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A Comprehensive Guide to Wellness and Inner Peace

By Ryan Sawyer © 2005

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PLEASE READ THIS FIRST	2
1. STRESS- AN OVERVIEW.....	6
<i>You can build up enough resistance against stress.....</i>	<i>8</i>
2. WHAT IS STRESS?.....	10
CAUSES OF STRESS	10
TYPES OF STRESS AND ITS EFFECTS.....	12
3. STAGES OF STRESS.....	14
<i>First Stage: ALARM.....</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Second Stage: RESISTANCE</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Third Stage: EXHAUSTION</i>	<i>15</i>
4. FINDING THE SOURCE OF YOUR STRESS.....	16
1. FAMILY.....	17
2. ANXIETY.....	18
3. SURVIVAL STRESS	19
4. WORK STRESS	19
5. INTERNALLY GENERATED STRESS	20
6. CHANGES AND STRESS.....	20
7. ENVIRONMENTAL CAUSES	20
8. CHEMICAL AND NUTRITIONAL CAUSES	21
9. RELATIONSHIPS	21
10. HORMONAL FACTORS	21
5. YOUR BODY’S DEFENCE AGAINST STRESS	22
6. STRESS CAN BE GOOD?	24
GOOD AND SHORT STRESS	24
BAD STRESS AND LONG-TERM STRESS	25
HOW CAN I EVADE STRESS?.....	25
7. WARNING SIGNS OF STRESS.....	27
EARLY WARNING SIGNS OF STRESS	27

PHYSICAL SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF STRESS 28

EMOTIONAL SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF STRESS..... 29

COGNITIVE AND PERCEPTUAL SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF STRESS 29

BEHAVIORAL SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF STRESS..... 30

8. HOW STRESS AFFECTS YOUR HEALTH 31

9. HOW STRESS AFFECTS YOUR RELATIONSHIPS..... 35

10. STRESS IN KIDS AND TEENS 37

11. STRESS AND COLLEGE STUDENTS 39

 ACCEPTING THE CHANGE..... 39

Planning your schedule..... 39

 GREATER RESPONSIBILITY 39

Different Social Circle 39

12. STRESS AND THE ELDERLY 41

13. STRESS ON THE JOB 43

14. HOW TO PREVENT STRESS FROM GETTING THE BEST OF YOU..... 45

15. STRESS AND VITAMINS 49

16. SIMPLE CHANGES TO REDUCE THE STRESS IN YOUR LIFE 50

17. HOW TO STOP FAMILY STRESS..... 52

18. OVERCOMING STRESS IN YOUR MARRIAGE..... 54

19. HOW TO MANAGE YOUR MONEY WITHOUT STRESS 56

20. HOW TO DO HOBBIES TO RELIEVE STRESS..... 58

21. HUMOR - LEARNING THE LIGHTER SIDE OF LIFE..... 60

22. LIFE IS TOO SHORT TO FRET - OVERCOMING YOUR ANGER..... 62

23. GETTING AWAY TO RELIEVE STRESS 64

24. FINDING MORE TIME - GOAL SETTING AND TIME MANAGEMENT 66

25. GETTING RID OF STRESS WITH MEDITATION 68

 MEDITATION AND STRESS 68

<i>Benefits of Meditation</i>	68
<i>How to Meditate</i>	69
26. STRESS MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES.....	71
DEEP BREATHING.....	71
IMAGERY.....	71
MEDITATION TECHNIQUES.....	72
PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION.....	72
AUTOGENIC TRAINING.....	72
BIOFEEDBACK.....	73
MARTIAL ARTS.....	73
QIGONG.....	74
YOGA.....	74
<i>Managing stress in daily life</i>	74
27. HOW TO MANAGE YOUR STRESS WITH ALTERNATIVE THERAPY.....	76
28. NATURAL REMEDIES FOR STRESS.....	78
HUMOR.....	79
29. BREATHING TECHNIQUES.....	80
HOW TO RELAX YOUR BREATH.....	81
30. HOW TO EXERCISE AWAY YOUR STRESS - STRESS RELIEF EXERCISES ..	82
BENEFITS OF EXERCISE.....	82
SOME SIMPLE STRESS RELIEVING EXERCISES.....	84
31. STRESS BALLS - HOW THEY WORK.....	87
32. STRESS IN THE COMMUNITY.....	89
33. STRESS AWARENESS DIARY.....	91
STRESS SCALE FOR ADULTS.....	93
HOLMES RAHE SOCIAL READJUSTMENT RATING SCALE.....	93
ADULT STRESS.....	94
STRESS RELIEF ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE.....	98

Part-I: Introduction

1. Stress- An Overview

Stress is the effect of physical and emotional changes that surround you.

Stress causes different reactions in different people.

How is your stress level?

We'll find out!

Are you aware how much the world has changed in the last 100 years?

It went from years of using animals to get from place to place. In fact, generation after generation people relied much on animals or their own feet to get to where they wanted to go.

Suddenly the amount of change has become astounding. One person could have gone from telephones, cars, radios, airplanes, black and white television, to stereo systems, to landing on the moon to watching war on color television within their own lifetime.

In this fast paced environment there is no shame whatsoever to admit to being stressed. Different people handle stress in different ways. What will work for one person may not work for another. However, understanding stress is your road to freedom from stress.

Why is it that some people can shrug off complete chaos while others can have one thing change their routine and it is enough to raise their blood pressure, or throw them into deep depression?

Can it be like the difference between swimming in salt water and fresh water? In salt water, it's way easier to float. Some people tend to float more easily than others through life and can shrug off the things that knock the wind out of someone else.

You've heard the expression "the straw that broke the camel's back."

Many people don't really understand it because they've really never owned a camel, or know much about camels. Well, a camel can carry a certain amount of weight and all it takes is just a tiny weight barely more than a feather to suddenly break the camel's back. Literally.

Stress is the same thing. It's added and added and added until suddenly you blow up over a silly thing like a glass left on the table after dinner. You will certainly look very irrational as you 'scream' about the glass.

It's not the glass. It's an accumulation of many things.

When you face any acute worry or are not comfortable with something, a constant nagging feeling of anger, frustration, or fear produces negative feelings and reactions in your body, resulting in aches and pains or a short temper.

Stress is not all bad. The positive effects of stress gears up your body systems and you become more alert and energetic. Your mental ability increases and your nervous system works faster. You can feel motivated, thrilled, and invigorated.

Stress can be an energizer and produce positive reactions such as when you race against time to meet your deadline, you pump in all your energy and boost your output levels. You could be hurrying to your office, to your school class,

or a college exam, or even running for a bus. You are late. Your body is reacting in different ways to your stress signals.

The same is true when you face any imminent danger. You gather all your resources to stand and fight or run away from the danger.

A healthy body is geared to handle normal stress.

Stress can add up! Stress is the total effect of environmental and physical changes around you.

The negative effects of stress have many far-reaching influences.

It promotes pessimistic feelings of anger, distrust, depression, and rejection. All or any of these can lead to mild headaches to monster migraines, as in my own case. It can also lead to high blood pressure, heart disease, ulcers, stomach upsets, sleeplessness, and strokes.

You need to be able to identify your body signals. When you are under extreme stress, your body emits certain warning signals. These could be aching muscles, a rapid heartbeat, dizziness, body aches, sleeplessness and stomach upsets. These require immediate attention as they could lead to serious illness or have fatal consequences.

You can build up enough resistance against stress.

You should have a balanced diet with good nutritious food, regular breathing and physical exercises, meditation to boost your concentration levels and a positive attitude towards life.

People under stress have frequent quarrels with their family members, friends, and co-workers leading to violent attacks, many arguments, and over-reactions over trivial matters, shying off from social activities, frequent changes of jobs, and rash driving of vehicles. Continuous exposure to stress and failure to recognize warning signals may lead to ending up in the hospital. They then require many psychological therapies to recoup and attain their health again,. if it isn't too late!

Stress does not allow you to concentrate well and negatively affects your performance. It causes problems in your relationships. It can cause car accidents, tripping and falling. Stress can cause premature greying, wrinkles, and even acne.

You can cope with stress once you are able to identify the cause.

This does not mean you can change events in your life that you have no control over. However, when you learn to cope with stress, you will learn what you need to do to help you cope with the things you can control to help balance your stress out.

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Part-II: Understanding Stress

2. What is Stress?

Stress is the effect of any external-physical or mental pressures on your physical and emotional wellness.

Causes of Stress

The main causes of stress are anxiety and tension, which may be through different events or conditions such as:

- Your normal health and emotional conditions, working conditions, friends and family, loneliness, illness.
- Specific events and happenings like arguments and the demise of a loved one, or monetary loss.
- Stages of development such as marriage, or losing physical or mental abilities.
- Money
- Sex
- Bad Habits
- Moving
- Job Changes

- Loss of a friendship, loss of your favorite hangout, loss of emotional support, your child gets married or you lose your position at work. You can't pay your mortgage, or you have had a house fire.

These causes may be single or overlapping with others. But, what about the things you do to add to your everyday stress where you may not even realize you are helping a problem escalate.

Think about how you can change some bad habits to more productive and less stressful habits.

- × **Driving on an empty gas tank:** - Protect your car, don't drive on low gas. It is stressful and hard on your engine.
- × **Spending money when you don't have it to spend:** Yes, money is worrisome, but sometimes you charge things which you could live without having, which puts you further into debt. **Think!**
- × **Gambling is dangerous:** Consider that only 4 percent of gamblers are winners, 20 percent break even and the rest are losers. Don't start. If you are in trouble with addiction, get help.
- × **Drinking has the same sort of cycle as gambling.** You drink to feel good, the drink wears away or, while you were drinking, you made mistakes that cause more stress in your life. If you cannot drink in moderation, you must quit drinking and get help.
- × **Driving a car with potential problems:** (will that tire go flat again? Will the car start with the bad battery, just one more time before you get home?) This is too much stress.

- × **Promising to bake that extra batch of cookies:** It's hard to say no when people ask favors but, if you are the kind of person that people always ask, learn to say "No!" sometimes! You deserve free time and you know those cookies will somehow get baked without you . ☺
- × **Drugs:** - it's a terrible cycle. Relieve stress with drugs, then depend on drugs, and then the stress of fighting the drugs. Get help!
- × **Promising to drive your friend's kid to school**
- × **Promising your boss to golf with him on Sunday**
- × **Wanting to say no to a favor request, but saying yes!**
- × **Speeding and other illegal things you do while driving:** Don't take the chance of running that yellow light, not paying your tickets on time, not wearing your seatbelt when it is the law.
- × **Late fees for not being organized in paying your bills**
- × **Not writing a list when you go to the store**

To conquer stress that you can control, you need some self-discipline. Taking control of your life and owning your own problems is the key to beating stress. And, amazingly enough, it starts with taking care of the small things.

Types of Stress and its Effects

Acute Stress - When your body faces danger or you are under pressure to complete any commitment, your brain releases chemicals to increase the rate of pumping of the heart. This increases blood pressure and you are more

energetic to fight off or run away from the danger; or otherwise increase your ability to put up a good show. You react positively to this short stress.

Chronic Stress - This stress is due to a persistent situation or many stressful incidents. If you are taking care of someone with chronic disease, or are having problems with your employer, or if you lack company, then your body responds adversely to such situations. Due to constant exposure to negative feelings, you develop many diseases such as diabetes, asthma, or nervous or immune system problems.

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3. Stages of Stress

When you are under stress, you experience and pass through three specific stages. These stages are Alarm, Resistance, and Exhaustion. However, you may or may not pass through all stages of stress, depending on the events that triggered the occurrence.

First Stage: ALARM

When you face any danger, your nervous system immediately sends an emergency signal to your brain. All the different body parts and their functions coordinate to either fight or flee away from the danger. You get more energy and your limbs work faster. This is clearly visible in your facial expressions as fear or tension.

Normally, this stage of stress can be due to an actual event such as an accident. It is then primary stress. Otherwise, you could cause your stress like when you are appearing for an important examination. This is secondary stress.

The general indications of this stage are your fast breathing with sweating and accelerated heart beat which leads to higher blood pressure and indigestion.

Second Stage: RESISTANCE

When you do not get any relief from the first stage of stress, you slowly start feeling a reduction in your energy levels. However, still you want to keep fighting the danger. Hence, you feel exasperated and are impatient with trivial matters. You miss your sleep schedules and find your resistance breaking down.

Your body reacts by releasing the stored sugars and fats into your system. This leads to defined changes in your physical and mental behavioral patterns.

The normal indications of this level are exhaustion, weariness, anxiousness, and being forgetful. You start smoking and drinking more to come out of your stress. Being weak, you are an easy target for colds and flu.

Third Stage: EXHAUSTION

When stress continues beyond the second stage and you do not adhere to remedial measures, the final stress stage of exhaustion settles in. You are now totally tired and drained out of all energy. You do not even have the desire or the drive to do your work or live your life.

This stage symbolizes a breakdown of your system and your basic physical existence itself. This leads to loss of mental equilibrium and extreme complications such as heart diseases, blood pressure, and ulcers.

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4. Finding the Source of Your Stress

Stress has far-reaching effects on your life. Often, you act and work differently due to stress. Yet, you are unable to stop changes in your behavior. The best therapy starts with identifying the source of your stress. Solutions will come up automatically.

The many sources for your stress are:

- Family
- Anxiety
- Survival Stress
- Work Stress
- Internally Generated Stress
- Stress due to Changes
- Environmental Causes
- Chemical and Nutritional Causes
- Relationships
- Hormonal Factors

1. Family

A family resembles a human body. You experience much difficulty when any body part suffers an injury or is ailing. All other parts need to coordinate and adjust their functioning to make up for the nonfunctioning part. This is also the case when any member of your family is ill, injured, unhappy, irritated, or annoyed. Your family is not able to function normally and all members need to adjust to the affected member, which is the main reason behind many problems.

You need help from therapists and psychologists when things are beyond your control. These professionals will help to put your family back on the original track.

If it is not that bad yet, you can start setting some small rules to change things and add some organization in your life. If the kids are underfoot when you need them not to be, you simply set up a single word that sends them running to another area of the house.

My mom used one word to let us know that we had gone too far. That word was, "One." That was all we needed. When mom said, "one" we knew she meant business.

And, do you know why she taught us the word "one?"

Well, Dad used to play wrestle with me when I was small. I'd want to play more. Daddy, would say, "stop it, that's enough."

But, then he'd throw a last play punch in, then I'd play back and Daddy would say stop, and he really didn't know how to stop me because I did not know

when he was serious. Then Daddy would get mad, and our fun time turned into a bad time. Daddy was mad at me, and that didn't make me feel very well. In fact, it stressed me out.

Mom came in and said, "it's so simple you two. Ryan, from now on when Daddy says, "ONE really strong, you know he is serious."

So, the word "one" made playing with Dad safe and fun again. My younger brothers soon learned about "one."

When I was seven, my younger brother - then four - asked me, "Ryan, what happens when Mom gets to three? I had to think for a minute, and realized that a lot of my friend's Moms and Dads counted to three and even higher. So, I just told my brother how it was:

"I don't know. I don't remember. But, whatever it is, it's real bad!"

How does that help you? You get your kids in line for you so that they jump when you ask them to do something, you'll discover way less stress in your life. And, they will know when you are serious.

There is some great advice on www.drphil.com He has wonderful advice on raising kids without spanking and how to keep your family together.

2. Anxiety

Anxiousness arises when you feel helpless and are not able to control things or events. Normally, negativity settles in to your anxious mind. When you try to remain or attain the absolute in every event, relationship, or work, you feel anxious because absolute is something unrealistic and unattainable in this World. You want everybody to love and adore you, to do things as you want

them to do. You want to be perfect in everything, and have every event according to your choice.

Such feelings are impractical. You cannot control the feelings and workings of others. Just as you want to do things your way, others too have the similar right to do things their way and have their own feelings and aspirations. You cannot be always perfect, as humans are sure to err and learn from these errors. The best mantra is to take everyday as it comes and find positive vibrations in every event.

3. Survival Stress

When you sense danger and fear for your life, you encounter survival stress. It can be a physical or emotional danger. At such times, your brain activates different glands and nervous system responses. All come together to give you extra energy and efficiency to combat the danger.

Adrenalin makes your heart beat faster, pump more blood into your limbs, increase your blood pressure, and coordinate the different organs to evade the danger.

Such adrenalin stress is good to combat any immediate danger. However, you need to have a calm mind and decide things coolly as stress will, over the long run, completely put you off balance and you will end up a nervous wreck.

4. Work Stress

Work stress is usually associated with your workplace. Difficult and demanding bosses, insecurity in job, lack of work appreciation, insufficient monetary compensation, deadlines and many more pressures result in work

stress. You are always in a vicious circle of hurrying to get things done and rushing behind impossible deadlines. This exhausts you and drains you of all energy.

The best way to combat such stress is to place priorities and adhere to regular schedules to avoid any last minute rush.

5. Internally Generated Stress

This stress is your own creation. Some like to work under stressful conditions by postponing their work or issues until the last moment. Some others set unreachable high standards and are under stress to attain them. Such self-generated problems lead you nowhere and create problems for you and your colleagues.

6. Changes and Stress

Change brings many new avenues and openings. You need to be ready to accept change as an integral part of your life and move ahead with it. Success is bound to accompany changes and relieve your stress levels. However, if you are adverse to changes, you will encounter stressful problems and situations.

7. Environmental Causes

Your living or working environment may be the cause of your stress. Your work or concentration may be hampered due to dirty and inadequate working or living space, noisy atmosphere, pollution, and lack of privacy.

8. Chemical and Nutritional Causes

Your food and intake levels decide your stress. High consumption of sugary, salty foods and coffee disturb the normal functioning of your body. Unhealthy and unbalanced diets do not provide requisite energy. You become irritable and prone to stress. You need to heed the advice of doctors and dieticians.

9. Relationships

Successful relationships between cohabiting partners or married couples depend on giving enough space to each other. When you try to impose your views or expectations on your partner, it is sure to trigger unpleasantness. A give and take policy is always best. You need to be accommodative and adjusting to have a lasting relationship.

10. Hormonal Factors

Activation and release of hormones occurs during your youth. Such hormonal changes bring about stress. This is more specific in women as, after puberty, the female hormones decide the stress levels of women. Just before the monthly menstruation cycle, women experience the stress of a sharp fall in their hormone levels. Such falls are also evident after childbirth and during menopause. Though this may not be true for all women, the majority experience this.

Once you are able to identify the source of your stress, you can find simple solutions to relieve you of your stress quotient.

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5. Your Body's Defence against Stress

When you are under stress, certain physiological changes occur within your body. These changes are the result of your body's defense system trying to protect you from negative effects of stress. However, you feel and act differently in such stress situations and your body has to cope with this unusual happening.

Normally, as soon as your stress levels start going up, the hypothalamus gland of your brain directs the pituitary gland to release ACTH hormone. With it, the adrenal gland releases both adrenaline and non-adrenaline. Many more hormones are now in your bloodstream. All of them need stimulation, which is available from the sugar released from your liver.

Your bloodstream now has many red blood cells full of energy joining hands with energized hormones. All these together increase the heart beat and your body temperature. Non-adrenaline tightens the walls of your arteries, thereby increasing your blood pressure.

Your whole attention is totally on the stress point and you combat it with full concentration. You are aware of only one single thing - STRESS. Activation of your mental alertness makes you feel excited or frightened. The power of your inert senses rises and you are now highly sensitive.

Involuntarily, certain physical changes occur in your body. You sweat more. Your face becomes whitish and your muscles twitch and tighten. Your eyes are open wider and your concentration levels soar. You do not have saliva in your mouth and other body functions of digestion, urination, or defecation completely stop. In extreme cases, it may lead to uncontrollable diarrhea or

urination. Your feet and hands become cold as the total blood in your body is pooling together to fight against the stress levels.

The stress period is a very vulnerable period as the total immune system of your body suffers a breakdown. Your body is defenseless against any foreign bodies. Hence, you are easy prey for illnesses and infections. You fall sick very easily and are not able to fight away the sickness.

The only way out of such stress symptoms is absolute relaxation of your nerves and the body as a whole. You have to erase the stress completely. By this means, you will be able to regain your inner and physical strength and come back to normalcy.

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6. Stress Can Be Good?

YES, stress can be good when the levels and duration are within limits. The word stress evokes scenes of breakdown, unhappiness, and disruption of normal body functioning. However, stress can be good or bad depending on the effects and consequences of stress.

Good and Short Stress

When you come face-to-face with danger, your body responds by supplying extra energy to combat the same. All the muscles and limbs function together as a whole. This auto-response system of your body is beneficial and protects you from diseases and infections. Such short durations of stress boost your immune system. This is good stress. This could be some impending danger, a distinct event or sudden unforeseen happening. Whatever it might be, it is only temporary and normalcy is set to return soon.

Stress is good in short durations. This is because when you experience stress for a short period, your body gears up to face the challenge. Such gearing increases the efficiency of your nervous and muscular system. It boosts your total body system and you deliver better. Your immune system improves and protects you against ailments.

When you encounter stress with the knowledge that it is bound to end and you will be normal afterwards, you benefit from this stress. This activates and energizes your immune system and your brain. Such stress includes those for impending examinations or some specific events.

Bad Stress and Long-Term Stress

Any stress that occupies a major portion of your life causing anxiety always is bad stress. This could be due to child abuse, loss, or incessant sickness of your partner, and continuing disability. When you face such situations, day in and day out, you become irritable and feel emotionally drained. This is bad stress. It has many far-reaching consequences like high blood pressure, heart attacks, asthma attacks, and continuous headaches.

Little dosages of stress are good to bring out the best of you. However, extended stress periods only crush you and turn you into a wreck. Stress is also the cause behind dreaded terminal diseases like cancer, liver cirrhosis, heart attacks, and lung ailments. It also leads to accidents and suicide. Continuous stress does have an impact on your health, as you age faster.

When you have some trauma or some bad experiences in the past, those linger and your body faces continuous stress throughout. This is harmful as it has many far-reaching consequences. It slowly and steadily breaks down your immune system and it no longer performs to optimum levels. The elderly and aged experience many more effects of such bad stress. Being old, they do not have the strength to put up with the strain any more. Such weakness coupled with stress is sometimes fatal.

How can I evade stress?

You can evade stress by adopting a few basic measures. Meditation and relaxing your muscles through simple exercises helps to control and lower your stress levels. Of course, there is nothing like good nutritious food and enough

sleep to push out stress from your lives. Besides, these measures provide enough strength and ability in you to combat and cope with stress.

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Part-III: Signs of Stress

7. Warning Signs of Stress

It is not difficult to identify a condition of stress. It expresses in the physical, mental or emotional life of a person through several signs and symptoms.

Early warning Signs of Stress

There are certain symptoms that are common in people suffering from stress. Mostly these symptoms show up as soon as stress starts to build up.

Headaches – Most of the people who regularly complain of a headache actually get it because of stress.

Body ache – Body ache is a common result of stress. There may be pain in different organs of the body such as muscle ache, chest pain, lower back pain, etc.

Impatience – People lose patience because of stress. It increases the negative emotions of anger and anxiety.

Speech difficulties – Stammering is one of the early signs of stress. People in the grip of anxiety fail to speak clearly.

Blood sugar – Stress damages the balance of blood sugar in the body. It can result in diabetes.

Blood pressure – People suffering from stress often fall prey to high blood pressure and other related diseases.

Excessive fatigue – Excessive fatigue may cause significant damage to the personal and professional life of a person.

Sexual problems – Stress decreases the tendency to want sex. It can even lead to infertility. Women can experience irregular menstruation because of it.

Withdrawal from social life – People suffering from stress fail to cope with group situations. Therefore, they withdraw from social life.

Physical signs and symptoms of stress

Stress is actually a reaction of the body to change in the physical, mental or emotional environment. It shows up in several physical signs and symptoms. Stress often leads to different types of physical disorders.

Heart beat – Increase in the heart beat is one of the most common conditions in stress. The heart pounds and beats faster in a stress situation.

Elevated blood pressure – Stress raises the blood pressure dramatically. It can be fatal for people that already have high blood pressure.

Tightness of the chest, neck, jaw, and back muscles – There can be stiffness in the muscles with pain. It may cause chronic pain in the body in its advanced stage.

Diarrhea – Stress hormones make the colon work faster. It may result in diarrhea.

Vomiting – Stress often leads to a condition of repulsion. It results in vomiting.

Susceptibility to minor illness – Stress weakens the immune system of the body. As a result, the body fails to protect itself from minor illnesses such as cold and infections.

Emotional Signs and Symptoms of Stress

Stress affects the emotional life too. It often causes emotional upsets in people.

- × **Negative emotions** – Many times, stress becomes a reason for different negative emotions. A person can exhibit negative emotions such as aggression, hostility and jealousy.
- × **Restlessness** – People lose peace of mind with stress. It creates feelings of anxiety and insecurity.
- × **Nightmares** – People suffering from excessive stress often complain of nightmares. Dreaming is how we try to solve problems.
- × **Negativity** – A negative attitude can easily grip a person who is under stress. He may lose the positive spirit and may get critical of everything he comes across. **(Every time you think of something negative, teach yourself to turn it into something positive. Make a game out of it.)**

Cognitive and Perceptual Signs and Symptoms of Stress

Stress often leads to a significant decline in the cognitive faculties in human beings. People lose the capacity to think rationally.

- × **Forgetfulness** – Stress is one of the main causes of memory loss. People fail to remember even small things.

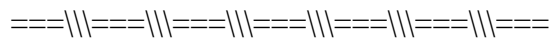
- × **Lack of attention to detail** – People fail to pay proper attention to the details. As the result, they fail to think from a broader perspective.
- × **Reduced creativity** – Stress reduces the capacity of creative thinking. This is the effect which stress has on many good artists.
- × **Disorganization of thought** – The thought process loses direction. It reduces productivity.

Behavioral Signs and Symptoms of Stress

Stress can express itself in a person through several abnormal behaviors. The nature of such behavior can be different from person to person. However, there are some common types of abnormal behavior.

- × **Use intoxicating substances** – People under stress may be drawn to intoxicating substances and may start smoking, drinking or using drugs.
- × **Carelessness** – Stress may lead to a careless attitude. It expresses itself through different irresponsible acts.
- × **Irregular eating** – Stress is often a reason for either overeating or under-eating.
- × **Compulsive behavior** – People under stress show compulsive behavior. They behave out of compulsion rather than clear thinking.

These are only some of the warning signs of stress,. there are many others. They may be different in different individuals.



Part-IV: Stress in Everyday Life

8. How Stress Affects Your Health

Stress is a common phenomenon for each of us. According to research findings, it leads to adverse health effects in forty-three percent of all adults. Stress is actually the reaction of the body to any physical, mental or emotional change. When we face a difficult physical, mental or emotional situation, the body reacts in certain ways to cope with the situation. We come across various things and happenings that trigger stress. It often leads to unnatural thinking and behavior. Stress can have serious effects on your health.

Stress can be positive or negative. In its positive form, stress can help you avoid danger or adjust to difficult situations by keeping us alert. On the other hand, it can also cause significant damage to your health. Persistent stress puts much pressure on the body and mind. It can lead to several physical and mental disorders.

We can broadly divide the effects of stress in the following categories:

- **Emotional** – In its advanced form, stress can turn into distress. Distress disturbs the internal balance of the body that results in tension, anxiety, anger or depression. It severely affects the physical and mental health of a person.
- **Behavioral** – Stress can affect the way we think and behave. It can result in mental fatigue, poor concentration, decline in memory power, indecisiveness, hopelessness etc. Many times, people try to

cope with stress through negative behavior such as smoking, drinking, gambling etc.

- **Physical** – Stress can lead to several physical disorders. Researchers have found a connection of stress with six of the leading causes of death. Those are cancer, heart disease, lung ailments, cirrhosis of the liver, accidents and suicide.

The simple health effects of stress include faster heart beats, muscle tension, stomach upset etc. However, stress often goes much beyond that. When it is intense and persistent, a person can experience a score of serious physical problems.

Immune system – The immune system in the human body works as the natural defense against physical disorders. Chronic stress affects the immune system severely. It first attacks the immune system at the cellular level and then affects the overall broader functions of the system. It produces cortisol, a hormone that turns off the natural defense mechanism of the body. The body loses its natural capacity to prevent physical disorders such as colds and infections.

Digestive system – Stress also affects the digestive system. It slows down the release of stomach acid and prevents the stomach emptying itself properly. Stress may lead to the release of certain hormones inside the body that make the colon work faster. It may result in diarrhea.

Cardiovascular system – Stress can be a cause of heart diseases. It is dangerous for people who already have heart disease. It increases blood pressure and heart beats. It also affects the cholesterol levels in the body.

Weight – In stress situations, the body releases the cortisol hormone. This hormone increases appetite by stimulating the fat and carbohydrate metabolism. It often results in an increase in body weight. Increased weight in the abdominal area raises the risk for diabetes and heart disease. In some situations, stress works other ways also. Many people lose their appetite because of stress. This results in decrease in the body weight and several other diseases may become more likely.

Sexual problems – Stress is the cause of many sexual problems. It can ruin the sexual life of a person. Often, men fail to have an erection because of stress. It can even lead to infertility in both men and women. Because of stress, women can experience absence of menstruation or abnormal bleeding because of stress. It can also cause hormonal imbalances resulting in fibroid tumors and endometriosis.

Mental health – Stress messes up the internal balance in the body and mind leading to tension, anxiety, anger or depression. People in such situations can behave abnormally. There may be mental fatigue, poor concentration, indecisiveness, hopelessness and a decline in memory power.

Insomnia – Stress keeps the brain active. As a result, people lose sleep. Insomnia is the condition where sleep-loss becomes a regular affair. Such a condition may be a prelude to several physical and mental disorders.

It is important to avoid stress for a healthy life. The first step in fighting stress is to find out the exact reasons for it. You should try to understand the situations that give you stress and prepare yourself for those situations. You should remember that a healthy lifestyle is necessary for tackling stress effectively. Good nutrition, relaxation and exercise help in keeping stress away. There are many things that you can do to deal with stressful situations.

A doctor can be of great help. A psychologist or a counselor can also help you understand your problems and help you solve them.

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9. How Stress Affects Your Relationships

Man cannot live alone. He needs the company of family and friends. Yet, these very near and dear ones cause much stress. The major relationships you share are those of child-parent, husband-wife and professional ones with your colleagues. A cause for anxiety in one can result in affecting all other relationships adversely.

If you are a parent, you may be hassled over the hyperactivity, illness, aggression, and underperformance of your child. If you are married, you can feel stress due to an unaffectionate spouse or extramarital affair, monetary affairs or lack of proper communication. For a professional, the workplace can be demanding. You need to be competitive and set priorities. It is important to strike a balance between work and family.

Stress affects your work, your family and your physical and emotional health. It causes moodiness, depression, phobias and over-reaction. It can lead to lack of concentration and memory loss. On the social front, you may become more irritable, violent, pick fights or argue too much.

According to psychologists, you need to do a balancing act. Identify your problems, whether marriage, children or work. List your resources, for example; your income, education, determination etc. Think up the strategies you need to tackle the problems. Plan what to do, when to do it and who needs to be with you.

You can keep your stress under control by following the tips given here. Plan your work for the day, communicate freely with all, and encourage those around you to talk. Make sure you spend quality time at home, fix a schedule

for it. Finally, accept that stress is a part of life and you have to deal with it positively. If you perceive stress as a motivator and challenging it will be beneficial rather than harmful.

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10. Stress in Kids and Teens

Contrary to popular belief, children **are** susceptible to stress. Stress does not manifest itself directly among children. The manifestation may be internal as well as external. In the former, the child exhibits signs of withdrawal, sadness and apathy, and in the latter, it takes the form of misbehavior and arrogance.

Stress due to peers is a major stressor among children apart from pressures from parents, teachers, siblings and society. However, studies have revealed the family and parents cause more stress among the children than the peers do. This is mainly because the family matters the most to a child.

Some factors responsible for stress with peers are -

- × Fights among peers
- × Presence of a bully among the peers
- × Loss of a peer due to relocation, injury or death
- × Inability to match performance of the peers
- × Feeling of being left alone or let down among the peers
- × Dismal performance in education or sporting activity vis-à-vis the peer group
- × Differences in social, economic or cultural status

Stress is stress and, whatever is the cause, you have to be careful about it. If your child shows any symptoms of stress, you must try to find out the causes

of stress and rectify it at the onset. Unattended stress could lead to severe physical and psychological conditions in your child.

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11. Stress and College Students

College life is a wonderful experience. However, it brings along a stress of a different kind as you face different challenges. You are now in an adult world and being away from family is a major cause for stress. You now have a new circle of friends, get to learn new things and set your own priorities. It is easier to handle stress at college if you accept certain realities.

Accepting the change

College study is different and vaster than that at school. Hence, you need to choose a course that interests you most and slowly adjust to new surroundings.

Planning your schedule

You are now responsible for your classes, assignments, and tests. You need to make out a schedule and adhere to it to avoid tension and stress at examination time.

Greater Responsibility

You now have to handle all responsibilities of managing your money and maintaining your accounts. This is easy when you are able to stay within your budget and not make any unnecessary expenses.

Different Social Circle

You now have many opportunities and avenues open to you. You make new friends, develop new social activities, and embark on more recreational

avenues. Of course, you can always count on the advice of family members and college counselors.

Stress is a part of your growing years in college. Face it confidently and you will emerge a winner. You only need to have a few basic things in mind:

- Changes are an absolute truth and you need to move ahead with changes.
- You have to consider and think over different options before arriving at any decision.
- You need to adapt to different environments.

Although there may initially be some problems and stress, you will adapt to it with the passage of time.

The most effective stress tool is having a healthy diet with regular exercise. Your diet should include all necessary nutrients to build up your physical body. Exercise boosts your physical-self and increases your stamina; relaxation techniques relax your nerves and muscles. It is best to stay away from drinking, smoking, drugs and overeating as these create health problems.

Recreation is necessary to relieve your stress. You can indulge in sports, reading, social work, and any other activity to divert your mind from work and study. Planning your work gives you much free time as you enjoy and value your college life.

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12. Stress and the Elderly

Age is the major factor determining all abilities of the elderly. When you grow old, your physical-self is no longer that agile and you are unable to do physical jobs efficiently. This puts a stress on your mental self. The loss of spouses, friends and family members as well as ailments and financial constraints are all contributors to your stress levels.

There are many common symptoms of stress in the elderly. You slowly lose your appetite, feel tired, sleepless, have pain in muscles, and are prone to frequent urination. You become forgetful, are unable to concentrate well, and are anxious about every small matter. Frustration over your inabilities leads to depression and you shun your social circle. You become more introvert and seek solitude.

You can overcome your stress levels by adopting a few simple techniques -

- ✓ You can talk over matters with friends, neighbors, or family members. This lessens the burden and you feel light and relieved.
- ✓ Try to keep yourself engaged in physical and other activities. This leaves you with little time to brood.
- ✓ You can initiate and do some social work to improve your self-confidence.
- ✓ Abstinence from smoking and drinking helps you to cope with stress.
- ✓ Regular exercise and meditation go a long way in relieving stress.

Certain specific diseases like terminal diseases, degenerative diseases, and heart disease reduce mobility in elders. However, you can still keep in touch with others through different means of communication like telephone and e-mail to overcome your feeling of loneliness. You can also join health centers and self-help centers to interact with other elderly people afflicted with similar diseases or problems. Such interactions reduce stress levels and you feel happier and lighter.

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13. Stress on the Job

In today's increasingly competitive world, stress on the job is not a new word.

'Stress' means demanding our body and mind perform up to or more than its capacity. Thus, stress is good if it acts as a stimulant and has a bad effect if we do not react to it positively.

There are many causes of stress. These may include organizational problems such as role conflict, inadequate leadership, and lack of variety, insufficient training, and emotional involvement. Long hours and heavy workload also cause stress. However, the maximum stress is around the jobs that include continuous change such as health care and teaching. Jobs where frequent downsizing occurs or where new technology has a major role to play are also highly stress related.

Several research studies into this subject have revealed the highest stress jobs to be that of Prison Officers, the Police, Social Work and Teaching. These jobs scored upward of 6.5 out of 10 on the stress scale. The librarian job was the least stressful with a 3.3 on the stress scale. The research also revealed that stress was highest in the junior ranks or the frontline employees and least stressful in the top management. This is due to the lack of control they have on their work and work environment.

The symptoms include both health and behavioral problems. Health problems such as poor mental health, back pain, headaches, lack of appetite etc, are the common symptoms of stress. Behavioral problems that result from stress include irritability, tension, excessive drinking and smoking.

The consequences of work-related stress affects both personal and professional life. Professionally, it affects your productivity, with an increase in the rate of absenteeism. Personally, there are increased chances of workplace accidents, high risk of cardiovascular disease, aggression and violence at the workplace.

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Part-V: Preventing and Coping with Stress in Your Life

14. How to Prevent Stress from Getting the Best of You

Stress is an intrinsic part of everyone's life. You are sure to experience stress in some or other form at any time. Stress can be short-term or chronic. Short-term stress occurs when you face some immediate danger or are expecting any important event. Sometimes short-term stress proves to be beneficial as it boosts your energy levels and you feel happy after the stress period is over. However, chronic stress is harmful as this stress spreads over a long period and at times over your whole life. Such stress could be due to any ailment or looking after a chronic patient or any other prolonged period of stress. This causes many diseases and ailments.

Stress can be from several quarters. Therefore, you need to be able to prevent stress from getting the best of you. You can successfully do this by following a few simple steps:

Exercise - Simple physical exercise like a brisk 20-minute walk in a nearby park, or stretching exercises in fresh air will make you feel lighter and relieved of stress. You feel rejuvenated and ready to face any problem. Make exercise a part of your daily routine.

Sleep - You need eight to nine hours of sleep every night. This sojourn energizes your nervous system and you will feel fresh every morning.

Relaxation - Relax your nerves by doing nothing for a few minutes in the day. Just sitting with closed eyes and a blank mind relieves stress immensely. Keep the noise level down.

Positive outlook - Be an optimist and look to the positive side of things. You need to push away negative thoughts and feelings in situations. This backstage energizer boosts your spirits.

Yoga - You can practice simple yoga postures, which go a long way in reducing stress levels. It increases metabolism rate, lowers blood pressure, and improves respiratory problems. These simple and gentle movements make you feel light and free.

Aromatherapy - Clean your place of unwanted clutter and fill the air with beautiful and mild scents. These boost your spirits and free your mind and body of stress.

Talk over your problems - You could tell your friends, family, counselors, or medical professionals about your stress-related problems. Pouring out your heart gives immense relief and you feel your anxieties vanishing away. In case stress is due to official workload, discussing with colleagues and even your boss relieves stress.

Balanced Diet - Eat a balanced diet with plenty of fruits and vegetables to build up your health. Irregular eating habits, junk food, and alcohol disrupt normal functioning of your digestive system. This causes stress and you are unable to continue with your normal routine.

Dealing with specific problems - When you are under stress, deal with your problems one at a time. Piling up all your problems increases stress levels.

Fun time - Keep aside some time of each day to enjoy yourself with your pets, children or to be just by yourself. This keeps you fresh and you forget your stress and worries for some time.

Be Prepared - Try to plan your next day the day before and accordingly keep everything ready. This does away with last minute rush and stress. At the office, you can plan important issues for the next day and keep relevant papers and documents together.

Develop Humor - Humor is an excellent energizer. You must learn to enjoy the lighter side of everything. Just a small laugh over a joke or a smile across your face puts away your stress and you feel a lot better.

Goal setting – You must set your goals specifically and evaluate your performance at the end. Proceed towards fulfillment of your goals and envision yourself winning and attaining your goals. These positive thoughts boost you and get negative feelings and stress off your mind. You should be aware and responsible for your decisions; evading them will only create more problems.

Develop Moderation - Do everything moderately and do not be over-enthusiastic about achieving everything. Being perfect is good but doing it to the extent of over-stressing yourself is harmful. Hence, try to be excellent in your endeavors rather than a perfectionist. It is not practically possible to achieve and attain everything within a stipulated period.

Develop your physical self - Pay enough attention to your physical appearance, as you develop an optimistic attitude when you are happy with your appearance.

Adopt soothing measures - Music has a soothing effect on everyone. Try to listen to your favorite music or songs while working as it calms your brain and you perform better. Having a vitalizing bath with aromas and scents relieves stress. It relaxes your muscles and relieves you of headaches and pain.

Take a break - It is good to take breaks while doing your work instead of working at a stretch. These short breaks are your energy pills and you restart your work with more gusto. You can take off on sudden outings on weekends to get away from regular routine. These largely relieve your stress and you perform and concentrate better after such breaks.

You can practice these techniques regularly to relieve you of stress and prevent stress from getting best of you. However, if you face acute stress problems, the best recourse is to seek medical help immediately.

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15. Stress and Vitamins

Stress and Vitamins share an inverse relationship. More intake of Vitamins leads to less stress. Less intake of Vitamins leads to more stress. This is the rule that you need to follow. The intake of Vitamins finally depends on the food intake. Thus, a balanced diet is important for the correct supply of Vitamins to the body.

Another stress buster is reduction in intake of toxins. These toxins include alcohol, smoke from tobacco and drugs. When stressed, the body loses essential minerals such as magnesium and zinc. If you do not take a balanced diet then you need to supplement this loss through multivitamins and minerals.

Stress is a symptom related to the brain. It affects the brain and the nervous system. Therefore, when combating stress, you need to focus on the intake of specific vitamins. These include the Vitamin B group. B2 helps treat nervous system disorders and depression, B3 helps the nervous system be healthy, B6 helps in neurotransmitter synthesis and B12 treats nerve degeneration, dementia and depression. Vitamin C and D also help to keep the immune system healthy. Certain herbs are available such as Beta Glucan – which helps in better immune function, Maitake mushroom, Gotu kola – helps reduce anxiety.

**Before starting the intake of any vitamins,
you must check with your physician.**

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16. Simple Changes to Reduce the Stress in Your Life

Stress can cause significant damage to one's physical and mental health. It is the root of many diseases and disorders. Reducing stress is necessary for a healthy life. There are many things that one can do to reduce the stress. Some simple changes in the lifestyle can go a long way.

The first step in stress reduction is to identify the cause of stress. There may be a single or multiple reasons for it. Again the reasons would vary from individual to individual. It is necessary to find out the reasons for the worry. After finding out the reasons, one can make the necessary adjustments for solving the problems.

Some of the simple and common ways for stress reduction are –

Relaxation – Continuous work causes fatigue. Relaxation helps in maintaining the energy level in the body. Meditation, yoga or simple deep breathing can increase the ability to handle stressful situations. These relaxation techniques help the body release healing hormones and lower blood pressure. Relaxation helps to increase creativity and production.

Exercises – Regular exercise helps one stay fit. It increases the body's ability to resist the risk of heart disease, stroke, diabetes, cancer, arthritis and osteoporosis.

Play – Play is another very simple way for reducing stress. Playful activities activate the immune cells in the body.

Regular eating – Regular eating is necessary for a healthy life. It helps in maintaining the intake of essential vitamins, minerals and other substances.

Attitude – A positive attitude is necessary to fight stress. An attitude of gratitude helps in maintaining higher levels of optimism, enthusiasm, alertness, determination and energy.

Altruism – Altruism (generosity in word and deed) goes a long way in neutralizing the negative emotions. It gives a sense of satisfaction to a person, which reduces stress significantly.

Laugh – Laughter is a good way to reduce stress. When one laughs, the body releases endorphins, the natural painkillers in the body. It also reduces stress hormones and lowers blood pressure. It gives a boost to the immune system in the body.

Paying attention – One should be attentive to the emotions that affect the home life, work and relationships. It helps in having a better control over those emotions.

Friendship – Aloofness decreases immune functioning. Being in the company of friends helps one stay happy and away from worries.

Get a pet – Pets can be great friends for human beings. Their company can liven up one's life and reduce the stress.

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17. How to Stop Family Stress

Stress is an inherent part of family life, more acute with working couples.

They have little energy and time for family and kids. However, you can reduce your family stress by adapting some changes in your lifestyle.

1. You have to realize that you are not facing a unique problem. Everyone has and deals with familial pressures and anxieties. You just need to handle issues properly.
2. Problems and disagreements arise often among family members. Addressing a problem brings forth its solutions. Curbing only aggravates the situation. Discuss it with all members and arrive at a workable solution.
3. Your family works as a whole unit. Hence, you need to train young ones in doing familial chores according to their age. When every member is aware of what work is to be done and when, things are simpler and require less effort.
4. Never bring your office into your home. You must leave all your work commitments and pressures at the office. It is easier to do this if you organize your office work. While at home, concentrate on your family.
5. See everything from the point of view of your family as a whole. Hence, take up and carry forward whatever is beneficial to your entire family. You need not spend time and energy on irrelevant matters.

Try to set and follow some family principles. You need to work within your limits and not try to do whatever other members want you to do. This relaxes your mind.

Pouring out your heart to family members and friends reduces stress. You feel better talking about it to your colleagues. Overburdening yourself will make things worse for you and your family.

Whenever faced with a problem, look for a solution other than doing a postmortem over what happened and why. You can come up with alternative solutions to a single problem and see which works the best.

Believe in yourself and be an optimist. This boosts your self-confidence and you feel stress as temporary.

Stay fit by doing proper exercises. This enables you to handle stress efficiently. It is always good to keep aside some time of the day for you, when you do things that relax you the most. This super energy pill can work wonders.

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18. Overcoming Stress in Your Marriage

Marriage is a wonderful relationship. There are several aspects to this relationship - expression of love and affection, close companionship, concern for each other, mutual respect, tolerance, forgiveness, compromises, emotional support and security, sexual expression, and bearing and rearing of children. However, the list is incomplete, yet the quotient of these basic aspects differs from couple to couple.

Somehow, sometime and somewhere down the line, the relationship quotient of your marriage starts shivering and shaking with stress of daily life. This brings a negative impact on your married life and you face innumerable problems. The best recourse is to sit and analyze the causes and work on them, thereby strengthening your marriage vows. A few basic steps help you both overcome stress in your marriage.

Keep aside time daily for just the two of you to talk over things. Do not try to hide any thoughts or feelings for fear of upsetting the other.

Give full attention to what your spouse is talking about. Understand and accept others' needs or wants and then follow the best course.

Never harbor any lies in your relationship, as truth is sure to surface at some point.

Learn to accept and forgive mistakes. Humans are born to err and nobody is perfect. Both of you should accept your mistakes and look for remedies.

Careers and monetary decisions need constant revision and changes according to circumstances. You need to set the priority of a partner’s career to maintain equilibrium in a marriage.

A sexual relationship highlights your intimacy and love. Such intimacy develops over a period of time. And, it changes as your relationship changes and as you add children to your family. It takes communication.

Take time off from the daily grind for just the two of you and get off to some weekend outing or even an evening together. This surely rekindles your romance and you come back fully recharged and ready to face any problems.

Doing familial chores together bonds your relationship and you get more time for each other. Similarly, you can spend time together while doing some of your hobbies and interests.

Arguments are a part of every relationship. You need not avoid them and bottle your feelings or anger, as letting them out, discussing and arriving at a solution enables you to relieve stress.

Problems inside your marriage belong inside your marriage. Work out your problems. If they are too tough to resolve then you will need an expert in the field of marriage to help you keep your marriage working well.

Always take help from marriage counselors to maintain and retain your marriage.

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19. How to Manage Your Money without Stress

Money is often the main cause for disagreements and unhappiness. The needs and commitments of every individual or couple differ and you need to plan your money accordingly. Arguments and dissent start when there is no proper communication between partners in money matters. Facts and figures should be clearly defined and planned.

You can manage your finances better if you put in all information about your money in writing. You could file all your payables into a single file chronologically so you need not search for the bills and their due dates. It is better to discuss your financial position regularly with your spouse or partner. This will help you curb expenses and think twice before embarking on any expenses.

The first step is to analyze your monetary situation. You have to assess your total income, expenses, debts, and their due dates. Then, delve deeper into interest rates and loans to find how much you are paying over the years. This will give a clear picture of your estimated expenses, how much money you need, and when.

Then prioritize the most important items and get it on paper. Think of ways to save, and think of some fun ways to make extra money.

Although going through the bare facts may kindle worries, it is necessary to plan for your future. Once you are aware of the problems, you can write down all possible solutions to make extra money to pay off debts. After completing the list, you can again go over it and try to cancel the impractical ones and go ahead with sure ways of making extra money.

You will be happy when your plans materialize and you are able to repay your debts. However, in case the plan does not yield the necessary results, you need to again get a better grasp of your problem before embarking on an alternate solution.

Monetary stress is mainly due to overspending and unplanned spending; you just buy on impulse and then repent your spending when you are not able to pay the debt. Hence, it is necessary to make a budget and control your expenses to be able to have no stress about money matters.

You can take help from counselors and advisers to manage your money better without any stress.

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20. How to do Hobbies to Relieve Stress

Anything you enjoy doing that is not a part of daily chores is your hobby.

You lower your stress levels by indulging in your hobby. They give you a break from the monotony and re-energize you so that you enjoy your work, which keeps your mind happy and free.

There is a wide choice of hobbies. You can pick and develop the one to your liking.

1. **Gardening:** You can plant flowers in pots or grow vegetables in a small kitchen garden. Seeing the flowers bloom and eating the vegetables from your garden is really rewarding.

2. **Painting:** You can express your feelings by doing some simple strokes on paper with your paint brushes. This gives vent to your stress and you feel free and happy.

3. **Reading:** Reading books and magazines is a wonderful booster. They take you to places where you forget your problems. It may also bring us to people with similar problems. Sharing and learning from experiences bring forth many positive results.

4. **Writing:** Penning down your inner feeling and desires unburdens your mind and you feel free of stress.

5. **Handicrafts:** You can make a good gift item by knitting, sewing, or woodwork. This builds your self-confidence and lowers your stress levels.

6. **Joining club activities:** You can join any club and indulge in outdoor and indoor sports. They keep you physically and mentally fit and reduce stress levels.

7. **Music:** Music is a real balm. You can sing or learn to play any instrument. You sway with the music and are able to cool your frayed nerves through soft music.

8 **Volunteering:** You can spend some time with others to help with their problems. You feel a sense of achievement when you donate some of your time for others. You forget your worries and this proves to be a real energizer.

9. **Exercising:** You need to do exercises as an energizer, not as a chore. You then relax your nerves and they perform better. Walking, swimming, working out in gyms, meditating are all different forms of exercises.

Hobbies help you to enjoy life and in the process reduce your stress.

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21. Humor - Learning the Lighter Side of Life

Stress is affecting people of all ages and temperaments. It is the main cause behind most cardiovascular, immune, and nervous system ailments. You feel nervous, sleepless, and dizzy initially which later develop into serious health problems.

Your body has the inbuilt capacity to relieve you of stress while you rest. However, in the jet set world of today, you are unable to give your body time to recoup. Hence, you need to create such circumstances and let your body to regain its equilibrium.

A simple way to release your stress is to look at life humorously. You should try to mold your brain into a constant alert situation. Then, you can easily think clearly and your brain is able to absorb stress. If you harbor a humorous sense, you can look through uncertainties of life without feeling so much deep impact.

Biologically, your body releases certain steroids into your blood during stress. These curb the working of your immune system. However, laughter lowers steroid levels and increase lymphocytes, which boost your immune system. This lowers blood pressure, hypertension, and cleanses the air in your lungs. Muscles relax and blood circulation increases. You feel fine and in high spirits.

Humor exercises cardiac muscles and lowers the content of stress hormones. You do not get angry or anxious so often; instead, you are able to control your feelings better. No doubt, you are more lively and happier and are able to spread the same positive emotions around you.

Humor is a very effective tool in workplace. It establishes excellent bonding between workers, management, and staff, reduces regular tensions and irritations. Communication levels between personnel increase leading to easier ways of solving problems. Creativity develops among staff and their morale gets a boost. Overall, the environment is more positively charged and output levels increase. It creates a better understanding between staff and customers alike.

Humor does not mean inducing peals of laughter to overcome stress. It just means putting pleasant things and feelings into your mind to enliven it and push away negative thoughts. It just stirs the child in you and you feel rejuvenated. You are now ready to face and tackle any adversity or obstacle in life.

Did you know the average adult laughs 15 times per day, while the average child laughs 400 times per day? It's something to ponder, isn't it?

Ask the Ebookwholesaler Member that supplied this book to you about “The Power of Laughter” by John Williams for more information about the benefits of humor.

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22. Life is too short to Fret - Overcoming Your Anger

Anger is a deadly evil. Normally, people with an angry temperament experience frequent headaches, migraines, high blood pressure, and low blood sugar levels, most of which may be factors in fatal diseases. You feel angry when stressed out as it lowers serotonin levels in the brain. Hence, you become hostile, your heart beat increases and are unable to concentrate on anything. To evade your depression you eat more, become fatter, and indulge in further destructive habits of drinking, smoking, and drugs.

Life is so small and beautiful that it is sheer madness to spend or end it angrily. It will do you immense good to forego the deadly feeling; instead, enjoy your life to the brim. This is possible if you just develop a few habits:

1. When you start fuming, you could question yourself, whether the matter is worth getting angry over. This normally stops your anger. Small bickering develops into anger and, at the end, you do not realize or remember where it actually started. Hence, control your anger by developing patience and understanding of situations and people.
2. Meditation can do wonders for your temperament. Focused breathing techniques relieve stress and free your brain of negative thoughts. Humans are prone to temperament changes. You cannot be a saint and maintain your cool under all circumstances. You can effortlessly assert your say in tense matters.
3. Arguments, anger, and tensions arise, due to lack of time or inclination to listen patiently. Listening calmly largely reduces tension and you can look from another's perspective. This reduces anger among mates.
4. Forgiveness is a really rare virtue. It is not possible to undo a wrong by losing your cool. Instead, forgiving the act eases tension and releases

anger. Laughing wholeheartedly and being humorous reduces anger and you save yourself from side effects of such angry feelings.

Change of environment enlivens your mind and you regain your cool sooner. The underlying truth is that you can control your anger but cannot do anything about others' temperaments. Hence, check your anger and spread love and happiness around you to enjoy and live life to the fullest.

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23. Getting Away to Relieve Stress

The same routine, day in and day out, gets on your nerves. You feel bored with the same monotonous work, co-workers, and function more like a robot. You do not enjoy your work anymore. This hints at your need to break away from the monotony and rush off somewhere for a short time. This will help you relieve your stress.

You can go on a short vacation over the weekend with your family, friends, or colleagues. Enjoy your vacation by eating your choice of foods at restaurants, walking through hills and by lakes, or taking part in adventure sports. This takes away your worries. The vacation may not turn out be a costly affair and you will be back with more energy.

However, it may not be always possible to go on a vacation. You can then relieve your stress by trying to calm your nerves when under stress. You only need to take in and let out deep breaths and reassure yourself that your body is calm and without stress. This largely lowers your stress.

Sometimes you can question yourself about the cause of your stress. Just worrying about a problem is not going to give solutions. Instead, take your mind off the worry or look at the problem from a different angle. You may just bump into a perfect solution. This relieves your stress.

Physical exercise and meditation are also good ways of getting away from stress. Exercises, ranging from walking, swimming, working in the gym or at your home, keep you physically and mentally fit.

You may just get up from your workstation and walk around for a few minutes to get away from stress. You feel your mind lighter and free from stress.

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24. Finding More Time - Goal Setting and Time Management

Goal setting is a real motivator. Setting goals decides your priorities and desires to achieve set targets in life. This provides a direction for your efforts towards your targets and you concentrate better. You can focus your attention on acquiring knowledge or gather resources to proceed towards fulfillment of your goals.

Setting goals enables you to measure your progress and raise your self-confidence. You are able to judge your ability to achieve your goal and provide an impetus to set more and better goals to surge ahead in your conquests of knowledge or status.

Goal setting is on different levels. First, you decide on your lifetime goals and then break it into smaller goals and targets to reach your final lifetime goal. You may set goals in any sphere or spheres of life depending on your interests and aptitudes.

After deciding on your goals, you can prioritize them according to your desires. Then you have to set time plans for achieving the goals. Such plans could be for your lifetime or smaller periods of five years or even lower than that. However, each of the plans should progress into the next one to be able to reach the final destination.

You need to keep certain things in mind while setting goals:

- Goals should be precise and within time limits so you can measure your progress and feel happy at your achievements.

- Goals should be small and performance oriented.
- Set your goals realistically and practically.
- Failure is a part of your goal setting and do not despair at failure. Instead, they are your stepping-stones to success.
- Be ready to change the goals as you mature and grow.

Time management deals with effective use of available time. It is essential for you to enjoy your job to give it the best shot. If you are not happy with your work, your performance will surely be low. Every job has its own interesting and boring angles to it. You have to do the uninteresting areas well to come out with a good overall performance.

You can do this easily once you are aware of your strong and weak points. You can then concentrate on your weaknesses, and regular evaluation of your work yields positive results. You need to make good use of available tools for your job to enhance output.

Regular feedback from your employer on your work will enhance your efficiency. If you understand the needs and priorities of your job from your employer, you can proceed on the right track. You should be able to analyze the worth of your time by finding how much you are able to work in a particular time and whether that is profitable to the organization or not.

Goal setting and effective time management are important tools to reach and achieve your goals without undue stress and pressure.

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25. Getting Rid of Stress with Meditation

Stress, as we know, is a debilitating disorder and it can have a devastating impact on your body, mind and soul if you let it grow unattended. Stress is all pervading and people of all ages, gender, race and economic or social status are prone to stress.

Meditation and Stress

Meditation is an effective method for dealing with everyday and chronic stress. Meditation is a relaxation technique coupled with breathing exercises, visualization, calming sounds and balancing of energy. Meditation has a soothing and calming effect on the mind, body and soul and is therefore effective in reducing the external and internal causes as well as symptoms of stress. Meditation helps in not only dealing with and getting rid of stress but also in prevention of stress and stress-related disorders.

Benefits of Meditation

Meditation promotes deep relaxation. Some physiological and psychological benefits of meditation are:

- ✓ Reduction in anxiety and insomnia
- ✓ Reduction in heart rate and respiration rate
- ✓ Reduction in rate of metabolism and oxygen consumption
- ✓ Reduction in muscular and skeletal tension

- ✓ Reduction in self-blame and melancholy
- ✓ Prevention of fatigue
- ✓ Increase in concentration and memory
- ✓ Enhancement in alpha wave activity of the brain
- ✓ Better skin resistance
- ✓ Better energy and productivity
- ✓ Prevention of psychosomatic ailments like asthma, ulcers, aches and pains, hypertension, constipation and migraine.

How to Meditate

Meditation for at least 20 -30 minutes per day is an effective stress-buster and could help you in getting rid of stress. To begin with, you can meditate for 5-10 minutes twice in a day and gradually increase it to your desired duration. There are many methods for meditation. Some of the important methods are:

- Meditation with focus on an object
- Meditation with focus on breathing
- Meditation with focus on Mantra (Phrase)

While in the first technique, you focus your attention on any object like a flower, lamp, or religious picture. In the second, the focus revolves around breathing, and in the last technique your focus is on some religious Mantra or phrase like "I am relaxed" or "I am feeling happy".

You should select a silent and tranquil place for meditation. While meditating, you should find a comfortable place to sit with your head, neck and spine in a straight line. Relax your body and start meditating on the object, mantra or breathing. You should take deep breaths and let your mind be free from all sorts of botherations of the outer world.

You should not try to force the unwanted thoughts out of your mind while you are meditating. All you have to do is to gently push out the unwanted thoughts and replace them with happier and positive thoughts. Because the more you would *push*, the more that the unwanted thoughts would resist their removal.

While meditating, you can also visualize that you are in a picturesque and relaxing location like a garden or calm beach. Visualize that you are becoming happier as you are meditating. Visualization can not only help you in meditating effectively but also produce better stress relief.

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26. Stress Management Techniques

Stress is common to all. There is hardly anything that one can do to avoid it. However, there are several ways of dealing with stress. They increase the ability to handle stressful situations and help reduce stress.

A structured program combining elements of physical and mental relaxation can go a long way in providing relaxation and reducing stress. Such a program can include a wide variety of activities ranging from the martial arts to meditation, deep breathing to muscular relaxation. These programs can also use psychotherapy and other medical therapies.

Deep Breathing

Deep breathing is a simple but effective stress management technique. It is actually the core component of many stress management techniques, which are comparatively complex in nature. Techniques such as relaxation imagery, meditation and Progressive Muscular Relaxation involve deep breathing.

Imagery

Imagery is a method of relaxation through use of pleasant or relaxing images. Such images help to calm the body and mind. One can get a sense of relaxation by simply controlling the breathing and viewing some soothing image. Practitioners use this technique in treating several physical and mental complexities including cancer.

Meditation Techniques

Meditation has long been one of the most popular stress management techniques. It is the process of focusing upon the core of one's being. It soothes the mind, body and the emotions. One can do meditation by daily practice of a routine or simply while being alone outdoors. There are a wide variety of meditation styles and techniques to choose from.

One of the most popular forms of meditation is transcendental meditation. The goal of this form of meditation is to achieve transcendental consciousness. Relaxation response is another popular form of meditation. One needs to sit quietly and pronounce a word or a phrase repeatedly for 10-20 minutes every day. This meditation technique is effective in reducing blood pressure and increasing the body's response to stress.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

One can use Progressive Muscle Relaxation to achieve mental relaxation through physical relaxation. It involves tightening and relaxing the muscle groups in succession. In this technique, you first need to tense up a group of muscles to contract them as much as possible. Then relax the muscles normally after a few seconds. You should relax the muscles as much as possible. It is simple to learn and perform this exercise. One needs to have adequate practice and patience to derive maximum benefits from this technique.

Autogenic Training

This stress management technique uses passive concentration and awareness of the body sensations for relaxation. Physicians use Autogenic training as a part of therapy for many ailments. In this technique, one focuses upon different

sensations in different organs of the body through repetition of the autogenic "formulas". Those sensations include warmth, heaviness etc. It does not require any particular physical exercise or skills. It only requires some amount of time and patience. This stress management technique is widely popular in Europe. It is gaining ground in the USA also.

Biofeedback

Biofeedback is an advanced technique for achieving relaxation, controlling stress responses and for modifying the body's reactions. It uses certain monitoring equipment to extract information from the body. Such equipment can measure heart rate, blood pressure, brain activity, muscle tension, stomach acidity and other biological functions inside the body. Analysts can use the information to analyze the breathing techniques, postural changes or thinking patterns. This technique is helpful in treating several physical and psychological conditions.

Martial arts

Practicing martial arts can be a great stress management technique. It keeps one physically fit and mentally alert. There are several martial arts that one can take up.

Tai chi is a Chinese martial art that is popularly known as "meditation in motion". It stresses precision and force. The body movements are soft and flowing. It is necessary to learn this art from an expert. Since it requires a great amount of physical labor, it is also necessary to check with a doctor before beginning to learn it.

Qigong

This ancient Chinese health care system combines Eastern philosophy and relaxation techniques with physical training. The physical training includes aerobic conditioning, isometrics, isotonic etc. This stress management technique has several forms. They are effective in treatment of various medical conditions. It needs much time, commitment, determination and patience to learn Qigong. It is necessary to have a health check by a doctor before starting the training, as it involves physical exertion.

Yoga

Yoga literally means "joining" or "union" in Sanskrit. This union is between the individual and the divine. This ancient Indian form of exercise is highly effective as a stress management technique. Besides, it also keeps the body strong and the mind alert. Yoga has many forms but all forms work on the principle that the mind has a connection with the body and breathing. Yoga restores the balance and harmony in the body and emotions through different breathing exercises and postures. It increases the body's flexibility and capability for relaxation. Yoga exercises are easy to learn and nearly anyone can learn them but guidance by an expert and a medical check before starting are essential.

Managing stress in daily life

There are many things that one can do to reduce stress in day-to-day situations. Controlling the breath is one of those simplest techniques. Another technique is 'second break' where one visualizes himself in a relaxing situation. Such breaks can be for a few seconds or for a few minutes. Apart from fantasizing,

one can also concentrate on something pleasant in the immediate environment. It will help in reducing the unpleasant emotions. Massaging the chest muscles can also help in easing off stress. A massage along the midline and across the chest below the collarbone is effective in relaxing the heart.

A stress diary may be effective in dealing with stress. Such a diary includes information about all the worries, pressures and concerns causing stress to a person. One should jot down the situations causing stress and his or her reaction to each of those situations. Analysis of those records helps in understanding the stress pattern and in dealing with them well.

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27. How to Manage Your Stress with Alternative Therapy

Alternative Therapy involves the use of herbs and other natural healing systems to relieve stress and anxiety. The popular herbs used are Kava kava and Valerian. Reiki is a healing system that helps manage stress levels.

Kava kava is an herb, popularly found in the South Pacific countries. People take it in the form of a drink. It is often termed as 'nature's relaxant'. It helps by producing a mild euphoria and therefore, reduces stress. This drink also helps treat insomnia. It is a common ingredient in the rituals and ceremonies of the people of Fiji, Tahiti and New Guinea.

WARNING: Very limited studies on the effects of this herb have shown it may help patients when taken in small doses. However, a higher dose has effects such as dizziness, vision blurriness, scaling skin. In some cases, liver damage also occurs. The US FDA, Australian and German authorities have reason to believe that kava kava is harmful. It is definitely never recommended for pregnant women or for people on any other medication such as antidepressants and sedatives.

Valerian is an herb commonly found in Europe and North America. The official term is *Valeriana officinalis*. The roots of the plant are dried and used in preparations such as tea, pills and bath additives. It is best known to treat insomnia and can help treat headaches, mental strain, menstrual cramps and anxiety. It promotes a soothing effect and helps as a mild pain reducer.

The effectiveness of the herb in different preparations varies. Therefore, you need to follow the dosage. **Consult your doctor before taking the herb.** The

side effects may be allergic reactions or drowsiness. Valerian can be addictive. It is not for pregnant women or people with fever, infections or heart problems.

Reiki is a healing system that helps achieve overall well-being and relaxation. The term 'Reiki' means transmission of energy from one to the other. This transmission is usually by the palms of the practitioner. The energy flows from the practitioner into the patient depending on the illness, the stage of illness and the willingness of the patient to get better. This energy is universal and infinite. During Reiki, the usual sensations are those of heat, tingling, drowsiness or numbness.

Reiki aims at achieving a balance in the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects. It helps ease the anxiety, calms the brain and therefore, reduces stress levels.

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28. Natural Remedies for Stress

Stress refers to feelings of anxiety, nervousness that increases with time, as you grow old. You become more emotional and, since you are not as fit as before, the levels of physical stress increase. The common symptoms of stress are sleeplessness, lethargy, depression and fatigue. If you are feeling more stressed-out lately it is time to change your routine and include some refreshing ingredients.

The first step towards restoring the balance is to take frequent breaks while working. When we work, we exert ourselves more than required. Try taking a quick walk down the hall, thinking of your loved ones, to de-stress yourself. A 10-minute break after every 50 minutes of work is good. In the break, inhale deeply and slowly. The second step is to reduce the caffeine intake to one or two a week. The third step is to exercise. Exercise helps remove the waste products in the body especially lactic and uric acids. As a result, the body becomes more active and alert and thus fights stress better. A good brisk walk will prepare you for a good sleep at night.

A major cause of stress is poor nutrition. Before you begin any medications, you need to change your diet to make it a good, balanced and nutritious diet. Try an oatmeal breakfast or a protein milkshake. If you're in a hurry, go for fruits during snack times and drink plenty of water. Go for low fat mozzarella cheese if you have a choice. It is important to take all meals and not to skip them. You should also include two healthy snacks into your day.

Some of your favorite foods need to go from your diet. These include refined sugar products, artificial sweeteners, caffeine, alcohol and tobacco.

Many natural supplements are available that may help to reduce stress and anxiety. Before you start taking any, check with your doctor. Some of these supplements are not for pregnant or nursing mothers. They are also not for people on other medications such as antidepressants. These supplements are easily available at the local chemists. Some of these are Vitamin B, especially B6 and B12 – these keep the nervous system healthy, Kava kava – a herb with no addiction effects, Saint John’s Wort – an antidepressant herb, Valerian – a natural sedative with no addictive effects, Chamomile – a herb with calming properties and Siberian Ginseng – a herb that nourishes the adrenal glands. The supplements available need not suit you therefore be careful and try one at a time.

Humor

You need to learn to not sweat the small stuff as much, and learn to see the humorous side of life.

"Humor is the great thing, the saving thing. The minute it crops up, all our irritation and resentments slip away, and a sunny spirit takes their place."

~~Mark Twain~~

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29. Breathing Techniques

Breathing relaxation is a process of focusing of the attention on the exhalation phase. It can give a feeling of heaviness, a feeling of slowing down or sinking. When you experience these sensations during the exhalation phase of the breathing cycle, you automatically get relaxation.

There are three basic criteria that you need to remember while using the breathing rhythms for relaxation.

1. The first one is to breathe normally. You should not try to manipulate your breathing cycle. Allow the body to breathe itself. Just observe it passively.
2. Disregarding the inhalations is the second point to remember. Let your body inhale by itself. You need not to give any conscious thought to it.
3. Third, you should focus your attention on the exhalation phase. Think about the exhalations and concentrate on it.

If you follow the above steps properly, you feel and experience some soothing sensations when you exhale. You experience a feeling of heaviness, a feeling of slowing down or sinking. This will ultimately leave you with a sense of freshness and relaxation. Breathing relaxation does not aim at providing relaxation only during the exhalation phase of the breathing cycle. If you synchronize the exhalation phase with the sensations, relaxation will be more lasting.

How to relax your breath

1. Position yourself in a comfortable posture with adequate support. You should not cross your arms or legs. Have a passive mind and allow your body to relax.
2. Close your eyes and quietly observe the air as it enters and leaves your nose during the first few breaths.
3. Focus only on the exhalation phase for the next several breaths. Focus on the warmth of the air as it leaves your nose and relax.
4. With each exhalation, feel the sense of your body sinking into the supportive environment. You will feel as if your body is slowing down.
5. Remain in the relaxed state for some time. Before you finish and open your eyes, take a deep breath, flex and stretch.

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30. How to Exercise Away Your Stress - Stress Relief Exercises

Exercise is an effective stress buster. Regular exercise would not only reduce stress and stress related symptoms but also help in prevention of stress build-up. Ask any tennis player whether she feels stress after an hour of practice. The answer would be an emphatic "No!"

The reason is simple. Physical activity is so involving that you have no time to focus your attention on stressors. Whenever you are feeling stressed or having a stress headache, try exercise and feel its dramatic stress relief effects on your own.

Benefits of Exercise

Here, I am not enumerating all the benefits of exercising in general. The focus here is around the stress-relieving benefits of exercising, some of which are -

- ✓ Exercise distracts you from the causes of stress.
- ✓ Exercise builds stamina and enhances productivity.
- ✓ Exercise relaxes the cold and tight muscles that contribute to stress.
- ✓ Exercise stimulates and tones up the nervous system.
- ✓ Exercise improves your focus and concentration.
- ✓ Exercise induces a sound sleep.

- ✓ Exercise releases beneficial hormones and chemicals like beta-endorphin, which promote a feeling of wellness.
- ✓ Exercise produces a feeling of well-being and confidence.
- ✓ Exercise improves blood flow to the brain and other body systems.
- ✓ Exercise maintains a healthy body that is less prone to stress and stress-related disorders.

All these benefits of exercising and many more have a stress-relieving and/or stress-preventative effect in some way or other. Whenever you are feeling stressed or tense, exercise for a while and feel the instant relief. Moreover, if you can involve simple exercises in your daily routine, you may be able to keep stress at bay.

It is not necessary that you take up any particular form of exercising for stress control. You can do whatever you like which fits your schedule. You can select from;

- ✓ aerobics,
- ✓ Yoga,
- ✓ recreational sports,
- ✓ brisk walking,
- ✓ jogging or
- ✓ working out in the gym, or with a cycle or treadmill at your home.

However, be careful to maintain a regular exercise schedule and do not take up any activity that could be harmful for any physical condition that you have.

It is important to consult your physician before starting your exercise regimen.

Some Simple Stress Relieving Exercises

Stress Headache or Neck ache: When you are having a stress head- or neck-ache, take a short break from your work.

1. Stand up and, if possible, walk a few steps.
2. Thereafter, take a few deep breaths and rotate your neck gently in clockwise and anticlockwise movements.
3. After that move your neck leftwards and rightwards.
4. Then you can roll your shoulders in a backward direction slowly and gradually pick up the speed to about one roll in a second.

After a few minutes of exercising your headache and/or neck ache should be gone and you will feel fresh and relaxed.

Tense Shoulders:

1. Stand up and take a few deep breaths.
2. Stretch your neck to left and right as far as you can.
3. Dip your head and gradually bring it back to normal position.

4. Straighten your arms and then take them sideways so your shoulders also move backwards.

Do these movements twenty times.

After that, place your arms on the shoulders and rotate your arms in clockwise and anticlockwise directions twenty times each.

Next, lift your right shoulder and bring it down and then lift your left shoulder and bring it down. Do this ten times.

Lastly, swing your right arm in full circular movements ten times and repeat the same with your left arm.

These exercises, which take just three to four minutes, instantly relieve you from tense and painful shoulders.

Backache: Stand up and breathe deeply.

Stretch your arms sideways and perform swinging movements to your sides with arms still in the stretched position ten times in each direction.

Raise your hands above your shoulders and bend down to touch your feet without buckling your knees. Do these movements ten times.

Then, lie down on your back and, without moving your legs, raise your torso as far you can and return to the supine position. Perform this exercise ten times.

Finally, lie down on your stomach and raise your torso and return to normal position ten times.

These exercises may provide instant relief from a sore back.

Note: You must consult your doctor before performing these exercises.

The exercises and methods are mentioned here just for information of a general audience. If you are suffering from any disease or a specific physical condition or are pregnant, take extra care.

"Training gives us an outlet for suppressed energies created by stress and thus tones the spirit just as exercise conditions the body."

~~Arnold Schwarzenegger~~

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31. Stress Balls - How They Work

Stress Balls have a magical stress relieving effect. Stress balls are small handheld objects, less than the size of a tennis ball but they seem to have amazing stress relieving properties. More and more people are using this powerful stress-relieving tool while working, talking on phone, sitting in a meeting or watching television.

The growing popularity of stress balls is mainly due to their convenience and faster stress-relieving properties. They are so simple that you can make them at your home with the help of simple stuff like helium balloons and flour.

To relieve yourself from stress by a stress ball, you simply have to place the ball in your palm, squeeze hard and hold for a few seconds and release. Repeat this process ten to fifteen times. With these simple steps, you can fight the dreaded stress and find yourself more relaxed and poised in a few minutes.

The stress ball works on the principle of progressive muscular relaxation and distraction. When you are squeezing the ball, you contract your hand and arm muscles and then relax them when you release the ball. This process has a stress relieving effect on your hand and shoulder muscles.

Stress balls are good distracters. They distract your attention from the stressors at work and involve you in childlike play, which has a soothing and calming effect on your nerves. Stress balls also have a calming effect on anxiety and frustration.

Whenever you are feeling stressed, getting bored in a meeting or midway through a marathon conversation on the phone, rather than toying with the

globe or jotting meaninglessly on your scribble pad, try stress balls. Squeeze, release, squeeze, release and see your mind being relieved of the stress in minutes.

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

~George Burns~

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32. Stress in the Community

Man is a social animal and has evolved society and community for his convenience. A person simultaneously is a part of many social and community institutions. Traditionally, these social and community institutions were a comforting factor for the individual in the society. However, modern day living has put enormous pressures on the man as a social being. Now the very institutions designed for betterment of human life generate much stress.

Stress in the community is mainly due to factors related to social and cultural differences, economic differences, differences in expectations and the inability to cope with the hectic and high-pressure life. Some of the possible factors for stress in the community are -

Family and Parenting: Possible stressors in this category include divorce or troubled relationships among parents, both the parents working, improper after-school or weekend care, lack of parenting skills, teenage pregnancies and there are many more.

Poverty: The quality of life for a large section of society is degrading because of a widening of gap between the haves and have-nots. Poverty and deprivation in itself is a big stressor and, when it gets compounded with lack of education and illness, it could lead to more serious troubles.

Domestic Violence: Domestic violence, abuse, incest and similar situations have a degrading and stressful impact on the life of the person. These problems often travel from one generation to the next, which further aggravates the stress in life.

Inadequate Health Care: Health care and health insurance is becoming costlier day by day. Lack of preventive care, growing instances of substance abuse, improper mental health-care and cuts in the Medicaid program are a reason for stress for those who have inadequate or no access to medical care.

Furthermore, many other factors in day-to day community living like troubled relations with neighbors, crowded parks and public places, inadequate public transport, improper political systems, growing hooliganism, and dissatisfaction and apathy from the human relations as a whole contribute to stress in the community.

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33. Stress Awareness Diary

A stress awareness diary is a record of the stressors that one experiences at different moments. Such a diary helps in understanding the causes of stress in life. You can analyze the records to manage the stresses and prevent their reoccurrence. You can develop an understanding of what situations put you under stress and how you react to them.

You should make entries in your stress diary at regular intervals. Besides, you should also record any stressful incident soon after it occurs. Make sure to mention the date and time when you make an entry. You can write down a subjective assessment of your mood as you make an entry. Give a score on a scale of 0 to 10 on how well or bad you are feeling. Another subjective assessment can be - how efficiently you are working now. Give a score on a scale of 0 to 10 here as well. Give another subjective score of how stressed you feel at a particular time.

Your stress diary should record the most recent stressful event you have experienced. It should include the physical and mental symptoms you had experienced. Also, write down the fundamental cause of the stress. It's also important to include how well you handled the situation. You should jot down your reaction to the event.

You can analyze the records in your stress diary at a time convenient to you. Separate the stressors based on their importance. Some may be of a general nature with less effect on you, whereas some may have significant bearing on you. Analyze the events that cause stress to you and analyze your reaction to them.

Then, try to find out the possible ways that could have helped you handle the situation best. This way, you can develop an understanding of how to handle a stressful situation in the future.

The things you do that cause stress:

- × When you don't plan, you add stress.
- × How many times have you stayed up too late knowing you have to get up early for something important?
- × How many times have you decided to not have your work clothes ready for the next day?
- × Where is your children's homework?
- × What did you do with the library books to be returned?
- × What did you do with the movie you rented?
- × How about writing post-dated checks?

Start thinking about the things you can prevent. It's true that major stress comes in losing a loved one, or seeing a good friend get divorced, but you can reduce your stress with some self-discipline and some organization skills.

"The man who doesn't relax and hoot a few hoots voluntarily, now and then, is in great danger of hooting hoots and standing on his head for the edification of the pathologist and trained nurse, a little later on."

~Elbert Hubbard~

STRESS SCALE FOR ADULTS

In the following table you can look up representative changes in your life and see how much stress value each of these changes is adding to your life.

This is for a year. Look back from one year ago until today and fill in the answer.

Holmes Rahe Social Readjustment Rating Scale

This allows you to determine the total amount of stress you are experiencing by adding up the relative stress values, known as Life Change Units (LCU), for various events. A score of 250 or more is considered high. Persons with a low stress tolerance may find themselves overstressed with a score of 150. The test is used to determine disease susceptibility. With a score of 150 or less, you have a 37% chance of becoming seriously ill.

If you have between 150 and 300, then it jumps to 51%. If it hits over 300, then there's an 80% chance of serious illness in the next 2 years.

The table of stress below is adapted from the "Social Readjustment Rating Scale" by Thomas Holmes and Richard Rahe. This scale was first published in the Journal of Psychosomatic Research 1967, vol. II p. 214.

Adult Stress

Death of spouse	100
Divorce	60
Menopause	60
Separation from living partner	60
Jail term or probation	60
Death of close family member other than spouse	60
Serious personal injury or illness	45
Marriage or establishing life partnership	45
Fired at work	45
Marital or relationship reconciliation	40
Retirement	40
Change in health of immediate family member	40
Work more than 40 hours per week	35
Pregnancy or causing pregnancy	35
Sex difficulties	35
Gain of new family member	35
Business or work role change	35

Change in financial state	35
Death of a close friend (not a family member)	30
Change in number of arguments with spouse or life partner	30
Mortgage or loan for a major purpose	25
Foreclosure of mortgage or loan	25
Sleep less than 8 hours per night	25
Change in responsibilities at work	25
Trouble with in-laws, or with children	25
Outstanding personal achievement	25
Spouse begins or stops work	20
Begin or end school	20
Change in living conditions (visitors in the home, change in roommates, remodeling house)	20
Change in personal habits (diet, exercise, smoking, etc.)	20
Chronic allergies	20
Trouble with boss	20
Change in work hours or conditions	15
Moving to new residence	15
Presently in pre-menstrual period	15

Change in schools	15
Change in religious activities	15
Change in social activities (more or less than before)	15
Minor financial loan	10
Change in frequency of family get-togethers	10
Vacation	10
Presently in winter holiday season	10
Minor violation of the law	5

Interpretation: Drs. **Holmes** and **Rahe** have shown the relationship between recent life changes (exposure to stress) and future illness. It is estimated that it will take 1 year to replenish the energy expended in adjusting to any of the changes described in the **scale**.

0-149 No significant problem

150-199 Mild Stress 37% chance of illness

200-299 Moderate Stress 50% chance of illness

300+ Major Stress 80% chance of illness

Holmes, T. & Rahe, R. (1967) "Holmes-Rahe Social Readjustment Rating Scale", Journal of Psychosomatic Research, vol. II.

Please be aware that some people have way less stress tolerance. In fact, 10% of the USA population has an extremely low stress tolerance, which may explain why there are many people who have ended up totally insane from what may seem to some as simple stress in life. If you are overstressed you are in a danger mode. The more stress, the more things just go wrong!

I'm a Christian so I am adding some Christian comfort for the end of this book on stress. I do hope you will find ways to cut down on the pressures in your life and that you now know that little things add up to big problems.

Life should be lived in moderation.

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Stress Relief According to the Bible

Perhaps the most overlooked option for stress relief is God. If you do not believe in God or believe that the Bible is the truth then you may want to skip this section, but if you believe God's Word (the Holy Bible) to be true, then please continue.

First we must understand that Stress is not of God! God does not desire us to be stressed or anxious. * He tells us this in his Word:

Philippians 4:6-7 (NIV)

6. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7. *And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

This passage tells us not to be anxious and also gives us a way to defeat our anxiety by prayer.

If you have stress or anxiety, pray about it. God will give you peace, which surpasses all comprehension. His word declares it!

Here is a sample prayer that you can speak out to God.

Father, I need you. Please take away the stress that I am feeling and replace it with your joy and peace. Your word says to cast all anxiety on you because you care for me. (1 Peter 5:7 NIV) I thank you for filling me with your joy and peace.

In Jesus' name Amen

* Although God does not desire us to be anxious, there may be times when he will allow your anxiety to be overwhelming. If you are anxious about anything and don't know the cause then you need to pray. God will show you the root of your anxiety and will help you overcome it.

When I was a tobacco smoker, and God wanted me to quit, he allowed me to feel overwhelmingly anxious after I finished smoking. Because I didn't want to quit smoking, it took me awhile to realize that the anxiety I was feeling would not be healed by prayer alone.

I would have to quit smoking too. God was using anxiety to stir my heart and lead me to change.

God used anxiety to give me a desire and the will to want to quit smoking. He set me free of smoking by changing the effects it had on my body.

It was not a pleasant time for me, but I am very thankful that God loved me enough to discipline me.

In Hebrews, he says that he has called us Sons, and goes on to say that he will discipline us as sons because he loves us. Please read Hebrews 12. It is a great chapter.

God loves you too. When your problems well up inside you, it's okay to loosen your burden to God.

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