



Presents

STRESS-AWARENESS

A Life Enhancing Wellness Workshop

Facilitated by

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Course Outline

Did You Know?

Introduction

What is Stress?

The Physiological Pathway

The Brain

Body Awareness

Stress Diary

Breathing

Progressive Relaxation

Stress Coping Tactics



THE KEY TO THIS WORKSHOP

To get the most from this workshop make a commitment to practice the techniques that are presented in it. Memorise some of them especially those on breathing. After a while you will begin to access these skills automatically

Be Prepared

Study how things work beforehand, practice a few of the techniques that you are comfortable with and stick to those. Only when you are proficient should you move on to new techniques.

Be Patient

Recognise that results take time, understand how stress works. One of its characteristics is restlessness. We are used to instant fixes. To master relaxation and stress reduction takes time.

Be Persistent

Try, try and try again. Concentrate on the solution not whether the technique is working or not. To master the techniques takes time, effort and commitment. Do your best to make the exercises and techniques fun!

Be Positive

You will attain the end result, which is to manage your bodies stress response patterns, as well as begin to understand, control and use the reasoning questioning mind efficiently.

Be Practical

This is a one day workshop. All the information presented to you here will not give you instant solutions but will rather create the foundation from which to work, both by yourself and for future workshops.

This is a shift in conscious awareness that will allow you to see your world differently, and empower you to take charge of your life. It is a continuous growth process.



DID YOU KNOW?

- § According to a global study by Grant Thornton International, South Africans rank 9th highest in the world of the most stressed people, and we are 10% more stressed this year (2006), than last year

1	Taiwan	69%
2	Hong Kong	54%
3	Mexico	54%
4	Turkey	54%
5	India	53%
6	Philippines	53%
7	Japan	51%
8	Russia	51%
9	South Africa	50%
10	Singapore	46%
11	Ireland	41%
	GLOBAL AVERAGE	39%
12	Greece	39%
13	Poland	39%
14	Germany	37%
15	Spain	37%
16	France	36%
17	Australia	34%
18	USA	34%
19	UK	33%
20	New Zealand	32%
21	Italy	30%
22	Canada	26%
23	Netherlands	25%
24	Sweden	23%

- § Stress related problems account for six out of 10 (60%) visits to a doctor's surgery.
- § Research in the US indicates that nine out of ten people (90%) report experiencing high levels of stress per month, with six out of 10 (60%) claiming to be under great stress at least once per week.
- § It is estimated that forty million working days are lost each year in the UK as a result of stress related absenteeism.
- § Research clearly shows that prolonged exposure to stress weakens the immune system and is implicated in the development of cancer.



- § Studies indicate that stress raises blood pressure and causes hardening of the arteries predisposing us to heart attacks and strokes.
- § Further studies indicate that death from cardiovascular disease of the heart and brain account for 50% of deaths each year in the US.
- § Research shows that 2 deaths occur every minute as a result of this epidemic in the US.
- § Global studies have shown that sons are experiencing heart attacks on average 13 years younger than their fathers and that heart attacks and strokes in men in their thirties is now common place.
- § Stress is now considered to be a leading contributor to ill health and emotional, spiritual and physical “dis – ease”.



INTRODUCTION

Stress is a part of life. We experience it every day in some form or another. Stress cannot be avoided. Our day to day living in our modern industrialized society offers even the most well managed life a steady barrage of potentially stressful situations to deal with. How you react or respond to these events will determine the impact stress will have on you.

Each one of us has our own unique experience of stress based on and triggered by our personal perceptions of our world in relation to the perceived problems that we are confronted with. **No one experiences stress in the same way that you do, in fact the stress reaction is the most unique personal experience.** The same group of people experience quite different internal responses to apparently identical external experience, due to their perception of the situation. So the way you choose to define stress, the way you choose to react or respond to stress, and how you manage or control your stress, is all dependent and governed to a large extent on your unique perceptions of yourself and your unique perceptions of others.

The objective of this course in stress management is not merely stress reduction. It is to help you define and reach the unique dynamic state of optimal stress awareness. Life would be boring without stress. It is well established that performance and efficiency actually improves with increased stress until performance peaks. As the stress levels become too great and your perceived ability to cope outweighs your perceived demands, you move into a state of negative stress. This workshop will help you to recognize this and help you to manage it effectively.

This material is designed to teach individuals to cope more effectively with the stress in their personal lives and work environment. It is based on proactive principles of stress management and reactive strategies of stress reduction.

The primary objective is to teach individuals how to maintain optimal stress levels in order that performance and efficiency can be sustained for longer periods of time. This is done by teaching the individuals to be more relaxed, alert and focused with better concentration skills that lead to increased productivity.

This stress management workshop will present tools that can help you to cope more effectively with the stress in your life. In addition stress management seeks to help to identify the right types and amounts of stress given your individual personality, priorities and life situation so that you can maximize your performance and satisfaction.



At this early stage of the workshop, it is important to define two forms of stress. They are:

“Modern Stress” – a long term constant emotional pressure to perform in a specific way with constant negative judgments being derived from comparing performance to expectation.

“Primitive Stress” – a short intense emotional and physical state that is necessary to combat an immediate threat in order to survive. There is a positive result every time as you are still alive!

The stress reaction is a very basic instinct, and is not designed to help us cope in the modern world. It is there to keep us alive when under threat from natural disaster or predation.



WHAT IS STRESS?

The Oxford Dictionary definition is a state of mental, emotional or other strain.

Stress is an umbrella term for a comprehensive catalogue of words that include:

Anxiety
Arousal
Burden
Conflict
Discord
Exhaustion
Fatigue
Nervousness
Powerlessness
Pressure
Tearfulness
Tension
Unhappiness
Upset

A Physiotherapist uses the word to mean “muscular tension”

A Psychologist uses the word to mean “mental anxiety”

A Surgeon uses the word to mean “fracture”

A Physicist uses the word to mean “strain and pressure”

A Linguist uses the word to mean “emphasis”

SO MANY DIFFERENT MEANINGS TO THE WORD STRESS SO MANY DIFFERENT TYPES OF STRESS

Pain, Muscle Tension and Cell Deterioration	-----	Physical Stress
Jealousy, Insecurity and Sense of Inferiority	-----	Emotional Stress
Decision-Making, Poor Concentration and Mental Disorientation	--	Mental Stress
Failure to find Meaning, Purpose or Direction in Life	-----	Spiritual Stress



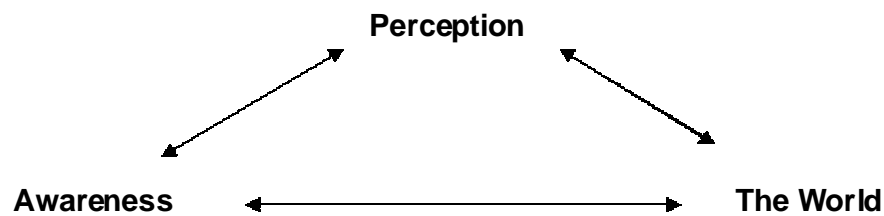
To complicate the picture a little further stress may be subdivided into:

- § Relationship Stresses
- § Environmental Stresses
- § Life Event Stresses
- § Occupational Stresses
- § Health Stresses

These may contain elements of physical, emotional, mental and spiritual stresses.

All of these synonyms, symptoms and sources of stress point to moments in time when our perceived demands threaten to outweigh our perceived resources.

Stress is a reaction to a basic threat and the basic threat is a perceived ability or inability to cope. This directly affects your view of the world, and in turn the world then reflects back at you what you are expecting to see and experience (Quantum Physics and the Theory of Relativity proved this!)



A perception of yourself as efficient and effective, able to achieve, deserving of happiness, and capable of self determination is a necessary prerequisite of personal self acceptance, positive self worth and high self esteem. The happiness of life, the wholeness of life and the harmonies of life so often rest upon this foundation of A PERCEIVED ABILITY TO COPE.

Our ability to cope will be called into question whenever our perceived demands threaten to outweigh our perceived resources. We will experience some type of stress whenever our ability to cope is challenged or threatened in some way. For if our coping collapses, then so too, so often, our self-acceptance, self-worth and our self-esteem collapses. This is a common phenomenon and is a direct result of “Modern Stress” – we physiologically go through the primitive stress reaction, perceive ourselves to have failed



because of our judgment of ourselves in comparison to the expectation of society, and yet we are still alive!

If left unchecked, this emotional response and resulting confusion can lead to other more intense physiological and psychological states of being that are not necessarily fully representative of the person in that state.



THE PHYSIOLOGICAL PATHWAY

The first person to describe the body's reaction to stress was Walter Canon, a Harvard physiologist over 100 years ago. He laid the groundwork for the modern meaning of stress by describing the "fight or flight response" as a "series of biochemical changes that prepare you to deal with threats or danger". He acknowledged that primitive man needed quick bursts of energy to fight or flee predators. In modern society however social custom prevents you from fighting or running away and so this emergency response is rarely allowed. The emotional thrust of this response is a constant influence on us and can accumulate and cause unstable emotional outbursts such as road rage, depression and post traumatic stress disorder.

Han Selye, the first major Researcher on stress, was able to trace exactly what happens in the body during the stress response. He introduced the term General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) to describe this.

1. Alarm Reaction

The first phase he called the ALARM REACTION which facilitates coping in an emergency situation, where he found that any problem real or imagined can cause the cerebral cortex (the thinking part of the brain) to send an alarm to the hypothalamus (the main switch for the stress response, located in the midbrain). The hypothalamus then stimulates the sympathetic nervous system to make a series of changes in your body. Your heart rate, breathing rate, muscle tension, metabolism and blood pressure all increase. Your hands and feet get cold as blood is directed away from the extremities and digestive system into the larger muscles that can help you fight or run. You experience butterflies in your stomach. Your diaphragm and anus lock. Your pupils dilate to sharpen your vision and your hearing becomes more acute.

While all this is going on, something else happens that can have long term negative effects if left unchecked. Your adrenal glands start to secrete corticoids (cortisol, epinephrine and norepinephrine) which inhibit digestion, reproduction, growth and tissue repair and the responses of your immune and inflammatory systems. Some very important functions that keep your body healthy begin to shut down. This is the "Primitive" stress reaction.

2. Resistance Reaction

If the stress continues over a long period, a second phase, the RESISTANCE REACTION, is initiated. During this stage, blood pressure remains abnormally high and metabolism is geared to help the body resist the effects of the stressor, whether fighting infection or dealing with an emotional problem. Protein breakdown is characteristic of the resistance phase. Levels of many hormones including cortisol, aldosterone, thyroxine and growth hormone are elevated. This is the "Modern" stress reaction.



3. Exhaustion

The final phase of GAS is the state of EXHAUSTION in which the body appears unable to utilize the available hormones and we succumb permanently to the stressor

It has been suggested that in our fast paced society, with its multitude of stress inducing events, many persons remain in the resistance stage of the GAS almost continuously. This chronic stress is harmful because of the side effects of long term elevated levels of cortisol.

While Glucocorticoids are helpful in reducing inflammation, they can also interfere with normal immune responses, resulting in spreading infection. Chronic high blood pressure contributes to heart disease and increased levels of fat in the blood promote atherosclerosis. When experimental animals are injected with large amounts of glucocorticoids, such disease states are induced and similar effects are seen when large doses are administered clinically to patients. Among the diseases linked to excessive amounts of adrenocorticoids hormones are ulcers, high blood pressure, atherosclerosis and arthritis.

The Solution

Now, the same mechanism that turned the stress response on can turn it off. This is called the RELAXATION RESPONSE. As soon as you decide that a situation is no longer dangerous, your brain stops sending emergency signals to your brain stem, which in turn ceases to send panic messages to your nervous system. Three minutes after you shut off the danger signals, the 'fight or flight response' "burns out. Your metabolism, heart rate, breathing rate, muscle tension and blood pressure all return to their normal levels. You can use your mind to change your physiology for the better, improving your health and perhaps reducing your need for medication. "The Relaxation Response" refers to this natural restorative process.

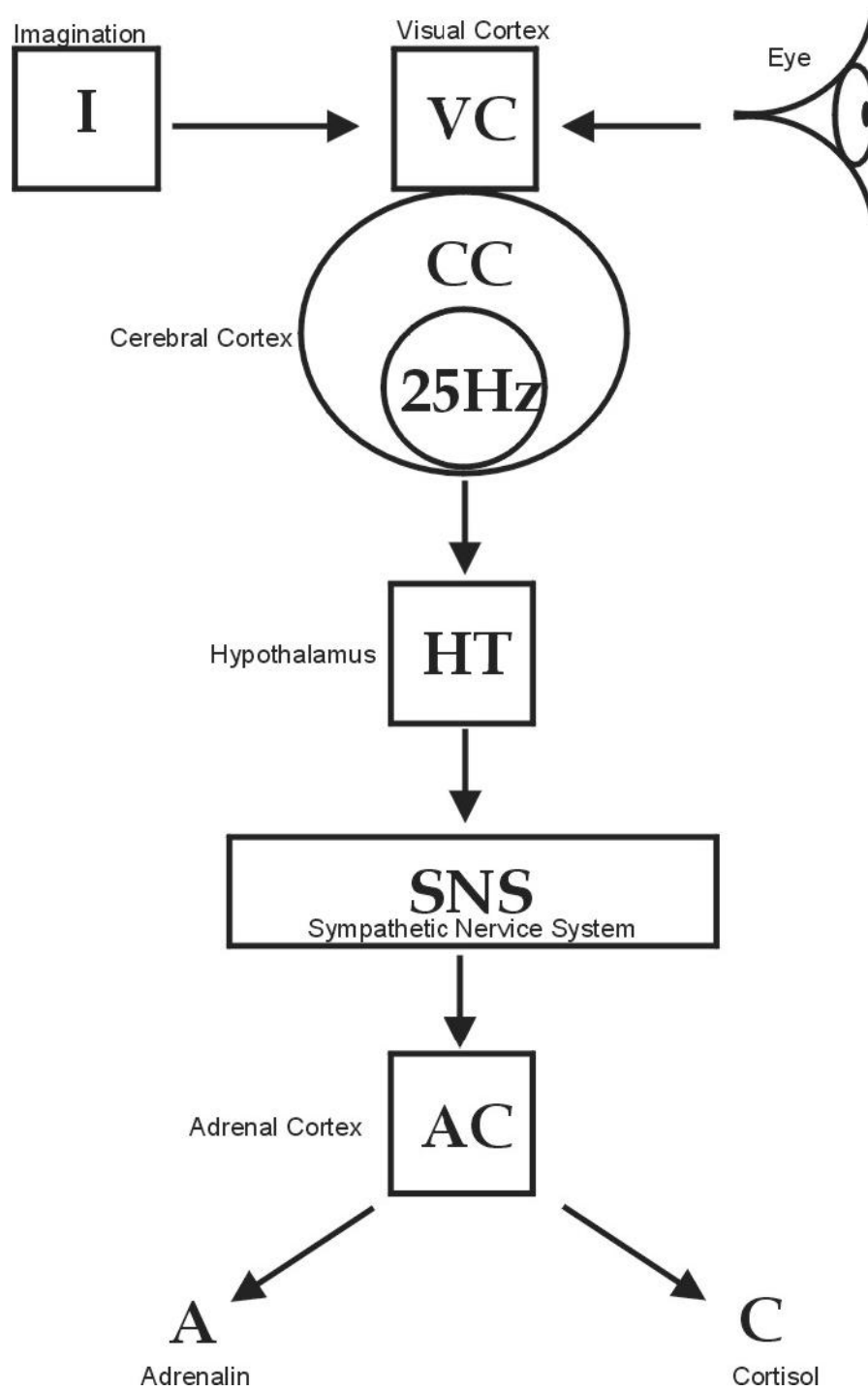
The Basics

It is important to understand that the stress reaction is a simple, mechanical and chemical process that is designed to keep the human animal alive under extreme circumstances. There are four simple and important components to stress that need to be understood. They are:

1. Stress is a UNIQUE experience. What makes you stressed may not make another person stressed.
2. Your stress is directly related to your AWARENESS and PERCEPTION of your environment.
3. The trigger that activates the stress reaction is a brain frequency threshold of around 25 Hz (Beta brain wave function)
4. Your brain does not subconsciously distinguish between what you physically see and experience in the world, and what you imagine. Both of these "events" are seen as input and treated in exactly the same way.



The Basic Physiological Stress Pathway





THE BRAIN

The human brain is a highly complex organ. Not even the most intricate computer begins to rival the complexity of the human brain. A soft, wrinkled mass of tissue weighing about 1.4 kilograms, the human brain is the most complex organ in the human body. Each of its 25 billion neurons is functionally connected to as many as 1000 others. No wonder that scientists have barely begun to unravel the tangled circuits that govern human physiology and behaviour. What we do know is that at any moment millions of messages are flashing through the brain which is transmitting “decisions” back to the organs maintaining the appropriate heart rate, blood pressure, respiration rate, temperature, muscle tone and blood chemistry, at the same time receiving and responding to, hundreds of external messages. Such as hearing a ringing telephone, smelling a steak dinner, seeing the printed words on this page.

All the time that the brain is thinking and analysing, it is using up neurochemicals to transmit impulses from one neuron to another and this creates a magnetic electrical activity which can be measured.

Continuous electrical activity within the brain can be measured by placing electrodes on the surface of the scalp and recording differences in electrical potentials. Patterns of activity called brain waves can be traced, producing a record called an electroencephalogram (EEG).

Brain waves are evoked primarily from the cerebral cortex, but some result from input from pathways projected through the thalamus. The rhythms arise from synchronized cyclic activity of groups of neurons. One’s EEG is as unique as one’s fingerprints, but the EEG changes with the state of consciousness or emotion.

Often brain waves are irregular, but under some conditions distinct patterns can be recorded. Four main kinds of wave rhythms have been distinguished:

1. The Alpha wave rhythm, is evoked when a person is relaxed and resting with eyes closed. (6 Hz – 12 Hz)
2. The Beta rhythm is characteristic of states of heightened mental activity, such as information processing or problem solving. (13 Hz – 40 Hz)
3. Delta waves are associated with normal sleep
4. Theta waves occur under emotional stress especially frustration or disappointment.

Can one learn to control brain waves? Those who tend to be anxious and exhibit beta and or theta waves for no good reason can be taught to induce the relaxed alpha state. With constant conditioning they can produce alpha waves at will. Studies have indicated that relaxation and meditation practise produces an altered metabolic state. Metabolic rate, blood pressure, and heart rate decrease, and alpha waves become dominant.



Experienced meditators have been found to lapse into sleep for about 40% of the time they were in meditation.

ATTITUDE

Which comes first, a sense of calm, or a positive, happy outlook on life?

It hardly matters. If you can maintain a state of real calm, you will be positive and happy. Conversely, if you are positive and happy, you will find it easy to be calm.

Optimism is the most important attitude you can pursue. Not only will it help you to be calm, but it will bring increased happiness, better health, more effective relationships and vastly improved communications. How do you achieve it? Listen to your conversation and your thoughts. Steer well clear of all negative expressions, strive to find the positive in all you think and say.

When you do succumb to the negative, try bombarding it with positive interpretations of the same thought. Instead of "I've got so much work to do" try "I'm so fortunate to be fully occupied" or "It's so rewarding to have useful work and challenges"

Picture yourself with a smile and boundless enthusiasm. Refer back to that mental picture time and time again throughout the day. Look for every opportunity to laugh.

Finally, throw yourself into every activity you encounter. Even if the task is an unpleasant one, perform it as thoroughly and as conscientiously as you possibly can. As the students of Zen will tell you, this is one of the most well-established paths to peace and contentment.

LEVELS OF CONSCIOUS AWARENESS

EMOTIONAL	Instinct	Child	React
MENTAL	Intellect	Adult	Respond
SPIRITUAL	Intuition	Elder	Reflect



CHRONIC STRESS & DISEASE

Of course there are times when the stress response is still adaptive today: you need it in the face of physical danger or when participating in sports that require fast, rigorous muscle activity, but neither of these situations demand a constant or prolonged stress response.

Chronic or persistent stress can occur when the stressors of life are unrelenting, as they are during a major reorganization or downsizing at work or while undergoing a messy divorce or coping with a chronic or life threatening illness. It is important to note that financial debt is a major stressor in our lives and constantly threatens to undermine our self worth.

Chronic stress also occurs when little stressors accumulate and you are unable to recuperate from any of them. As long as the mind perceives a threat, the body remains aroused. If the stress response remains turned on, you can be increasing your chances of a stress related disease.

Researchers have been looking at the relationship between stress and disease for the last fifty years. They have observed that people suffering from stress-related disorders tend to show hyperactivity in a particular “preferred system”, such as skeletal-muscular, cardiovascular, or gastrointestinal system. For example, the evidence shows that chronic stress can result in muscle tension and fatigue for some people. For others it can contribute to stress hypertension, migraine headaches, ulcers or chronic diarrhea.

Almost every system in your body can be damaged by stress. Suppression of the reproductive system can cause amenorrhea (cessation of menstruation) and failure to ovulate in women, impotence in men and loss of libido in both. Stress-triggered changes in the lungs increase the symptoms of asthma, bronchitis, and other respiratory conditions. Loss of insulin during the stress response may be a factor in the onset of adult diabetes.

Stress suspends tissue repair and remodeling which in turn causes decalcification of bones leading to osteoporosis and or susceptibility to fractures. Inhibition of immune and inflammatory systems makes you more susceptible to colds and flu and can exacerbate some diseases such as cancer and AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). In addition, a prolonged stress response can worsen conditions such as arthritis, chronic pain and diabetes. There is also some evidence that the continued release and depletion of norepinephrine during a state of chronic stress can contribute to depression.

The relationship between chronic stress, disease, and aging is another area of research. Aging experts are looking at the changing patterns of disease and the emergence of degenerative disorders. Over just a few generations, the threat of infectious diseases such as typhoid, pneumonia, and polio have been replaced with such “modern plagues” as cardiovascular disease, cancer, arthritis, respiratory disorders such as asthma and emphysema, and a pervasive incidence of depression. As you age normally your physiology does change, but with a constant imbalance in the body’s optimal stress levels, the body tends to grow old very quickly as a direct result of certain vital physiological structures and systems either shutting down or underperforming.



LIFE EVENTS: SUBJECTIVE ASSESSMENT

EVENT	SCALE
Bought, Sold or Moved House	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Major House Renovation	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Separation from a loved one	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
End of relationship	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Got engaged	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Got married	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Marital problem	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Awaiting divorce	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Divorce	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Child started school/nursery	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Increased nursing responsibilities For elderly or sick person	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Problems with relatives	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Problems with friends/neighbours	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Pet-related problems	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Work related problems	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Change in nature of work	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Threat of redundancy	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Changed job	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Made redundant	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Unemployed	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Retired	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Increased or new bank loan or house bond	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



Financial difficulty	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Insurance problem	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Legal problem	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Emotional or physical illness of close family or relative	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Emotional or physical illness of yourself	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Serious illness of close family or relative requiring hospitalization	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Serious illness requiring your own Hospitalization	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Surgical operation experienced by family member or relative	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Surgical operation on yourself	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Death of husband or wife	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Death of family member or relative	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Death of close friend	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Pregnancy	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Birth of baby	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Birth of grandchild	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Family member left home	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Difficult relationship with children	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Difficult relationship with parents	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Plot Total Score Below

Low Stress

High Stress

1 _____ 200 _____ 400



BODY AND EMOTIONAL AWARENESS

With body awareness what we are trying to do is to learn the skill of being able to recognize how the body reacts to the stress in your life. Most people are not aware of the tension in their bodies or of their personal stress reaction. Muscle tension is your body's way of letting you know that you are under stress and body awareness is the first step toward acknowledging and reducing stress.

The importance of consciousness, the mind and emotions as well as the relationship to body status has long been emphasized by eastern philosophies embodied in traditional Zen Buddhism through Hindu Yoga as well as the teaching of the Sufi Muslims. Unfortunately, it is only recently that we see the rekindling of this relationship between our thoughts and our emotional and physical states of being. What is important to know is that you initially tense your body when you experience stress, when the stress is removed the tension will also go away. It is about learning to acknowledge and identify that you are undergoing such a process.

The tool that will help you to start identifying this is called AWARENESS. This helps you to differentiate between your internal awareness and your external awareness. It will start to teach you to separate the world from your physical reaction to it.

Internal awareness refers to any physical sensation feeling and emotional discomfort or comfort within the body. External awareness includes all stimulation to the five senses, sight, sound, taste, touch and smell from the outside world. Most of the tension in our bodies is not felt because our awareness is directed to the outside world. The following exercises promote body awareness and will help to identify areas of tension.

Internal versus External Awareness

1. First focus your attention on the outside world. Start sentences with "I am aware of" (for example: "I am aware of the cars going by the window, papers moving, coffee percolating, the breeze blowing, the blue carpet").
2. After you have become aware of everything that is going on around you, shift to focusing your attention on your body and your physical sensations, your internal world. (For example: "I am aware of feeling warm, my stomach gurgling, tension in my neck, nose tickling and cramp in my foot").
3. Shuttle back and forth between internal and external awareness. (For example: "I am aware of the chair against my buttocks, the circle of yellow light from the lamp, my shoulders hunching up, and the smell of bacon").
4. Used during free moments in your day, this exercise allows you to separate and appreciate the real difference between your inner and outer worlds.

Body Scanning



Close your eyes. Starting with your toes and moving up your body, ask yourself, “Where am I tense”? Whenever you discover a tense area, exaggerate it slightly so you are fully aware of it. Be fully aware of the muscles that are tense then ask: “Why am I hurting myself”? Be aware that all muscle tension is self-produced, become aware of the life situation that is causing this tension and think about what you can do to change it.

Letting Go Of Your Body

Lie down on a rug or a firm bed and get comfortable. Put a pillow under your knees and the small of your back and close your eyes. Shift your body till you are completely comfortable. Become aware of your breathing, feel the air move into your nose, mouth and down your throat into your lungs. Now think about which parts of your body are you most aware of, which parts are you not aware of, which parts can you easily feel and which parts have no sensation. Are there any differences between the left and right sides of your body? Now think about where you are experiencing physical discomfort, describe the discomfort to yourself, be aware of it and focus on it, it may change so let your body do whatever it wants to do. Continue letting go for as long as necessary, let your body take over.



KEEPING A DIARY

By beginning to put down on paper what is going on in your head, you will begin to see a correlation between parts of the day that are more stressful than others. In addition it becomes possible to see the correlation between types of stressful events and characteristic physical and emotional symptoms you might experience.

But the most important part of keeping a diary will also help you to start to see exactly who it is or what it is that is bothering you. The persistent and constant communication that goes in your head, with people who are not present and yet are involved in internal debate and dialogue, points us in the direction of issue that need to be resolved.

By putting these down on paper you give yourself the opportunity to examine the issues properly and clearly and to begin to see them for what they truly are, as well as the real extent of every body's involvement in the actual issue.

So the stress diary is useful in the following manner

1. It allows you to discover and chart your stressful events and the resultant characteristic reactions. For example interpersonal confrontations may result in stomach tension whilst rushing or stuck in queues may result in irritability. Using your body awareness exercises now allows you to recognize where your body shares its tension.
2. Allowing yourself increased awareness, to note the areas of muscular tension gives you the opportunity to apply a relaxation skill to let go the tension you have discovered. With the release of tension you will experience an increase in your energy level as well as a greater sense of well being
3. Your diary has helped you to identify events that are in your head that need to be sorted out. Once identified the particular issue is written out and the following formula is applied to the particular situation under review
 - a. How much of this situation is REAL.
 - b. How much of this situation is SPECULATION.
 - c. How much of this situation is IMAGINATION.

Once all of this formula has been worked out, and the issues at hand have been clearly identified, what becomes necessary if for you to make an appointment to see the people involved. Then with a clearly written out set of issues that needs to be examined you meet for a time long enough to be able to express yourself clearly on all relevant issues.

Remembering that nobody moves through criticism, all issues centre around how you are feeling in the given situation and how you choose to be able to move onto solutions through empowering open ended communication



central around the ability to hear through listening and cultivate the ability to see and understand the other persons perspective.

4. You can use your stress awareness diary to help you to record your progress with the relaxation techniques presented in this workshop.

STRESS AWARENESS DIARY

Some parts of the day are more stressful than others and some events are more likely to produce physical and emotional symptoms than others. Certain types of stressful events often produce characteristic symptoms. It is useful to keep a record of stressful events as well as symptoms that may have been a stress reaction.

The following example is a stressful Monday from a store employee

<u>Time</u>	<u>Stressful Event</u>	<u>Symptom</u>
8:00	Alarm does not go off, late, rushing	
9:30		Slight headache
11:00	Customer is rude and insulting	
11:15		Anger, tightness in stomach
3:00	Return of 3 items, much paper work	
3:15		Depression, slight headache
5:30	Heavy traffic	
6:30	Irritable with son	Anger, pounding headache
6:35	Wife defends son	Tightness in stomach

<u>Time</u>	<u>Stressful Event</u>	<u>Symptom</u>
8:00		
9:30		
11:00		
11:15		
3:00		
3:15		
5:30		
6:30		
6:35		



YOUR STRESS AWARENESS DIARY

Day

Date

<u>Time</u>	<u>Stressful Event</u>	<u>Symptom</u>
8:00		
8:15		
8:30		
8:45		
9:00		
9:15		
9:30		
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18:30		



To keep a convenient record of how you feel before and after your relaxation exercises, use the following record of general tension.

Record of General Tension

Rate yourself on this 10-point scale before and after you do your relaxation exercise.

1 Totally relaxed No tension	2 very relaxed	3 moderately relaxed	4 fairly relaxed	5 slightly relaxed
6 Slightly Tense	7 fairly tense	8 moderately tense	9 very tense	10 extremely tense

<u>Week Of</u>	<u>Before Session</u>	<u>After Session</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			

Your personal mind-body connection and the interactions between your thoughts, body, and social environment are an integral part of beginning to manage the stress in your life, as opposed to letting it manage you.



TIME MANAGEMENT SKILLS

De-Stressing your work day: (What do I do when?)

Action Plan:

1. Write lists. You cannot remember everything and forgetting will make you feel stressed.
2. Write your action plan the evening before. Restrict your plan to about 15 tasks per day, and do not spend more than 15 minutes writing your action plan.
3. Before you fill in a task, ask yourself if you can delegate it (yes even if you can do it better)
4. If you have a couple of projects to attend to, list them first and list 3 important tasks for each project.
5. List a realistic time estimate beside each one.
6. Telephone Call List, in order of priority
7. List of people to contact, chase, and nag.
8. Major Admin tasks or personal household management tasks.
9. Friends, business contacts to touch base with, support groups or social clubs
10. Any other task that does not fall into any one of these categories.

At the bottom of your action sheet should be "ME TIME", tasks or chores that relate to you personally including self care.

If you do not complete anything on your action sheet, transfer it to the next day, until it gets done or falls off altogether. (Maybe it is out of date or it was not so important in the first place).

When you make an appointment, include all contact telephone numbers directly underneath it, so you do not spend time searching for a number to change the appointment or ask for directions etc

Start each day by doing the most difficult task and reward yourself afterwards, with a cup of tea, or call to a friend.

Every piece of paper that comes your way must only be handled once, so Deal with it, Delegate it, or Dump it. Recirculate it with your hand written reply.

Start marking in your diary the high and low points of your energy cycles and don't put major tasks in your diary during a low energy cycle.



Learn to manage your phone, make calls rather than accept them, it is a better use of time and gives you the advantage, make a check list of points to be communicated, get straight to the point without chit chat and keep the call to 3 minutes or less. Try standing when on the phone, you will waste less time chatting, you also sound more authoritative, due to the expansion of your lungs and resulting voice projection.

Leave short concise messages on voice mail and always leave your name, company and number. (“Hi it’s me call me back”, does not work for someone who talks to 40 people per day).

Clear out your computer files regularly. Have just one ring binder for each project and use dividers for information headings. Clear out your desk and work top clutter once a week. Staple relevant correspondence in date order, no paper clips.

File material as it arrives and keep files in arms reach, helpful when on the phone.

Use portable home filing units, file bills, warranty papers, equipment manuals and legal documents immediately, so you don’t have to search for them.

Group your filing so they come to hand easily,
C for children/crèche/child minders/school bills and telephone numbers
E for emergency (Alarm Company, police station, spouse’s direct line, automobile rescue, doctor, plumber)
Enter all telephone details in pencil, they will change.

Make appointments and keep them. Always be on time or early. Group meetings geographically, be realistic about traveling and parking time. Arrange meetings for slightly unusual times. Like 2:15 instead of 2 or 2:30, people are more punctual for odd start times.

Don’t allow open ended decisions, always pin down action dates and deadlines, and note these in your diary so you won’t have to search through meeting notes or contact reports.

Procrastination takes time and energy, get difficult calls, refusals, confrontation out of the way early in the day. Saying No to others means saying Yes to yourself, so do it. Always carry reading/writing work with you, for when you receive the unexpected gift of free time (traffic jams, collecting children, waiting for people).

Keep emergency supplies in your bottom drawer (home and office), birthday/thank you/get well cards, sewing repair kits, pain pills, plasters, tights, small gifts for babies, birthdays, emergencies, gift wrap etc.
Never shop without a list, and plan which stores you can access in one location.

Be ruthless about cleaning out clutter.



BREATHING

Breathing is a necessity of life that most people take for granted. With each breath of air you obtain oxygen and release the waste product carbon dioxide. Poor breathing habits diminish the flow of these gases to and from your body, making it harder for you to cope with stressful situations. Improper breathing contributes to anxiety, panic attacks, depression, muscle tension, headaches and fatigue. As you learn to be aware of your breathing and practice slowing and normalizing your breaths, your mind will quiet and your body will relax. Breathing awareness and good breathing habits will enhance your psychological and physical well-being, whether you practice them alone or in combination with other relaxation techniques.

Let's examine a breath. When you inhale, air is drawn in through your nose, where it is warmed to body temperature, humidified, and partially cleansed. Your diaphragm, a sheet-like muscle separating the lungs and the abdomen, facilitates your breathing by expanding and contracting as you breathe in and out.

Your lungs are like a tree with many branches (bronchial tubes) that carry air to elastic air sacs (alveoli). The alveoli have the balloon like ability to expand when air is taken into the lungs and contracts when air is let out. Small blood vessels (capillaries) surrounding the alveoli receive oxygen and transport it to your heart.

The blood that your heart pumps carries oxygen to all parts of your body. An exchange occurs in which blood cells receive oxygen and release carbon dioxide, a waste product that is carried back to your heart and lungs and exhaled. This efficient method of transporting and exchanging oxygen is vital to sustain life.

When you breathe, you typically use one of two patterns:

1. Chest or Thoracic breathing
2. Abdominal or diaphragmatic breathing

Chest or thoracic breathing is often associated with anxiety or other emotional distress. It is also common in people who wear restricted clothing or lead sedentary or stressful lives. Chest breathing is shallow and often irregular and rapid. When air is inhaled, the chest expands and the shoulders rise to take in the air. Anxious people may experience breath holding, hyperventilation or constricted breathing, shortness of breath, or fear of passing out.

If an insufficient amount of air reaches your lungs, your blood is not properly oxygenated, your heart rate and muscle tension increase, and your stress response is turned on.

Abdominal or diaphragmatic breathing is the natural breathing of newborn babies and sleeping adults. Inhaled air is drawn deep into the lungs and exhaled as the diaphragm contracts and expands. Breathing is even and non-constricting. The respiratory system is able to do its job of producing energy from oxygen and removing waste products.

By increasing your awareness of your own breathing patterns and shifting to more abdominal breathing, you can reduce the muscle tension and anxiety present with stress



related symptoms or thoughts. Diaphragmatic breathing is the easiest way of eliciting the relaxation response.

Symptom Relief

Breathing exercises have been found to be effective in reducing generalized anxiety disorders, panic attacks and agoraphobia, depression, irritability, muscle tension, headaches and fatigue. They are used in the treatment and prevention of breath holding, hyperventilation, shallow breathing and cold hands and feet.

Time for Mastery

While a breathing exercise can be learned in a matter of minutes and some benefits experienced immediately, the profound effects of the exercise may not be fully appreciated until after months of persistent practice. After you have tried the exercise, develop a breathing program incorporating those exercises you find most beneficial and follow your program with patience and persistence.

Instructions

1. Breathing for Awareness and Relaxation

Your first step is to increase your awareness of your breathing habits and to learn how to use breathing as a relaxation skill.

Breathing Awareness

1. Close your eyes. Put your right hand on your abdomen, right at the waistline, and put your left hand on your chest, right in the centre.
2. Without trying to change your breathing, simply notice how you are breathing. Which hand rises most as you inhale? The hand on your chest or the hand on your abdomen?

If your abdomen expands, then you are breathing from your diaphragm. If your abdomen does not move or moves less than your chest, you are breathing from your chest.

The trick to shifting from chest to abdominal breathing is to make one or two full exhalations that push out the air from the bottom of your lungs. This will create a vacuum that will pull in a deep diaphragmatic breath on your next inhalation.

Diaphragmatic or Abdominal Breathing

1. Lie down on a rug or blanket on the floor in a “dead-body” pose your legs out straight and slightly apart, your toes pointed comfortably outwards, your arms at your sides and not touching your body, your palms up and your eyes closed.
2. Bring your attention to your breathing and place your hand on the spot that seems to rise and fall the most as you inhale and exhale.



3. Gently place both of your hands or a book on your abdomen and follow your breathing. Notice how your abdomen rises with each inhalation and falls with each exhalation.
4. Breathe through your nose. (if possible, always clear your nasal passages before doing breathing exercises)
5. If you experience difficulty breathing into your abdomen, press your hand down on your abdomen as you exhale and let your abdomen push your hand back up as you inhale deeply.
6. Is your chest moving in harmony with your abdomen or is it rigid? Spend a minute or two letting your chest follow the movement of your abdomen.
7. If you continue to experience difficulty breathing into your abdomen, an alternative is to lie on your stomach, with your head rested on your folded hands. Take deep abdominal breaths so you can feel your abdomen pushing against the floor.

Deep Breathing

1. Although this exercise can be practiced in a variety of poses, the following is recommended: lie down on a blanket or rug on the floor. Bend your knees and move your feet about a ruler length apart, with your toes turned slightly outward. Make sure that your spine is straight.
2. Scan your body for tension
3. Place one hand on your abdomen and one on your chest
4. Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose into your abdomen to push up your hand as much as feels comfortable. Your chest should move only a little and only with your abdomen.
5. When you feel at ease with Step 4, smile slightly and inhale through your nose and exhale through your mouth, making a quiet, relaxing, whooshing sound like the wind as you blow gently out. Your mouth, tongue and jaw will be relaxed. Take long, slow, deep breaths that raise and lower your abdomen. Focus on the sound and feeling of breathing as you become more relaxed.
6. Continue deep breathing for about five or ten minutes at a time, once or twice a day, for a couple of weeks. Then, if you like, extend this period to twenty minutes.
7. At the end of each deep breathing session, take a little time to once more scan your body for tension. Compare the tension you feel at the conclusion of the exercise with that which you experienced when you began.
8. When you become at ease with breathing into your abdomen, practice it any time during the day whether you are standing, sitting or lying down. Concentrate on



your abdomen moving up and down, the air moving in and out of your lungs and the feeling of relaxation that deep breathing gives you.

9. When you have learned to relax yourself using deep breathing, practice it whenever you feel yourself becoming tense or upset.

Complete Natural Breathing

1. Begin by sitting or standing up straight with good posture
2. Breathe through your nose.
 - a. As you inhale, fill the lower section of your lungs first. (Your diaphragm will push your abdomen outward to make room for the air.)
 - b. Fill the middle part of your lungs as your lower ribs and chest move forward slightly to accommodate the air.
 - c. Fill the upper part of your lungs as you raise your chest slightly and draw in your abdomen a little to support the lungs. (Imagine you are blowing up a balloon)

These three steps can be performed in one smooth, continuous inhalation, which with practice can be completed in a couple of seconds

3. Now hold your breath for a few seconds to experience your full lungs.
4. As you slowly exhale, pull your abdomen in slightly and slowly lift it up as your lungs empty. When you have completely exhaled, relax your abdomen and chest.
5. Now and then at the end of the inhalation phase raise your shoulders and collarbone slightly so that the very tops of your shoulders are sure to be replenished with fresh air.

2. Breathing to Release Tension

Use the following exercises to enhance relaxation and release tension

Breath Counting

1. Sit or lie in a comfortable position with your arms and legs uncrossed and your spine straight.
2. Breathe deeply into your abdomen. Let yourself pause before you exhale.
3. As you exhale, count "One". As you continue to inhale and exhale, count each exhalation – two...three...four...
4. Continue counting your exhalations in sets of four for five to ten minutes.



5. Notice your breathing gradually slowing, your body relaxing, and your mind calming as you practice this breathing relaxation technique

The Relaxing Sigh

During the day, you probably catch yourself sighing or yawning. This is generally a sign that you are not getting enough oxygen. Sighing and yawning are your body's way of remedying the situation. A sigh is often accompanied by a sense that things are not quite as they should be and a feeling of tension. Since a sigh actually does release a bit of tension, you can practice sighing at will as a means of relaxing.

1. Sit or stand up straight.
2. Sigh deeply, letting out a sound of deep relief as the air rushes out of your lungs.
3. Don't think about inhaling; just let the air come in naturally.
4. Take eight to twelve of these relaxing sighs and let yourself experience the feeling of relaxation. Repeat whenever you feel the need for it.

Letting Go Of Tension

1. Sit comfortably in a chair with your feet on the floor.
2. Breathe deeply into your abdomen and say to yourself, "Breathe in relaxation." Let yourself pause before you exhale.
3. Breathe out from your abdomen and say to yourself, "Breathe out tension." Pause before you inhale.
4. Use each inhalation as a moment to become aware of any tension in your body.
5. Use each exhalation as an opportunity to let go of tension.
6. You may find it helpful to use your imagination to picture or feel the relaxation entering and the tension leaving your body.

3. Breathing to Stimulate Alertness

These exercises can be used to stimulate and tone your entire breathing apparatus and refresh your whole body.

Purifying Breath

This exercise can be practiced by itself or combined with other breathing exercises.

1. Begin by sitting or standing up straight with good posture.
2. Inhale a complete natural breath.



3. Hold this breath for a few seconds.
4. Pretend that you are blowing through a straw and exhale a little of the air with considerable force through the small opening between your lips. Stop exhaling for a moment and then blow out a bit more air. Continue this procedure until all the air is exhaled in small, forceful puffs.

The Windmill

When you have been bent over your work for several hours and are feeling tense, this exercise will relax you and make you more alert.

1. Stand up straight with your arms out in front of you.
2. Inhale and hold a complete natural breath.
3. Swing your arms backward in a circle several times and then reverse directions. For variety, try rotating them alternately like a windmill.
4. Exhale forcefully through your mouth.
5. Practice a couple of purifying breaths.
6. Repeat this exercise as often as you like.

Bending

This exercise is a useful one to use when you are feeling stiff and tense. It has the added benefit of stretching your torso, making it more flexible for breathing.

1. Stand up straight with your hands on your hips.
2. Inhale and hold a complete natural breath.
3. Let the lower part of your body remain stiff. Bend forward as far as you can, slowly exhaling completely through your mouth.
4. Stand up straight again and inhale and hold another complete natural breath.
5. Bend backwards as you slowly exhale.
6. Stand up straight again. Inhale and hold another complete natural breath.
7. Continue this exercise, first bending backwards and then to the left and right sides.
8. After each round of four bends, practice one purifying breath.
9. Do four full rounds



PROGRESSIVE RELAXATION

You cannot have the feeling of warm well-being in your body and at the same time experience psychological stress. Progressive relaxation of your muscles reduces pulse rate and blood pressure as well as decreasing perspiration and respiration rates. Deep muscle relaxation, when successfully mastered, can be used as an anti-anxiety pill.

Our bodies respond to anxiety-provoking thoughts and events with muscle tension. This physiological tension increases the experience of anxiety, while deep muscle relaxation reduces physiological tension and by its very nature is incompatible with anxiety. The habit of responding with one blocks the habit of responding with the other.

Symptom Relief

Excellent results have been found in the treatment of muscular tension, anxiety, insomnia, depression, fatigue, irritable bowel syndrome, muscle spasms, neck and back pain, high blood pressure, mild phobias and stuttering.

Time for Noticeable Change

One to two weeks, Two fifteen minute sessions per day.

Instructions

Most people do not realise when their muscles are chronically tense. Progressive relaxation provides a way of identifying particular muscles and muscle groups and distinguishing between sensations of tension and deep relaxation. Four major muscle groups will be identified:

1. Hands, forearms and biceps.
2. Head, face, throat and shoulders, including forehead, cheeks, nose, eyes, jaws, lips, tongue and neck. Considerable attention should be given to the head because from an emotional point of view, the most important muscles in your body are situated here.
3. Chest, stomach and lower back.
4. Thighs, buttocks, calves and feet.

Progressive relaxation is practiced lying down or in a chair with head supported. Each muscle or muscle group is tensed from five to seven seconds and then relaxed for twenty to thirty seconds. This procedure is repeated at least twice. If an area remains tense continue up to five times. Use the following relaxing affirmations when un-tensing.

*Let go of the tension
Throw away the tension*



*I am feeling calm and rested
Relax and smooth out the muscles
Let the tension dissolve away*

Or anything similar that is calming for you.

Once the procedure is well remembered, keep your eyes closed and focus attention on one muscle group at a time. The instructions are divided into two sections. The first part you may wish to tape and replay when practicing. The second part shortens the procedure by tensing and relaxing many muscles at the same time to that deep muscle relaxation can be achieved in a short period of time.

Basic Procedure

Get into a comfortable position and relax. Now clench your right fist tighter and tighter, studying the tension as you do this. Keep it clenched and notice the tension in your fist, hand and forearm. Now relax and feel the looseness in your right hand and compare this with the tension. Repeat and notice the differences between tension and relaxation. Repeat with your left fist and then both fists at once. Now bend your elbows and tense your biceps, observe the tautness, relax and straighten out your arms. Let the relaxation develop and feel the difference. Repeat.

Wrinkle your forehead as tightly as you can, relax and smooth it out, imagine your forehead and scalp being smooth and at rest, now frown and feel the strain spread throughout your forehead. Let go. Allow your brow to become smooth again. Close your eyes, now squint them feel the tension, relax your eyes. Let them remain closed gently and comfortably. Now clench your jaw, bite hard and feel the tension throughout the lower part of your face. Relax your jaw until your lips are slightly parted. Really feel the difference between tension and relaxation. Press your tongue against the roof of your mouth. Feel the ache in the back of your mouth. Relax. Purse your lips into the shape of an "O" Relax your lips, notice that your forehead, scalp, eyes, jaw, tongue and lips are all relaxed.

Press your head back as far as it will go and observe the tension in your neck. Roll it to the left now roll it to the right, feel the stress move and change as you do so. Straighten your head and press your chin against your chest. Feel the tension in your throat, the back of your neck. Relax, allow your head to return to a comfortable position. Let the relaxation deepen, now shrug your shoulders. Relax your shoulders and feel the relaxation spread through your neck throat and shoulders.

Give your entire body a chance to relax. Feel the comfort and heaviness. Now breathe in and fill your lungs completely. Hold your breath. Notice the tension. Now exhale, let your chest become loose, let the air hiss out. Continue relaxing letting your breath come freely and gently.

Repeat this several times, noticing the tension draining from your body as your exhale. Next tighten your stomach and hold. Note the tension then relax. Now place your hand on your stomach. Breathe deeply into the stomach pushing your hand up. Hold and relax. Feel the contrast of relaxation as the air rushes out. Now arch your back without straining keep the rest of your body relaxed, focus on the tension in your lower back now relax deeper and deeper



Tighten your buttocks and thighs. Flex your thighs by pressing down your heels as hard as you can. Relax and feel the difference. Now curl your toes downward, making your calves tense. Study the tension. Relax. Now bend your toes toward your head, creating tension in your shins and relax again.

Feel the heaviness throughout your lower body as the relaxation deepens. Relax your feet, ankles, calves, shins, knees, thighs and buttocks. Now let the relaxation spread to your stomach, lower back and chest, let go more and more. Experience the relaxation deepening in your shoulders, arms and hands. Deeper and deeper. Notice the feeling of looseness and relaxation in your neck jaws and all your facial muscles.

Shorthand Procedure

The following is the procedure for achieving deep muscle relaxation quickly. Whole muscle groups are simultaneously tensed and relaxed. As before repeat each procedure at least twice, tensing each muscle group from five to seven seconds and then relaxing from twenty to thirty seconds. Remembering to note the contrast between the sensations of tensing and relaxing.

1. Curl fists, tightening biceps and forearms (body building pose). Relax.
2. Wrinkle up forehead, press head as far back as possible, roll it in a circle reverse. Now wrinkle up the muscles of your face, eyes squinted closed, lips pursed into an "O", tongue pressing the roof of the mouth and shoulders hunched. Relax.
3. Arch back as you take a deep breath into the chest. Hold. Relax. Take a deep breath, pressing out the stomach. Hold. Relax.
4. Pull feet and toes back toward face, tightening shins. Hold. Relax. Curl Toes, simultaneously tightening calves, thighs and buttocks. Relax.



Behavioral Symptoms of Stress

Anti-social behavior, such as arguing in public, or being insensitive to others

Claiming to be too busy to relax

Driving badly

Eating in a hurry

Experiencing increased problems at home

Inability to unwind

Loss of interest in sex

Low productivity

Managing time badly

Not looking after yourself

Restlessness

Smoking, drinking or drugging more

Taking work home more, or thinking about work while at home

Voice tremor

Withdrawing from supportive relationships



Emotional / Mental Symptoms of Stress

Acting defensively, or aggressively

Being overly critical

Being disorganized

Being less intuitive and less sensitive

Difficulty making decisions

Difficulty remembering recent events

Difficulty working equipment, or carrying out simple tasks

Feeling frustrated with people

Having difficulty taking in new information

Inability to concentrate

Irrational or rash decision-making

Irritability or impatience – interrupting others

Lack of physical co-ordination or tendency to be accident prone

Making more mistakes

Relying on more medication

Sleeping problems, including lying awake worrying about the next day, or having bad dreams

Tunnel vision



Physical Symptoms of Stress

Appetite Change	Muscle tension or slight pains In the chest, stomach, shoulders, neck and jaws (the last some- times manifesting as bruxism, night time grinding of the teeth)
Asthma (a complicated illness aggravated by stress)	clenched fists
Cold hands and feet, or cool skin	
Chronic constipation	Nausea
Chronic diarrhea	Obesity
Dizziness	Palpitations – throbbing heart
Dry mouth	Restlessness and fidgeting
Excessive sweating	Sexual problems, such as Impotence and loss of libido
Facial muscle twitches or tics	
Frequency (desire to urinate)	Shakiness
Frequent colds, flu or other infections	Skin irritation or rashes
High pitched or choking voice	Sleeping difficulties (either in falling asleep staying asleep or early morning wakening)
Increased sensitivity / irritable reaction to noise	Stomach ache / tummy butterflies
Indigestion	Susceptibility to allergies
Intense and long term tiredness	Vague aches and pains as well as backache, abdominal pain and headache
Irregular breathing and breathlessness without exertion	
Migraine	Weight gain or loss



Chronic Stress and Illness

Alcohol and drug abuse	Hyperthyroidism/underactive Thyroid gland
Allergies	
Anxiety	Indigestion
Asthma (certain kinds)	Inflammatory bowel diseases
Back and other musculo- Skeletal problems	Irritable bowel syndrome
Colitis	Menstrual difficulties
Constipation	Migraine
Coronary thrombosis (Heart Attack)	Nervous dyspepsia
Depression	Peptic ulcers
Diabetes mellitus	Pruritis
Flatulence	Rheumatoid arthritis
Hay fever	Skin disorders (including eczema, Hives and acne)
Headaches	
Hypertension (high blood Pressure)	Sleeping problems
	Tuberculosis



STRESS COPING TACTICS

As a member of our modern society there are a number of methods available to counter the negative effects of stress. Medical doctors treat your stress related symptoms and disease. Over the counter drugs can reduce your pain, help you sleep, keep you awake, help you counter your acid indigestion and nervous bowels. You can consume food alcohol and recreational drugs to block feelings of disease, we have diversions such as TV, movies, hobbies and sport you can even withdraw from the world and avoid all stressful contact with it altogether.

However to find real peace and contentment it is necessary to pay attention to the following areas of life.

1. Commitment
To acknowledge that the large amount of stressful events in your life is not going to suddenly reduce and that you are now willing to find solutions and work at them, is what is needed.
2. Time Management
3. Relaxation Response
4. Diet
5. Exercise
6. Attitude
7. Sufficient Sleep
8. Take Time Off
9. Monitor Internal Conversations
10. Identify Sources of Stress
11. Pursue a Hobby
12. Don't repress or deny emotions
13. Avoid Hassles (i.e. Traffic Jams)
14. Stress Free Home (TV or Stereo)
15. Massage, Reflexology, Aromatherapy
16. Financial Stability
17. Affection (given and received)



18. Focus on Spirituality

19. Selflessness

20. DON'T TAKE LIFE TOO SERIOUSLY BE OPTIMISTIC

DIET

If there is one thing that affects your state of mind as much as your health, it's your diet.

Certain things can be described as "calm foods" and can have a soothing effect on your stress levels – especially in the long term

1. Concentrate on maintaining an 80:20 balance between the alkaline-forming foods (wholegrain flour and cereals, fruits, vegetables, especially uncooked), and acid-forming foods (coffee, meat, sugar, processed foods, white flour, nuts, preservatives).
2. Eat less (for most people).
3. Eat more vegetables, fruits, complex carbohydrates and whole grains.
4. Eat fewer fats.
5. Ensure your diet is high in vitamins A, C, E and B.
6. Drink more water.
7. Wherever possible, start your day with fresh fruit or fruit juice, and begin each meal with raw vegetables or a salad. Use fruit or wholegrain bread as snack foods.
8. Limit or avoid altogether: coffee, soft drinks, sugar, refined foods, preserved foods and fat-laden snack foods.

EXERCISE

The importance of exercise to your state of health is imperative. Exercise is not only good for your body; it is equally as important to your state of mind.

1. Regular exercise diminishes the effects of stress on the body.
2. Regular exercise helps you to cope better.
3. Regular exercise will make you feel more calm and contented.

If the thought of all that stretching and sweating bothers you, take up walking. Not only does walking require no special skills or equipment, it is the most relaxing and one of the most beneficial of all exercises.

There is no better way to start a calm day than a brisk, 40 minute walk as the sun rises. Walk. And remember your breathing.



SELFLESSNESS

One of the most satisfying and useful ways of relieving your stress – especially in the long term – is to make a habit of helping others to relieve theirs.

When you immerse yourself in helping another individual, you overcome the self centered nature of your own stresses and anxieties. Studies have shown that immediately after helping others most people experience a powerful sense of elation and accomplishment which, in turn, leads to better health and feelings of peace.

As well, charitable behavior tends to reduce the feeling of isolation which, even in people who would not classify themselves as lonely, usually accompanies feelings of stress.

Direct contact with the recipient, however, is a necessary part of the process; a simple donation will not suffice.

For a long term sense of calm and fulfillment, seek out opportunities to help others. Your efforts will be rewarded.

AWARENESS

Begin to be aware of as much detail about what and who you are. Observe patterns in your inter personal and inter environment interactions. Be aware of how you fit into specific situations in life and how you are fulfilling your expectations. Observe, balance and change where necessary.



QUICK TIPS

Beating Stress at Work

1. **Prioritise** Divide tasks into four categories, in order of priority ranging from “urgent” to “can wait”. Make a plan at the start of each day, or even better, at the end of the previous day – stick to it. The more you do it, the quicker you get.

2. **Communicate Assertively** Use these two techniques to handle conflict in the office. The “broken record” method involves stating your case in a calm and clear manner over and over again, ignoring provocation. That doesn’t mean you ignore the person you disagree with, but simply stick to your guns without raising your voice. Strategy two is to ask your accuser pointed questions – an effective defence technique which helps you to distinguish between the real mistake you have made from general criticism thrown at you.

3. **Build Confidence by Being Prepared** You should not expect to be confident about performing a task if you are not prepared and have not practiced. It is like taking your driving test without any lessons. Face your fears and become confident through practice and repetition.

4. **Don’t go to work if you are ill** You will make yourself more ill when you push yourself to the limit. Despite the culture of “I must be in the office”, which is motivated by the fear of losing your job, chances are your colleagues will resent your bringing germs into the office rather than say “well done”

5. **Learn to manage your time effectively** Allow time for the unexpected. Avoid procrastination it will not get easier if you delay the task. Process one task at a time. Open incoming mail and Deal with It, Dump it, or Delegate it. Give and demand clear instructions

6. **Vary your routine** Too much routine will manifest boredom and result in stress. If your job is routine defined, work out in advance when you can take a break from certain tasks and switch to others also introduce short relaxation periods.

7. **Deal with criticism objectively** Do not immediately over react. Take a deep breath, relax shoulders, and unclench fists. Listen carefully and clarify by repeating the criticism. Ask yourself is this criticism justified in whole or in part. Admit which portion of blame is yours if any, and detail how to rectify it. If no blame is yours state this calmly and clearly.

8. **Expect the Unexpected** Make sure a colleague knows where important information is kept in case you are not present – keep them regularly updated on all events so they can defuse a crisis on your behalf.



9. **A clear desk makes for a clear head** A desk cluttered with things to do like unanswered mail, is a constant reminder of too many things to do and not enough time to do them in. You are also wasting time trying to “find” things.
10. **Have stress free relationships with your colleagues** Accept and deal with your fair share of the workload. Respect others privacy. Be co-operative over shared space. Keep confidences.
11. **Have stress free relationships with your superiors** Always ask if instructions are not clear to you. Use your initiative. Be willing and cheerful. Ask for feedback. Do not be submissive.
12. **Have stress free relationships with your subordinates** Keep them informed of decisions that will affect them. Fight for their interests. Give praise where it is due. Advise and encourage them. Consider their personal problems.
13. **Appropriate responses to actual incidences** Low frustration tolerance is, handled by changing the thought of “I can’t stand it” – and the more they say this the more true it will be for them. Instead they should tell themselves “I can stand it. I’ve handled it before and I can handle it again”.
14. **Take the tension out of commuting to work** Do not drive aggressively yourself. Make allowances for bad drivers they will not improve by your shouting at them. Try to leave home problems at home and never drive after an argument. Eat a healthy breakfast before leaving home, low blood sugar affects your ability to concentrate.

Anti-Stress Diet

1. **Cut out caffeine** Tea and coffee can increase tension anxiety and nervousness a big payback for a temporary lift. Cut out caffeine slowly over two weeks, switch to herbal teas and decaff.
2. **Lose weight slowly** Crash dieting will send your stress level soaring, feeling hungry all the time will make it impossible to concentrate on anything else. Crash dieting can also lead to weight gain as your metabolism slows down and your body becomes less proficient at processing food.
3. **Eat more carbohydrates** Complex carbohydrates, such as potatoes, pasta and bread, trigger the release of an amino acid called tryptophan, which in turn released the feel-good brain chemical serotonin. If you are moody in the morning, a low-fat high carb breakfast such as



no sugar added cereal with skim milk will raise your spirits and increase your performance levels.

4. Keep your blood sugar stable

Chocolate contains a mood-elevating chemical called phenylethamine (so does cheese). But a little of what you fancy does you good – operative word being little, because cheese and chocolate are high in fat. Chocolate is also high in sugar which triggers serotonin. Adding scientific fact to “I need chocolate”.

5. Don't eat on the run

Stress

contributes to indigestion, but indigestion also contributes to stress. If your lunch hour amounts to ten minutes, find a quiet place to eat your sandwich. Even at your desk, take phones off the hook and do not work while you eat, gaze out your window instead. Even if it is a low stress activity like watching television, you tend to eat more and faster, putting strain on your digestive system. Be aware of what you are eating and appreciate it – DON'T eat in front of TV.

6. Don't overeat

Stress

related anxiety usually slows down all non-essential bodily activities, such as digestion, so by over eating you are taxing your system more than it can handle. Eat lightly during stress periods. Stick to a small portion on a small plate.

7. Don't under eat

Stress

causes loss of appetite. Lack of nutrients causes low energy levels, which aggravate stress. Nibble a bit of fennel before a meal to stimulate appetite. Other foods and flavours to enhance appetite and digestion are cinnamon, coriander, and ginger, and horseradish, parsnips, to rule lemon and lime and sweet ripe peppers. If loss of appetite persists, see your GP to rule out depression.

8. If stress makes you aggressive cut out meat

Animal

protein increases the level of the neurotransmitters dopamine and norepinephrine, which aid alertness and responsiveness, but also aggression.

9. Forget food combining

The

theory states do not mix carbohydrates with protein. However new research shows that eating some protein with carbohydrate inhibits stimulation on the stress hormone cortisol and supports the adrenal system. Foods containing both proteins and carbohydrates are nuts, seeds, beans and lentils.

10. Keep your diet simple and practical

Less Stress At Home

1. Change your approach to housework

Use

your time-management techniques from work, train your family to assist. Draw up a roster and stick to it. It's easier than you think.



2. **Throw things away** The
The rules are, never throw out without asking the owner first, be merciless with your own stuff if you have not used it for a year, give it away or throw it away. Make “homes” for all the “where is” stuff, such as sellotape, scissors, keys etc. Everyone must know where it belongs and must return it there.

3. **Combine boring tasks with mental stimulation** Listen to an
audio book while doing the ironing for instance.

4. **Reduce electro-magnetic stress** It is
proven that electromagnetic signals from electronic equipment can lead to fatigue, nervous tension, headaches and insomnia. Air rooms by opening windows for at least half an hour every day (even in winter). Use ionisers to counteract positive ions generated by electronic equipment, or use a bowl of water in each room. Sit at least six feet away from the television and remove electrical gadgets such as clock radios and television sets from your bedroom.

5. **Practice personal relaxation exercises** Once
an expert you can relax anywhere, but to begin practice in a quiet room for 15 to 20 minutes every day. Use progressive muscle relaxation, tense and release all muscles in turn from feet to head. Feel the sensation of tense and relaxed.

6. **Listen to soothing music and not the news**
Listen to uplifting music in the morning; the news will make you feel stressed. The ideal tempo for relaxation is a bit slower than your heartbeat.

7. **Keep a journal of stressful events** This
is great for those who do not open up or do not want to burden others. The release will improve your immune system. Writing forces you to define your emotions and reactions.

8. **See the funny side of things**
Laugh Out Loud, even if it's not that funny. Hearty laughter boosts the production of immunoglobulin A, which fights viruses. Smiling relaxes muscles and triggers the production of endorphins, resulting in a natural high. If you force yourself to smile, you will create a mood of happiness.

9. **Make meal times stress-free** Eating
together should be pleasant and happy, allowing the family to laugh and exchange stories of their day. Make the effort to co-ordinate as many meals as possible for family gathering. Do not force any one to eat everything on their plates, just like you, sometimes children are not hungry. Make washing up a fun joint family venture. Enjoy a romantic candle lit dinner with your partner at least twice a month.

10. **Take time out from work on the weekends**
Some people use the weekend to catch up on little jobs that were left during the week, instead of relaxing, sometimes this is unavoidable, but make chore free weekends the rule, rather than the exception.



Exercise

1. **Walk away from stress**
Take a 30 minute walk at least three times a week.
2. **Stretch on rising**
Still lying in bed; flex your foot while you inhale slowly and deeply. As you exhale curl your toes, do this three times for each foot. Stretch your whole body in a long slow movement. Get out of bed slowly.
3. **Try Yoga**
Find a class in your area, attend once a week, and practice every day.
4. **Tai – Chi**
Lift the sky is a popular wake-up exercise. Stand with feet close together, arms hanging, smile with palms facing down touch fingertips together wrists at right angles to arms elbows straight, move arms forwards and upwards in arc breathing gently through nose, feel energy flowing through body push up palms skywards. Lower arms to sides as you exhale visualizing negative energy leaving your body, repeat 20 – 30 times.
5. **Dance away your troubles**
Put on your favorite song and dance like there is nobody watching. Invite your children laughter and stress relief guaranteed
6. **Sing in the car!**
7. **Learn self-defense**
Empower yourself take a class.
8. **Work it out in the water**
Water aerobics at your local gym or take a swimming class if you are unable to swim.
9. **Go for a spin**
Join a spinning class is great fun, going nowhere on an exercise bike to “action” music – it is a personal challenge.
10. **Join the gym with a friend**
Nothing makes you commit like knowing your friend is waiting to meet you. Having a buddy to talk to while you exercise helps to motivate you.

De-Stress Your Relationships

1. **Accept you cannot change another person**
You can only change your responses.



2. **Accept people cannot read your mind**
Nothing gets a message across like talking about it.
3. **Once you have agreed to speak about conflict**
 - a. Be calm
 - b. Be specific
 - c. No speaking in code
 - d. Suggest solutions
 - e. Talk in "I feel" not "You Are"
 - f. Listen and take notes!
4. **Remember you are on the same side**
The goal of any disagreement is to find a solution that works for both of you, not merely to win or dominate.
5. **Deal with the present problem** Do not
drag your last relationship issues into this discussion.
6. **Don't take each other for granted**
Respect and honour every second you have together, give praise and acknowledgment every day.
7. **Spend quality time together**
Make a date with your partner or best friend and keep it no matter what, make it special and fun.
8. **Do not dump or get dumped on**
If your friend is one of those who only moans, say I will listen to you complain on a Tuesday evening between 6 and 6:05pm, every other time we meet or chat is for fun only.
9. **Show affection**
Hold hands, hug, kiss, sit close to each other.
10. **Manage a family row with a talking stick**
This is not for hitting each other with. The holder of the talking stick is the only person allowed to speak and everyone gets a turn.
11. **Sex is a great stress buster, don't misuse it**
A flagging sex drive is usually the symptom of a much larger problem so discuss it.
12. **"Time Out" during all heated conflicts**
Keep conflict discussions to 30 minutes, then take a break to reassess.
13. **Learn to respect and demand personal space**
Even friendships that are too close, can be pressure cookers, so give it and demand it and most of all respect it.



Complimentary Therapies

1. **Practice your Relaxation Response**
2. **Learn meditation** The
walking breathing meditation is the easiest count each step as you walk and breathe.
3. **Bach Flower Remedies**
Buy them and use them.
4. **Herbal Medicines and Teas**
No more caffeine switch to herbal, warm or iced.
5. **Visualisation** Day
dream about the things you most want, it worked when you were a child.
6. **Massage**
Whether it is self-massage after a warm bath, or an appointment with a professional, just do it.
7. **Aromatherapy** Do
it yourself with drops in your bath, or make an appointment and spoil yourself.
8. **Reflexology**
Used to treat a wide variety of ailments, don't worry if you are ticklish because this is a pressure treatment.
9. **Brush your skin**
Use a loofah, a sponge or just your hand and brush before a bath or shower, for stimulation and de stressing, the effect is similar to a good massage or 20 minutes jogging. The point is to work towards the heart. Should take as long as it takes to run your bath.
10. **Haircut** Take
the fuss out of hair care with a low maintenance style.
11. **Have your nails done**
Whether it is a home or salon manicure this is a real stress busting treat. It works every time you look at your hands
12. **Scalp massage**
Stimulating calming and promotes strong healthy hair. Stand with feet apart, breathe deeply and slowly. Lean forward from your waist until head hangs low. Keep legs straight. Then "rap" your scalp gently with your knuckles all over for 30 seconds, Slowly stretch upright and repeat, follow with a 5 to 10 minutes scalp massage using all your fingers, applying pressure in circular motions, feel the release of tension.



13. **Get muddy**

Beauty products based on mud are full of bromine, magnesium carbonate, zinc and potassium which are great stress-busting minerals. Mixed with water and stirred into the bath or applied directly will penetrate the skin.

Further information can be obtained by emailing us on info@woadstress.com

GOOD LUCK AND HAVE FUN!



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