying about a report due at work. It seems difficult to take your mind off it. The first thing to do is don't fight it. Listen to your inner concerns and then release it. If you can't stop your mind from thinking (I have to finish that report by Tuesday morning), simply take in a deep breath and as you exhale

imagine your blowing that thought out of your head. Perhaps see the words written on a chalk board and imagine you are blowing the message off the board with your exhale. Or imagine you are erasing it. This gives the subconscious mind a very clear message. Then focus your attention on going deeper. Remember it is a very natural to have thoughts in your mind as you are learning how to meditate.

Another technique to end the distraction is to mentally tell those pesky thoughts, "I hear you, thank you and you can go now." Thinking those words silently to yourself, will confirm to your subconscious mind, I've got the message now, the messenger can leave. Be patient and remind yourself that the goal of meditation is not to eliminate thought, but to slow it down. In the space between, is where you will find the solutions to your problems and begin to resolve them.

Meditation is a powerful technique to gain mastery over your life, and to become more conscious of your truer self. Meditations' true purpose is to shift your consciousness from the outer world to your inner world, where all change begins. Meditation offers you a way to create a pause in your daily activity to consciously connect with your inner power.

On a spiritual level meditation offers a ritual to commune with your Soul to receive guidance, healing and wisdom from within. On a mental level, meditation will bring you clarity and can reveal deeper understanding about the way you're living your life, and what thoughts and beliefs are holding you back. On an emotional level, meditating offers a way to get in touch with your feelings and to resolve them constructively producing profound inner peace. On a physical level, meditation is a stress reducer, as you practice it on a regular basis, you will renew your physical energy and stamina. The siesta times many countries honor is a great way to bring balance back into a busy life-style, even if it's only a fifteen minute meditation on your lunch break at work.

Lily Tomlin says some of the wildest things and she offers us this profound thought, "Why is it when we talk with God it's called praying, but when God talks to us, we call it schizophrenia?" Meditation is a way to listen to the still small voice of the spirit of truth. Whether you practice silent, moving or guided meditation you will soon discover the infinite wisdom that dwells within you, waiting to offer you guidance and inner peace.

Benefits of Meditation

You've probably heard of the benefits of meditation, but you won't believe the results until you try it for yourself. Rather than coping with stress and pain in our lives, many of us turn to destructive or unhealthy behaviors such as overeating, excessive consumption of alcohol, working long hours, outbursts of rage and anger, and isolating ourselves from friends and family. When you learn and practice simple meditative techniques, you address the real problems in your life with clarity and intent.

In this fast-paced world, many of us forget to slow down and refuel our hearts and our minds. One of the key benefits of meditation is connecting to your inner self, and rejuvenating your spirit. When you slow down and take in the world around you, you're better equipped to handle any problems that come your way.

Many people experience an increase in creativity through simple meditation techniques. So many of us get blocked creatively because we spend too much time thinking about things we can do nothing about. When you meditate, you release negative thoughts and slow down your mind.

Meditation can give you a sense of calm, peace and balance that benefits both your emotional well-being and your overall health. And these benefits don't end when your meditation session ends. Meditation can help carry you more calmly through your day and improve certain medical conditions.

The emotional benefits of meditation include:

- Gaining a new perspective on stressful situations
- Building skills to manage your stress
- Increased self-awareness
- Focusing on the present
- Reducing negative emotions

How to Meditate

Meditation is one of the easiest techniques you can learn to refuel your body, mind and spirit. While many of us have heard of the benefits of meditation, few of us actually want to spend the time it takes to learn how to meditate. We often cling to stress, fear and anxiety because we think we need these things in order to function in this fast-paced world.

Many people who have learned how to meditate have actually achieved more than they did when they lived under constant stress and anxiety. These people have found you really don't need anxiety to be a productive member of society. If you want to learn how to reach your potential in a healthy and peaceful manner, meditation may be just what you're looking for.

Here are 7 Steps to Learn How to Meditate:

1. **A quiet location.** If you're a beginner, practicing meditation may be easier if you're in a quiet spot with few distractions and no disturbances. No television, radios or cell phones. As you get more skilled at meditation, you may be able to do it anywhere, especially in high-stress situations where you benefit the most from meditation, such as a traffic jam, a stressful work meeting or a long line at the grocery store.

2.. **A comfortable position.** Sit down with your back straight. It is recommended to put your body in a position where you will be able to “forget” about it for a while. Progressively, you can practice meditation whether you're sitting, lying down, walking or in other positions or activities. Just try to be comfortable so that you can get the most out of your meditation.

3. Close your eyes and lift your eyes to a 10-15' angle. As if you are looking up through the bridge in your nose, between your eyebrows. It should feel comfortable. Do not strain your eyes. This is a biofeedback technique to begin to slow down your brainwave activity.

4. **Relaxed breathing.** This technique involves deep, even-paced breathing using the diaphragm muscle to expand your lungs. The purpose is to slow your breathing, take in more oxygen, and reduce the use of shoulder, neck and upper chest muscles while breathing so that you breathe more efficiently. Breathe in deeply 3-5 times. Inhaling

slowly through your nose and exhaling through your mouth. Your breath regulates your mind. As you slow down your breathing, you will also slow down your thinking

5. Focusing your attention. Focusing your attention is generally one of the most important elements of meditation. Focusing your attention is what helps free your mind from the many distractions that cause stress and worry. You can focus your attention on such things as a specific object, an image, a mantra, or even your breathing. Don't fret when your mind wanders. Just return to your focus of attention. Relax your entire body. Begin at the scalp and simply send a warm relaxing thought to each area of your body as you slowly move from head to feet. Take 5-10 minutes to thoroughly move through your body.

Pay particular attention to the follow areas. These are where most people hide their tension: Tongue, relax your tongue, if it is pressed against the roof of your mouth, let it go back into the center were it belongs.

Neck/Shoulders
Lower back Pelvic Girdle
Hands / Legs and Feet

6. You are now in altered state of mind. You should feel, euphoric, light or very heavy depending on your cadence. Let yourself either do one of three things.

1. Drift into silence or
2. Visualize what you want or
3. Pray: Ask for help, guidance, healing or direction from your Soul.

7. When you are ready. Take in a deep breath and as you exhale, mentally tell yourself, I am going to count from 1-5, at the count of 5 I will fully return from meditation, being relaxed, refreshed, energized and feeling great. Silently count up, open your eyes, stretch your body and give yourself a few minutes to acclimate to your surroundings.

You don't have to spend hours on end learning how to meditate. In under an hour, you can learn basic skills for getting in touch with your inner self, your Soul. Meditating on your thoughts and feelings is one of the best ways to release stress and anxiety in your daily life. Once you learn the basics of meditation, you can calm your mind any time of the day or anywhere you desire. This is a great tool for dealing with high-pressure jobs or situations, and making split second decisions with clarity and purpose.

Tips to practice meditation on your own:

Here are some ways you can practice meditation on your own, whenever you choose. Take a few minutes or as much time as you like to practice one or more of these meditation methods:

- **Breathe deeply.** This technique is good for beginners because breathing is a natural function. Focus all attention on your breathing. Concentrate on feeling and listening as you inhale and exhale through your nostrils. Breathe deeply and slowly. When your attention wanders, gently return your focus to your breathing.

- **Scan your body.** When using this technique, focus attention on different parts of your body. Become aware of your body's various sensations, whether that's pain, tension, warmth or relaxation. Combine body scanning with breathing exercises and imagine breathing heat or relaxation into and out of different parts of your body.
- **Repeat a mantra.** You can create your own mantra, whether it's religious or secular. Examples of religious mantras include the Jesus Prayer in the Christian tradition, the holy name of God in Judaism, or the om mantra of Hinduism, Buddhism and other Eastern religions.
- **Walking meditation.** Combining a walk with meditation is an efficient and healthy way to relax. You can use this technique anywhere you're walking — in a tranquil forest, on a city sidewalk or at the mall. When you use this method, slow down the pace of walking so that you can focus on each movement of your legs or feet. Don't focus on a particular destination. Concentrate on your legs and feet, repeating action words in your mind such as lifting, moving and placing as you lift each foot, move your leg forward and place your foot on the ground.
- **Engage in prayer.** Prayer is the best known and most widely practiced example of meditation. Spoken and written prayers are found in most faith traditions. You can pray using your own words or read prayers written by others. Check the self-help or 12-step-recovery section of your local bookstore for examples. Talk with your rabbi, priest, pastor or other spiritual leader about resources.
- **Read or listen and take time to reflect.** Many people report that they benefit from reading poems or sacred texts silently or aloud, and taking a few moments to quietly reflect on the meaning that the words bring to mind. You can listen to sacred music, spoken words or any music you find relaxing or inspiring. You may want to write your reflections in a journal or discuss them with a friend or spiritual leader.
- **Focus your love and gratitude.** In this type of meditation, you focus your attention on a sacred object or being, weaving feelings of love and gratitude into your thoughts. You can also close your eyes and use your imagination or gaze at representations of the object.

Summary:

Don't judge your meditation skills, which may only increase your stress. Meditation takes practice. Keep in mind, for instance, that it's common for your mind to wander during meditation, no matter how long you've been practicing meditation. If you're meditating to calm your mind and your attention wanders, slowly return to the object, sensation or movement you're focusing on.

Experiment, and you'll likely find out what types of meditation work best for you and what you enjoy doing. Adapt meditation to your needs at the moment. Remember, there's no right way or wrong way to meditate. What matters is that meditation helps you with stress reduction and feeling better overall.

14K: Brisk Walking : Benefits:

1. **It is great exercise.** Walking at a steady pace for 30 to 45 minutes a day has been proven to be an excellent fat burner. Do this six times a week, along with following a healthy diet, and you will see a change in your weight. A good speed of walking is 6km/hour. In other words, it should take you 10 minutes to cover a kilometer.
2. **It is good for the heart.** Walking is known to reduce blood pressure, improve blood circulation and all round cardiovascular functions
3. **It increases stamina.** Walking regularly at a good speed also improves muscle strength and endurance.
4. **Promotes mental health.** Walking is a great stress buster. And if you're able to walk outdoors, there's nothing like it. The combination of fresh air and exercise is an excellent mood booster and you'll definitely find yourself feeling happier as well as healthier.
5. **It is good for bones.** Walking is a great way of strengthening your bones. Walking 30 minutes a day actually increases bone density and slows down bone loss in the legs. This low-impact exercise also targets your spine, legs and hips.
6. **Prevents type 2 diabetes.** Studies show that walking 150 minutes per week can reduce the risk of diabetes, which is why doctors highly recommend it to anyone who has a history of diabetes in their family.
7. **Reduces risk of breast and colon cancer.** Studies show that regular walking can reduce a person's chances of getting breast and colon cancer.
8. **Safer than running.** Many experts believe that walking is actually better than running because it's easier on your knees and joints. It leads to fewer injuries and if you're just starting to exercise, it's a good beginner workout.
9. **Anyone can do it.** Walking is truly a democratic exercise because anyone at ANY fitness level can do it. If you're completely out of shape, start by walking 20 minutes a day and then slowly increase the time every week.
10. **It is free!** Unlike most other forms of exercise, all walking requires is a pair of good walking shoes. Walk in the park; on the road; up the stairs; on a treadmill; in a long corridor, it really doesn't matter. You don't need expensive equipment or a partner to do this. So if you're in the mood for a good, safe workout, just start walking!

14L: Visualization:

What is visualization:

In this relaxation technique, you form mental images to take a visual journey to a peaceful, calming place or situation. During visualization, try to use as many senses as you can, including smell, sight, sound and touch. If you imagine relaxing at the ocean, for instance, think about such things as the smell of salt water, the sound of crashing waves and the warmth of the sun on your body. You may want to close your eyes, sit in a quiet spot and loosen any tight clothing.

In simple terms, visualization is the process of creating mental imagery (pictures) with the aim of reprogramming the mind or escaping your current reality. Visualization is similar to Daydreaming. Visualization is one of the best method of reprogramming of mind because the brain thinks in images. This is most obvious when we dream but also can occur when you read, hear or think some thing. For example, when someone says us to think about our national flag, then our mind shall automatically visualize tri color of our flag. It is called visualization. Thus the visualization is the language of brain. i

Visualization is generally done in a relaxed meditative state with eyes closed. Please do it in a systematic manner. Follow the steps mentioned below to gain maximum benefits from visualization.

How does visualization work?

Visualization is a repetitive process of creating a scene inside your mind: shutting out the rest of the world and having an intimate conversation, in your head, with whatever it is that you desire. In your mind's eye you play out a movie – it's like a dream only you are awake and you control what happens.

Visualization works best if it is powered by feeling...and done regularly. Daydreaming and seeing the daydream in your head is just a visualization. Nothing too special about that. People do that all the time and nothing changes for them. Holding a picture on your head is all well and good, but holding that same picture, **with the emotion as though the picture is real**, is VERY powerful and moves from a visualization to a creative change in progress. Even more powerful is calling back that same picture and feeling many times during the day, week and month in the lead up time to the visualization becoming reality.

Visualization and emotional intelligence (aka feelings, knowing or intuition) are underused power tools that cost nothing to buy, nothing to run and create the best outcome and artisan could ever want: exactly what you set out to create. **Visualization with feeling will change your life.**

What do I visualize?

Whatever you want to achieve: wealth, health, car, house, lover, happy family, having someone clean your house, top marks on an assignment, etc, etc. You simply visualize whatever the end result is that you desire and attach positive feeling to that visualization.

Think, believe and receive. How easy is that to get what you want and deserve? Make sure you do your visualization regularly and enjoy the process of your visualization becoming true.

An excellent technique to help you visualize and relax is that you lie down your back and focus on your toes. Say to yourself that “my toes are deeply relaxed”. Then focus on your ankle and say to yourself that “my ankles are deeply relaxed”. Gradually move up the body whilst imagining a wave of relaxation spreading to each part of body. Follow the following process for best results.

- Find a quiet room or place without any disturbances. No radios, televisions, or mobile phones.
- Become aware of your breathing and notice how the diaphragm expands and contracts as you breathe.
- Make a mental picture of tension in your muscles - see a clenched fist or a tightly contorted facial muscle.
- Watch the fist open, the face smooth out. Move down the body from head to toes, visualizing tight muscles and seeing them relax and smooth out.
- Imagine yourself in a beautiful garden, a sunny golden beach, in green, scented woods, or in any place which for you like the most. If you don't have such a place invents one.
- Now Imagine about all sweet and happy things you want to happen in life. Example becoming very rich person, Becoming a world famous sports person, or spending a holiday with your favorite celebrity.

To be successful, visualization must be practiced for twenty minutes at a time, Once a day. "The subconscious mind doesn't know the difference between the real and the imaginary."

Other visualization exercises that are suggested are:

- 'Seeing' through closed eyelids
- Drawing, sketching and doodling more
- Making visual mind-maps
- Recording your dreams
- Using more visual words and phrases in your language
- Pretending / Imagining / Remembering instead of that big scary word 'visualizing'
- Using visualization software and drawing packages like 3D Poser, 3DMax etc

14M: Spirituality and stress relief: Make the connection:

Taking the path less travelled by exploring your spirituality can lead to a clearer life purpose, better personal relationships and enhanced stress management skills.

Certain tools to reduce stress are very tangible: exercising more, eating healthy foods and talking with friends. But there is another tool for helping you manage difficult times that can be just as beneficial, albeit harder to pin down — embracing your spirituality.

What is spirituality?

Spirituality has many definitions, but at its core spirituality helps to give our lives context. It's not necessarily connected to a specific belief system or even religious worship. Instead, it arises from your connection with yourself and with others, the development of your personal value system, and your search for meaning in life. For many, this takes the form of religious observance, prayer, meditation or a belief in a higher power. For others, it can be found in nature, music, art or a secular community. Spirituality is different for everyone.

How can spirituality help you?

Spirituality has many benefits. It can help you:

- **Focus on personal goals.** Cultivating your spirituality may help uncover what's most meaningful in your life. By clarifying what's most important, you can focus less on the unimportant things and eliminate stress.
- **Connect to the world.** The more you feel you have a purpose in the world, the less solitary you feel — even when you're alone. This can lead to a valuable inner peace during difficult times.
- **Release control.** When you feel part of a greater whole, you realize that you aren't responsible for everything that happens in life. You can share the burden of tough times as well as the joys of life's blessings with those around you.
- **Expand your support network.** Whether you find spirituality in a church, mosque or synagogue, in your family, or in walks with a friend through nature, this sharing of spiritual expression can help build relationships.
- **Lead a healthier life.** People who consider themselves spiritual may be better able to cope with stress and heal from illness or addiction faster.

How can you define your spirituality?

The best way to uncover your spirituality is to engage in self-discovery. Here are some questions to ask yourself to discover what experiences and values define you:

- What are your important relationships?
- Where have you found comfort?
- What gives you hope?
- What brings you joy?
- What are your three most memorable experiences?
- If you have survived losses in your life, how have you done so?
- What do you believe will happen to you when your physical life ends, and how do you feel about that?
- Describe a time when you felt comfortable and all was right with the world.
- Describe a time when your life was filled with a sense of meaning or you were filled with a sense of awe.

The answers to such questions help you identify the most important people and experiences in your life. With this information, you can focus your search for spirituality on the relationships and activities in life that have helped define you as a person and those that continue to inspire your personal growth.

Cultivating your spirituality

Spirituality begins with your relationship with yourself, is nurtured by your relationships with others and culminates in a sense of purpose in life. Realizing this, two of the best ways to cultivate your spirituality are to improve your self-esteem and to foster relationships with those who are important to you. This can lead to a deepened sense of your place in life and in the greater good.

Looking inward

- **Try prayer, meditation and relaxation techniques** to access your inner wisdom and help focus your thoughts.
- **Keep a Book/journal** to help you express your feelings and record your progress.
- **Seek out a trusted adviser or friend** — preferably someone who has had similar life experiences — who can help you discover what's important to you in life. Sometimes others may have insights that you haven't been able to discover on your own.
- **Read inspirational stories or essays** to help you evaluate different philosophies of life.
- **Talk to others** whose spiritual lives you admire. Ask questions to learn how they found their way to a fulfilling spiritual life.
- **Be open to new experiences.** If you're exploring organized religion, remember to consider a variety of different faith traditions. If your spirituality is more secular, you might consider expanding your horizons with new experiences in the arts.

Nurturing relationships with others

- Develop effective listening and communication skills.
- Make relationships with friends and family a priority and stay in touch.
- Share your spiritual journey with loved ones and let them know what's important to you.
- Seek out others with similar spiritual beliefs and engage in conversation to learn from each other.
- Volunteer within your community.
- See the good in people and in yourself.
-

Pursuing a spiritual life

Staying connected to your inner spirit and the lives of those around you can enhance your quality of life, both mentally and physically. Remember that spirituality is a dynamic process and a constantly evolving internal journey. Your personal concept of spirituality may change with your age and life experiences, but it always forms the basis of your well-being, helps you maintain a reasonable stress level and affirms your purpose in life.

14N: Positive thinking: Reduce stress, enjoy life more:

Positive thinking helps with stress management and can even improve your health. Overcome negative self-talk by recognizing it and practicing with some examples provided. Is your glass half-empty or half-full? How you answer this age-old question about positive thinking may reflect your outlook on life, your attitude toward yourself, and whether you're optimistic or pessimistic.

In fact, some studies show that these personality traits — optimism and pessimism — can affect many areas of your health and well-being. Positive thinking also is a key part of effective stress management. Positive thinking doesn't mean that you keep your head in the sand and ignore life's less pleasant situations. It just means that you approach the unpleasantness in a more positive and productive way. With all this in mind, take a refresher course in positive thinking. Learn how to put positive thinking into action in your own life, and reap the benefits.

Understanding positive thinking and self-talk

Self-talk is the endless stream of thoughts that run through your head every day. These automatic thoughts can be positive or negative. Some of your self-talk comes from logic and reason. Other self-talk may arise from misconceptions that you create because of lack of information.

If the thoughts that run through your head are mostly negative, your outlook on life is more likely pessimistic. If your thoughts are mostly positive, you're likely an optimist — someone who practices positive thinking.

It's unclear why people who engage in positive thinking experience these health benefits. One theory is that having a positive outlook enables you to cope better with stressful situations, which reduces the harmful health effects of stress on your body. It's also thought that positive and optimistic people live healthier lifestyles — they get more physical activity, follow a healthier diet, and have reduced rates of smoking and alcohol consumption.

Identifying negative thinking

Some common forms of negative self-talk include:

- **Filtering.** You magnify the negative aspects of a situation and filter out all of the positive ones. For example, say you had a great day at work. You completed your tasks ahead of time and were complimented for doing a speedy and thorough job. But you forgot one minor step. That evening, you focus only on your oversight and forget about the compliments you received.
- **Personalizing.** When something bad occurs, you automatically blame yourself. For example, you hear that an evening out with friends is canceled, and you assume that the change in plans is because no one wanted to be around you.
- **Catastrophizing.** You automatically anticipate the worst. You refuse to go out with friends for fear that you'll make a fool of yourself. Or one change in your daily routine leads you to think the entire day will be a disaster.

- **Polarizing.** You see things only as either good or bad, black or white. There is no middle ground. You feel that you have to be perfect or that you're a total failure.

Focusing on positive thinking

Because your self-talk is mainly negative doesn't mean you're doomed to an unhappy or unhealthy life. You can learn to turn negative thinking into positive thinking. The process is simple, but it takes time and practice — you're creating a new habit, after all. Here are some ways to think and behave in a more positive way:

- **Check yourself.** Periodically during the day, stop and evaluate what you're thinking. If you find that your thoughts are mainly negative, try to find a way to put a positive spin on them.
- **Be open to humor.** Give yourself permission to smile or laugh, especially during difficult times. Seek humor in everyday happenings. When you can laugh at life, you feel less stressed.
- **Follow a healthy lifestyle.** Exercise at least three times a week to positively affect mood and reduce stress. Follow a healthy diet to fuel your mind and body. And learn to manage stress.
- **Surround yourself with positive people.** Make sure those in your life are positive, supportive people you can depend on to give helpful advice and feedback. Negative people, those who believe they have no power over their lives, may increase your stress level and may make you doubt your ability to manage stress in healthy ways.
- **Practice positive self-talk.** Start by following one simple rule: Don't say anything to yourself that you wouldn't say to anyone else. Be gentle and encouraging with yourself. If a negative thought enters your mind, evaluate it rationally and respond with affirmations of what is good about yourself.

Examples of typical negative self-talk and how you might apply a positive twist include:

Negative self-talk	Positive spin
I've never done it before.	It's an opportunity to learn something new.
It's too complicated.	I'll tackle it from a different angle.
I don't have the resources.	Necessity is the mother of invention.
I'm too lazy to get this done.	I wasn't able to fit it into my schedule but can re-examine some priorities.
There's no way it will work.	I can try to make it work.
It's too radical a change.	Let's take a chance.
No one bothers to communicate with me.	I'll see if I can open the channels of communication.
I'm not going to get any better at this.	I'll give it another try.

Some more examples:

1. A winner sees green near every sandtrap; a loser sees sandtrap near every green
2. A winner says let me do it for you; a loser says that is not my job.
3. A winner says it may be difficult but it is possible; a loser says it may be possible but it is too difficult.
4. A winner is always a part of solution; a loser is always a part of problem
5. A winner has answer to every question; a loser have questions to every answer
6. Winners have dreams; Loser have schemes.
7. Winners see the gain; Losers see the pain.
8. Winners see possibilities; Losers see problems.
9. Winners make it happen; Losers let it happen.
10. Winners are like a thermostat; Losers are like thermometers.
11. Winners choose what they say; Losers say what they choose.

Practicing positive thinking every day

If you tend to have a negative outlook, don't expect to become an optimist overnight. But with practice, eventually your self-talk will contain less self-criticism and more self-acceptance. You may also become less critical of the world around you. Plus, when you share your positive mood and positive experience, both you and those around you enjoy an emotional boost.

Practicing positive self-talk will improve your outlook. When your state of mind is generally optimistic, you're able to handle everyday stress in a more constructive way. That ability may contribute to the widely observed health benefits of positive thinking.

140: Social support: Tap this tool to reduce stress:

Having close friends and family on whom you can count has far-reaching benefits for your health. Here's how to build and maintain these essential relationships.

It doesn't take a scientific study to show that surrounding yourself with supportive family, friends and co-workers can have a positive effect on your mental well-being, but there's plenty of research to confirm it. A strong social support network can be critical to help you through the stress of tough times, whether you've had a bad day at work or a year filled with loss or chronic illness. It's never too soon to cultivate these important relationships — and your social support network can never have too many good friends.

What is a social support network?

A social support network is different from a support group. A social support network is made up of friends, family and peers, while a support group is generally a structured meeting run by a mental health professional. Although both can play an important role in times of stress, a social support network is something you can develop when you're not under stress, providing the comfort of knowing that your friends are there for you if you need them.

You don't need to formalize your support network with regular meetings or an official leader. A coffee break with a friend at work, a quick chat with a neighbor, a phone call to your sister, even a visit to church are all ways to reduce stress while fostering lasting relationships with the people close to you.

Benefits of a social support network

The positive effects of a support network include:

- **Sense of belonging.** Spending time with people helps ward off loneliness. Whether it's other new moms, dog lovers, fishing buddies or siblings, just knowing you're not alone can go a long way toward coping with stress.
- **Increased sense of self-worth.** Having people who call you a friend reinforces the idea that you're a good person to be around.
- **Feeling of security.** By reaching out and sharing yourself with others, you have the added security of knowing that if you start to show signs of depression or exhibit unhealthy lifestyle habits, your friends can help alert you to the problem.

Cultivating your support network

The first step toward developing a strong support network is an evaluation of your own behavior as it relates to building and maintaining friendships. After all, relationships are a two-way street. The better a friend you are, the better your friends will be. Here are some suggestions for nurturing your relationships:

- **Stay in touch.** Answering phone calls, returning e-mails and reciprocating invitations let people know you care.
- **Be proactive.** Don't wait for someone else to make the first move. If you meet someone you think could be a good friend, invite him or her for coffee. Or be the one to strike up a conversation while in line at the grocery store.
- **Know when to say "no" and when to say "yes."** Spending time with people who aren't supportive can add stress and take away valuable time. On the other hand, don't decline an invitation because you feel shy or insecure.
- **Don't compete.** Be happy instead of jealous when your friends succeed, and they'll celebrate your accomplishments in return.
- **Be a good listener.** Find out what's important to your friends — you might find you have even more in common than you think.
- **Challenge yourself.** Keep looking for ways to improve. Maybe it's by complaining less, being more generous or forgiving others' faults.
- **Don't overdo it.** In your zeal to extend your social network, be careful not to overwhelm friends and family with phone calls and e-mails. Save those high-demand times for when you really need them.
- **Appreciate your friends and family.** Take time to say thank you and express how important they are to you.

A cautionary tale

Remember that the goal of extending your social support network is to reduce your stress level, not add to it. Here are some things to look out for when evaluating your relationships:

- **Manage obligatory social ties.** Some evidence shows that the negative consequences of maintaining obligatory relationships, such as with certain relatives or co-workers, can outweigh the benefits. Although you may not be able to cut ties with a nagging in-law, look for ways to manage the relationship so that it doesn't become a stressor for you.
- **Beware of codependents.** A support system with people who are engaged in the same unhealthy behaviors that you're trying to overcome — whether it's substance abuse or simply a negative attitude — can be damaging to your well-being.

- **Avoid a sense of duty.** The best support systems have no strings attached. If your peers are constantly demanding repayment for their efforts, or you feel pressured to conform to their beliefs, you're probably better off without them.
- **Pick the right supporter.** If you need help through a hard time, consider carefully which friend or family member to ask. A sibling might not be the best choice, for example, in dealing with grief over a lost parent because he or she too is affected by the loss.

14P: Managing Marital/ Marriage Stress:

Relationships offer wonderful benefits, but none are without their challenges. These challenges can put a strain on a couple, but working through them can either strengthen their bond or push them apart, depending on how they handle the challenges they face. Working through marriage problems in a healthy way can be very challenging, especially because stressors in a marriage can come from many different sources.

Sometimes common marriage problems surface in the first few years of married life. Every couple has marriage problems, and some are bigger than others. Many people fear upsetting their new husband or wife and remain silent about things that are bothering them. Remaining mute on the big issues – from having a baby to money – is a big mistake that could ruin your marriage in the long run. If you want to make your marriage strong and enduring, you must communicate with one another from the start about marriage problems.

The following are some of the most common sources of marital stress and marriage problems:

- 1. Money:** Stress and fighting over money constitute one of the most oft-cited marriage problems that couples face. Generally speaking, when couples fight about money, their dispute is really symbolic of something different—power struggles, different values, or other issues that surround money. However, in tough economic times, financial stress can actually cause more general stress, and more conflict over things unrelated to money, as well as money-centered arguments. (For example, when one partner is extremely stressed about money, they may be less patient and more stressed in general; they may then pick fights with the other partner about unrelated things without even realizing it!)
- 2. Children :** The advent of children brings another potential source of marriage problems. Children are wonderful, and can bring wonderful and meaningful gifts into our lives. However, having children can bring additional stress into a marriage because the caretaking of children requires more responsibility as well as a change in roles, provides more fodder for disagreement and strain, and reduces the amount of time available to bond as a couple. This combination can test even the strongest of bonds.
- 3. Daily Stress:** Daily stressors don't need to equal marriage problems, but they can exacerbate problems that already exist. As with financial stress, general daily stress can test patience and optimism, leaving couples with less to give to one another emotionally.

4. **Busy Schedules:** Marriage problems can result from overly-busy schedules for a few reasons. First, couples who are very busy may find themselves generally stressed as well, especially if they're not taking care of themselves with quality sleep and good nutrition. Additionally, they may find themselves less connected because they have less time to spend together and more separateness in their lives. Finally, if they don't work together as a team (even if their responsibilities are completely separate, if they don't coordinate to cover all responsibilities well), they may find themselves fighting over who's taking care of which household and social responsibilities. Again, while busy schedules don't automatically lead to marriage problems, they do present a challenge that needs to be worked through.
5. **Poor Communication:** Perhaps the biggest predictor of marriage problems is poor communication, or negative communication that belies damaging attitudes and dynamics within the relationship. Negative communication is so damaging. Healthy communication is key; unhealthy communication can lead to major marriage problems.
6. **Bad Habits:** Sometimes couples experience marriage problems that could be solved if the two could notice their habits and change them. People don't always make a conscious decision to argue over petty things, nag and be critical, or leave messes for the other to clean, for example. People just get into negative patterns of relating, fall into lazy personal habits, or get into a rut that they perpetuate out of habit.
7. **Sex Problems:** Another big issue that faces some couples is sex problems. Again, differences – as in different levels of interest in sex or different libidos – are usually at the core of the problems. One person wants more or less sex than the other. Or one person is more sexually adventurous than the other. Or one person is enjoying the sex and the other is not. As with everything else, resolving your sex problems starts with communication. Discuss what's bothering you and try to come up with compromises that will satisfy both of you
8. **In-Law Problems:** When you married your husband or wife, you married his or her family, too. While there is a big difference between the relationship you share with your spouse and the one you have with his or her family, you still have to make both work. The relationship spouses have with their in-laws, however, isn't always easy. We've all heard the jokes about the pushy mother-in-law, and far too many people have their own horror stories, which usually begin during the wedding planning, about the in-laws. Communication with your spouse comes in handy when dealing with the in-laws, too. Tell him or her what's bothering you about the in-laws. Choose your words carefully and plan what you're going to say beforehand because you can easily offend your spouse when communicating about his or her family. Put your best foot forward with your new family. Choose your battles with them wisely. Then, stand your ground and be firm without being mean or disrespectful.
9. **Household Problems:** Determining who does what around the house has become a bigger issue for couples now that more men and women both work outside the home. Sharing the responsibilities of cooking, cleaning, and paying the bills can mean more arguments in the beginning stages of a marriage simply because each person doesn't yet know his or her role and obligation. Often, the workload ends up falling mostly on one person's shoulders. This causes resentment. Each person has to carry his or her

weight, and traditional ideas about who is supposed to do what must be forgotten. The modern era calls for equality, and you have to determine how to evenly distribute the chores in your marriage. Making a schedule and assigning chores to one another in a way that is fair and satisfactory to both of you is a great way to resolve problems about chores.

Fortunately, these marriage problems can be worked on. Even if only one partner is consciously trying to change, any change can bring a shift in the dynamic of the relationship, which can bring positive results.

Solution is in your own hand: So how can you keep things exciting in a marriage--especially when life takes over and you have real responsibilities? The key is to not only communicate and work through conflict in healthy ways, but do things together that are new and exciting. Here are some ways to do that, and maintain a happy marriage:

- **Premarital Skills Training:** Aaron believes that premarital education can teach couples "to handle conflict and support each other ... The evidence is that 10 to 20 years later, people are doing a lot better in their marriage. They're less likely to be divorced, less likely to be unhappy." It is also recommends marriage enrichment courses for couples who have been married for many years.
- **Have a date night once a week:** While not new advice, it's nice to have more experts encourage date nights for married couples. If they do it [date night] every week, it's good for their marriage- "It enriches and enlivens." We believe that putting date nights on your calendar and not letting other things interfere with that time together show the priority you place on your marriage. Remember to find ways to make your date nights different and you can get the butterflies back.
- **Try new things—regularly!:** When you're on your dates, don't just do the same things all the time. Go see stand-up comedy, go on hikes, go horseback riding, see live music, try new and exotic food, take dance classes together. Do things that you haven't done before! This helps relieve stress and boredom in life, and allows you to grow together at the same time.
- **Participate *actively* in each other's lives.** Get involved in what your spouse is doing, and invite their participation in your life. Your challenges then become shared experiences, you both benefit from the support, and stressors feel less stressful. If you're parents, this includes both of you being actively involved in your kids' lives, and facing challenges as a team. This sounds like a given, but sometimes reminders help.
- **Have More Fun.** Sometimes it's just that simple--seek out fun, and make it part of your relationship. This can be as simple as maintaining a sense of humor, or can involve taking certain steps toward having fun on a regular basis. Don't let responsibility and stress rob you of marital satisfaction and fun in life--you both deserve better!.
- **Fight Fair:** It's one of those "duh" recommendations, but truly, learning how to handle marital conflict in healthy ways can lower divorce rates. If you fight to win or try to avoid conflict, you are setting yourselves up for a divorce. Fighting fair can

strengthen your marriage. Knowing when to **apologize** and how to **forgive** are also important marital skills that the two of you need to incorporate into your marriage.

- **Treat Depression:** Even though your own mental health may suffer if you have a depressed spouse, don't think you can make things better for both of you by trying to treat your spouse's depression yourself. "The best thing they can do for the relationship is get therapy." If your depressed spouse will not see a doctor, consider seeing a counselor on your own and that you take care of yourself emotionally and physically.
- **Offer Just Enough Support:** Giving unwanted advice is not always beneficial to your marriage. "...it's definitely possible to overdo it when offering support to your mate. Sometimes the right type of support is more appreciated than the quantity."
- **Create Rituals Together:** Another not so new piece of advice, but an important way to increase your marital satisfaction is to share in holiday rituals. While the study focuses on religious and holiday rituals as important in affirming and cementing marriages, we think, everyday rituals are just as important and show the love you have for one another.
- **Celebrate Success:** Hopefully, we don't have to remind you to celebrate and acknowledge your spouse's moments of success. You don't need to throw a party every time your spouse shares good news, but saying you are proud goes a long way to creating a successful marriage. Complimenting your spouse should be a daily activity.
- **Some Key wonder Works:**
 - **Spend at least 10 minutes a day** focused on one another without the distraction of your kids, the TV, the phone, etc.
 - **Say I Love You.**
 - **Hug your spouse** whenever u get an opportunity.
 - **Affirm** something your spouse said or did and say something nice.
 - **Be kind** to your spouse.
 - **Do something caring** and romantic for your spouse.
 - **Don't criticize** your spouse all the time
 - **Laugh together.**
 - **Hide some love notes** for your spouse.
 - **Do a few things together**, like working in the yard, taking a walk, watching a favorite movie, or planning and cooking dinner.
 - **Encourage** both yourself and your spouse to have some alone time.
 - **Celebrate your anniversary.** Write a letter to each other recommitting yourselves to your marriage.
 - **Decide** together how you will celebrate holidays.
 - **Make a big deal** about your birthdays.
 - **Don't try to change** your spouse.
 - **Be willing** to forgive.
 - **Don't expect** your spouse to be a mind reader and don't try to be a mind reader.
 - **Accept** that there will be some small issues that you two will never resolve and that it is normal in successful marriages.

14Q: Managing Children Stress:

Anxiety symptoms are common in children and adolescents, with 10-20% of school-aged children experiencing anxiety symptoms. An even larger number of children experience stress that does not qualify as an anxiety disorder. So how can you help to reduce your child's anxiety and stress?

1) Encourage your child to face his/her fears, not run away from them.

When we are afraid of situations we avoid them. However, avoidance of anxiety-provoking situations maintains the anxiety. Instead, if a child faces his or her fears, the child will learn that the anxiety reduces naturally on its own over time. The body cannot remain anxious for a very long period of time so there is a system in the body that calms the body down. Usually your anxiety will reduce within 20-45 minutes if you stay in the anxiety-provoking situation.

2) Tell your child that it is okay to be imperfect.

Often we feel that it is necessary for our children to succeed in sports, school, and performance situations. But sometimes we forget that kids need to be kids. School becomes driven by grades, not by enjoyment of learning if an 85 is good, but not good enough. This is not to say that striving is not important. It is important to encourage your child to work hard but equally important to accept and embrace your child's mistakes and imperfections.

3) Focus on the positives.

Many times anxious and stressed children can get lost in negative thoughts and self-criticism. They may focus on how the glass is half empty instead of half-full and worry about future events. The more that you are able to focus on your child's positive attributes and the good aspects of a situation, the more that it will remind your child to focus on the positives.

4) Schedule relaxing activities.

Children need time to relax and be kids. Unfortunately, sometimes even fun activities, like sports, can become more about success than they are about fun. Instead, it is important to ensure that your child engages in play purely for the sake of fun. This may include scheduling time each day for your child to play with toys, play a game, play a sport (without it being competitive), doing yoga, paint, have a tea party, put on a play, or just be silly.

5) Model approach behavior, self-care, and *positive thinking*.

Your child will do what you do. So if you avoid anxiety-provoking situations, so will your child. If you face your fears, so will your child. If you take care of yourself and schedule time for your own needs, your child will learn that self-care is an important part of life. If you look for the positive in situations, so will your child. Children learn behaviors from watching their parents. So when you think about your child's psychological well-being think about your own as well.

6) Reward your child's brave behaviors.

If your child faces his or her fears, reward this with praise, a hug, or even something tangible like a sticker or a small treat. This is not bribery if you establish this as a motivator prior to your child being in the situation. If you reward behaviors your child will engage in them more often.

7) Encourage good *sleep* hygiene.

Set a bed time for your child and stick to that bed time even on weekends. Also have a 30-45 minute bed time routine that is done every night. This helps your child to transition from the activities of the day to the relaxed state necessary to fall asleep.

8) Encourage your child to express his/her anxiety.

If your child says that he or she is worried or scared, don't say "No you're not!" or "You're fine." That doesn't help your child. Instead, it is likely to make your child believe that you do not listen or do not understand him/her. Instead, validate your child's experience by saying things like "Yes, you seem scared. What are you worried about?" Then have a discussion about your child's emotions and fears.

9) Help your child to problem solve.

Once you have validated your child's emotions and demonstrated that you understand your child's experience and are listening to what your child has to say, help your child to problem solve. This does not mean solving the problem for your child. It means helping your child to identify possible solutions. If your child can generate solutions, that is great. If not, generate some potential solutions for your child and ask your child to pick the solution that he or she thinks would work best.

10) Stay calm.

Children look to their parents to determine how to react in situations. We've all seen a young child trip and fall and then look to their parent to see how to react. If the parent seems concerned, the child cries. This is because the child is looking to their parent for a signal of how to react to the situation. Children of all ages pick up on their parent's emotions and resonate with them. If you are anxious, your child will pick up on that anxiety and experience an increase in his/her own anxiety. So when you want to reduce your child's anxiety, you must manage your own anxiety. This may mean deliberately slowing down your own speech, taking a few deep breaths to relax, and working to ensure that your facial expression conveys that you are calm.

11) Practice relaxation exercises with your child.

Sometimes really basic relaxation exercises are necessary to help your child to reduce their stress and anxiety. This might mean telling your child to take a few slow, deep breaths (and you taking a few slow breaths with your child so your child can match your pace). Or it might mean asking your child to image him or herself somewhere relaxing, like the beach or relaxing in a backyard hammock. Ask your child to close his/her eyes and imagine the sounds, smells, and sensations associated with the image. For example, close your eyes and picture yourself on a beach. Listen to the sound of the surf as the waves come in and go out. In and out. Listen to the sound of

the seagulls flying off in the distance. Now focus on the feel of the warm sand beneath your fingers and the sun warming your skin. Your child can do these techniques on his or her own during anxiety-provoking times.

12) Never give up!

Anxiety and stress can be a chronic struggle and often the source of a child's anxiety changes over time so it can feel as though you are always putting out fires. With repetition of the anxiety and stress management techniques, your child will learn how to lower his/her anxiety level and how to cope with anxiety-provoking situations. The key is repetition so keep it up!

14R: Managing Depression:

Common Reasons for Depression:

- Changing Weather
- Addiction to Smoking/ Alcohol/ Drugs/ Medicines etc.
- Diseases
- Poor Sleep habits
- Overload of works
- Addiction to Computer/ TV
- Too many choices
- Lack of dieting
- Poor Interpersonal relations
- Insecurity
- Fear
-

Signs and symptoms of Depression:

Depression is not uniform. Signs and symptoms may be experienced by some sufferers and not by others. How severe the symptoms are, and how long they last depends on the individual person and his illness. Below is a list of the most common symptoms:

Psychological signs and symptoms:

- Persistent sadness or low mood
- Thoughts and feelings of worthlessness
- Persistent worry
- Persistent anxiety
- Feelings of self hatred
- A feeling of hopelessness
- A feeling of helplessness
- Feeling like crying
- A feeling of guilt
- Irritability - even trivial things become annoying
- Angry outbursts
- Intolerance towards others

- Persistent doubting - finding it very hard to decide on things
- Finding it impossible to enjoy life
- Thoughts of self harm
- Thoughts of suicide

Physical signs and symptoms:

- Body movements may be slower than they used to be
- Problems with focusing, the person's concentration span may be reduced
- Speech may be slower than it used to be
- Eating patterns change, appetite changes - typically, the patient eats less and loses weight. However, some people may eat more and gain weight.
- Low Sex Drive
- Lack of energy, fatigue, tiredness - even small and easy chores feel like unpleasant ordeals
- The woman's menstrual cycle may change
- Restlessness - the patient may pace up and down more, wring his/her hands, and find it hard to keep still
- Unexplained aches and pains, such as headache, backache or digestive problems
- Sleeping disturbances - the individual may find it hard to get to sleep, or wakes up during the night and cannot get back to sleep. People with depression may suffer from some kind of Insomnia, Hypesomnia (oversleeping) is also possible.

Social signs and symptoms may include:

- Underperforming at work
- Not doing well at school
- Avoiding keeping in touch with friends
- Abandoning interests and hobbies
- Having family/home problems

Self Treatment of Depression:

1. Cultivate Supportive Relationship:

Getting the support you need plays a big role in lifting the fog of depression and keeping it away. On your own, it can be difficult to maintain perspective and sustain the effort required to beat depression, but the very nature of depression makes it difficult to reach out for help. However, isolation and loneliness make depression even worse, so maintaining your close relationships and social activities are important.

The thought of reaching out to even close family members and friends can seem overwhelming. You may feel ashamed, too exhausted to talk, or guilty for neglecting the relationship. Remind yourself that this is the depression talking. You loved ones care about you and want to help.

- **Turn to trusted friends and family members.** Share what you're going through with the people you love and trust. Ask for the help and support you need. You may have retreated from your most treasured relationships, but they can get you through this tough time.

- **Try to keep up with social activities even if you don't feel like it.** Often when you're depressed, it feels more comfortable to retreat into your shell, but being around other people will make you feel less depressed.
- **Join a support group for depression.** Being with others dealing with depression can go a long way in reducing your sense of isolation. You can also encourage each other, give and receive advice on how to cope, and share your experiences.
 - Talk to one person about your feelings.
 - Help someone else by volunteering.
 - Have lunch or coffee with a friend.
 - Ask a loved one to check in with you regularly.
 - Accompany someone to the movies, a concert, or a get-together.
 - Call or email an old friend.
 - Go for a walk with a workout buddy.
 - Schedule a weekly dinner date.
 - Meet new people by taking a class or joining a club.
 - Confide in a counselor, therapist, or clergy member.

2. Challenge Negative Thinking:

Depression puts a negative spin on everything, including the way you see yourself, the situations you encounter, and your expectations for the future. But you can't break out of this pessimistic mind frame by "just thinking positive." Happy thoughts or wishful thinking won't cut it. Rather, the trick is to replace negative thoughts with more balanced thoughts.

- **Think outside yourself.** Ask yourself if you'd say what you're thinking about yourself to someone else. If not, stop being so hard on yourself. Think about less harsh statements that offer more realistic descriptions.
- **Allow yourself to be less than perfect.** Many depressed people are perfectionists, holding themselves to impossibly high standards and then beating themselves up when they fail to meet them. Battle this source of self-imposed stress by challenging your negative ways of thinking.
- **Socialize with positive people.** Notice how people who always look on the bright side deal with challenges, even minor ones, like not being able to find a parking space. Then consider how you would react in the same situation. Even if you have to pretend, try to adopt their optimism and persistence in the face of difficulty.
- **Keep a "negative thought log."** Whenever you experience a negative thought, jot down the thought and what triggered it in a notebook. Review your log when you're in a good mood. Consider if the negativity was truly warranted. Ask yourself if there's another way to view the situation. For example, let's say your boyfriend was short with you and you automatically assumed that the relationship was in trouble. It's possible, though, he's just having a bad day.

3. Take Care of Yourself:

In order to overcome depression, you have to take care of yourself. This includes following a healthy lifestyle, learning to manage stress, setting limits on what you're able to do, adopting healthy habits, and scheduling fun activities into life.

- **Aim for eight hours of sleep.** Depression typically involves sleep problems. Whether you're sleeping too little or too much, your mood suffers. Get on a better sleep schedule.
- **Expose yourself to a little sunlight every day.** Lack of sunlight can make depression worse. Make sure you're getting enough. Take a short walk outdoors, have your coffee outside, enjoy an *al fresco* meal, people-watch on a park bench, or sit out in the garden. Aim for at least 15 minutes of sunlight a day to boost your mood. If you live somewhere with little winter sunshine, try using a light therapy box.
- **Keep stress in check.** Not only does stress prolong and worsen depression, but it can also trigger it. Figure out all the things in your life that stress you out. Examples include: work overload, unsupportive relationships, taking on too much, or health problems. Once you've identified your stressors, you can make a plan to avoid them or minimize their impact.
- **Practice relaxation techniques.** A daily relaxation practice can help relieve symptoms of depression, reduce stress, and boost feelings of joy and well-being. Try yoga, deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, or meditation.
- **Care for a pet.** While nothing can replace the human connection, pets can bring joy and companionship into your life and help you feel less isolated. Caring for a pet can also get you outside of yourself and give you a sense of being needed—both powerful antidotes to depression.
- **Do things you enjoy:**

While you can't force yourself to have fun or experience pleasure, you can choose to do things that you used to enjoy. Pick up a former hobby or a sport you used to like. Express yourself creatively through music, art, or writing. Go out with friends. Take a day trip to a museum, the mountains, or the ballpark. Push yourself to do things, even when you don't feel like it. You might be surprised at how much better you feel once you're out in the world. Even if your depression doesn't lift immediately, you'll gradually feel more upbeat and energetic as you make time for fun activities.

 - Spend some time in nature
 - List what you like about yourself
 - Read a good book
 - Watch a funny movie or TV show
 - Take a long, hot bath
 - Take care of a few small tasks
 - Play with a pet
 - Write in your journal
 - Listen to music
 - Do something spontaneous

4. **Get Regular Exercises:**

When you're depressed, exercising may be the last thing you feel like doing. But exercise is a powerful tool for dealing with depression. In fact, studies show that regular exercise can be as effective as antidepressant medication at increasing energy levels and decreasing feelings of fatigue.

Scientists haven't figured out exactly why exercise is such a potent antidepressant, but evidence suggests that physical activity triggers new cell growth in the brain, increases mood-enhancing neurotransmitters and endorphins, reduces stress, and relieves muscle tension—all things that can have a positive effect on depression.

To gain the most benefits, aim for 30 minutes of exercise per day. You can start small, though, as short 10-minute bursts of activity can have a positive effect on your mood. Here are a few easy ways to get moving:

- Take the stairs rather than the elevator
- Park your car in the farthest spot in the lot
- Take your dog for a walk
- Pair up with an exercise partner
- Walk while you're talking on the phone

As a next step, try incorporating walks or some other enjoyable, easy form of exercise into your daily routine. The key is to pick an activity you enjoy, so you're more likely to keep up with it.

5. **Eat a Healthy and Mood Boosting Diet:**

What you eat has a direct impact on the way you feel. Aim for a balanced Diet of low-fat protein, complex carbohydrates, fruits and vegetables. Reduce your intake of foods that can adversely affect your brain and mood, such as caffeine, alcohol, trans fats, saturated fats, and foods with high levels of chemical preservatives or hormones (such as certain meats).

- **Don't skip meals.** Going too long between meals can make you feel irritable and tired, so aim to eat something at least every three to four hours.
- **Minimize sugar and refined carbs.** You may crave sugary snacks, baked goods, or comfort foods such as pasta or French fries, but these "feel-good" foods quickly lead to a crash in mood and energy.
- **Focus on complex carbohydrates.** Foods such as baked potatoes, whole-wheat pasta, oatmeal, and whole grain breads can boost serotonin levels without a crash.
- **Boost your B vitamins.** Deficiencies in B vitamins such as folic acid and B-12 can trigger depression. To get more, take a B-complex vitamin supplement or eat more citrus fruit, leafy greens, beans, chicken, and eggs.
- **Try super-foods** rich in nutrients that can boost mood, such as **bananas, brown rice, spinach** etc.

14S: Stress Management Strategy:

It may seem that there's nothing you can do about stress. The bills won't stop coming, there will never be more hours in the day, and your career and family responsibilities will always be demanding. But you have more control than you might think. In fact, the simple realization that you're in control of your life is the foundation of stress management. Managing stress is all about taking charge: of your thoughts, emotions, schedule, and the way you deal with problems. Follow following guidelines for quick strategy:

1. Identify sources of stress
2. Look at how you cope with stress
3. Avoid unnecessary stress
4. Alter the situation
5. Adapt to the stressor
6. Accept the things you can't change
7. Make time for fun and relaxation
8. Adopt a healthy lifestyle

1. Identify sources of Stress in your Life:

Stress management starts with identifying the sources of stress in your life. This isn't as easy as it sounds. Your true sources of stress aren't always obvious, and it's all too easy to overlook your own stress-inducing thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Sure, you may know that you're constantly worried about work deadlines. But maybe it's your procrastination, rather than the actual job demands, that leads to deadline stress. To identify your true sources of stress, look closely at your habits, attitude, and excuses:

- Do you explain away stress as temporary (“I just have a million things going on right now”) even though you can't remember the last time you took a breather?
- Do you define stress as an integral part of your work or home life (“Things are always crazy around here”) or as a part of your personality (“I have a lot of nervous energy, that's all”).
- Do you blame your stress on other people or outside events, or view it as entirely normal and unexceptional?

Until you accept responsibility for the role you play in creating or maintaining it, your stress level will remain outside your control.

2. Look at how you currently cope with stress:

Think about the ways you currently manage and cope with stress in your life. Your stress journal can help you identify them. Are your coping strategies healthy or unhealthy, helpful or unproductive? Unfortunately, many people cope with stress in ways that compound the problem.

Unhealthy ways of coping with stress

These coping strategies may temporarily reduce stress, but they cause more damage in the long run:

-
- Smoking
 - Drinking too much
 - Overeating or undereating
 - Zoning out for hours in front of the TV or computer
 - Withdrawing from friends, family, and activities
 - Using pills or drugs to relax
 - Sleeping too much
 - Procrastinating
 - Filling up every minute of the day to avoid facing problems
 - Taking out your stress on others (lashing out, angry outbursts, physical violence)

Learning Healthier ways to manage stress:

If your methods of coping with stress aren't contributing to your greater emotional and physical health, it's time to find healthier ones. There are many healthy ways to manage and cope with stress, but they all require change. You can either change the situation or change your reaction. When deciding which option to choose, it's helpful to think of the four As: avoid, alter, adapt, or accept.

Since everyone has a unique response to stress, there is no "one size fits all" solution to managing it. No single method works for everyone or in every situation, so experiment with different techniques and strategies. Focus on what makes you feel calm and in control.

3: Avoid unnecessary stress:

Not all stress can be avoided, and it's not healthy to avoid a situation that needs to be addressed. You may be surprised, however, by the number of stressors in your life that you can eliminate.

Learn how to say "no" – Know your limits and stick to them. Whether in your personal or professional life, refuse to accept added responsibilities when you're close to reaching them. Taking on more than you can handle is a surefire recipe for stress.

Avoid people who stress you out – If someone consistently causes stress in your life and you can't turn the relationship around, limit the amount of time you spend with that person or end the relationship entirely.

Take control of your environment – If the evening news makes you anxious, turn the TV off. If traffic's got you tense, take a longer but less-traveled route. If going to the market is an unpleasant chore, do your grocery shopping online.

Avoid hot-button topics – If you get upset over religion or politics, cross them off your conversation list. If you repeatedly argue about the same subject with the same people, stop bringing it up or excuse yourself when it's the topic of discussion.

Pare down your to-do list – Analyze your schedule, responsibilities, and daily tasks. If you've got too much on your plate, distinguish between the "shoulds" and the "musts." Drop tasks that aren't truly necessary to the bottom of the list or eliminate them entirely.

4.: Alter the situation :

If you can't avoid a stressful situation, try to alter it. Figure out what you can do to change things so the problem doesn't present itself in the future. Often, this involves changing the way you communicate and operate in your daily life.

- **Express your feelings instead of bottling them up.** If something or someone is bothering you, communicate your concerns in an open and respectful way. If you don't voice your feelings, resentment will build and the situation will likely remain the same.
- **Be willing to compromise.** When you ask someone to change their behavior, be willing to do the same. If you both are willing to bend at least a little, you'll have a good chance of finding a happy middle ground.
- **Be more assertive.** Don't take a backseat in your own life. Deal with problems head on, doing your best to anticipate and prevent them. If you've got an exam to study for and your chatty roommate just got home, say up front that you only have five minutes to talk.
- **Manage your time better.** Poor time management can cause a lot of stress. When you're stretched too thin and running behind, it's hard to stay calm and focused. But if you plan ahead and make sure you don't overextend yourself, you can alter the amount of stress you're under.

5.: Adapt to the stressor:

If you can't change the stressor, change yourself. You can adapt to stressful situations and regain your sense of control by changing your expectations and attitude.

- **Reframe problems.** Try to view stressful situations from a more positive perspective. Rather than fuming about a traffic jam, look at it as an opportunity to pause and regroup, listen to your favorite radio station, or enjoy some alone time.
- **Look at the big picture.** Take perspective of the stressful situation. Ask yourself how important it will be in the long run. Will it matter in a month? A year? Is it really worth getting upset over? If the answer is no, focus your time and energy elsewhere.
- **Adjust your standards.** Perfectionism is a major source of avoidable stress. Stop setting yourself up for failure by demanding perfection. Set reasonable standards for yourself and others, and learn to be okay with "good enough."
- **Focus on the positive.** When stress is getting you down, take a moment to reflect on all the things you appreciate in your life, including your own positive qualities and gifts. This simple strategy can help you keep things in perspective.

6.: Accept the things you can't change:

Some sources of stress are unavoidable. You can't prevent or change stressors such as the death of a loved one, a serious illness, or a national recession. In such cases, the best way to cope with stress is to accept things as they are. Acceptance may be difficult, but in the long run, it's easier than railing against a situation you can't change.

- **Don't try to control the uncontrollable.** Many things in life are beyond our control— particularly the behavior of other people. Rather than stressing out over them, focus on the things you can control such as the way you choose to react to problems.

- **Look for the upside.** As the saying goes, “What doesn’t kill us makes us stronger.” When facing major challenges, try to look at them as opportunities for personal growth. If your own poor choices contributed to a stressful situation, reflect on them and learn from your mistakes.
- **Share your feelings.** Talk to a trusted friend or make an appointment with a therapist. Expressing what you’re going through can be very cathartic, even if there’s nothing you can do to alter the stressful situation.
- **Learn to forgive.** Accept the fact that we live in an imperfect world and that people make mistakes. Let go of anger and resentments. Free yourself from negative energy by forgiving and moving on.

7.: Make time for fun and relaxation:

Beyond a take-charge approach and a positive attitude, you can reduce stress in your life by nurturing yourself. If you regularly make time for fun and relaxation, you’ll be in a better place to handle life’s stressors when they inevitably come.

Healthy ways to relax and Recharge:

- Go for a walk.
- Spend time in nature.
- Call a good friend.
- Sweat out tension with a good workout.
- Write in your journal.
- Take a long bath.
- Light scented candles.
- Savor a warm cup of coffee or tea.
- Play with a pet.
- Work in your garden.
- Get a massage.
- Curl up with a good book.
- Listen to music.
- Watch a comedy.

Don’t get so caught up in the hustle and bustle of life that you forget to take care of your own needs. Nurturing yourself is a necessity, not a luxury.

- **Set aside relaxation time.** Include rest and relaxation in your daily schedule. Don’t allow other obligations to encroach. This is your time to take a break from all responsibilities and recharge your batteries.
- **Connect with others.** Spend time with positive people who enhance your life. A strong support system will buffer you from the negative effects of stress.
- **Do something you enjoy every day.** Make time for leisure activities that bring you joy, whether it be stargazing, playing the piano, or working on your bike.
- **Keep your sense of humor.** This includes the ability to laugh at yourself. The act of laughing helps your body fight stress in a number of ways.

8.: Adopt a healthy lifestyle:

You can increase your resistance to stress by strengthening your physical health.

- **Exercise regularly.** Physical activity plays a key role in reducing and preventing the effects of stress. Make time for at least 30 minutes of exercise, three times per week. Nothing beats aerobic exercise for releasing pent-up stress and tension.
- **Eat a healthy diet.** Well-nourished bodies are better prepared to cope with stress, so be mindful of what you eat. Start your day right with breakfast, and keep your energy up and your mind clear with balanced, nutritious meals throughout the day.

- **Reduce caffeine and sugar.** The temporary "highs" caffeine and sugar provide often end in with a crash in mood and energy. By reducing the amount of coffee, soft drinks, chocolate, and sugar snacks in your diet, you'll feel more relaxed and you'll sleep better.
- **Avoid alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs.** Self-medicating with alcohol or drugs may provide an easy escape from stress, but the relief is only temporary. Don't avoid or mask the issue at hand; deal with problems head on and with a clear mind.
- **Get enough sleep.** Adequate sleep fuels your mind, as well as your body. Feeling tired will increase your stress because it may cause you to think irrationally.

15: The bottom line: More friends, less stress:

It's always a good time to make more friends or improve on the relationships you already have. Whether you're the one getting the support or the one doling out the encouragement, you'll reap the rewards of comfort and compassion.

25 Ways to improve life-

1. Review the context of your life
2. Know life's impermanence
3. Make your smile cheaper
4. Be enthusiastic and praise others
5. Make meditation a part of your life
6. Go to the most beautiful place
7. Communicate effectively
8. Take out time for yourself
9. Better the world around you
10. Nourish your emotions
11. Plan short and long term goals
12. Prayer is a vital tool
13. Implement changes if needed
14. Identify your limitations
15. Do not lose your friends
16. Don't look for perfection
17. Let us be unpredictable
18. Have a sense of humour
19. Don't be afraid to make mistakes
20. Overcome your prejudice
21. Feel that "i am blessed"
22. Do random acts of kindness.
23. Be a student, always
24. Dream the impossible
25. Compare your performance

16: Manage Your Life: 108 useful Tips:

Some useful tips to Reduce Stress-Make it a habit

Morning:

1. Get up 15 minutes earlier
2. Prepare for the morning the night before
3. Avoid tight fitting clothes. Wear your favorite clothes and dress up well.
4. Avoid relying on chemical aids
5. Make a “to do list” and time table

Habits:

6. Try quitting bad habits
7. Eat lots of fresh vegetables and fruits.
8. Drink plenty of water- minimum 8 glasses
9. Exercise regularly.
10. Practice breathing slowly

11. Help others
12. Forgive & Forget
13. Contribute to a good cause.
14. Do your best and leave the rest
15. Share your time with family

Your life & Routine:

16. Set priorities in your life
17. Set goals for yourself
18. Make duplicate keys
19. Practice preventive maintenance
20. Don't rely on your memory ... write it down

21. Simplify meal times
22. Anticipate your needs
23. Unclutter your life
24. Stretch your limits a little each day
25. Maintain your weight

26. Practice grace under pressure
27. Stand up and stretch
28. Be responsible for your feelings
29. Learn to meet your own needs
30. Know your limitations and let others know them, too

31. Remember you always have options
32. Have a support network of people, places and things
33. Quit trying to fix other people
34. Get enough sleep
35. Learn a new doodle

Work/Appointments:

36. Set appointments ahead
37. Use time wisely
38. Get to work early
39. Say "no" more often
40. Always make copies of important papers

- 41.. Repair anything that doesn't work properly
42. Ask for help with the jobs you do
43. Break large tasks into bite size portions
44. Take problems as challenges
45. Work at being cheerful and optimistic

46. Do it today
47. Be aware of the decisions you make
48. Leave work early some time (with permission)
49. Take break/rest
50. Always have a plan "B"

Hobbies:

51. Pet a friendly dog/cat
52. Look up at the stars
53. Buy yourself a flower
54. Laugh often
55. Learn to whistle a tune

56. Read a poem
57. Listen to a symphony
58. Watch a ballet
59. Read a story curled up in bed
60. Do a brand new thing

61. Schedule play time into every day
62. Take a bubble bath
63. Walk in the rain
- 64.. Read a book /journal
65. Plant a tree
66. Feed the birds
67. Memorize a joke
68. Dance a jig
69. Throw a paper airplane
70. Learn the words to a new song

71. Concentrate on your hobbies
72. Play patty cake with a toddler
73. Go on a picnic
74. Put air freshener in your car
- 75.. Watch a movie and eat popcorn

76. Write a note to a far away friend
77. Go to a ball game and scream

78. Cook a meal and eat it by candlelight
79. Be prepared for rain
80. Tickle a baby

Attitude:

81. Be positive
82. Be Assertive
83. Tolerant
84. Share your feelings
- 85.** Love and respect yourself and others.

86. Avoid negative people
87. Keep Smiling
88. Say something nice to someone
89. Teach a kid to fly a kite
90. Recognize the importance of unconditional love

91. Remember that stress is an attitude
92. Practice a monster smile
93. Visualize yourself winning
94. Develop your sense of humor
95. Stop thinking tomorrow will be a better today

96. Freely praise other people
97. Avoid criticism
98. Avoid arguments
99. Believe in yourself
100. Stop saying negative things to yourself

101. Say "hello" to a stranger
102. Find support from others
103. Ask someone to be your "vent-partner"
104. Tell someone to have a good day in
105. Talk less and listen more
106. Be frank and open minded
107. Take time to smell the flowers
108. Ask a friend for a hug

17: A to Z of stress management:

- A Always take time for yourself, at least 30 minutes per day.
- B Be aware of your own stress meter: Know when to step back and cool down.
- C Concentrate on controlling your own situation, without controlling everybody else.
- D Daily exercise will burn off the stress chemicals.
- E Eat lots of fresh fruit, veggies, bread and water, give your body the best for it to perform at its best.
- F Forgive others, don't hold grudges and be tolerant -- not everyone is as capable as you.
- G Gain perspective on things, how important is the issue?
- H Hugs, kisses and laughter: Have fun and don't be afraid to share your feelings with others.
- I Identify stressors and plan to deal with them better next time.
- J Judge your own performance realistically; don't set goals out of your own reach.
- K Keep a positive attitude, your outlook will influence outcomes and the way others treat you.
- L Limit alcohol, drugs and other stimulants, they affect your perception and behaviour.
- M Manage money well, seek advice and save at least 10 per cent of what you earn.
- N No is a word you need to learn to use without feeling guilty.
- O Outdoor activities by yourself, or with friends and family, can be a great way to relax.
- P Play your favourite music rather than watching television.
- Q Quit smoking: It is stressing your body daily, not to mention killing you too.
- R Relationships: Nurture and enjoy them, learn to listen more and talk less.
- S Sleep well, with a firm mattress and a supportive pillow; don't overheat yourself and allow plenty of ventilation.
- T Treat yourself once a week with a massage, dinner out, the movies: Moderation is the key.
- U Understand things from the other person's point of view.
- V Verify information from the source before exploding.
- W Worry less, it really does not get things completed better or quicker.
- X Xpress: Make a regular retreat to your favourite space, make holidays part of your yearly plan and budget.
- Y Yearly goal setting: Plan what you want to achieve based on your priorities in your career, relationships, etc.
- Z Zest for life: Each day is a gift, smile and be thankful that you are a part of the bigger picture.

18: Measure your Stress Level Practically:

Please consider the following conditions and answer the questionnaire honestly. Remember denial refers to an advanced stage of non copying. Make a cross through the number, which shows how regularly you have experiences the symptoms during the last 6 months. Add all the numbers you have made a cross to find your total score, then refer to the table at the end.

Good Luck	Score				
	Never	Seldom	Sometime	often	Regular
Heart pounding or racing	0	1	2	3	4
Trembling/shaking	0	1	2	3	4
Grinding of teeth (even in your sleep)	0	1	2	3	4
Do not sleep well	0	1	2	3	4
Susceptible to illness	0	1	2	3	4
Stomach pains	0	1	2	3	4
Headaches	0	1	2	3	4
Migraine headaches	0	1	2	3	4
Feeling tired constantly	0	1	2	3	4
Constipation	0	1	2	3	4
Hollow stomach	0	1	2	3	4
Lowered self-confidence	0	1	2	3	4
Loss of appetite	0	1	2	3	4
Excessive sweating (e.g. hands, face, arm pits, etc.)	0	1	2	3	4
Sweaty palms	0	1	2	3	4
Listlessness – don't feel like doing stuff	0	1	2	3	4
Forget things	0	1	2	3	4
Absentminded	0	1	2	3	4
Feeling irritated	0	1	2	3	4
Nauseous	0	1	2	3	4
Pessimistic	0	1	2	3	4
Jealous/Envious	0	1	2	3	4
Moody	0	1	2	3	4
Pain in the lower back	0	1	2	3	4
Feelings of depression	0	1	2	3	4
Anxiety	0	1	2	3	4
Loss of interest in things	0	1	2	3	4
Sensitive and/or Touchy	0	1	2	3	4
Muscle pain	0	1	2	3	4
Indecisive	0	1	2	3	4
Unnecessary/excessive checking of work	0	1	2	3	4

	Never	Seldom	Sometime	often	Regular
Difficulty with breathing	0	1	2	3	4
Struggle to overcome minor sicknesses (e.g. a cold)	0	1	2	3	4
Suspicious	0	1	2	3	4
Hair loss	0	1	2	3	4
Throat irritations	0	1	2	3	4
Lost sense of humour	0	1	2	3	4
Impaired concentration	0	1	2	3	4
Struggle to loose/gain weight even when following a diet	0	1	2	3	4
Heartburn	0	1	2	3	4
Skin disorders	0	1	2	3	4
Don't take initiative as you used to	0	1	2	3	4
Nightmares	0	1	2	3	4
Dry mouth	0	1	2	3	4
Consume tonics (bioplus, liviton, lucozade, pharmaton, etc.)	0	1	2	3	4
Diarrhea	0	1	2	3	4
Nervous twitches in face or scalp	0	1	2	3	4
Feelings of inadequacy	0	1	2	3	4
Easily startled/jumpy	0	1	2	3	4
Increased appetite	0	1	2	3	4
Impaired co-ordination	0	1	2	3	4
Uncertainty	0	1	2	3	4
Become frustrated quickly	0	1	2	3	4
Less involvement with others	0	1	2	3	4
Biting of fingernails	0	1	2	3	4
Reduced motivation	0	1	2	3	4
Increased caffeine intake (coffee, tea, coke, coke light, red bull, etc.)	0	1	2	3	4
Restlessness	0	1	2	3	4
Poor judgment	0	1	2	3	4
Increased smoking	0	1	2	3	4
Feeling out of control	0	1	2	3	4
Confused thoughts	0	1	2	3	4
Increased time sleeping	0	1	2	3	4
Use tranquilizers, sleeping pills	0	1	2	3	4
Waking up tired	0	1	2	3	4
Feeling overwhelmed by demands	0	1	2	3	4
Excessive blinking	0	1	2	3	4

	Never	Seldom	Sometime	often	Regular
Daydreaming	0	1	2	3	4
Procrastination	0	1	2	3	4
Feeling panicky	0	1	2	3	4
Reduced productivity	0	1	2	3	4
Wasting time on irrelevant activities	0	1	2	3	4
Cannot discuss my problems with others	0	1	2	3	4
Difficult to identify causes of nonperformance	0	1	2	3	4

Stress Level:

Score	Your stress
00-20	It is unlikely that your stress is so low. Perhaps you interpreted the questionnaire incorrectly.
21-45	You cope effectively with stress. Your level of stress is below average.
46-70	You do not experience more or less stress than the average person.
71-90	You exhibit an above average level of stress and should learn to manage your stress more effectively. You might find it difficult to cope in specific circumstances. You can benefit from active coping strategies.
90+	You exhibit high stress levels. It is recommended that you learn to identify causes of stress as well as active ways in dealing with these causes. You might think you're coping, but you're not.