



Strength & ResilienceSM

Stress Management Program



Workbook



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Introduction

Do you ever wish you could cope better under pressure? Do you wonder how other people stay so calm? If you want to protect yourself against the effects of stress, this workbook is for you.

Stress is a major cause of poor health and can show itself in many different ways. It can make you feel irritable or aggressive and withdrawn or tearful. It can disrupt your eating habits and cause aches and pains, concentration problems and many other symptoms. But there are things you can do to protect yourself from the effects of pressure and stop stress from getting the better of you.

This workbook was developed in conjunction with our medical team, made up of specialists in medical and behavioral disorders that lead to and are aggravated by stress, and Dr. Bill Mitchell*, a specialist in work-related psychological distress. It's designed to give you practical solutions for improving your resilience to stress – no matter what the cause. Each chapter covers a different topic. While we recommend that you read each chapter, we've designed the workbook so you can use it for quick and easy reference by going directly to the sections that apply to you.

In this workbook, you'll find:

- Ways to identify your personal stress response.
- Tips for reducing stress.
- Strategies for improving your work/life balance.
- Advice on physical activity.
- Information on how nutrition, sleep and relationships can boost your resilience to stress.

Before diving into this workbook, take some time to think about why improving your resilience to stress is important to you. Is it because you want to feel happier? Or because you want more time to spend with family and friends? There are many reasons why you may want to reduce your stress. Try to identify the top two or three reasons and write them down in the spaces that follow. Keep your reasons in mind as you read the workbook. Knowing why reducing your stress is important to you and staying focused on your reasons will help keep you motivated and on track.

List the reasons why improving your resilience to stress is important to you.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Congratulations! You've taken an important step to improve your resilience to stress by enrolling in the Strength & ResilienceSM program. Take time to increase your resilience now!

** Bill Mitchell MA, PhD, Dip Psych: A clinical psychologist in London, England, who graduated from the University of Aberdeen, where he worked in research before moving to London where he was appointed lecturer at the London Hospital Medical College. He now works in independent practice as a clinical psychologist with a particular interest in work-related psychological disorders. He also acts as a consultant to several organizations that are interested in applying psychological approaches to work-related problems.*

This workbook is for informational purposes only. For more information on managing stress or any of the stress management techniques described in this workbook, please consult your physician.

Also, always consult your physician before beginning any exercise program.

CHAPTER 1

How Do You React To Pressure?

Goals for This Chapter

This chapter includes information on identifying how you react to stressful situations. After you complete the chapter, you'll:

- Learn to spot your stress symptoms.
- Recognize that how you think about and respond to high-pressure situations affects how stressed you feel.
- Begin thinking about how the way you react to stressful situations is affecting your physical and mental health.
- Reflect on specific situations that cause you stress and identify ways in which you can react to them in a more effective and healthy manner.

What Is Stress?

Stress is a condition or feeling that occurs when you feel you're unable to deal with a certain situation. Stress doesn't always occur in response to a challenging situation, but its occurrence depends greatly on your *perception* of the situation and your *ability to cope* with it. When you experience an event where you feel more pressure than you think you're able to handle, your perception of the event may trigger symptoms of stress. Personal relationships, financial commitments, moving, work, lack of sleep and illness can all be sources of pressure. You can even perceive positive changes in your life, such as marriage, becoming a parent, a job promotion or retirement, as stressful.

What Happens in Times of Stress?

Centuries ago, humans were faced with the ongoing threat of encountering predators and warding off competitors for food and shelter. As a result, we developed the "fight or flight" response to make us as alert as possible. Our bodies still respond to stressful situations in the same way.

Although in today's world we don't have many encounters with fierce predators, we're still faced with adverse and even threatening situations which cause our brains to send a message to our organs to make us more alert and vigilant.

When you're in this kind of situation, bodily changes occur that make you more able to defend yourself (fight) or remove yourself (flight) from the threatening situation. These changes include:

- Increased blood pressure and heart rate
- Dilated pupils
- More rapid breathing
- Reduction in saliva production
- Slowed digestion process
- Increased sweating
- Increased metabolism
- Increased need to urinate
- Decreased function of immune system
- Increased blood glucose to mobilize energy reserves
- Release of stress hormones that make you more alert, vigilant and able to defend (fight) or remove yourself (flight) from the threatening situation

Everyone copes with pressure and responds to stress differently. Your reactions are essential for helping you to manage short-term stress. However, maintaining the fight or flight response for long periods of time could eventually have a lasting effect on your health.

Symptoms of Stress

People react to stress in very different ways. The following is a list of some of the most common behavioral and physical symptoms. Take a moment to look at the list to see if you're experiencing any of these symptoms of stress.

Which of the following symptoms are you experiencing? Check all that apply.

Behavioral Symptoms

- Irritability
- Feelings of anger or frustration
- Increased tobacco or alcohol use
- Social withdrawal
- Disrupted eating patterns (over-eating or eating less)
- Communication difficulties
- Irrational or unpredictable behavior
- Lack of concentration
- Compulsive behaviors such as shopping or gambling

Physical Symptoms

- Headache
- Low energy (fatigue)
- Upset stomach
- Muscle aches
- Sexual difficulties
- High blood pressure
- Difficulty sleeping (insomnia)
- Low immune system function
- Rapid heartbeat

If you find you have many of these symptoms, it could be a sign that you're experiencing stress and should take time to address the sources of pressure in your life.

Stress isn't always negative. While experiencing more stress than you can handle can cause numerous physical and mental consequences, you sometimes need stress to motivate you to get things done. Everyone has an optimum level of stress. Your level is just enough to motivate you and prevent boredom, yet not enough to cause the physical and behavioral symptoms associated with too much stress. Sometimes you may need to modify your stress level by focusing on the importance of a task or giving yourself a challenge to achieve your goals.

How you respond to stress depends in part on your personality, resources, beliefs and behavior. However, you can probably identify a time when you've thrived following a particularly stressful or traumatic experience, and perhaps have even improved your life because of it.

Remember...

- ✓ The stress response – “fight or flight” – is a natural response to danger.
- ✓ The stress response makes us more alert and vigilant.
- ✓ Lack of stress can make us bored and unmotivated.

Can Stress Make You Sick?

According to the American Psychological Association, 54 percent of Americans are concerned about the levels of stress in their everyday lives. In fact, two-thirds of all office visits to family doctors are due to stress-related symptoms. And with good reason – stress is linked to the top six leading causes of death in the United States.⁴

It's normal to occasionally experience bouts of stress. When the stress is temporary, such as a work deadline, missing the bus or being stopped for a speeding ticket, the symptoms experienced are usually short-term and rarely have a lasting impact on health.

However, there is a strong connection between long-term stress and poor health. When faced with chronic stress, your body systems remain elevated without a break from the physical symptoms. Stress can make you sick when this response continues without relief, especially if you see no way out and feel that you lack control of the situation. Too much stress can cause relatively minor issues, such as sleep difficulties and muscle aches, but it can also contribute to more serious health issues such as:

- High blood pressure
- Depression
- High cholesterol
- Asthma
- Ulcers
- Migraine headaches
- Stroke
- Heart disease
- Chronic neck and low back pain
- Decreased immune system function
- Prolonged recovery and healing

One of the keys to staying healthy is learning how to manage your stress proactively. Understanding what situations can trigger a stress response for you – and then learning ways to manage those triggers – can allow your body the break it needs to recover. For the stressors you can't control or change, support groups, relaxation exercises and regular physical activity can all help reduce the impact of chronic stress.

Boosting Your Immune System

Everyone feels run down from time to time. How can you make sure your immune system is in the best condition to fight infection?

Many factors can affect your immune system, including physical activity, mood, stress level, nutrition and the amount of sleep you get. It's important that you support your immune system so that it can protect you from infection and keep you healthy. The following are some ways you can keep your immune system functioning at its best:

Be physically active. Physical activity is good for both your physical and mental health. It's essential for a healthy heart and can improve the performance of many of your body's other organs. It can help build and maintain healthy bones, muscles and joints, and help preserve mobility and strength in your body.² Physical activity also releases hormones called *endorphins* into your brain that give you a positive "high" feeling at the end of a workout.

Read more about physical resilience to stress in Chapter 4.

Keep a positive mood. Keeping your life as stress-free as possible can help keep your immune system healthy. Being happy and optimistic makes your immune system function better. On the other hand, when you're depressed, your immune system isn't able to function at its optimum level.⁴⁸ Also, immune system functioning is proportional to your level of stress – the more stressed you are, the more your immune system is affected.³⁶

Read more about mental resilience to stress in Chapter 5.

Eat a well-balanced diet. What you eat has a significant effect on your immune system. A healthy, well-balanced diet is important to keep your body functioning properly. It's always important to have sufficient amounts of vitamins and minerals, but for your immune system, certain vitamins and minerals are particularly important.

Read more about resilience to stress through nutrition in Chapter 6.

Get plenty of sleep. A lack of sleep can affect your immune system and make you more likely to become susceptible to infection and illness. In fact, significant effects on immune system functioning can be seen after just a few nights of inadequate sleep.⁴⁹

Read more about resilience to stress through better sleep in Chapter 7.

How Do You Respond to Stress?

Before you can begin to learn how to manage your stress, it's important to know how you react to stressful situations.

Think about a time you experienced a stressful situation in the past.

What was the situation? _____

How did you feel emotionally? Physically? _____

Looking back, do you think your response was appropriate to the situation? _____

How could you have handled the situation differently? _____

When you encounter a stressful situation, try to break it down into parts, which will help you to view it from a more realistic standpoint. Learn to recognize when you're starting to get stressed, and try to control your response. Try to consider the following questions the next time you're feeling stressed:

- What exactly is it about the situation that's making you feel stressed?
- Can you do anything about the situation?
- If not, can you change the way you see the event?

What's Your Personality Type?

Your personality type can also affect how you respond to different situations. Which of the following categories best fits your personality?

Type A

- I tend to be a pretty competitive person, and I like to be right.
- I prefer to have things done in a certain way and often multi-task to get as many things done as I possibly can.
- Being on time is important to me.
- I'm typically fast about the way I take part in everyday activities, such as eating and walking.

- I'm very ambitious and like to get things done as quickly as possible.
- I don't like to be kept waiting, and I have a difficult time relaxing.

Type B

- I'm a pretty easy-going person and typically am not too rushed when taking part in everyday tasks.
- I take the time to enjoy my meals and don't have a very hard time relaxing.
- I'm not very competitive by nature.
- I tend to express my feelings rather than keeping them hidden.
- I care about satisfying myself regardless of what others may think.

Which of the personality types best fits you? Are you a Type A, Type B or somewhere in between?

Type A personalities

People with Type A personalities tend to be competitive and always in a rush. Many studies have shown that Type A behavior is more likely to lead to stress-related illness and heart disease. If you have many Type A characteristics, think about what steps you can take to reduce the amount of stress and pressure in your life.

Type B personalities

Type B personalities tend to be relaxed and easygoing. Some people may find this type of personality too relaxed, but in the long term, this slower, gentler pace of life has its benefits. Type Bs are less likely than Type As to suffer stress-related diseases, such as coronary heart disease and strokes.

In the middle

Many people are Type As in some situations and Type Bs in others. As an example, think about how you behave at work and at home. At work, you may like competition, but at home, you may be more accommodating. If you find that you're reacting to particular situations as more of a Type A personality, you may want to see if you can respond more as a Type B.

Challenging Your Type A Traits

For the most part, your individual characteristics are the result of your environment, inherited traits and habits. However, with a little practice, it's possible to change certain Type A traits that may potentially have a negative effect on your physical or mental health. Here are some examples of these traits and some actions you can take to modify your response to potentially stressful situations:

Always on time? When you have an event that isn't time critical, such as meeting friends, force yourself to be five minutes late. Although arriving late may be difficult for you, it may help you to be more forgiving of others who are late for non-critical events.

Competitive? The next time you play a game, don't focus on winning. Instead, concentrate on enjoying the experience of playing.

Anticipate what others are going to say? Try to really listen to what others have to say without saying a word until they've finished.

Impatient while waiting? The next time you're in a store, choose the slowest line and don't allow yourself to become stressed about waiting. Stuck in traffic? Try to keep in mind that you can't control the situation and that getting frustrated won't help you move any faster.

Try to do too many things at once? Learn to manage your time effectively. Prioritize your activities and make sure to include some time for relaxation. Try to keep your focus on the task at hand rather than worrying about the next item on your list.

Fast and forceful with your speech? Breathe slowly and deeply and try to slow down your speech. This will help you to become a more efficient communicator.

Need recognition? Make an attempt to recognize your accomplishments when you complete your tasks or meet your goals and reward yourself! Don't rely on others for praise.

Always hurried? Do you eat quickly? Keep in mind that eating fast impairs the digestive process. Walk fast? Slow down and use the time to take a few deep breaths and look around you.

Push yourself and others too hard? Be realistic with the goals you set for yourself and others. Managing your time effectively can help to relieve some of the pressure you feel to meet your targets and deadlines.

Hide your feelings? Become more aware of your feelings by writing them down. Suppressing emotions can be a significant cause of stress, so try to express them to others.

Few interests outside home/work? Make time to pursue outside interests. Focusing on something new, such as getting involved in a new sport or learning a language, can be a great way to meet new people as well as relieve stress.

Over-ambitious? There's nothing wrong with being ambitious; however, it can be a significant source of stress if you're setting unrealistic goals.

Too eager to get things done? Again, there is nothing wrong with being eager to get things done. Try to keep a perspective on priorities, though. For example, ask yourself if meeting a deadline is really more important than spending time with your family.

Who's Controlling Your Life?

How much control you believe you have in your life or in a specific situation can also affect how you respond to stressful situations. Do you believe that fate or external circumstances guide your life, or do you feel you're completely responsible for your personal decisions? In the 1950s, psychologist Julian Rotter proposed a theory that is now widely used called the *Locus of Control*. Locus of control refers to your perception of the main causes of events in your life.

Think about how you attribute your successes and failures. Do you make statements like "I was just lucky" or "It was someone else's fault"? Or do you view outcomes as a result or lack of your own hard work? How you perceive your control of events in your life is an important part of your personality and can affect your resistance to stress.

Look at the following statements and check the ones that best reflect your attitude:

Internal Locus of Control

- I believe that most negative things that happen in my life are the result of my own mistakes.
- I believe that most people end up getting what they deserve.
- I think that success is the result of hard work.
- I believe that one person can make a difference.

External Locus of Control

- I think that many things that happen in life are the result of luck.
- I believe in fate.
- I think that no matter how hard I work, what is meant to happen will happen.
- I believe that many things in my life turned out the way they have because I was in the right place at the right time.
(adapted from Palmer, et al, 2003)

So what does it all mean?

Internal locus of control

People who have an internal locus of control tend to cope with high-pressure situations better than those who have an external locus of control because they feel they have the ability to control the outcome of events. As a result, these individuals are less likely to suffer from stress.

Additionally, these people are more likely to take responsibility for their actions and aren't easily influenced by the opinions of others. They also tend to do better at tasks when they can work at their own pace.²²

External locus of control

If you don't feel you have control of events that happen in your life, you may find that situations tend to "stress you out" quite frequently. External thinkers are more likely to pay attention to other people's opinions. This can be positive if it helps you resolve conflict, but if it stops you from doing what makes you happy, you may want to think about why what others think matters so much to you.

These differences in thinking can help explain why people react very differently to similar situations, and how they explain the causes of those events to themselves and to others.

Changing Your Perception of Control

Your locus of control is largely learned, and as a result, can be changed. You may even find your perception of control changes in different environments – for example, at work or at home. Finding a healthy balance between an internal and external locus of control will help you to deal with stressful situations in an effective way.

Letting go of control

- Always trying to take control of every situation isn't good for your health. In fact, being over-controlling and anxious can be as stressful as feeling you have no control at all. If this characteristic sounds familiar, try letting go a little more and relaxing your control.
- Put things into perspective. Does it really matter if you're stuck in traffic or if someone else has a different plan for dinner?
- Don't blame yourself for things you can't control. Letting things get to you that you have no control over will only increase your stress.

Tips for increasing control

- Think about the effect your behavior has on situations in your life. For example, did you really get that promotion because you were just lucky, or did you get it because you're actually good at your job?
- Take responsibility for your actions. For example, if you don't leave enough time to get somewhere and are late as a result, recognize that you're responsible instead of blaming your lateness on traffic.
- Think about your needs. What do you want to achieve and how are you going to get it? Then make a plan for how you're going to take control of the things you want from life.
- Be assertive. Let people know what your needs and feelings are.

Whatever type of person you are, it's important to recognize how you interpret and respond to certain situations and to know that you have the ability to change your response.

Top Tips

- ✓ Because everyone experiences stress differently, it's important to recognize what your early warning signs are.
- ✓ Find someone you trust who can tell you when you're getting stressed. For example, a friend, your partner or your kids – they may be able to spot your stress symptoms even before you recognize them yourself.
- ✓ The signs of stress tend to fall into four main groups:
 - Behavioral** – Are you irritable or unsociable, or do you feel you're losing your sense of humor?
 - Cognitive** – Is there a shift in the way you think about yourself? Do you suddenly feel filled with guilt or less confident about yourself?
 - Physical** – Are you suffering from more headaches, back pain or stomach problems than usual?
 - Routine habits** – Is there a change in your sleeping pattern, eating habits or alcohol use?
- ✓ By learning to spot your warning signs, you can take steps to reduce your sources of stress and prevent them from having a negative impact on your health.

Look at problems as challenges.

Your Personal Stress Management Plan

In this chapter, you learned about how you react to stressful situations, and how you can respond more appropriately to those situations.

What did you learn about the way you react to stress? _____

Knowing how you react, list three actions you can take to manage stressful situations better. _____

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

The next time you encounter a stressful situation, try to take the following steps:

S – Stop. Recognize the symptoms of stress that you’re experiencing.

T – Think about the situation that’s causing you stress. What is it that’s really upsetting you?

O – Open your mind. Is the situation something that’s under your control? Are you really upset about the situation, or are your Type A characteristics taking over?

P – Put things into perspective and come up with a plan to manage the situation.

CHAPTER 2

Working Relationships

Goals for This Chapter

This chapter includes information on how you can improve your relationships with others. After you complete the chapter, you'll:

- Improve your communication skills.
- Learn how to manage your work stress better.
- Improve your ability to work with people who have personalities that challenge you.
- Be aware of how others around you deal with stress.

The interactions you have with the people in your life – whether it's your partner, your child, your co-workers or a stranger you encounter at the supermarket – can have an effect on the amount of stress you experience at any given time. Although you can't control how other people act, you can choose how you respond to them. To respond effectively, it's important to have good communication skills.

Are You a Good Listener?

Misunderstandings can be a big source of stress. Paying attention to what other people say is essential to avoiding misunderstandings. However, *really listening* to what they are saying is a skill that often takes practice. Learning how to be an active listener can help you retain information and improve your communication with others.

The three steps of active listening

1. **Hearing** – Really listening to what the speaker is saying and being able to repeat it.
2. **Understanding** – Interpreting what you think the person speaking might mean.
3. **Judging** – Evaluating whether what the other person said makes sense.

You can help improve your active listening by rephrasing and clarifying what the other person has said and by providing feedback. Using phrases such as “Do you mean...?” and “Can you explain a bit more about...?” can help ensure that you're both clear about what each of you has said and agreed to.

Many people have obstacles that prevent them from being a good listener. Consider whether you've ever encountered any of the following obstacles:

Mind reading. You read the speaker's mind instead of hearing what the person is saying. For example, you may think, “I know he said he liked it, but I can tell he really didn't.”

Selective hearing. You pay attention only to what concerns you or what you want to hear.

Daydreaming. Your mind wanders to other things instead of listening to what the speaker is saying.

Self-comparison. You think about how you compare to the speaker rather than listening to what the person is saying. For example, you may think, “She thinks she knows a lot about this topic, but I actually know much more than she does.”

Jumping to conclusions. You assume you know what someone is going to say before you've let the person finish talking. As a result, you may draw incorrect conclusions.

Opinion giver. You give opinions, particularly negative ones, before the speaker is finished and tend to “put down” the speaker.

Topic shifter. You have a habit of changing the subject before the speaker is finished.

Planning ahead. You think of questions and solutions while the speaker is still talking. While this is not necessarily bad, you may not be hearing everything the person is saying.

Pleasing. You agree with everything the speaker says before understanding the whole situation.

Which of the obstacles to listening have you experienced? Do you think they've become a habit for you?

By being an active listener, not only will you be attempting to minimize misunderstandings, but you'll also be giving others the respect they deserve when they express their feelings and opinions. Consider the following tips on how to be a good listener:

Give your full attention to the speaker. Don't let your thoughts wander and get distracted from the topic at hand. Focus on what the person is saying.

Let the speaker finish before you begin to talk. Don't let yourself predict what someone is going to say.

Finish listening before you start talking. You can't fully listen to someone if you're thinking about what you're going to say next.

Avoid emotional involvement. Listen to what the person is saying, not what you want to hear.

Ask questions. If you don't understand something, ask for an explanation.

Give visual feedback. Engage with the speaker and nod to show when you've understood. Smile, laugh or frown to show your feelings about what the person has said.

Try practicing active listening and see how much more you can gain from understanding what other people are really trying to say!

The Power of Assertiveness

When it comes to achieving your goals and getting what you want out of life, neither passivity nor aggression is beneficial, especially where your career is concerned. Do you want others to see you as a pushover? Or to pity you rather than respect you? Being passive may cause people to form that kind of impression of you. Not only will you not get the things you want and need, but you may find you feel unappreciated.

It's also important not to appear aggressive. Aggression can cause others to resent you and possibly become even less inclined to help you.

Assertiveness treads the middle ground. It gives you the right to express your feelings, ask others what they feel and come to a mutually agreeable conclusion. While assertiveness is asking for what you want and need, it's also based on showing respect for the other person.

How do I become more assertive?

Many people find it difficult to be assertive because they have a hard time finding the balance between passivity and aggressiveness. The next time you're in a situation where you need to be assertive, try taking the following steps:

1. Think about your situation. How do you feel about it? What would you like to happen? Is what you want reasonable?
2. Clearly communicate the issue and your feelings about it. Suggest what you would like to do to rectify the situation, while keeping the opinions of others in mind.
3. Be clear, specific and direct in what you say. Be prepared to repeat yourself.

Although being assertive may be difficult for you at first, it can help you to reach your goals and feel more confident in the long run.

Managing Stress at Work

Stress costs employers about \$10,000 per worker each year and has an overall economic burden of about \$300 billion a year. These costs are a result of absenteeism, tardiness, burnout, lower productivity, high turnover, worker's compensation and medical insurance costs.⁵³

According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health:¹⁵

- Forty percent of workers report their job is very or extremely stressful.
- Twenty-five percent of workers view their job as the number one stressor in their lives.
- Job stress is more strongly associated with health complaints than with financial or family problems.

As these statistics indicate, you're not alone if you feel stress at work. If you think you may be suffering from work-related stress, there are steps you can take to keep your stress from escalating into a bigger issue. The following tips may help you to alleviate some stress from your workday:

Take your time. The best way to start your day is not necessarily by coming into the office, sitting at your desk and launching into the day's work. Instead, make a list of all the tasks you have to achieve during the day, estimate how long each will take and allow a little extra time to complete each one. Then list your tasks in order of priority.

Be realistic. If you simply have too much work, talk to your manager. Trying to hide the way that you feel or cover up the fact that you can't meet your deadlines will only increase your stress. You're only one person and there are only so many hours in the day. And remember, a problem can't be resolved if you don't recognize it.

Be professional. Make sure your workspace is clean and organized. It may seem obvious, but clutter can cause disarray and can also make you appear unprofessional. If you're genuinely organized and using your time effectively and still cannot meet your targets, then you should talk to your manager. If you need some extra help with your time management skills, see the *Manage Your Time* Section in Chapter 3.

Communicate. Taking the first step towards speaking to someone about your workload can be difficult. Arrange a short meeting with your manager if possible. Take some time to organize yourself beforehand and think about what you want to say, how you'll present your case and what resolution you want. Come prepared with solutions – for example, extra resources or more time or help prioritizing work – to suggest to your manager.

Break it up. If you're really busy, taking a break can seem like a bad idea, but working excessively can cause your productivity to plummet. Even taking five to 10 minutes to calm your mind can make a huge difference in your stress and concentration levels.

Working With Personalities That Challenge Us

Everyone knows someone who seems to be "difficult." And everyone, at times, shows a challenging side. But learning how to manage situations and understanding what makes someone tick can often help to alleviate tension.

Maybe your "difficult" person (or people) is a family member, colleague, customer or neighbor. Whoever they are, you can learn strategies for dealing with particular patterns of behavior that can help reduce stress for everyone involved.

What behaviors challenge your ability to communicate with others the most?

Check them below:

- Hostile or aggressive
- Negative or pessimistic
- Withdrawn or passive
- Overly agreeable, but doesn't deliver
- Opinionated and defensive
- Manipulating

People who exhibit difficult behaviors can create the most extraordinarily negative responses in us every time we communicate with them. It's how you decide to react to your emotions that can make the difference. It's important to remember that you can't change the person. However, there are techniques that can assist you in reducing the stress you feel when you encounter these difficult behaviors.

Behavior	Technique
<p>Hostile/Aggressive: The person can be overtly abusive, have a tantrum, go into a rage or act like a bully. Sometimes people disguise this behavior with non-playful teasing or by making innuendoes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Listen without returning anger. ■ Take unpredictable actions – become nicer as they escalate, or quieter as they become louder. ■ Don't try to argue – instead, focus on any point on which you can agree. Most aggressive people will calm down if they feel someone is really listening to what they have to say.
<p>Complaining: The person complains chronically without a desire to find a solution.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Don't agree, but paraphrase what they say. ■ Try to move to a problem-solving mode by asking them to suggest alternatives with questions like, "What results are you trying to achieve?" or "How would you like to see this resolved?" Complaining tends to stop when they have responsibility for solving the problem.
<p>Unresponsiveness/Passivity: The person may feel uncomfortable revealing any feelings or information. Sometimes people use this behavior passive aggressively as a way to deny someone needed information or to avoid reprimand.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ask open-ended questions that require more than a "yes" or "no" response. ■ Wait calmly for a response and don't fill the silence with conversation. ■ Be attentive when they do speak or participate. ■ Assign tasks rather than wait for them to volunteer. ■ Ask them for their feedback and opinions in writing instead of face-to-face – sometimes unresponsiveness is due to shyness, not avoidance.
<p>Overly agreeable, but doesn't deliver: The person may want to be liked and will therefore make promises to gain approval, but won't be able to deliver on the promises.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Don't allow them to overcommit. ■ Make sure they're clear on rewards for following through and the consequences for not following through. ■ Get their commitment in writing – even an informal follow-up memo can prevent misunderstandings and make their verbal commitment binding.
<p>Opinionated/Condescending: The person appears to always be an expert but isn't, or to know best but doesn't.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Acknowledge their accomplishments; show them you respect what they know. ■ Rather than negate their idea, just add yours: "That's good – here's what I'm thinking." ■ Be very prepared and have all your facts when meeting. ■ Question them with confidence – don't allow yourself to be intimidated.

Behavior	Technique
<p>Negative/Pessimistic: The person has a tendency to disagree with group consensus or to criticize decisions regularly. People with this behavior may find reasons why something will fail and may have negative opinions that go beyond constructive criticism.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Be assertive about your optimism. ■ Don't argue. ■ Invite them to suggest alternatives. ■ Beat them to the punch – anticipate and voice any possible problems before they do, and then try to solve the problem. ■ See their negative perspective as a valuable resource for determining possible problems to be overcome.
<p>Hesitant to make a decision, won't take initiative: The person plays it safe to the point of not "going out on a limb" and making decisions or taking the initiative to do things without being asked or told.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Give them a set of choices and offer your opinions on the pros and cons of each. ■ Empower them to make decisions by pointing out that mistakes are okay and can be used to their advantage. ■ When they make a successful decision, recognize their accomplishment.

Looking back at the behaviors you checked, consider these questions:

Who do I have difficulty communicating with?

Why might these people behave the way they do?

How could I communicate with them more effectively?

Call a friend or family member you haven't talked to in awhile.

Dealing With Stressed Colleagues

Managing your own stress levels can be tiring enough, but how can you help someone else with theirs without it becoming your burden? Because you can only control your own behavior, it can be difficult to help someone who appears stressed and unhappy. If you've been in this situation, you may find yourself asking questions such as:

- How do I approach the subject?
- What should I say?
- How do I know when to listen and when to offer advice?

How do I recognize a colleague who needs help?

Anyone can experience stress at work, but how one person reacts will be different from how anyone else reacts. Some people seem to be coping well and then they erupt in anger or dissolve in tears, while others will continually let you know about their stress.

Some of the warning signs to look for include weight loss or weight gain, teeth grinding, nail biting, hypersensitivity, aggressiveness, depression and anxiety.^{27,17}

What can I do to help my colleague?

Because talking to other people can be a great way of coping with stress, you might try asking if your colleague wants to talk. Talking to someone else can help give a person a different perspective on the problem, provide ideas on how to deal with the stress, and provide reassurance and support.

How should I approach someone whom I suspect needs help?

Approaching someone whom you think could be suffering from stress can be difficult. If you know the person well, you could simply ask, "How are you doing?" Or, perhaps you could mention that you have a lot of work and ask if your colleague also has a lot. Sometimes just offering a little bit of reassurance may be just enough to help the person.

If you don't know the person very well, you could make an effort to be more approachable or speak to another colleague who is closer to the person. When you're stressed, little things that go badly can seem a lot worse than they really are. However, small acts of kindness can go a long way. Why not offer to make the person a cup of tea or make an effort to say hello in the morning? Or you could offer to bring something back for lunch. Your efforts to reach out could help your colleague start to open up to you.

How do I prevent someone else's stress from becoming my stress?

Coping with your own stress is difficult enough, but trying to help others cope with their stress as well can turn into a burden. Before helping someone else tackle stress, make sure you have good time management and organizational practices and a strategy for coping with your own stress in place.

Offering practical advice and showing that you're happy to listen and talk things over when needed can make a big difference to someone. But if you choose to help a colleague, it's important that you don't allow the person's stress to affect your daily working life. For example, make a point of stopping by your colleague's desk to talk rather than talking at your desk – this way, you control the amount of time you spend together.

If your colleague wants to talk when you're really busy, explain that you can't discuss things at the moment and ask if you can talk later when you can offer your full attention. If you're unable to provide the time the person needs, suggest someone else who may be able to help. You can also talk to your manager or Human Resources department in confidence about your concerns for your colleague.

Top Tips

- ✓ Realize that everyone can have an effect on everyone else at work and take responsibility for your effect on others.
- ✓ Talk to someone if you feel you can't cope with your workload.
- ✓ Don't take your feelings of stress out on other people.
- ✓ Don't avoid talking to "difficult" people – regular updates can make sure you both have the same expectations.
- ✓ Don't let your emotional response to a situation control what you say – wait a day before you respond.
- ✓ Keep calm. Practice deep breathing to help you keep your cool during times of tension.
- ✓ Watch your body language. Are you giving off unintentional signals that someone could misunderstand, such as standing too close or staring?

Your Personal Stress Management Plan

This chapter focused on ways to improve your relationships with others, particularly your work relationships.

What have you learned about your communication skills, such as listening and assertiveness? _____

How can you use what you've learned to lower your stress levels? _____

How will you handle personalities that challenge you? _____

Achieving a Healthy Work/Life Balance

Goals for This Chapter

This chapter includes information on how to achieve a healthy balance between your work and home life. After you complete the chapter, you'll:

- Understand the importance of setting limits.
- Learn how to manage your time effectively.
- Be able to give yourself permission to relax and enjoy your free time.

At one time or another, many of us have felt that we've been pushed to our limit. Our tasks become more than we can handle, and our feelings of stress continue to build until we feel as though we no longer have control over our lives.

If you've ever felt this way, you're not alone. In today's society, more and more people appear to be struggling with trying to find a balance between work and life. The reason? Most likely, it's a combination of longer work hours, higher expectations and the pressure to succeed while still managing to strike a balance between work and family. In short, simply attempting to keep up with today's increasingly fast-paced society can cause us quite a bit of stress.

Did you know...

- ✓ Workers in the U.S. are putting in more hours than workers put in anywhere else in the industrialized world.⁵⁴
- ✓ There has been a significant increase in the number of men and women working more than 40 hours each week in recent years.¹²

Do you struggle to find a balance between work and life? Check all of the following statements* that apply to you:

	Agree	Disagree
<i>I feel like there are never enough hours in the day.</i>	_____	_____
<i>I'm strongly committed to my personal or work life.</i>	_____	_____
<i>I've recently experienced changes in my role or workload.</i>	_____	_____
<i>I don't feel as if I have control over my situation.</i>	_____	_____
<i>I have high expectations for myself.</i>	_____	_____
<i>I have a high-demanding role. (For example, single parent or service profession)</i>	_____	_____

If you agreed with any of these statements, you may be finding it difficult to find a balance between your work and personal life.

*(Hutman, et al, 2005).

Most employers recognize that their employees work best when they have a good balance between their work and home life – and so do the men and women working 40+ hours each week. However, many people don't know how to achieve this balance. How can you find it?

Know Your Limits

Although work is important and you may have a responsibility to meet certain targets, it's important to have other interests as well. Ask yourself, "If I look back in 20 years, will I wish I had worked more hours? Or will I wish I had spent more time doing other things I enjoy?" Being aware of where you draw the line between work and home can be helpful in finding the balance that works for you.

Recognize when it's "too much"

Take a look at your workload and examine how many hours you work outside of the "normal" workday – for example, whether you work on evenings and weekends if you work days. If you can honestly say that you work efficiently and still have to skip breaks and take work home to manage, it's time to talk to your manager about the volume of work you're expected to undertake.

Use good communication skills

If you're running late for a deadline or you have too much going on, tell someone. People can't help you if they don't know you have a problem.

Be assertive

Learn to put time boundaries around how much work you're willing to do outside of normal work hours. Find a middle ground that satisfies both you and your company and stick to it. Don't be afraid to say "no." You have to help yourself before you can truly help others. You can't give something you don't have to give!

Remember your priorities

How far are you willing to go? Is working every weekend really worth risking your relationships with your loved ones? Try to reframe your thinking and remember what's really important to you.

Set realistic goals and expectations

You don't have to do it all. Don't put so many things on your plate at once. By trying to do too much, you may find yourself experiencing stress and ultimately being less productive.

Think of the major areas/interests in your life and then rank them according to importance. Then keep them at the forefront of your planning when you're dividing up your time. Use the suggestions on the left to get started.

_____ Family Life

_____ Career

_____ Friends

_____ Hobbies

_____ Other _____

_____ Other _____

_____ Other _____

_____ Other _____

Manage Your Time

How well are you managing your time? Being organized can free up more time in your day and reduce the stresses of daily life. The following are some ideas to help you improve how you manage your time:

Get organized

How organized is your workspace? How much time do you waste trying to find things? Whether at home or work, organization is the key to freeing up time.

- Create an organized environment and clear your workspace of clutter so you can concentrate on the task at hand.
- File paperwork and store supplies so you can easily retrieve them.
- Throw away junk mail and unnecessary paperwork regularly.
- Get a highly organized friend to share a good system with you and repeat the de-cluttering exercise at regular intervals.
- Prepare your clothes, paperwork, lunch and anything else you'll need for a meeting, appointment or daily task the night before.

Minimize interruptions

Do you find interruptions are taking up all your time?

- Keep conversations to the point. Keep a clock nearby and allocate a certain amount of time for a call or question.
- When possible, use your voicemail, or have calls diverted and turn off your e-mail.
- If you need to talk to your co-workers, go to their desks rather than allowing them to come to yours. This way, you control both the situation and when you return to your work.

- Learn to control the conversation by using the Three-Step Model of Assertiveness:

1. Acknowledge the speaker's need to communicate with you. For example, "I appreciate your need to speak to me."
2. Make your needs known. For example, "However, I really need to complete some urgent work."
3. Suggest an alternative. For example, "Could I call you at 3:00 when I can give you my full attention?"

Plan ahead

Setting goals and planning ahead are the fundamentals of time management.

- Plan, plan, plan! Be realistic about the goals you set for yourself and leave a bit of room for unexpected interruptions or crises.
- Use a diary or organizer to keep track of appointments and plan your time.
- Schedule meetings with co-workers to discuss new ideas and ways to solve problems. At home, make time to discuss shopping lists and ideas for menus and vacations.
- Prioritize your tasks using a simple A, B, C system to identify what's most important, and then start on those tasks first.

A: Urgent items for immediate attention

B: Important items that require attention in the near future

C: Non-essential or non-urgent items

Be efficient

- Send short messages by e-mail instead of writing letters or making phone calls.
- Delegate – try to share the load at work and home. You may be giving someone else the chance to learn something new, and you'll get some help at busy times.
- Try to arrange a schedule that allows you to work during your most productive time of the day.

What times during your day could you manage your time more wisely? _____

What types of changes can you make to use your time more effectively? _____

Take a Break

We all need time out from work to relax and recharge. Working excessively on a prolonged basis can cause your productivity to plummet and your stress levels to rise. Although taking a break may be difficult if you're under pressure, you'll feel and work better if you do.

- Don't just plan for work. Schedule your leisure time on your calendar and make a commitment that you aren't going to do anything except relax and enjoy yourself. Then keep your commitment.
- Enjoy your free time. Recognize that you work hard and deserve a break. Don't feel guilty about putting aside time just for yourself.
- Learn to say "no" to your kids and other people you live with when you need time for yourself.

It can be difficult to find something enjoyable and relaxing to do during a break, particularly when you're focused on the work you need to do. Here are some suggestions to get you started:

Have a snack. Choose foods that are fresh, full of vital nutrients and easily digestible.

Relax. Try some deep breathing exercises, listen to your favorite music or just take 10 minutes to lie down or read a book.

Escape. Do you have an unused room (or even your car) where you can go for some quiet time alone? Close your eyes and think of an image that makes you happy: a deserted beach, driving through the countryside or a happy memory. A photograph or picture from a magazine may help to focus your thoughts.

Read a book or magazine. This can be an easy way to take your thoughts to another place for a little while.

Get moving. How about taking a short run or a brisk walk? Gather a group of co-workers to go with you if you prefer some company.

Socialize. Catching up and talking are great, but how about combining it with a walk, sports, shopping or even a visit to a local place of interest? Changing your scenery can be a great way to give your mind a chance to relax.

Catch up on chores. Plan shopping lists, write letters or pay bills to take your mind off your work.

Remember... taking a break doesn't mean you lack commitment. In fact, you'll probably perform better after it.

What do you like to do to relax?

- Exercise
- Spend time outdoors
- Read
- Take a nap
- Watch a movie
- Other _____
- Other _____
- Other _____
- Other _____

How could you make time in your schedule to fit in these interests on a regular basis? _____

Keeping Work... at Work

Try not to take the stresses of your work home with you. If you've had an awful day, call home and give advance warning so you don't unleash your stress on your loved ones the moment you walk through the door.

Be flexible

If you can, try to be flexible with your working hours. If you have to leave early one day to collect the kids, try to arrange to come in early another day. Or if you have to work on the weekend, try to negotiate a couple of hours off during the week.

Set limits

At some point, most of us will have to do a reasonable amount of work in our free time. Schedule a set time for work and when the time is up, stop and do something else. Don't leave your loved ones to wait until "whenever I finish work."

Take some time to transition from work to home

Create some mental distance between work and home on your commute from work. Unwind by listening to music or the radio. Once you get home, take five minutes to sit in the car before you walk through the door. Have a routine when you get home that helps you unwind and leave your work behind. Try changing your clothes or walking the dog.

Personal Experience: John's Story

John works in advertising. He has very long hours and lots of networking and entertaining to do in the evenings. In the beginning, he loved his job, but then he started a family and everything changed. He began to resent working late, and it became a huge source of stress because he didn't have any family time. However, because of the late nights, no one in his office started work early in the morning. This late start became an opportunity for John to have some personal time. He could have breakfast with his kids and play with them or take them to school before he started work. He was able to re-establish a balance in his life between work and family, and he started to enjoy his job again.

Top Tips

- ✓ Build stronger separations between work and home:
Take 15 to 20 minutes to consolidate your day and plan tomorrow before leaving work.
- ✓ Each day, write down the top three things you have to do. Block out time for them and avoid interruptions from phone calls and e-mails.
- ✓ Limit the number of unfinished tasks you're working on. Finish writing e-mails and send them; don't get distracted half way through. Give your full attention to what you're working on now.
- ✓ Energize yourself. If you feel good, you'll achieve twice as much in any given amount of time.

Your Personal Stress Management Plan

In this chapter, you learned about the importance of finding a balance between work and life.

List five steps that you can take to improve your work/life balance and make a point of doing them each at least once this week:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Make a point of scheduling some time to relax this week. List three ways that you can relax:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Physical Resilience to Stress

Goals for This Chapter

This chapter includes information on the ways that physical activity can have an impact on your stress level. After you complete the chapter, you'll:

- Understand that being physically active can improve your resilience to stress.
- Be aware that taking care of your body can improve both your physical and mental well-being.

There are many different ways that you can build up your resistance to stress. One way to begin reducing the amount of stress in your life is to become more physically active.

According to the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), 65 percent of all American adults are either overweight or obese. One of the recommendations that the CDC makes is for adults to be physically active for 30 minutes or more a day at least five times a week, and for children to be active for an hour each day. Unfortunately, more than 50 percent of us don't exercise to this extent. And 25 percent are not active at all.¹¹

Why Physical Activity?

Physical activity* is not only good for your physical health – it's also good for your mental well-being. Even as little as 30 minutes a day can improve your overall health, dramatically reduce your risk of developing many health problems and help you to look and feel better.

Effects of physical activity on your body

Regular physical activity can have many benefits. The following are just some of the ways it can help you improve your health:

Physical

- Helps build and maintain healthy bones, muscles and joints
- Aids in weight control
- Improves immune system functioning
- Helps maintain mobility and strength
- Reduces the risk of heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure and colon cancer²

Mental

- Reduces stress and tension
- Reduces depression and anxiety²
- Increases mood
- Increases pleasurable feelings such as revitalization, tranquility and vigour^{8,21}

Which of the ways that physical activity can benefit you is most important to you? _____

*** While regular physical activity is beneficial to your health, make sure that you consult your doctor before starting a new fitness program, especially if you have any health issues or concerns (for example, heart disease, diabetes, pregnancy or obesity).**

What Type of Physical Activity Is Best for Me?

When it comes to physical activity, there is no one magic exercise that works for everyone. Each person enjoys different types of activities, and depending on your health, certain activities may be better for you than others. Think about which of the following activities might interest you:

Aerobic exercise is activity that uses the large muscle groups in a continuous, sustained activity that raises your heart rate to between 60 and 80 percent of its maximum rate for an extended length of time. Its benefits include cardiovascular strength, stamina and the burning of body fat.

Some examples of aerobic exercise are:

- Running
- Biking
- Skating
- Dancing

Muscle strengthening, anaerobic exercise and resistance training all refer to the same type of activity: short bursts of muscle exertion followed by periods of rest. Benefits include increased strength and stamina and a more muscular body that not only looks better but also burns more calories 24 hours a day.

Some examples of strength training are:

- Free weights
- Resistance machines
- Resistance bands
- Calisthenics that involve resistance, such as crunches, push-ups and leg-lifts

Flexibility Training helps to relax muscle tension and promote flexibility. It reduces stress on muscles and joints, helps to prevent or slow arthritis, helps maintain range of motion and reduces risk of injury.

Some examples of flexibility training are:

- Stretching exercises
- Yoga
- Tai Chi
- Pilates

There are some other activities that may not be considered traditional forms of exercise but still provide health and stress reduction benefits.

Some examples of these alternative activities are:

- Gardening
- Cleaning the house
- Mowing the lawn
- Washing the car

Which types of exercise do you enjoy? _____

Are you able to do this type of activity? If not, what other types of activities could you try? _____

Know your limitations and let others know them, too.

How much is enough?

To obtain the benefits from physical activity, you don't need to be in perfect shape. Even 30 minutes a day of activity can be beneficial. These 30 minutes don't even have to be done all at once. For example, you could do two 15-minute blocks of exercise, three 10-minute blocks or one 20-minute block and one 10-minute block instead.

Can physical activity be bad for me?

While exercise itself typically isn't bad for you, how you perform it could result in an injury. By following a few simple guidelines, you can minimize your risk of injury while maximizing the benefits of exercise:

- Be careful not to push yourself too hard.
- When you first start to exercise, have a rest day between each session.
- As you progress, try not to exercise the day after a particularly intensive session.
- If you're trying to burn fat and increase general fitness, don't exercise too intensely. You should be slightly breathless but still be able to hold a conversation.
- Never exercise if you're feeling unwell.
- If you're injured, give your body time to recover fully, or you could turn a minor injury into a chronic problem.
- If you're new to exercise, or you have a medical condition, seek medical advice first.
- Have a fitness professional help you develop a plan that's safe for you.

How to Get Started

Although many people are aware of the benefits that physical activity can bring, it's not always that easy for them to get started. With today's hectic schedules, it can be hard to make time to be active, and it can be even harder to stick with an exercise program once you begin. The following are some tips on what you can do to get started and stay motivated:

Set simple goals. One of the easiest ways to stay active is to make a commitment to a certain number of minutes of physical activity each day. Your plan of action will depend upon how active you are now. If you've been totally sedentary, you might begin with a 10-minute walk or bike ride before dinner. If that feels good, gradually add 10 minutes of strength training with small dumbbells while you watch your favorite TV show. Then, use your lunch or break time for another 10 or 15 minutes of brisk walking.

Keep an activity log. To track and give yourself credit for your progress, keep a record of your physical activity on a convenient calendar. Jot down what you did, the number of minutes you did it each day, and how you felt before and after the activity. Add up your total at the end of each day and week, and congratulate yourself for being active!

Find a partner. It's always easier to exercise with a buddy, so find a friend or colleague who also wants to get fit. If you've agreed to go for a brisk walk together, it'll be that much harder to skip it.

Join a walking group, exercise class or swimming club. Find an activity that you enjoy (or used to enjoy) and join a group that meets regularly.

Take up a new activity. Consider trying out an activity that has always appealed to you. It could be anything from salsa dancing to swimming to yoga.

Choose an exercise that suits you. Many of us stop exercising because it doesn't suit our personality or lifestyle. Find what works for you.

Keep it fun. If you're a social being, put on your dancing shoes. Or why not hit the slopes?

Pat yourself on the back. When starting a new activity or exercise, it's easy to be self-conscious because you may feel that you're not very good at it. Give yourself credit for any increase in activity you make. The more you engage in an activity or exercise, the easier it becomes.

Still lack motivation? Visit your local gym or neighborhood recreation center – you may discover a whole world of unique group fitness programs you didn't even know existed.

What not to do

- Don't do too much too soon. Start your fitness plan gently and gradually build up to longer or more vigorous exercise sessions. If you ask your body to do more than it's ready to do, you may get discouraged or even injured.
- Don't rush into vigorous exercise without warming up. Spend about five minutes warming up by slowly walking or jogging. Follow with some active stretches, such as arm and shoulder circles, side bends, hip rotations and knee bends. Also, remember to stretch and cool down when you've finished exercising.
- Don't cut corners when buying equipment. Be sure you have the correct clothing, footwear and equipment for the activity you choose.

Making Physical Activity a Part of Your Day

Even if you don't have time to go to the gym or the inclination to go for a run, you can still fit physical activity into your day. Try some of these suggestions to make time for physical activity in your schedule:

- Walk to and/or from work or at least some of the way if you can. Or walk to the grocery store to get those two items you need.
- Take the dog for a walk. Borrow one if you don't have your own dog.
- If you're a busy parent, why not incorporate your stroller into your workout?
- Park your car at the far side of the parking lot or take the long route to the water fountain. Do whatever it takes to stay active.
- Go dancing. Hitting the dance floor is a great way to get your heart going.
- Take the stairs and walk up escalators.
- Plan your family's activities around physical activity. Why not take the kids swimming or go for a bike ride?

There are even ways you can fit strength training* in while sitting at work. Just taking 10 minutes can build your strength and help you to firm and tone up. You can do the

following exercises at work or at home. They're easy to fit into your day, and you won't feel as if you're taking time for a "workout."

Arms

Biceps

1. Hold a dumbbell or 1 lb. can of food in each hand.
2. Stand up straight with your arms by your sides, the palms of your hands facing forward and your elbows tucked into your sides.
3. Slowly raise your hands to your shoulders, keeping your elbows still tucked into your sides.
4. When you reach your shoulders, slowly lower your hands back down to your sides.
5. Repeat 10 times.

As you get stronger, build up the number of repetitions. Remember to control your movements and go slowly.

Triceps (*backs of your arms*)

1. Find a low table or other flat surface you can lean on that will support your weight.
2. Sit on the table edge (facing away from it) with your hands holding the edge.
3. Bend your knees in front of you, so your legs are at right angles to the floor.
4. Lift your buttocks off the table and slowly lower yourself toward the floor, bending your elbows to 90 degrees so you're a couple of inches off the floor.
5. Push yourself back up to a sitting position, but don't rest your buttocks back on the table.
6. Continue the movement for 10 repetitions, rest and repeat the set three times.
7. Rest if you need to, and start again.

As you get stronger, try to build up the number of repetitions and sets. To make it more difficult, extend your legs out in front of you so they're straight.

***When doing strength training exercises, it's important to stretch your muscles before you start and after you've finished to reduce the risk of injury.**

Abs

Not all stomach exercises require lying on the floor to strengthen your muscles effectively.

1. Stand with your legs shoulder-width apart and bend your knees slightly.
2. Suck in the lower part of your stomach. Imagine you're drawing in your navel to the center of your spine (you're trying to make your waist as tiny as possible while keeping your muscles tight).
3. Hold your muscles tight for 30 seconds and remember to breathe.
4. Relax, and then repeat again.

You can put your hands on your stomach just inside your hips to make sure that you're holding your stomach tight. Strengthening these muscles will make it easier to hold your stomach in and will make you look slimmer. Strong stomach muscles are also beneficial for your back because they reduce the chances of injury.

Legs

You can improve both your calves and buttocks by taking the stairs. Try taking a few extra flights during your break time.

Top Tips

- ✓ It can be easier to exercise with a partner than on your own. Try to find a friend or colleague who is interested in joining you.
- ✓ Remember – exercise doesn't have to consist of tedious treadmills, hectic can't-keep-up classes or joyless jogging. It can be fun!
- ✓ Decide on the time of day that suits you best: Is it morning, lunchtime or after work?
- ✓ Find the form of exercise you like best; for example, walking part of the way to work, swimming or a gentle jog with your kids.
- ✓ Start slowly. Don't try too much at once.
- ✓ You only need a small amount of activity each day to get major mind/body benefits.

Your Personal Stress Management Plan

This chapter focused on the importance of physical activity in combating stress. Use what you've learned to create a personal exercise plan and make it a goal to stick to it this week.

I plan to exercise by taking part in these activities:

I'll spend _____ minutes on _____ days this week.

When I reach my goal, I'll reward myself by _____

CHAPTER 5

Mental Resilience to Stress

Goals for This Chapter

This chapter includes information on ways you can use your mind to continue to ward off stress. After you complete the chapter, you'll:

- Recognize that positive thinking can help you deal with stress better.
- Be able to identify how negative thinking may be affecting your stress levels.
- Know that having a good support network of friends and colleagues can help you cope better with stress.
- Understand the importance of finding time to relax and spend time doing things you enjoy.

When it comes to managing your stress, there are many steps you can take to build up your resistance.

Identifying Negative Thoughts

How you perceive events can have a big impact on your stress levels. Learning how you respond to different situations can help you assess the appropriateness of your response and look at alternative ways of thinking about situations. Try the following exercise to take a closer look at the way you think.

Many people find that when analyzing a stressful situation, their thoughts increase their stress rather than reduce it.

There are many different types of negative thinking, but concentrating on negative aspects of a problem doesn't help solve the problem or reduce your stress levels. Look at these common "thinking errors" and see if any of them apply to you:

Think back to the last time you felt stressed. Perhaps your travel arrangements were delayed, you had a deadline to meet or something had broken. Try to recall the incident in your mind.

What thoughts were going through your mind? _____

Did you feel angry, either with yourself or with someone else? _____

What did you think about the situation – was it "dreadful," or "terrible"? _____

Did you feel the situation was unfair, and things "should be better" or you hadn't been treated fairly? _____

Did you try to avoid the situation or think you "couldn't stand it"? _____

How did your thoughts affect the situation? _____

Did they help you feel less stressed or did they increase your stress? _____

Holding pre-conceived notions. Tim feels that things “never” work out for him. After being turned down for a job, he thinks, “I couldn’t get this job, why should I even look for another one? I’ll just get passed up.” Tim has formed an opinion based on a single situation, and he uses this conclusion to predict how similar situations will turn out in the future.

Thinking in absolute terms. Mandy tends to think of things in extremes, and doesn’t consider anything less than perfect to be acceptable. For example, she often thinks, “If I don’t exercise each day, I may as well not even bother to try.” She frequently criticizes herself and those around her for not doing things according to how they “should” be done.” This often leads to her feeling angry, frustrated and unmotivated.

Making a mountain out of a molehill or a molehill out of a mountain. Jill often views a “small” issue in her life as something much more significant than it actually is. For example, when no one acted upon an idea she suggested at work, she considered herself a worthless employee who would most likely lose her job and never be able to find another. Even if she has done a good job, she thinks, “It’s nothing. Anyone could have done it as well or better.”

Playing the blame game. Jeff is quick to blame himself for anything that goes wrong, even when he’s not entirely responsible for the outcome. Other times, he does the opposite: he blames others for situations in his life without actually looking at what he’s done that could have contributed to the problem. For example, he frequently tells his wife, “It’s not my fault that I keep gaining weight. It’s you and the kids who have the junk food in the house.”

Being a negative magnet. Ryan received many positive comments from his boss in his yearly review. He also received some mild constructive feedback. However, he focused only on the minor negative comments and completely discounted the rest of the review. This type of thinking tends to “attract” someone to just the negative aspects of a situation.

Drawing emotional conclusions. Mary often draws conclusions about what kind of a person she is based on how she feels at any given moment. For example, after feeling guilty for having forgotten to go to a friend’s graduation, she felt she was a horrible person. One morning when a co-worker didn’t say hello to her, she thought, “He must be angry with me. It’s all my fault he’s acting this way.”

Living under a dark cloud. Robert is convinced that “nothing” will ever work out for him. He views the “glass as half empty,” and even small setbacks lead him to believe that he’ll “never” be happy and will “always” feel miserable. Despite what anyone says to the contrary, he holds on to the notion that there is no joy in his life and that he’s a miserable person. Because of this point of view, people tend to push him away, which results in a continuous cycle of rejection.

Do you recognize any of these patterns in the way you think about yourself, your situations or your future? If you don’t yet, that’s okay. Most thinking happens so quickly and so automatically that we don’t even realize it’s happening.

Remember... the first step is to recognize negative thoughts. Only then can you fight them.

Fighting Back Against Negative Thoughts

There are several ways to challenge negative thoughts. When you find yourself thinking negatively, try some of the following suggestions to help get you thinking more positively:

Consider the evidence (or lack of) that you have to support your beliefs. Can you back up the way you're feeling? Is there a chance that you could be wrong?

What other explanations could there be for the situation? What other factors could have contributed? Consider all the possible outcomes of how your situation could turn out.

Remember: Nobody's perfect! Don't set **unrealistic expectations** for yourself or for others.

Give yourself credit for your effort and accomplishments. Be kind to yourself and treat yourself the way you would treat a friend.

Don't make hasty judgments when you're upset. Instead, try revisiting situations when you're in a more positive mood.

Replace negative thoughts with positive ones:

- Try to reframe your situation as a positive learning experience.
- Look for the good in every situation. Sometimes things that are seemingly negative turn out to be blessings in disguise.
- Use phrases such as "I will," "I can," or "I choose" and you just may find yourself believing them. For example, you could replace "It's hopeless" with "I have the power to control how I handle this situation, and I choose to ..."

Surround yourself with positive people.

Believe in yourself and in the power you have to overcome your situation. Don't give up hope.

Use your imagination to picture yourself successfully dealing with the situation in a positive way. Or, imagine someone else experiencing the same situation. How would you view that person?

Smile until you mean it. When you're feeling particularly negative, smiling can do wonders for your mood. If you keep smiling, no matter how bad you may feel, your smile just might eventually take over.

Be realistic. Try to see the situation from a realistic point of view. Ask yourself the following questions to help put things into perspective:

- How long is the situation truly going to last?
- What's the worst that can happen?
- Is the situation really unbearable, or is it just difficult?
- Am I characterizing myself based on a single event? What are my other traits?
- What other similar situations have I been in and gotten through?

Take care of yourself. Keeping fit and eating healthfully can help to reduce stress and negative thoughts.

Take a half day off from work.

Challenging Your Negative Thoughts With Rational Thoughts

You can challenge your negative thoughts by identifying situations where you've experienced automatic, negative or destructive thoughts, and then replaced them with more realistic or rational thoughts. The log below shows two examples of how to challenge negative thoughts with rational thoughts. Use the space that follows to challenge a few of your own recent negative thoughts. Don't rationalize your negative thought. Instead, make your rational thought realistic and believable, so it can reveal your negative thought as invalid.

Activity/Situation/Trigger	Mood/Feeling and Bodily Symptom	Automatic Negative Thought	Rational Thought
<p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Failure to meet a deadline ■ Cancelled plans with friends because I was too tired 	<p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Defeated – upset stomach ■ Depressed – headache 	<p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ I'm a loser. I can't even meet a deadline. ■ I always feel too tired and depressed to spend time with my friends. 	<p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ I wasn't able to meet the deadline this time, but this is a big project, and I shouldn't be so hard on myself. I'm doing my best. ■ I wasn't able to go with my friends this time, but I did do something with them last week, and I have plans with them this weekend.

Thinking Positively

Most of us have felt it at one time or another – the feeling that we are on top of the world and absolutely nothing can knock us down. We feel energized and as if nothing can go wrong in our perfect world. Some of us experience this zest for life more than others experience it. Those who feel it more often tend to be positive thinkers by nature, and typically view the world around them in a positive light.

Why should you think positively?

Thinking positively can do wonders for your stress levels:

- It can help you deal with daily life, and when problems arise, provide a sense of stress relief.
- It can make you feel better. Instead of sitting back and feeling defeated when life throws you curves, you can take control of your situation and how you feel by thinking positively. Positive thinking can help erase much of the negativity that you may usually carry around.
- It's contagious! Adopting an optimistic outlook will not only make you feel better, but may also make those around you feel better as well – which can also be a stress reliever in itself!
- Others will respond to you differently. When you're in a good mood, those around you notice it. Give it a try sometime and take notice of how others treat you differently when you have a positive attitude.
- You may find more opportunities to be successful because you aren't stuck in a negative mind-set, and you may notice possibilities that you hadn't thought of before.

What makes a positive thinker?

Positive thinkers are people who look at a glass as half full rather than half empty. They look on the bright side of life. They see the good in the bad. They are confident in their abilities and the abilities of others around them. They always seem to have a smile on their face and walk with an extra beat in their step. And what's more, they seem to handle stress well.

Positive thinking is not about hiding negative emotions and putting on a happy face to mask what you're really feeling. We all have negative experiences that we sometimes can't escape no matter how hard we try. The positive thinker will deal with the unpleasant situation as needed, and then attempt to move on successfully after experiencing it, all the while viewing the situation from a realistic standpoint.

How can I start thinking positively?

Thinking positively may take some work, but it doesn't have to be difficult. Just give it a try – take one day and commit to thinking only positive thoughts. Here are some suggestions to help get you started:

Replace negative thoughts with positive ones. For example, replace "It's hopeless" with "I have the power to control how I handle this situation, and I choose to"

Look for the good. Many times, situations that are seemingly negative turn out to be blessings in disguise.

Surround yourself with positive people.

Use positive words. Use phrases such as "I will" and "I can" – you just may find yourself believing them.

Believe. Believe in yourself and in the power you have to deal with, and overcome, your situation.

Visualize. Picture yourself successfully dealing with a situation in a positive way.

Smile until you mean it. When you're feeling particularly negative, smiling can do wonders for your mood. If you keep smiling, no matter how bad you may be feeling, your smile will eventually take over.

Be realistic. Try to see the situation from a realistic viewpoint. Ask yourself how long the situation is truly going to last. Look for examples of times you have been in a similar situation and have gotten through it.

Prepare for the morning the night before.

Remain optimistic. People will react differently to you when you have a negative attitude than they would when you have a positive outlook. Their reaction to your negativity may only add to your feelings of stress. But when you make an effort to remain optimistic, others may react to you in a more positive way, which can have a positive effect on you.

Some people are naturally positive thinkers while others tend to see the more negative side of situations. Where do you fall? Consider the following questions to determine how you can make the most of using positive thinking to reduce the amount of stress in your life:

Are you a positive thinker? If not, what steps can you take to start thinking more positively? _____

Take a Deep Breath...

Learning to control your breathing can help you find calm during stressful times and can have a big effect on how you feel. It can also slow your heart rate and help you to feel less stressed. However, most people don't take full advantage of their lungs to breathe properly. Under stressful conditions, breathing typically becomes rapid and shallow. This reaction can trigger dizziness, a faster heartbeat, "tingly" cold hands and feet, shakiness and sweating.⁵

Learning how to breathe

Take a deep breath. Did you feel your stomach expand? If not, you may be a "shallow-breather." The following technique will help you to breathe more effectively by using more power from your diaphragm to increase the capacity of your lungs so your body can inhale more oxygen:

1. Stand or sit up straight. Stooped shoulders and a constricted throat will reduce the volume of your lungs, which means you'll breathe using your upper chest instead of your stomach.
2. Keeping still, become aware of the movement in your stomach region as you inhale deeply through your nose. Become aware that there is an increase in pressure on your back and abdomen.⁵⁶ (If you're finding this exercise difficult, imagine you have a balloon in your stomach that's filling up with each breath you take.)

3. Hold your breath for two seconds.
4. Exhale slowly and feel your abdomen deflate. Tell yourself that you're exhaling any tension or stress you may be experiencing and feel your muscles relax.

See how much your heart rate reduces by taking your pulse before and after deep breathing.

1. Put your two forefingers on your neck underneath your jaw, and find your pulse.
2. Count how many beats you can feel in 30 seconds.
3. Multiply by two to calculate your beats per minute and record your result.
4. Repeat after your breathing exercises and see the difference in your results.

Record your heart rates below:

Before deep breathing _____

After deep breathing _____

Now that you've learned this technique, it's important to remember to use it! Try deep breathing before drifting off to sleep to help you have a restful night. Try to incorporate it into your daily routine by finding 10 minutes during the day to help yourself unwind. The more you practice these techniques, the more effective they'll be in calming you during times of stress.

The Benefits of Laughter

The benefits that laughter can provide are no laughing matter. Laughter can have many positive effects, both emotional and physical. In particular, laughter can help moderate stress by:

- Reducing the level of stress hormones.
- Improving your immune system.
- Exercising your internal muscles, leaving them more relaxed afterward.
- Distracting you from other negative emotions.
- Helping you gain emotional distance from a situation or view the situation in a different way.
- Helping you feel connected to others.

Try some of the following suggestions to add more laughter to your day:

- Find items that make you laugh, such as pictures or comics, and place them around your home or office.
- Spend time doing the things you enjoy.
- Look for humor in your own life. It often takes time before we're able to laugh about situations that are painful or embarrassing at the moment. However, take a moment to step back from situations that seem ridiculous or absurd and think about how you'll be able to look back on the situation and laugh or tell the story to your friends for a good chuckle.
- Find television shows and movies that make you laugh.
- Spend time with positive and humorous people.
- Take time to find the humor in everyday situations.
- Make plans with friends to do something that guarantees laughter will be involved, such as going to a comedy show or having friends over for a party or game night.

Learning to Relax

When you're stressed, it can be hard to relax. However, having some time to relax and unwind is essential so you can recharge and be able to perform at your best. Physical activity can be a great way to relax because it can help to improve mental clarity. Here are some techniques you can use to relax:

Visualization

Visualization can help you relax and prepare for stressful events.

1. Take five minutes in a place where you won't be disturbed and close your eyes.
2. Think about a place where you've been very relaxed or at peace – maybe somewhere at home, a place you've been on vacation, or somewhere in the mountains or at the beach. Imagine yourself sitting in this place.
3. Try to recall every detail about this place. Look in front of you, left, right, up and down.
4. Picture the colors and shapes of the environment in your mind.
5. What can you hear? Think about the sounds in your relaxing place. Do you hear waves? Birds chirping? The wind blowing?
6. How does it smell? Is there a special taste on your lips?
7. What can you feel or touch? The wind in your hair? The sun on your face? The chair you're sitting on?
8. Continue to think about every sensation you can recall and enjoy relaxing for a few minutes.

When preparing for a stressful situation, such as a difficult conversation or a presentation, consider the kind of performance the situation will require from you physically, mentally and emotionally. Think about what you have to do and use all your senses to imagine what it'll be like. Picture yourself overcoming any obstacles or problems and finding solutions. Visualizing the situation and your response to it can help you prepare for the event and be more relaxed when it occurs.

Meditation, mantras or prayers

Meditation is a way of focusing on deeper thoughts and feelings. The goal is to empty your mind, free yourself from distractions and then let your concerns drop away.

1. Find a quiet place where you won't be disturbed.
2. Sit in a position you can hold for at least 15 minutes, such as crossing your legs or kneeling.
3. Concentrate your attention on a word or sound – a mantra. This sound, such as "Om," helps you focus your concentration.

Different forms of meditation concentrate on different things – where you are, what you're experiencing this moment, or a single word or image. The goal of meditation is to introduce you to your internal feelings so you can get to know yourself better.

Some research has shown that saying mantras and prayers can have beneficial effects on cardiovascular rhythms. They slow the rate of breathing, which improves cardiovascular and respiratory function, oxygenation of the blood and exercise tolerance. They can also improve calmness and well-being.⁷

Yoga

Many people find yoga a great way to relax. It focuses on suppleness, strength, stamina and concentration. You can practice by yourself, but it's a good idea to learn poses and techniques with a registered yoga practitioner first.

Which relaxation technique sounds most like something you're likely to do? Circle one.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------|
| Deep breathing | Visualization |
| Meditation, mantras, or prayers | Yoga |

Is there anything else you can do that could make you feel more relaxed? _____

Stress and Depression

"I can't cope with the pressure – it's all too much. There's too much to do. I'll never get through it. I'm hopeless at this. There isn't any point in trying any more – I'll never get it done. I just want to hide myself away."

Most people have experienced a time when pressure is building and they feel like they can't handle all of their responsibilities. They may start to feel sad or hopeless about their situation. But what if you feel this way and can't shake it? What if, instead of passing in a few days or weeks, this feeling becomes more permanent?

Joe enjoys his job in information technology, but lately the workload has increased to an unmanageable level. He's working all the time, but making no significant progress. He's started to resent the time he's at work and has become moody. His colleagues are finding it difficult to work with him. Joe feels as if he's at his breaking point.

A little bit of pressure can be motivating and can help you rise to the challenges placed before you for a limited amount of time. But pressure over a long period can trigger a downward spiral of feelings, which can put extra strain on your body. A sudden serious incident at this time could trigger a fall into the depths of depression.

Depression is a serious and common condition. An estimated 18.8 million American adults suffer from major depression.³⁸ Depression can affect both the sufferer and those who are close to the person.

Warning signs of depression

If the following symptoms sound familiar, it's time to take immediate steps to tackle the sources of stress in your life:

- You feel like the pressures you're having are taking over other things in your life.
- You feel as if things are spiraling out of control.
- You don't feel you're achieving as much as you usually do.
- You have less confidence in yourself and don't value what you do.

Depression can have a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms, which can sometimes make it hard to recognize and understand. Common symptoms include:

- Feeling helpless and hopeless
- Feeling useless, inadequate or bad
- Prolonged sadness or unexplained crying spells
- Unusual irritability or anger
- Feeling unnecessarily guilty
- Diminished interest in life
- Significant weight loss or weight gain
- Fatigue and lethargy
- Thoughts of harming yourself
- Inability to concentrate
- Insomnia
- Loss of sex drive
- Unexplained aches and pains
- Low self esteem with an overwhelming need for reassurance

These feelings tend to form a vicious cycle that's difficult to break. It's important, however, to break the cycle. Many depressed people experienced their first depressive episode when a serious life event happened at a time of chronic stress.³ Although depression is serious, it is treatable. If you've been suffering from any of these symptoms for more than two weeks, you should talk to your doctor or a behavioral health professional who can assess your risk factors and symptoms to determine whether you're clinically depressed.

Making changes

Although depression requires the help of a mental health professional, there are steps that you can take to manage feelings of depression on your own.

Take a few moments and think about how much of your life is enjoyable. Does your week follow a familiar pattern: You work hard all week, spend the weekend cleaning up and doing chores, sleep in on Sunday, and on Monday, start over again? If this is your life, it may be time to build in some "you" time and do something you enjoy. Here are some tips to get you started on making positive changes to your life:

Try doing something new or rekindling an old hobby.

Think of all the things you could do that give you pleasure: gardening, cooking or taking a cooking course, painting, dancing, walking, visiting a museum or gallery, playing a musical instrument, going to a concert, sewing, or carpentry. Volunteer for something. It can be incredibly rewarding, give you a purpose for a few hours, and can help you to put things into perspective.

Take care of yourself. Depression tends to affect your eating habits, level of physical activity and sleeping patterns, which can have an increasingly negative effect on your mood. Make an effort to eat nutritious food, but if you aren't eating very well, ask your doctor about taking a multi-vitamin.

Make physical activity a part of your day. If you're not used to any level of activity, start with a walk around the block. It'll help keep your body in good condition and can trigger the production of hormones that can help you feel better.

Improve your sleep "hygiene." Make sure your room encourages sleep and doesn't have too many disruptive features. Disruptive sleep is a common symptom of depression.

Top Tips

- ✓ Instead of thinking about all of the things you can't do, think about those you can and how you can improve your performance for the next time.
- ✓ Essential to relaxation is being able to keep your mind on the present – literally being here *now*.
- ✓ Practice relaxation exercises for five minutes in places where there is nothing to do: on the train, on a walk at lunchtime, before bed.
- ✓ Take some deep breaths whenever you need to calm down.
- ✓ Go for a walk. Get some oxygen into your lungs and clear your head.
- ✓ Have you tried aromatherapy? Some odors can help you relax or concentrate.
- ✓ Get a massage. It can improve your blood flow and circulation.

Your Personal Stress Management Plan

This chapter focused on ways that you can mentally fight back against your stress.

What did you learn about your patterns of negative thinking? _____

List three ways that you can fight back against your negative thoughts.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

How will you spend time relaxing this week? _____

CHAPTER 6

Resilience Through Nutrition

Goals for This Chapter

This chapter includes information on the types of foods that can boost your mood and help you manage your stress. After you complete the chapter, you'll:

- Recognize what you eat and how it can help your body cope with times of stress.
- Know why eating vitamin-rich foods can help keep your body functioning well and protect you from some of the effects of stress.
- Have a better understanding of why you shouldn't rely on caffeine, alcohol and nicotine when you're stressed.

Food and Mood

In an effort to understand the relationship between food, mood and behavior, a team of scientists carried out a study at the most unlikely of places - an adult prison in Britain. Eighty-two young inmates were given nutritional supplements containing vitamins, minerals and essential fatty acids. Their behavior was compared to 90 inmates who were given an inactive placebo. The results were startling. The number of disciplinary incidents involving individuals taking the supplements dropped by more than 25 percent. And the reduction for serious incidents was even greater: a decrease of 37 percent.²⁴

The researchers had found that adding vitamins, minerals and essential fatty acids to the inmates' diet could reduce their antisocial behavior.

The link between food, mood and behavior is strong, and there is considerable evidence that shows how deficiencies or excesses of certain dietary components can cause both physical and mental symptoms.

Your body's basic food experience

Sugar is an important component of food because it's directly converted to energy that fuels your body. When your blood sugar level is low, your body releases certain hormones. These hormones tell your body that it's in distress and turn up your stress response to compensate. This heightened level of stress can lead to reduced immune system functioning, increased blood pressure and anxiety. These physical changes can also lead to other medical or mental health problems, so it's important to keep your body well fed with a regular supply of healthy foods in the right amount.

The all-important neurotransmitters

Neurotransmitters help the brain communicate by sending chemical signals to nerves in the brain. Different neurotransmitters send different signals. The signals affect the way we feel and the many moods we experience.

Important mood neurotransmitters

Serotonin - The "happy" neurotransmitter. Too little serotonin can lead to depression.

Dopamine - The "feel good" neurotransmitter that provides feelings of enjoyment. It's also involved in memory, attention, problem solving and addiction.

Norepinephrine - The "alertness" neurotransmitter. Like dopamine, it can help focus attention.

Epinephrine - The "get-up-and-go" neurotransmitter. It helps you respond to pressure and get motivated.

These neurotransmitters are made from essential amino acids, which are the small building blocks that make up proteins. These amino acids can only be obtained through food. However, your body also needs other vitamins and minerals that include B vitamins, vitamin C, zinc, magnesium and iron to convert the amino acids into neurotransmitters. Having an understanding of what you eat and how it can affect your ability to manage stress is one more step towards increasing your resilience.

Improving Your Mood With Food – Stress-Busting Food

High pressure can cause stress, and stress can have a number of effects on your body, including:

- Headaches
- Exhaustion
- Insomnia
- Depression
- Changes in appetite
- Reduction in the effectiveness of your immune system

A common response to chronic stress is a heavy reliance on caffeine, alcohol, cigarettes and fatty foods and a general neglect of good nutrition. However, certain foods can help your body cope with stress and improve your mood by providing the essential nutrients required for optimum bodily functioning. The following are some ways that you can use food to help you cope with stress and improve your overall health:

Beat fatigue. Tiredness can result from iron deficiency, especially if you've had recent blood loss or a diet low in iron. Iron-rich foods include red meat, liver, red kidney beans, chickpeas, fortified breakfast cereals, nuts and green leafy vegetables.

Increase serotonin production. Mood-boosting serotonin requires the amino acid tryptophan, which is found in many protein foods, including chicken, turkey, milk, cheese and soybeans.

Avoid refined and excess sugar. Sugary foods provide instant energy and a "high." However, they're often followed by a slump in energy. Some examples of refined foods are white bread, white rice, pasta and pretzels. Keeping your blood sugar levels steady will help improve concentration, alertness and memory.

Eat little and often. Regular eating will help maintain blood sugar levels. Make time for breakfast and eat at regular intervals. Don't be afraid to have healthy snacks between meals if you're hungry. Try foods such as nuts, seeds, rice cakes, hummus, bread sticks, fruit and vegetable sticks.

Include plenty of essential fatty acids. Omega-3 and omega-6 fats are essential for good brain health. It isn't possible for our bodies to make essential fatty acids (EFAs), so we need to get them from our diet. EFAs ("good" fats) protect against heart disease, reduce inflammation, keep skin healthy and provide a host of other benefits, such as hormone and energy production.^{28,50}

Most people eat sufficient omega-6 fats, but not enough omega-3 fats. To get enough, you should be eating two portions of oily fish, such as trout, salmon, tuna, mackerel, herring or sardines, a week. Alternative sources include pumpkin seeds, walnut oil, eggs and flax seeds.

Eat nutrient-dense foods. There are food sources rich in vitamins and minerals that support the immune system, which can be depleted during times of stress. For example:

- Zinc is important for metabolizing essential fatty acids and producing serotonin. Low levels of zinc are associated with a wide range of symptoms, including depression and anxiety.^{23,42}
- B vitamins are vital to the functioning of the body, and low levels of vitamin B6 may be linked to depression.

Eating a healthy, balanced diet is the best way to get all the nutrients your brain and body need. If your food intake of any of the following vitamins is low, a general multivitamin supplement may be beneficial.

Vitamins	Food Sources
Vitamin C	Sweet peppers, Brussels sprouts, broccoli, watercress, tomatoes, mango, kiwi, guava, black currants, citrus fruits, strawberries, lychees
Vitamin A	Liver, liver products, and kidney products, oily fish, eggs, carrots, sweet potato, mango, cantaloupe melon, apricots, Swiss chard, parsley, curly kale, spring greens, spinach
Vitamin E	Vegetable oils, nuts, sunflower seeds, pine nuts, avocado, egg, wheat germ.
Folic acid	Leafy green vegetables, peas, beans, lentils, yeast extract, liver, fortified breakfast cereals
Vitamin B12	Meat, poultry, fish, eggs, dairy foods
Zinc	Meat, fish, shellfish (oysters are the richest sources of zinc), eggs, whole grains, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, walnuts
Selenium	Nuts (brazil nuts are the richest source), whole grains, fish, poultry, meat, milk, eggs
Iron	Red meat, liver, peas, beans, lentils, leafy green vegetables, dried fruits, nuts, seeds, fortified breakfast cereals.

What foods do you eat when you're feeling stressed? _____

Which of the nutrient rich foods listed in the chart do you currently eat? _____

Over the next week, choose two new foods to add your diet and list them here: _____

Stay hydrated. Make sure you're drinking enough water. Dehydration combined with excessive amounts of caffeine can cause tiredness, headaches and irritability as well as decreased concentration levels. Aim to drink around eight cups of water a day.

Cut the caffeine. How reliant are you on that first cup of coffee before facing the world? The effects of caffeine can turn you from a sluggish sloth to a high-powered hawk. Caffeine is a stimulant and as the effects wear off, you start to feel withdrawal symptoms and need another dose to pick you up. Too much caffeine can make you feel anxious, nervous, jittery and depressed. It can also cause insomnia. Caffeine also reduces your blood sugar level, which can make you feel even more stressed.

Look at how much caffeine you consume, and don't just think about your coffee intake. Think about tea, chocolate and cola, which often contain caffeine. If you're having six or more cups of caffeinated beverages a day, you should think about cutting back. You may want to cut down gradually since you can develop withdrawal effects, such as headaches, if you stop cold turkey.

Schedule play time every day.

If you're a committed caffeinated coffee drinker, try the following experiment:

Coffee Experiment

Buy two types of coffee you haven't tried before – one caffeinated and one decaffeinated. Put them into identical jars so you don't know which is which. Try one every day for a week and try the other one each day for the next week. See if you can tell which one is the caffeinated coffee.

Record your results here:

Week One

Date	Did you feel less sleepy or more alert?	Were you able to react faster or concentrate better?	How did you feel physically?

Week Two

Date	Did you feel less sleepy or more alert?	Were you able to react faster or concentrate better?	How did you feel physically?

Can you say for sure that one type of coffee has a real stimulating effect on you? You may even notice some negative effects, such as one type of coffee making you urinate more or making your heart beat faster.

Caffeine is a chemical, and even in small doses, it can have a stimulating effect on your nervous system by boosting the way messages are transmitted between cells.¹⁶ It affects muscle cells in your heart and the airway into your lungs. It also makes your kidneys take more water out of your blood to form urine, so you'll urinate and drink more frequently.¹⁹ In addition, caffeine causes the release of insulin, a hormone that acts to reduce the amount of sugar in your blood. If you don't have something to eat with your coffee, you may quickly feel hungry.

If you want to reduce your caffeine intake, try the following suggestions:

- Drink out of a smaller cup.
- Use instant rather than ground coffee.
- Choose decaffeinated rather than caffeinated coffee (or a mixture of the two).
- Drink weaker tea.
- Choose decaffeinated soft drinks.
- Drink herbal tea.

Everyday Super Foods

Many foods can offer health benefits and help reduce the risk of some medical conditions. These foods are packed full of vitamins and minerals. But which foods are these?

Some people use the term "super food" to describe food supplements such as wheatgrass (often taken in liquidized plant form) and spirulina and chlorella (kinds of algae). These foods are packed full of nutrients that can offer health benefits. However, if these foods sound a bit intimidating or expensive, keep in mind that you can get benefits from everyday foods as well. Some of these foods are:

Low fat bio-yogurt – About 100 years ago, Nobel Prize winner Dr. Metchnikoff studied Eastern Europeans who were more than 100 years old and had very few signs of senility. Dr. Metchnikoff linked their longevity to their diet, specifically the large amounts of fermented yogurt they were eating. We now know that live yogurt contains "good" bacteria that can help keep your digestive system in top condition as well as help your body fight infections and reduce cholesterol and the risk of colon cancer.^{29,35,47} Try to have some live "bio" yogurt every day. It's best to choose plain yogurt and sweeten it yourself with fruit and honey if needed, because flavored yogurts can be extremely high in sugar.

Watercress – Choose watercress instead of iceberg lettuce for salads because it'll give you a much wider range of nutrients, including iron, calcium and potassium. The darker the color of the leaves, the more chlorophyll they contain and the more nutrient-dense they are. Watercress, with its peppery taste, is rich in sulfur, which helps the liver remove toxins. You can add watercress to soups, juices, salads, pasta and rice.

Oats – One of the best ways to start the day is with a steaming bowl of oatmeal. It's rich in fiber, so it slows digestion and keeps you feeling full for longer. Oats also help lower cholesterol.⁶ Oats are packed with B vitamins, which are essential for energy production.

Orange veggies – Try to include as many different colored fruit and vegetables in your diet as possible. The natural colorings of fruits and vegetables contain a wealth of nutrients. Orange veggies, such as carrots, butternut squash, pumpkin and peppers, are rich in carotenoids, which are antioxidants and can help fight cancer.

Tomatoes – Tomatoes contain a substance called lycopene. One study showed frequent lycopene intake reduced the risk of prostate cancer by 30 to 40 percent.²⁶ Lycopene is more easily absorbed by the body when the tomatoes are cooked, so add plenty of tomatoes to your pasta and veggie dishes.

Treat yourself to something special.

Eggs – Eggs are one of the best sources of protein and vitamins B12, A, D and B3. Try poached or scrambled eggs for breakfast if you find you're often hungry before lunchtime. Many people worry about the cholesterol content in eggs. Eggs do contain cholesterol; however, they also contain lecithin, which helps break down cholesterol. Lecithin is destroyed at high temperatures, which is why it's important to poach or scramble your eggs over a low heat and avoid frying.

Blueberries – Try adding a handful of blueberries to your yogurt. They are very high in antioxidants, which can help improve your immune system. One study showed that blueberries stopped the growth of colon cancer and breast cancer cells when tested in Petri dishes.⁴² Many supermarkets sell bags of frozen berries – a good option when berries aren't in season.

Eating Away From Home

It can be difficult to make healthy food choices while you're away from home. Grabbing a bite to eat on the run may mean that you don't always make the best choices. What foods should you eat to keep your energy levels up throughout the day?

Breakfast

The answer starts before you leave home: Eat breakfast. Eating breakfast will maintain your blood sugar levels during the morning and lower your risk of eating unhealthful foods during the day. Good choices include oat-based or wholegrain-type cereals with low-fat milk or yogurt, or multigrain toast with olive oil-based low-fat spread and fresh or dried fruit.

Snacks

You can control your diet best by eating smaller, frequent meals. Five smaller meals a day can be better than three large ones. With breakfast and an evening meal during the working day, you can still have a light lunch and a small snack at mid-morning and mid-afternoon. Healthy snacks include dried fruit, fresh fruit or a wholegrain bun. The goal is to give the body some energy but not to make a snack into a large meal. Small snacks, high in fiber and carbohydrates, are filling options and can stop the temptation to reach for chocolate or chips.

Lunch

Lunch should be reasonably light and based on carbohydrates so that energy is released throughout the afternoon. Choose quick, healthy meals such as wholegrain sandwiches stuffed with lean meat, chicken or fish and salad; or a baked potato with beans or cottage cheese and salad; or whole wheat pasta with a tomato-based sauce. A simple salad is too low in calories and may result in low energy throughout the afternoon and hunger cravings. Try to avoid lunchtime foods with high-fat additions, such as mayonnaise. For example, tuna and chicken salad are often loaded with extra calories from mayonnaise. Also try to avoid fatty meats, such as pepperoni on pizza, and large pats of butter or margarine on a baked potato.

Physical activity is one of the best ways of controlling your diet. A brisk 20-minute walk can burn 150 calories and give you some welcome fresh air. It can also make you more alert and help suppress your appetite.

Habits are the key

Appetites depend on much more than the need for food. Although direct hunger for calories is an influence on appetite, it's one of the smallest influences. The hunger pangs you feel have more to do with your eating habits than low blood sugar levels. When you eat, the feeling of fullness in the stomach reduces your appetite and causes you to stop, so foods with bulk can be useful. Regular exercise is important, too. It helps fine-tune your appetite so that energy input balances energy output.¹⁰

Most important are your regular daily habits. It's extremely difficult for people to eat a healthy breakfast regularly if they're always rushing to work, desperate for that first cup of coffee. To help reduce your stress in the morning when you're trying to get out the door and make it to work on time, prepare your meals and snacks the evening before.

Planning your meals for the week can aid in stress reduction and help ensure that you include vitamin-rich foods in your diet. Use the chart to plan your meal menu for the next week:

Date	Breakfast	Morning Snack	Lunch	Afternoon Snack	Dinner

Drinking and Smoking: Do They Relieve Stress?

When you're feeling stressed, do you reach for a cigarette or an alcoholic beverage? Smoking and drinking alcohol have a number of effects on your body, including depleting it of essential vitamins and minerals.

Alcohol contains empty calories – seven calories per gram compared with four calories per gram for carbohydrates and proteins, both of which offer nutritional benefits. Some people view alcohol as nutritious because wine contains vitamin C from grape juice, beer has B vitamins and minerals from cereal grains and yeast, and spirits are made from grain products.¹⁸ However, they aren't very nourishing when the low nutrient content is compared to the high amount of calories they contain.

Dangers of excess alcohol

Over time, excessive alcohol use can cause problems with liver function. A damaged liver reduces the body's ability to absorb and use the nutrients in food such as fat-soluble vitamins (vitamins A, D, E and K). Heavy drinking can also cause stomach cells to become inflamed and susceptible to ulcers and the kidneys to increase the quantities of magnesium, calcium, potassium and zinc they remove from the body. Diet and genetic disposition can also affect the nutrients a heavy drinker may lack.¹⁰

Minimizing the negative effects of alcohol

You can do a number of things to prevent the negative effects of alcohol. The first is to try to limit the volume and frequency of your consumption of alcohol. How much and how fast you drink affects your blood level of alcohol. Drinking alcohol on an empty stomach causes it to immediately be absorbed, so try to eat beforehand if you plan to drink alcoholic beverages.

Consuming alcohol also affects your ability to get a restful night's sleep, which can affect your ability to manage stress (see Chapter 7 for more on sleep and stress).

Smoking and diet

One in two long-term smokers dies prematurely as a result of smoking. Most die from one of the three main diseases associated with smoking: lung cancer, bronchitis and emphysema, and coronary heart disease.¹ Although the risks of smoking are well publicized, many people still choose to smoke.

As you've read throughout this chapter, having a well-balanced diet full of vitamin-rich foods is important in stress management. Smoking depletes your body of these vitamins. In addition, cigarette smoke produces chemicals in the body called *free radicals*. Vitamins C and E and beta-carotene act as antioxidants to destroy free radicals.

Smokers need twice the amount of vitamin C that non-smokers need. Smoking also depletes the body of B vitamins, which can be found in whole grains, lean meat and fish.¹⁰

When you're feeling stressed, try taking a walk or completing a relaxation exercise instead of having a cigarette.

Top Tips

- ✓ Your diet can influence your mood and energy. For example, a dip in blood sugar can make you feel moody, irritable, weak or shaky and can affect your concentration.
- ✓ Be alert to times when your blood sugar may be low and take steps to maintain your appropriate level. Make sure you have a good breakfast and snack on fruit, nuts and oatcakes.
- ✓ Caffeine can add extra stress to your body, so try to keep your caffeine intake low and drink 1 1/2 to 2 liters of water each day.

Your Personal Stress Management Plan

In this chapter, you learned about how good nutrition can help you manage your stress.

Do you have any nutrition habits that could be increasing your stress? _____

List three changes you'll make to your diet that could help increase your resilience to stress.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

CHAPTER 7

Resilience Through Better Sleep

Goals for This Chapter

This chapter includes information on the stages of sleep, what defines a good night's sleep, steps to increase sleep quality, and some facts and myths about sleep. After you complete the chapter, you'll:

- Understand that sleep is vital for the functioning of your body and mind.
- Know how sleeping well can make you better able to cope with stress.
- Have a better understanding of how a good night's sleep can dramatically raise alertness, increase energy and enhance observational skills.

Do you often wake up wishing you had more time to sleep? How many times do you push the snooze button on your alarm clock? If you aren't waking up feeling refreshed, you may not be getting enough sleep or quality sleep.

What Is Sleep?

Sleep is defined as *"the natural periodic suspension of consciousness during which the powers of the body are restored."*³³ Sleep can vary greatly among individuals and is dependent on a variety of factors, including general health, environment and life stresses. However, sleep can generally be seen as a time when we stop being aware of things.³¹

What happens during sleep?

Sleep is a biological necessity for humans. It helps us rest and recuperate physically and psychologically, conserve energy, and grow and regenerate body cells. Some scientists even believe that memory may be enhanced during sleep.³¹

The biological clock

Our levels of sleepiness and wakefulness are partly regulated by our biological clock (which increases certain chemicals in our body to make us feel more or less awake) as well as external stimulus factors, such as night and day. Difficulties in sleep arise when our body clock is disrupted and forced to work in an inappropriate way; for example, during shift work or as a result of jet lag.

What are sleep cycles?

Sleep has many layers and stages but the most important division is between REM (Rapid Eye Movement) and NREM (Non-Rapid Eye Movement) sleep.¹³

REM (Rapid Eye Movement) sleep

- Eyes periodically move rapidly.
- Brain activity is high.
- Dreaming occurs.
- Muscles become temporarily paralyzed, which prevents people from acting out their dreams.

NREM (Non-rapid Eye Movement) sleep

- Brain activity is slowed.
- The body is able to move naturally.
- Sleepwalking and talking may take place.
- Body temperature drops.
- Heart rate slows down.
- Blood pressure lowers.
- Rest and restoration occur.

How do sleep cycles work?

Each cycle of NREM and REM sleep lasts approximately 90 minutes. At the end of each cycle, you wake up, but often without realizing it because your brain encourages you to go back to sleep immediately to start a new cycle. This is natural and only people with disturbed sleep will be aware that they have woken up several times throughout the night. Adults spend about 20 percent of the night in REM sleep, while babies spend about half their time in REM sleep.

Sleep: How Much Is Enough?

Rats deprived of sleep for many days appear unkempt and develop sores on their bodies that won't heal. Soon they lose their ability to regulate their body temperature and it begins to drop. Their metabolic rate increases and they lose weight, even though they are eating more than usual. After about 16 days, the rats die.^{13,34} This research highlights the essential role of sleep in health and well-being.

Most adults do best on seven or eight hours of sleep each night, although some people sleep longer and some less. As long as you feel rested and awake when you need to be, you're probably getting a healthy amount of sleep.¹⁴

Fortunately, most people can't go more than a couple of days without sleep before tiredness becomes so overwhelming that they fall asleep at any available opportunity.

How much, how often?

To function well, most people need between seven and eight hours of sleep each night.

If you don't get the sleep you need, it can leave you feeling:

- Tired
- Less alert
- Less able to concentrate
- Lethargic/sluggish
- Unable to process complicated information
- Less able to make good decisions

Lack of sleep can also impair your ability to drive or operate machinery. In fact, being awake for 19 hours has the same effect upon concentration and reaction times as being just over the drunk-driving limit in the United States.

How much sleep you personally need depends on your individual requirements, but most people don't sleep enough. National Sleep Foundation surveys found 75 percent of adults said they experience daytime sleepiness and 34 percent said sleepiness interfered with their daytime activities.¹³ Keeping a sleep diary can help you discover how much sleep you need on a nightly basis. Keep your diary for one week, and then make an active attempt to sleep a bit longer the next weeks. See if there is any difference in the way you feel.

Your Sleep Diary

For the next week, record your sleep patterns here:

Date	Time you went to bed	Time you went to sleep	Time you woke up	How alert did you feel the next day?

Feeling tired?

There are many things that can affect your sleep quality, which in turn can have a direct effect on your health. Stress and sleep have a close relationship. Sleep can help you cope with pressure, but too much pressure or stress can impair your ability to sleep. In fact, anxiety is a major cause of insomnia.

Extreme long-term stress can have many physiological effects on your body, including making you more susceptible to infection. This makes stress and insomnia an unhealthy combination. Some researchers even suggest that the stress associated with the sleep deprivation in the rat experiments is what caused their early death.¹³ Understanding what causes the stress in your life and learning effective coping strategies will go a long way towards better sleep and better health.

If you're frequently tired, take a look at your sleep habits and see if they can be improved.

Review the following statements and check the ones that apply to you:

- My bedroom is too hot or too cold.
- I'm disturbed by noise from within or outside my home.
- My bed is uncomfortable.
- I watch TV or work while in bed.
- I drink a lot of caffeine or eat late at night.
- I smoke or drink alcohol before bed.
- I exercise close to the time I go to bed.
- I do very little exercise during the day.
- My bed times are erratic. (For example, you sleep much longer over the weekend than during the week.)
- I'm under a lot of pressure.

If you checked any of these statements, you may benefit from a few simple steps to improve your sleep quality.

So how much sleep is enough? If you're always tired, you're probably not getting enough. Understanding your own body's sleep needs and taking steps to make sure you get the sleep you need are key to waking up feeling rested and ready to tackle the day.

Have a support network of people, places and interests.

Preparing for a Good Night's Sleep

Are you getting enough sleep? If not, the unpleasant consequences could include reduced energy, impaired concentration, disagreeable mood and an increased risk of accidents. But you can take steps to improve your sleep. At any one time, more than one in three adults reports some trouble sleeping.⁴³ So how can you make sure you're not one of them? Here are some tips to try:

Develop a routine. Go to bed and get up at the same time each day, allowing yourself seven to eight hours of sleep each night of the week. Although initially you'll probably miss sleeping in, once you're regularly getting the right amount of sleep, you'll probably feel better.

Don't sleep during the day. Try not to nap, but if you really must have a nap, limit your nap to 20 to 30 minutes.³⁹

Keep cool. Exercise raises the body's temperature, which then leads to a corresponding fall of temperature five to six hours later. This mirrors the natural temperature regulation of the body, which drops to its lowest point during sleep. Exercising in the afternoon, rather than in the evening, will help your body prepare for sleep.

A slightly cooler bedroom temperature of 64°F can also contribute to a good night's sleep.⁵¹

Be comfortable. Start the relaxation process as soon as you get home from work:

- Have a warm bath and change into loose, comfortable clothing.
- Spend the hour before bedtime reading, watching non-violent television or listening to relaxing music.
- Write down all the things you need to do the next day so that you don't lie awake thinking about them.

Watch what you eat and drink. Avoid caffeinated beverages such as coffee, tea and cola before bedtime because they can make you feel restless. And be wary of alcohol. Although it may appear to help you fall asleep, your sleep will be shallow and disturbed, and you may suffer abnormal dream periods and early morning wakening.⁵¹ Milk is a great bedtime drink because it contains an amino acid that can calm you and help you sleep.

Relax. Doing relaxation exercises shortly before you go to bed can clear your mind and help you get a good night's rest. See Chapter 5 for examples of relaxation techniques.

Avoid working and watching TV in bed. Use your bed only for sleeping – not for working or watching TV. If you find yourself lying awake staring at the clock, get up, go into another room and do something relaxing, such as reading a book until you feel tired again. Some people find different background noises help them drop off to sleep, while others can't stand anything but silence. Experiment to see what works for you.

Record your bedtime routine.

For the habits that you answer "no," list alternatives that you think could help you sleep better.

Bedtime Routine	Do you think this is a good sleep habit?	Alternative

Insomnia

Having trouble sleeping? Feeling exhausted in the morning? You aren't alone.

At any time, about one in three people is suffering from insomnia.⁴³ Insomnia can affect just about anyone, but some people are more likely to have it than others. Those most likely to suffer include people over 60 years old, post-menopausal women and people with a history of depression.

Insomnia comes in many forms, from having trouble getting to sleep and staying asleep, to problems with waking up too early. It can be classified three ways: transient (short term), intermittent (on and off) and chronic (constant).¹⁴

Transient: This type of insomnia can last for several nights, but usually resolves itself. It's often caused by being stressed or overexcited, by excessive exercise close to bedtime, or by the flu or other brief illnesses. It can also develop after long-distance journeys over multiple time zones (jet lag).

Short-term: This type of insomnia can last up to two or three weeks and can be a result of emotional stress such as bereavement, job loss or illness. Again, it usually gets better on its own, but if you find yourself caught in the vicious cycle of not sleeping because you're worried about not being able to sleep, you might consider talking to your doctor.

Chronic: This type of insomnia lasts longer than a few weeks with poor sleep every night. It can have many different causes, but it can be improved by taking strategic action. Talking to your doctor can help you to find the root of the problem. For example, are you particularly worried about something, or are you perhaps drinking or eating too late at night?

There are other sleep disorders, such as excessive snoring or restless leg syndrome, that prevent people from getting a restful night's sleep. You may want to consult with your doctor if you think you may be experiencing any of these disorders.

Sleep and Our Jobs

Why do we feel so useless the morning after we've had a late night?

It can be difficult to cram in all the activities you'd like to do in a single day. As a result, you may often sacrifice sleep, which can affect both your health and productivity.

Exactly what happens during sleep is not fully understood. However, we know that the body repairs and restores itself while you sleep. Sleep is vital for keeping your body and mind functioning properly. A good night's sleep can dramatically raise alertness, increase energy, enhance observational skills, boost motivation, and improve your ability to process and interpret data. Insufficient sleep prevents full repair and growth and produces both a sleep debt and symptoms of fatigue.

Sleep and work

Sleep and work are closely related. Being awake longer allows you more hours to get more done. However, being sleepy can affect the quality and quantity of work you achieve. Pressure to get your work done often supersedes sleep as a priority. Nearly half (46 percent) of people who reported occasional or frequent insomnia cited stress as the primary factor in interrupting their sleep.⁴¹ However, a good night's sleep enables you to be better equipped to deal with stress.

The cost of insomnia and other causes of sleep deprivation are significant. Fatigue can affect all aspects of your life, from your personal relationships to your ability to concentrate and perform daily tasks.

Plan a three-day weekend to do nothing but relax.

The effect of sleepiness on work is widely recognized, as results of the National Sleep Foundation survey show.⁴⁰

- About half of the workforce (51 percent) report that sleepiness on the job interferes with the amount of work they get done.
- Many adults (40 percent) admit that the quality of their work suffers when they're tired.
- At least two-thirds of adults say that sleepiness interferes with their concentration (68 percent) and makes handling stress (66 percent) on the job more difficult.
- Overall, employees estimate that the quality and quantity of their work is diminished by about 30 percent when they're tired.

How to make the most of your sleeping time

Getting enough sleep can be difficult for many reasons, including high workloads, caring for small children and a noisy environment. Try to take steps to reduce the impact of these factors on your sleep. Try the tips in the earlier section of this chapter, "Preparing for a Good Night's Sleep," to improve your sleep.

When you go to bed, don't expect to fall asleep the moment your head hits the pillow. Don't panic if you feel you aren't getting to sleep. If you're tired, sleep will come, but the more you worry about it the more you will slow down its arrival. Try the following breathing exercise to quiet your mind.

1. Breathe in for a count of four, hold for four, breathe out for four, hold for four, and then repeat.
2. Imagine you're drawing the edge of a square on each part of your breath.
3. Draw this square in your mind as you concentrate on your breathing for a few minutes.
4. Let yourself relax and your mind unwind.

Sleep Facts and Myths

Take this sleep quiz:

1. *True or false:* Lack of sleep can affect your weight.
2. *True or false:* The older you get, the less sleep you need.
3. *True or false:* Insomnia can be a symptom of depression.
4. *True or false:* You don't dream every night.
5. *True or false:* It's dangerous to wake a sleepwalker.
6. *True or false:* Your brain is inactive during sleep.
7. *True or false:* An hour of sleep before midnight is worth two after.
8. *True or false:* Eating cheese gives you nightmares.
9. *True or false:* You can catch up on sleep on the weekend.

Here are the correct answers:

1. Lack of sleep can affect your weight.

True. Sleep appears to affect a number of factors that can have an effect on your weight. Sleep deprivation is thought to lower the level of *leptin*, a hormone that controls appetite, and increase the level of *ghrelin*, a hormone that increases food intake and plays a role in long-term regulation of body weight.⁵² Sleeping less also provides more opportunity for you to eat, and insufficient sleep has been shown to impair the body's use of insulin, which can lead to the onset of diabetes.

2. The older you get, the less sleep you need.

False. Although sleep patterns change as we age, the need for sleep generally does not. Older people may wake up more often during the night and may sleep less at nighttime, but they still need as much sleep as younger adults.⁴⁰

3. Insomnia can be a symptom of depression.

True. Not being able to sleep, or waking up very early in the morning can be a symptom of depression. If you've had difficulty sleeping for a number of weeks, it may be worth talking to your doctor about possible causes and treatment options available to you.

4. You don't dream every night.

False. Although you may not always remember your dreams, it's widely accepted that people dream every night. Most dreaming occurs during REM sleep, but it's thought that some dreaming occurs during other parts of the night.

5. It's dangerous to wake a sleepwalker.

False. It may be difficult to wake a sleepwalker, but it's not dangerous. In fact, gently leading a sleepwalker back to bed is the best thing you can do to prevent the sleepwalker from getting hurt.⁴⁰

6. Your brain is inactive during sleep.

False. During sleep, your brain is very active controlling bodily functions, such as breathing, heart rate and hormone production, and consolidating memories and skills you've acquired during the day.⁴⁶

7. An hour of sleep before midnight is worth two after.

False. There doesn't appear to be any truth to this old proverb. It's essential to get enough sleep, and for most people, that means around seven to eight hours each night. People who have to get up early in the morning often go to bed before midnight, which may be how the myth originated. However, some people's body clocks are "programmed" to sleep at certain times. Altering that time by even just an hour can affect the way they feel.

8. Eating cheese gives you nightmares.

False. According to research by the British Cheese Board, cheese doesn't give you nightmares. In the first study of its kind, 200 people were given a portion of cheese before bed and asked to record their dreams. Seventy-two percent of volunteers slept well every night, 67 percent remembered their dreams, and none reported nightmares.⁹

9. You can catch up on sleep on the weekend.

False. Although you can make up for some sleep during the weekend, it can be difficult to make up the entire amount of sleep you've lost. Trying to make up lost sleep can also have an effect on your sleep schedule once the next week rolls around.³⁹

Beating stress requires many strategies. Having a restful night's sleep can give you the energy to apply these strategies and fight off stress. Now that you have a better understanding of sleep and its importance, take steps to improve your bedtime routine and sleep habits.

Top Tips

- ✓ Spend time (1 to 1 1/2 hours) winding down before going to bed. Don't check e-mails or get into a conversation about a difficult topic during that wind-down time.
- ✓ Don't work in bed. Thinking about work problems or making notes in the middle of the night won't help you sleep. Use a relaxation technique to help you get back to sleep.
- ✓ Busy people often don't take time to address issues that are interfering with sleep. Set aside time in the day to tackle or think through things that may affect your sleep.
- ✓ Develop a sleep routine.
- ✓ Don't exercise just before bedtime.
- ✓ Relax in the evening.
- ✓ Drink warm milk and avoid alcohol.

Your Personal Stress Management Plan

In this chapter, you learned about how getting quality sleep can help you reduce your stress.

What did you learn about your sleep habits? _____

What steps will you take to improve your quality of sleep? _____

CHAPTER 8

Resilience Through Personal Relationships

Goals for This Chapter

This chapter includes information on managing your relationships. After you complete the chapter, you'll:

- Recognize why people who have a strong support network of friends and family have less stress and tend to live longer.
- Know how good communication can help reduce relationship stress and pressure.
- Have better conflict management skills.
- Have a better understanding of how to beat feelings of loneliness.

Get Personal

Most people could benefit from some relationship guidance at one time or another, whether it relates to resolving conflict at work, patching up differences with friends, spending more quality time with your partner or improving communication with your kids. While maintaining good relationships provides many rewards, such as extending your lifespan, reducing stress and improving your mood, it often requires hard work.

Make friends and live longer

A network of good friends can actually help you live longer, according to research by the Center for Aging Studies at Australia's Flinders University.²⁵ The study of people over 70 years old found that close contact with children and relatives had little effect on survival rates, while a strong network of friends and confidantes significantly improved the chances of survival over a 10-year period.

The authors speculated that friends could have a positive influence on health behaviors, such as smoking and drinking, or seeking medical help for troubling symptoms. Friends may also have important effects on mood, self-esteem and coping mechanisms in times of difficulty. If that's the case, the same benefits are likely to be true regardless of age, so make an effort to keep in touch with your current friends or make new ones. Call someone you haven't seen for a while and make plans to catch up.

Relationships with our partners

Have you ever experienced that euphoric feeling from falling in love with someone new? If so, you probably felt dizzy and elated, which may have translated into sleeplessness, loss of appetite and obsessive thinking about your beloved. Well, that roller coaster ride of emotions is caused by high levels of dopamine and norepinephrine and low levels of serotonin in the brain.²⁰

The chemical reaction and enjoyable feelings associated with falling in love typically fade within the first three to six months of a new relationship. The good news, though, is that these feelings can be revived by stimulating the dopamine system. All it takes is a willingness to do novel things together.

For some couples that may be as simple as going to a different restaurant, whereas for others, something like couples skydiving may be more appropriate. What's important is for the couple to try something new that's comfortable for each of them.

However, sometimes no matter how hard you try, relationships fail and people choose to separate. Separation and divorce can trigger a range of emotions, from relief or anger to sadness or grief, and both partners, as well as any children involved, will be affected. It's important to seek adequate support to help you through this type of transition. That support may mean talking to friends or family about your feelings, calling a telephone counseling service, or seeing a professional counselor.

Who are the people in your life you can turn to for support? List them here.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Managing Stress in Personal Relationships

Relationships can be a great source of love and support; however, they can also be a source of frustration, irritation and additional pressure. Try taking proactive steps, such as the ones that follow to see if you can reduce the pressure:

Communicate

- Instead of letting things build up until you explode over something small, try to deal with issues as they come up.
- Use “feeling” words rather than assigning blame. For example, try saying things like, “I find it really upsetting when you say that.” rather than “You do that to upset me.” These kinds of statements help both of you identify the cause of the problem and the effect it’s having on you.
- Listen to the other person and try to see things from that perspective.
- Try not to judge or make assumptions.
- Communication is a two-way process; ask questions so that you really understand what the other person is saying, and be prepared to answer questions and explain how you’re feeling.

Think ahead

- Give advance warning. If you’ve had a lousy day, phone your partner or housemates and let them know so they can prepare themselves and perhaps postpone difficult discussions.
- Remember your manners. If you’re running late, let people know and try to give an accurate arrival time.
- If things are getting out of control, take some time out to unwind rather than taking it out on other people.
- Take some time at the end of the working day to consolidate your thoughts and plan for the next day before you head home.

Prevent conflict

- Assume the best, not the worst. Unless you have evidence to the contrary, try to give people the benefit of the doubt.
- Learn to recognize your own stress signals and those of your friends and family.
- Try to think rationally about whether you’re overreacting.
- Consider the possibility that there are other underlying problems causing you, or the person with whom you’re irritated, to feel strained or sensitive; for example, you or the other person may be feeling tired or sick.
- Ask yourself if it’s worth the argument. Are you being defensive because you feel guilty about something? Are you holding a grudge about a previous issue?

Managing Conflict in Personal Relationships

Sometimes conflict is unavoidable. It's natural for conflict to arise between friends and family members from time to time. Rather than denying it or hoping it'll go away, try to deal with it constructively. Use positive communication methods to resolve conflict and bring about a peaceful resolution, even if the final decision involves compromise or agreeing to disagree. However, how you choose to work through the conflict can make a difference in your ability to resolve the conflict.

Conflict can sometimes lead to anger, which in turn can make you stubborn and therefore unable to listen to another person's point of view. Before you begin, make sure all parties are committed to negotiating a solution. Once you've agreed to negotiate, try these tips:

- Think about whether the issue is really worth fighting over.
- If you feel too angry to talk calmly, try to cool off before discussing the issue.
- Take time out and come back at an agreed time to proceed.
- Keep in mind that the idea is to resolve the conflict, not win the argument.

- Remember that the other party isn't obliged to always agree with you on everything.
- Define the problem and stick to the topic.
- Respect the other person's point of view by paying attention and listening.
- Talk clearly and reasonably.
- Try to find points of common ground.

It's important to listen throughout this process without interrupting when the other person is talking, and to try to stay calm. You may want to ask questions to make sure you understand the person's point of view.

When it's your turn to speak, communicate clearly and honestly, using "I" statements if you can, to explain your feelings and thoughts. For example, you might say, "I feel hurt when you..." or "I feel angry when you..." Stick to the topic at hand and resist the temptation to bring up old issues.

Once you've both discussed your concerns, you can work out a solution together. You might make a list of possible solutions, and then choose the most suitable one. Be willing to compromise, and once you've agreed on a solution, stick to it and do what's needed to carry it through.

Your Conflict Management Plan

It can be difficult to remain calm through conflict. Planning ahead on how the conversation may occur can help to keep the situation as positive as it can be. Use this plan to assist in your preparation and to document your agreement.

What is the issue?	What "I" statements can you use to address the issue?	What are the options for resolution?	What was the agreed solution?

Beating Loneliness

Feeling lonely can happen to anyone. It can make you feel empty, hollow and cut off from the world around you. But loneliness is a common feeling. It isn't a personal defect, and it can be changed.

To stop loneliness from bringing you down into depression, you'll have to address your feelings and make the first move to break the cycle. This can be especially scary since one of the effects of loneliness can be to make you feel socially inadequate and that no one wants to talk to you. But remember, feeling lonely signals that your personal needs are not being met.³⁷

The most important thing to remember is that loneliness is not a sign of weakness. You can make changes if you're prepared to put in the work. You can decide whether you want to find and make new friends, rekindle old friendships or learn to enjoy time on your own.^{37,55} Here are some suggestions for overcoming loneliness:

- Put yourself in new situations where you may meet someone with whom you have something in common. There are many activity groups where you can learn a new skill; do things with others you enjoy, such as walking or going to a book club; attend discussions with like-minded people; or volunteer your skills.
- Don't wait for people to talk to you – say "hello" and smile.
- Don't stop doing things you enjoy because you don't have anyone to do them with. Go to the movies, buy a ticket for the play you want to see or visit your local art galleries.
- Respond to other people's invitations and encouragement and ask questions to engage in the conversation.
- Don't rush into intimate relationships too quickly. Friendships take time and develop naturally, so be patient and don't give up.
- Take care of yourself. Be sure to get adequate sleep, practice good nutrition and get regular exercise.

Recognizing the symptoms

Feelings of loneliness tend to occur at certain life points or when you feel that you have no choice in how things have worked out. Changes in circumstance, such as moving to a new home, the breakup of a relationship, bereavement, unemployment, having a baby or young children, or retirement can all be powerful triggers. Feeling isolated by these changes and that you have no one with whom you can share your feelings and experiences can make you feel unloved or unwanted, socially inadequate, self conscious, and even angry and critical of others.^{37,55}

But this isn't the only time loneliness can strike. Feeling as if you have no one who understands you can happen at any time, even when to the outside world you have no reason to feel lonely because you appear to have everything, including a family, friends and a career.

There are different degrees of loneliness, and the strategies that will work for you will depend on where you are on the scale. Overwhelming feelings of loneliness and despair may signal the need to talk to a professional counselor or your doctor because loneliness can lead to depression. If your symptoms are less severe, try some of the strategies listed earlier.

Helping others

If you're lucky enough not to have experienced any of these feelings, or if you've been there and come out the other side, take a quick look through your address book. When was the last time you spoke to your friends and family? Is there anyone you haven't heard from in a while? Why not call and catch up? What about your parents and grandparents? When did you last spend time with them? Checking up on your friends and family has benefits for you as well – after all, you're expanding your own support network of people to check on you!

Top Tips

- ✓ Make your friends and family a priority.
- ✓ Deal with conflict by using positive communication methods.
- ✓ Volunteer – it’s a great way to meet other people, and helping others can improve your health and reduce stress.

Your Personal Stress Management Plan

In this chapter, you learned how your personal relationships can help you manage during stressful times as well as how they can add to your stress level.

Think about your most important personal relationships.

How do they provide support for you during times of stress? _____

In what ways do they contribute to your stress? _____

What steps can you take to manage your personal relationships better? _____

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Always look for the “silver lining.”

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