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e-book

GET RID OF STRESS BALANCE YOUR LIFE

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Introduction

“People are as happy as they make up their minds to be”.

____Abraham Lincoln

By the SAME token, people are as stressed as they wish to be. Not so strange, if you think about it. It’s all in your head, you know. Stress and its corrosive companions come knocking on every door. They enter only when they are invited in.

Known the world over as ‘the silent killer’, the word ‘stress’ is causing stress in many a mind and body. The positive aspect, however, is that the choice is still ours. To be stressed or not. When we can choose to be free from stress, why worry?

Here is a practical guide to freedom from stress. How to recognize stress, avoid stress, cope with stress, overcome stress.....

Well...just lead a life sans stress. It’s in your hands.

1. The story of Stress

What is stress?

STRESS IS THE ‘wear and tear’ that our bodies experience as we adjust to our continually changing environment. It has physical and emotional effects on us and create positive or negative feelings.

As a positive influence, stress can help compel us to action. It can result in a new awareness and an exciting new perspective. Positive stress actually exists; it’s called ‘eustress’. It results from exhilarating experiences.

Eustress is the stress of winning and achieving.

Negative stress is distress. It is the stress of losing, falling, overworking and not coping. As a negative influence, it can result in feelings of distrust, rejection, anger and depression which, in turn, can lead to health problems. We all experience distress from time to time.

What are stressors?

‘STRESSORS’ ARE THE events or situations that cause stress. Acknowledging the source of the stress, is the key to managing it.

Take a piece of paper and write the word ‘Stress’ at the top. Now write down all the words and images that come to your mind as you think about this word. No two lists, not even your twin’s will ever be the same.

Stress is different thing to different people.

To a mountaineer it is the challenge of pushing physical resources to the limit by striving to achieve a demanding goal.

To the homeward-bound commuter, it may be the hassles of heavy traffic and obnoxious exhaust time.

To the student, it may be exam pressure.

To the homemaker, it may be the dismissal of domestic help.

To the new bride, an unexpected pregnancy.



To the career person, it might be a missed promotion or a callous colleague.

To the single parent, traumatic memories and fears about the future.

To the bereaved, the suddenness of loss.

Stress situations are unique to every individual.

Therefore, they are diverse and numerous.

2. Stress, the silent killer.

God grant me serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference.”

-----Reinhold Niebuhr

Acute stress

A LATE NIGHT party is fun .The same gathering again the next day? Well...And then another late night in a row?
Definitely taxing and tiring.

Acute stress comes from the demands and pressures of the recent past and the anticipated demands and pressures of the near future .It is thrilling and exciting in small doses, but too much is exhausting.

Because it is short-term ,acute stress doesn't have enough time to do the extensive damage associated with long-term stress.

The most common symptoms are :

- Emotional distress-anger of irritability, anxiety and depression; muscular problems including tension headaches and back pain.
- Stomach, gut and bowel problems such as heart-burn,acidity,flatulence,diarrhea,constipation and irritable bowel sundrome.
- High blood pressure, rapid heartbeat, dizziness, migraine headaches, shortness of breath and chest pain.

Acute stress can prop up in anyone's life.

So what do we do about it?

Travel at the speed of life. It's simple and easy when you know how. Go with the flow. Neither too fast nor too slow. Keep pace with life.

Episodic acute stress

There are those. Whose lives are so disordered, that they suffer from acute stress frequently. They are always in a rush, but always late. If anything can go wrong, it does. They take on too much.

It is common for such people to be short-tempered, irritable, anxious and tense.

Always in a hurry, they tend to be abrupt, and sometimes their irritability comes across as hostility.

Interpersonal relationships deteriorate rapidly when others respond with real hostility

Another form of episodic acute stress comes from ceaseless worry.

This 'worry warts' sees disaster around every corner and pessimistically forecast catastrophe in every situations.

The key to a cure is, quite naturally, a change in attitude. Choose to change.

Chronic Stress

While acute stress can be thrilling and exciting, chronic stress is not. This is the grinding stress that wears people down day after day, year after year.

Chronic stress destroys bodies, minds and lives. It wrecks havoc through long term attrition.

It's stress of want, of broken homes and families, of being trapped in an unhappy marriage or in a despised job or career.....

Chronic stress comes when a person never sees away out of a miserable situation.

With no hope, individual gives up searching for solutions.

The worst aspect of chronic stress is that people get used to it. They forget it's there. People are immediately aware of acute stress because it is new; they ignore chronic stress because it is old, familiar, and sometimes, almost comfortable.

Chronic stress kills. People wear down to a final, fatal breakdown.

Is there hope? Yes, of course. Move out from the stress zone – physically. If that it is not possible, move out mentally.



THE AMERICAN JOURNALIST and sociologist Alvin Toffler predicted that the rate of change in modern civilization would accelerate to such a degree, that enormous numbers of people would experience shattering stress and disorientation. Toffler described this condition as Future Shock. This was in the year 1970!

Physiological and psychological stress emerges as a result of a growing deficit between daily demands and coping resources.

To cope with the stress of 'future shock' people need to get tough.

The need of the hour is stress-toughness ... the word is **hardiness**.

However, just as the idea of stress is unique to every person, so is each person's threshold of tolerance.

3. Stress personalities

Just who do you think you are?

“ Life is about twenty percent in what happens to us and eighty percent in the way we respond to the events”

-----Ted Engstorm

EVERY INDIVIDUAL IS unique. No two personalities are ever identical. Nor can anyone be ‘clubbed’ together for common traits. However...

It is extremely unlikely, that none of these ring a bell or touch a chord somewhere !

The silent sufferer

You are anxious. You may:

- feel reluctant to discuss your problems with other people, in case you appear incompetent or ignorant.
- work yourself into a state of nervousness, fear or panic.

You could bite the bullet and seek a sympathetic ear. Reassurance will transform your view of everything.

The obsessed one

You are really upset. You may:

Allow your problems to preoccupy you to the exclusion of everything else.

go over and over them until everybody is fed up with listening to you.

Feel that your control of the daily routine is slipping because of your constant fretting’

Develop compulsive behaviour patterns, such as repeatedly checking that gas and electrical appliances are turned off, windows are locked etc.

Since you can’t sort which worry is worse than another, sit down and make a list in order of priority.

The Clam

You are really upset. You may:

- avoid stress by detaching yourself from involvement with other people and events.
- create a fantasy world in which everything is rosy.

Make a real effort to communicate with other people.

The victim

You are suspicious. You may:

- believe that the world is filled with perils for you.
- suspect other people of having malicious intentions.
- blame others for your problems.
- See any support or advice as a threat.

Treat refusal as a personal rejection.

However difficult, try to trust people when they offer help. Make an effort to imagine yourself in other people's shoes and offer help in return.

The beanbag

You are placid and dependent. You may:

- let problems roll over you without attempting to deflect or resolve them.

When people offer advice, try to follow their suggestions. Better still, take the initiative instead of relying on others to bail you out.

The surly solo

You are aggressive and hostile. You may:

- ignore other people's feelings and thus make situations worse
- oppose things because you don't know how else to react.
- Reject advice if you don't agree with it.

Unfortunately, you are not likely to pay attention to any suggestions, until some catastrophe has humbled you enough to heed good advice. Awareness, acceptance and an attitude that is positive, are the keys to freedom from stress and its related maladies.

4. Get into the rhythm of life

Simple secrets for stress-free living

“Realise that true happiness lies within you. Waste no time and effort searching for peace, contentment and joy in the world outside. Remember that there is no happiness in having or in getting, but only in giving. Reach out. Share. Smile. Hug. Happiness is a perfume you cannot pour on others without getting a few drops on yourselves.”

---Og Mandino

Helpline ---

“Come to the edge.
 We can't. We're afraid.
Come to the edge.
 We can't. We will fall!
Come to the edge.
 And they came.
And he pushed them.
 And they flew.”

---Guillaume Apollinaire

You...Are here for a reason

Your life has a purpose and meaning.

Consider this: nothing would be the same if you did not exist. Every place you have ever been and every one you have ever spoken to would be different without you.

If this is so, why suffer from an identity crisis? Why look for approval? Why waste away in envy, bitterness or self pity?

It's okay to lose

You don't have to win every time.

Highly competitive people, who always need to win, end up enjoying life much less. If they lose they are very disappointed, and if they win it's what they expected... So where is the thrill? This attitude can be boring and stressful in a very subtle manner. Accept it. It is okay to lose. Enjoy another's victory.

Never lost touch

Cultivate friendships. Cherish and nourish them constantly.

Rekindle past relationships, and take advantage of opportunities at work or among your neighbours to make more and more friends. People need to feel that they are a part of something bigger, that they care about others and are cared about by others in return. This sense of belonging is therapy of sorts.

Get real

Have realistic expectations.

People who are happy don't get everything they want, but they want most of what they get. Choose to value things that are yours.

People who find themselves dissatisfied in life often set unreachable goals for themselves. People who set and reach more modest goals are happier than those who aspire higher and wear themselves down.

When you take stock of your position at work, or your relationship with your family, don't use fantasy pictures as a standard of comparison. The richest person or happiest family. These people or situations do not exist in the real world.

Stay with reality and strive to make things better, not perfect.

Team up

Don't face your problems alone.

Problems can be daunting. The human race is basically gregarious. We are social creatures who need to discuss our problems with others. We may choose to confide in people who care about us most or those who have faced the same problems we have. When we are alone, we tend to 'stew in our juices' and let problems fester. By sharing, we can gain different perspectives and find solutions.

Fear not the golden years

Old people are as happy as younger people. Prepare for a life of quietness and serene satisfaction. Make sure that boredom does not feature in your vocabulary. Early enough, just as monetary plans are made, hobbies and friendships too must be cultivated. Much before retirement.

Routine is soothing

Develop a household routine.

We often feel overwhelmed by the chores that have to be done on a regular basis. Set up a reasonable schedule to do your work.

Make a list of tasks to accomplish each day.

A routine will ensure that you are not bewildered and overwhelmed, wondering what comes next.

Make your job a mission

Treat your career as a calling.

If you see your work as only a job, then it's taking you away from what you really want to be doing. It becomes a 'drag'.

If you see it as a 'calling', then there is no longer toil that you are forced to endure. Instead, it becomes an extension of yourself. A means of expression and an important aspect of your life.

Value your values

Never trade your morals for your goals.

People, who compromise on what they believe in to satisfy their goal, wind up unhappy with their accomplishments. Their inner voice will not allow them to revel in their ill-achieved success. If you do not respect yourself, satisfaction is impossible to achieve.

Good night

Don't skimp on sleep. A full night's rest is fuel for the following day. Rested people feel they work better and are more comfortable when the day is over

Smile

Your smile can make a person's day bright and happy. This will also make you happy. Is it too much to ask?

Listen to music

Music communicates to us on many different levels, and our favourite music tends to transport the mind to its favourite place. Music is therapeutic. Soothe your nerves with good music. ‘Good’ simply means music that you ‘enjoy’.

Get some fun and sun

Don’t forget to have fun.

Every day, make sure that you give yourself some time to enjoy, to be silly, to laugh, fool around and have fun without donning masks of any kind.

Soak in a few minutes of the sun. Darkness and closed doors can cause gloom that sunlight quickly dispels.

Fill with fragrance

Surround yourself with pleasant aromas.

A simple way to make yourself feel better is to air out your rooms, and fill them up with fresh fragrant flowers. Aroma candles and pot-pourri too can be soothing.

Find meaning

Have a purpose.

Without a purpose nothing matters. You can work hard and be successful. Keep house, cook, clean, and then take up any number of new activities. But without proper reason, everything becomes meaningless.

It’s immaterial

Money does not buy happiness.

We spend so much time chasing wealth, worrying about money, earning, saving, hoarding, spending....It may surprise you to learn that there are many ‘wealthy’ people who are stressed out, dissatisfied and unhappy.

Happiness has nothing to do with the state of being rich.

It's your choice

What does life mean? You decide for yourself.

Your future – how you feel about it, yourself, and everything else – follows from the decision you make, the priorities you develop, and the perspective from which you see things. It determines how you choose to be, Relaxed and happy. Or tensed and strained. Make the right choice.

Slide down, on the rainbow

“Sometimes it’s important to work for that pot of gold. But other times it’s essential to take time off and to make sure that your most important decision in the day simply consists of choosing which color to slide down on the rainbow”

Douglas Pagels

Victories are sweet. We spend needless time worrying about the numerous things that have gone awry. Or might. Instead, try dwelling on the triumphs of life. The minor ones, such as buying the right accessories, or having just enjoyed a good book. And the major ones, such as a loving family, or having found a comfortable apartment, or having bought a new car, or having a great career. Aren’t there a million things happening in your life that make you smile, laugh or even giggle like a school girl? Think of them.

Involve yourself in a cause. There are folks around us who are not quite so blessed. Spend some time, effort or even wealth on them. When you see the smiles on the faces of patients you visit in a hospice or a home, all your troubles will seem to vanish. Visit a school for special children with your children. Teach them art or craft. Play with them or offer to go along on the school picnic... they could do with extra help.

Think of others and let your stress , real or imaginary, ebb away slowly.

Believe. Believe in the goodness of human nature. In the fact that every person is looking for solace. Each one has his or her own share of problems and is not there to sabotage your life. Believe that the best is yet to come. Believe in yourself and your ability to cope with the roller-coaster ride that we call life.

Generosity is the ability to give.... Without keeping tabs. It’s only at work that you need remuneration. At other times, there is a joy in giving. Give your time and skills and never expect returns as a matter of right. Most often, expectations lead to frustration and, its sister, stress. So, be generous in thought, word and deed. Think the best of others, leave gossip and slander alone. Do something to brighten up someone’s day.



You do matter.... a lot. Never forget that you are the most important person in your life. In your need to please your family and friends, in trying to match the Modis or keep up with the Kaleems, don't lose sight of the fact that your likes and dislikes matter. Spend time to pamper yourself a little... or a lot. Stay home and read your favourite book, rather than tag along to a movie you'd rather not see. Say no when you have to. It's not wrong.

Order. Bring order into your life. De-clutter your thoughts and bring in emotional order. Every night, just as you turn out your pockets or purse to clear the unnecessary, clear your head of fruitless thoughts. Bitterness and the yen for revenge are self-destructive. Throw out negative feelings and memories. In the same way, relieve yourself of material clutter. Make space, in and around you. Personal space is sacred.

Life's simple pleasures. Raindrops on roses and whiskers on kittens. Bright copper kettles and What are your favourite things? Find time to enjoy life's simple pleasures. Realise your dreams and then dream on.

5. Don't worry, be happy

Mind over matter

“The mind is its own place, and in itself, can make heaven of hell, and a hell of heaven.”
- John Milton

THE STRESS OF worry can lead to a downward spiral. We become stressed because we are worried, and then even more worried because we are stressed.

Get the picture?

Worrying can be the result of sudden problems which may arise.

Or constant nagging factors that disturb.

Creating mental barriers can be an effective means of controlling worry. When you feel anxious, think immediately of a baby's smile or something funny.

This may seem simple or silly, but at any one time we can only hold one thought in our mind.

By concentrating on a non-threatening subject we deflect our thoughts from the cause of anxiety.

Once you feel calmer, go off and do something which is not only enjoyable but also requires your full concentration.

Return to the problem only when you feel totally at peace.

Put the cause in perspective now.

Dreamy destinations

“Every good thought you think is contributing its share to the ultimate result of your life.”
- Grenville Kleiser

VISUALISATION IS A potent method of stress reduction, especially when combined with physical relaxation methods such as deep breathing.

Some environments can be very relaxing, while others can be intensely stressful. The principle behind the use of imagery in stress reduction is that you can use your imagination to recreate a place or scene that is very relaxing.

Imagine a scene, place or event that you remember as safe, peaceful, restful, beautiful and happy. You can bring all your senses into the image, with the sounds of running water, the smell of cut grass, the taste of cool spring water, the warmth of the sun....

Use the imagined place as a retreat from stress and pressure.

Meditation mantras

“Still the bubbling mind; herein lies freedom and bliss eternal.”

- Swami Sivananda

THE IDEA OF meditation is to focus your thoughts on one relaxing thing for a sustained period of time.

This rests your mind by diverting it from thinking about the problems that have caused stress.

It gives your body time to relax and recuperate.

The essence of meditation is to quieten your thoughts by focusing completely on just one thing – object, breathe, sound or imagery.

Unlike hypnosis, which is more of a passive experience, meditation is an active process that seeks to exclude outside thoughts by concentration on the subject of the meditation.

Relax your body. Get into a position that you can comfortably sustain for a period of time. If you are supple enough, then the lotus position may be appropriate. Otherwise, just sit in a comfortable chair, or lie down.

Concentrating on breathing slowly. You could visualize health and relaxation flowing into your body when you inhale, and stress or pain flowing out when you exhale.

Focus on a sound. It could be ‘Om’. Some prefer soft instrumental music. Yet others, different chants. You will find that as you practice meditation, your attention span will improve.

Unconventional stress relievers

“Dance like no one is watching. Sing like no one is listening. Love like you’ve never been hurt, and live like it’s heaven on earth.”

- Mark Twain

Sing

LOTS OF PEOPLE swear by the power of music to release tension and stress.

Sing in your car, in the shower, at home, or whenever you feel comfortable.

It doesn't matter if you sing childhood jingles or Billboard hits.

The point is to let go of inhibition and have fun.

If you really want to use up some energy, add some dance steps.

Feel silly? Good. At least you won't feel stressed.

Repetitive, relaxing activity

Try knitting, crochet, pottery making, or anything with soothing movements.

Don't worry about creating a masterpiece or even developing a skill.

It's the process that's beneficial.

Sitting still while performing repetitive movements is calming and stabilizing.

It could also be an opportunity to collect your thoughts.

Grow something

Start a garden. You don't need a large yard or even any yard. Apartment-dwellers can have a balcony garden or even an indoor 'garden' of potted plants.

Sure, there's work involved in getting started. But tending plants and flowers and watching them grow, bloom, or yield fruit and vegetables is rewarding.

Avid gardeners say working in a garden is one of the best ways of controlling stress and worry. The added benefit being, of course, the creation of a beautiful environment.

Play with a pet

Pet owners have longer lives and fewer stress symptoms than non-pet owners.

It's hard to feel negative or tense when you are stroking a kitten or taking a dog for a walk.

It's a form of social interaction with no pressure to meet anyone's expectations.

Star gaze

Gaze at the stars. Preferably in a still, dark and quiet area. Sit back and observe the heavens. Just for fun, try to identify some constellations and planets.

Accepting the vastness of the universe can make any problems seem very small.

Read, write and rave

Creative expression is a great stress buster. Read a good book. Write poetry. Cover the floor with rangoli patterns. Rave about what you have enjoyed with anyone who cares to listen. More than half the pleasure of enjoyment is when you share it with others and see them in sync with your emotions. Share a joke, a thought, a tale....

Since these are unconventional activities, you could think up so many more. Each one as unique in itself as you are. Make them fun, relaxing or as bizarre as you please. Tell the world, or keep your secret.

6. Play the game of life...

“Which of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?”

- Luke 12:25-26

HERE ARE SOME simple ways to gear yourself up and be mentally, emotionally and physically fit to handle the game of life. And all that it metes out to you.

- **Eat, drink.... And live well.** Good nutritional habits that include eating a balanced diet, taking appropriate nutritional supplements, and limiting caffeine, sugar and fat intake is stage one in the war you wage against stress - rather, step one towards a life sans stress.

Unwind...relax. There are numerous relaxation techniques. Deep breathing exercises, pranayama, yoga, meditation, alternative schools of healing such as Reiki, Pranic healing, Tai Chi, Aromatherapy and more. Scout around for one that suits your temperament and purse. You can relax right at home if you apply your mind to it. Some good music, a method of creative expression, your feet up or soaking in warm sudsy water, a good book...

The body that is not tense receives everything in the right way. The good, the bad and the unpleasant.....nothing can upset its balance.

- **Walk.** Walk away your disturbances. Get away from your misery, mood and mania. Walking keeps you fit to handle physical overloads, and calm to tackle the mental short circuits too. It's simple, it's easy, it's inexpensive.
- **Get active.** Don't be a couch potato glued to the TV all day. Move around even if you are home. Find something interesting to do that involves physical effort. Clean, dust, reorganize. Get involved in social projects, community projects and good causes.

Keep the mind and body agile

- **Be a sport.** Play a game. At the club with the cronies. At the home with your kids. The game doesn't need a name or suitable gear. Just sweat it out while you have fun bonding with friends and family. Feel the body let go of the 'knots' and 'crosses' of daily stress.
- **Cling on.** Feeling low? Hold on. Lean. Share. There is no need for the ego to stand in your way. Choose a confidante carefully and share your feelings and fears. Your confidante could be a friend, family or an anonymous helpline.

- **Have your say.** Express yourself clearly. Never bottle up feelings. Choose an appropriate moment and a sympathetic ear. Communicate. By the same token, be there for others. Listen, when people talk. Whether it is about you or about them. Verbal give-and-take is a great way to unwind.

Put your foot down. Speak up for yourself when you are right. Learn to say no when you feel you should. Don't try to please everyone while tying yourself up in knots. Remember, the only know that made the history was the Gordian Knot... and it's yet to unraveled.

Simplify your life by accepting only what you can or want to do. Be assertive. Give constructive criticism, refuse unrealistic requests.

Go Fiscal... enjoy your money. Neither hoard nor splurge. Be balanced and plan money matters so that they do not become an obsessions. When you have money to spend on needs and some saved for the unexpected rainy day, it doesn't rake over your life and run it.

Nor does it terrorize you by night and day. Determine your needs and find the means to earn the necessary amount.

Keep time. Manage time right. Plan your day. Plan the next hour. It doesn't require paper work. Mentally organize your program. Put down on paper the more demanding schedules. Be punctual. Honour commitments and appointments. There is no need to rush through your day if it is loaded just right. And none but know your load limits. Get up an hour earlier. You gain personal time and space to reorient yourself and take on life.... Cheerfully and calmly.

Act... don't react. Establish your priorities, take action on plans and goals. Set limits and stick to them. Schedule effectively and avoid procrastination. Pace your efforts. Space them too. When you are in control, you will act. Not react.

Resolve...don't dissolve into despair. There are very few problems in this world that have absolutely no solution. Approach problems logically. Obtain information. Never assume that you are equipped to handle everything that comes your way. Seek help and accept it with grace. Find workable solutions by considering alternatives. Look for the potential consequences of every action and evaluate them. Think out of the box, as they say. Solution will surface.

Challenge... your self. Your thought patterns may be your undoing. Consciously monitor your thoughts – distinguish the negative from the positive. Assess yourself honestly. Do you tend to have more negative thought patterns? Put your problems in perspective and think again. Challenge your attitude. Change your attitude.

Rock.. the foundation. Many beliefs that are rigid and time worn are stress inducing. Break away from them. Change them to those that are practical and functional for you, for the moment and the context.

“I can be happy even if others do not approve of me.”
“The world doesn’t have to meet my wishes all the time.”
“I don’t have to be perfect to be worthwhile.”

Make these your mantras of the moment.

Roll... with laughter. Learn, yes... learn to laugh. At life, at yourself, at situations, at the small little things that happen along the way. Laughter is medicine.

“The arrival of good clown exercises a more beneficial influence upon the health of a town than the arrival of twenty asses laden with drugs.”

Thomas Sydenham
Seventeenth Century Physician

Remember, man is the only of the creator’s masterpieces that can laugh. Treasure that gift. Laughing with your friends over silly little things can refresh you and relieve you of life’s frustrations.

Connect... with the higher consciousness. Seek your truth. Look inward and find strength to handle everything. The joys, sorrows, trials and triumphs. Any emotion in extreme is stressful. See that enthusiasm doesn’t topple you over, nor despair drown you. Remember....

“I am the cosmos.
I am limited only by my thoughts.
I have the power to create and annihilate.
Why then I should feel powerless before fate?
I am as free as the wind and the water and the birds.
Should I choose to imprison myself with my presumptions.
And so fettered, refuse to fly?”

- N. Kavassery

Do you believe these lines to be true?
If you do, you will never ever have to feel the blues.

7. Shake free of shackles

“You have got to think about ‘big things’ while you’re doing small things, so that the small things go in the right direction.”

- Alvin Toffler

OFTEN, STRESSFUL SITUATIONS can be avoided when we take corrective steps at the personal level. Start with the face in the mirror. Step by step, unfetter yourself of old negative habits and useless traits. Reinvent your personality.

Make pact with yourself

Your word... Make it honourable. Honour it always.
Speak with integrity.
Say only what you mean, and mean every word you say.
Never speak against yourself. It’s demeaning.
Acknowledge the power of your words.
Use this power carefully.

“Stop being humble, you are not that great.”

-Golda Meir

Did you laugh? By the same token, you are not that important either!

So.... Don’t take everything personally

- Noting others do or say is because of you.
- People have their own reasons for their speech or action.
- Value others’ opinions, but do not be dependant on them.
- Relate to people but don’t make emotional crutches out of them.
- When things go wrong, don’t blame yourself.
- When things go right. Don’t take full credit.
- Uneasy lies the head that grabs the crown.

When you learn to become immune to opinions and happenings, needless suffering ceases.

Avoid jumping... to conclusions

“Some of the world’s greatest feats were accomplished by people not smart enough to know they were impossible”

- Doug Larson



- Don't make assumptions all the time.
- Find the courage to ask questions.
- Express yourself clearly but never overrule.
- Communicate without conflict.
- Avoid misunderstanding... others.
- Never say impossible. Try. Try again.
- You can, if you so wish. Change the person you are.
- You can transform your life.

Best foot forward

“I care not what others think of what I do, but I care very much about what I think of what I do. That is character!”

- Theodore Roosevelt

- Always do your best.
- Your best is not a constant. It will change from moment to moment.
- Under any circumstances, simply do what you can in the best possible way.
- Avoid regret and reproach.

Strive for perfection, but don't get carried away by perfectionism.

Some are always talking about the past; others are constantly planning the future. If you want to 'live', the best place to be is the present, the here and now, as it is, where it is.

8. Play your cards well

DEAL WITH LIFE much the same way as you would play your hand in a game of cards. You have what has been dealt to you. You pick up, retain and discard as you go along. You may win or lose a game. But you play on. Are you stressed out when you play a game of cards? Certainly not.

Life is not different. Play life's cards cheerfully.

“Now is no time to think of what you do not have. Think of what you can do with what there is.”

- Ernest Hemingway

Your 13 cards....

- Your life... God! It's so precious.
 - Time... it's precious.
 - Good health.. it's the fabric of life.
 - Your skills... They are your wealth.
 - Knowledge.. it's power.
 - Education.... A tool for life.
 - Your positive personality traits... You strengths.
 - Your negative personality traits.....your raw deal.
 - Relationships... your reason to exist.
 - Career... a support system.
 - Victories... the reason to go on.
 - Trials.... A test of strength.
- Love... an antidote for everything.

A mixed bag? Yes, indeed. That's the way of life.

And now the game...
Pick up and retain...

Good friends. These are the kind that are around in good times and bad. The kind that care and share. They even dare to tell you when you are wrong. Friends are great stress relievers. Treasure them always.

Clean habits. By this we mean, habits that are conducive to good physical, mental and emotional well-being. For example, personal hygiene and fitness routines would keep you comfortable at the physical level. Good hobbies and punctuality at the mental level. The ability to relate well to people, and more importantly, to yourself, at the emotional level.

Noble thoughts. Thoughts trigger our speech and action. As we speak and behave, so we become. What we become is what we live with, right through our lives. When thoughts are frenzied and harried, the person is a bundle of nerves. When the mind rests in the higher and more noble realms of thought, the person reflects and radiates calm.

Forgiveness. Forgive yourself and those around you for what you ‘perceive’ as imperfections. You could be dead wrong, you know. To forgive and forget is to heal and find peace.

So you have an idea of what cards you need to keep....there are more such cards in life’s deck. Unearth them all and decide what is good for you. Hold on to them for dear life!

Now, discard...

Guilt... is painful. Never get into situation you cannot talk to anyone about. Are you uncomfortable about a thought, word, or deed? Give it up. It’s easier than living with guilt. Listen to the still small voice inside you. It is your friend.

Resentment... is cancerous. It gnaws away as it builds up dis-ease. Yes. Doesn’t the lack of ‘ease’ lead to ‘disease’? So why walk into an ICU with your eyes open? Let go of resentment. Don’t let it wear you down.

Criticism... is arthritic in nature. It cripples. It is a permanent habit that refuses to let you be free of stress and trouble. It seeks and finds negativity. It causes pain of a chronic kind. Simply stop being critical of others and yourself.

Fear... is paralyzing. It causes tensions at all levels of functioning. It creates migraines, aches and pains. It is unreasonable, illogical and makes you stressed out even before you encounter conflict. It is trouble in anticipation. Be reasonable. Fear flees before reason.

These are a mere indication of the negative cards that we may pick up. There are more. So many more that we may encounter.

Pride, anger, vengeance, shame, envy, jealousy, possessiveness, dishonesty.... The list is frighteningly long.

But always remember, it is by choice that we retain these cards in our hands.

Realise that they have no place in your scheme of things.

They are useless. Discard them immediately.

You are the player. You are in control.

9. One step at a time

OFTEN, WE PANIC because we are unsure of the unknown. Here are few golden truths that have come from voices of experience. From the book of life. Think about them. Even wry humour can make one look inward for answers.

When you have your answers, there is no cause for panic or stress. It's a position of power. It is a state of peace.

“The trouble with the rat-race is that even if you win, you're still a rat”

---Lily Tomlin

- Why are you running a race at all? Who are you competing with? What point do you need to prove?

Slow down and go at your pace. You'll get there in good time. And, more importantly, in good shape.

“It is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit

--Harry S.Truman

- We are constantly craving attention and approval. When we are not noticed or acknowledged, we sulk or suffer.

We are stressed if others take credit. We are stressed if we miss an award or recognition. Or a promotion. Happiness lies in accomplishing things. Not in the recognition of it. If the approval comes, it is merely a bonus.

“Obstacles are those frightful things you see when you take your eyes off your goal.

--Henry Ford

- When we are sure of what we are doing, the journey becomes that much easier and more comfortable. It is when we lose sight of our destination and goals that we wander aimlessly and encounter hurdles. Keep your end in sight. Find the means to achieve it.

“ A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity, an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.

--- Winston Churchill

- There is a well-worn story, but timeless in its relevance. Two marketing men went to a tribal area to explore the scope for marketing footwear. Said the first “This place has no potential. No one wears shoes here.”

Said the second. “ This place has tremendous potential. No one wears shoes here!”

It is the same half cup. It’s either half empty, or half full.

The choice is ours.

Pessimism causes distress ... and despair.

Optimism causes eustress ... and excitement.

“We are not retreating – we are advancing in another direction.”

-- General MacArthur.

- Everything in life is a matter of perception. If old values stress you out, break free and head in a fresh new direction. If a job or career is in the doldrums, maybe it’s time to rethink your next move.

It is foolish to fight a futile or lost cause. It is not weak to admit failure and move on in life. Relentless pounding away at a door that won’t open is a sure way to break down. No, not the door, your nerves. Know when to give up and when to go on.

“Out of clutter, find simplicity. From discord, find harmony. In the middle of difficulty, lies opportunity.”

-- Albert Einstein

- ‘Seek and ye shall find’ applies to most things in life.

We find what we look for. Trials and tribulations. Victories and power. Stress and sorrow. Happiness and peace. Openings and opportunities.

Seek and find what give you peace and power.

“One of the symptoms of an approaching nervous breakdown is the belief that one’s work is terribly important.”

--- Bertrand Russell



- We often derive a great deal of pleasure in putting ourselves at the helm and playing captain. We get carried away and refuse to let go of the wheel. Swollen in self-importance, we lose sight of our limitations and skill sets and our mental and physical capacities. We believe firmly that we are the proverbial giant, Atlas, propping up the world. Is it any wonder that we break down?

“For every problem, there is a solution that is simple, neat and wrong.”

Henry Louis Mencken

- Of the many roads that lead to stress ville, the ‘easy way out’ is often the most used. Lacking the time, energy or will to things out, we often take the path of least resistance...which could lead us into trouble, or nowhere. Neither is a comfortable destination. The journey you enjoyed is soon forgotten in the mess that awaits you. Use your discretion to figure out the best possible solutions. Not just the easiest.

“It’s not that I’m so smart, it’s just that I stay with problems longer.”

-

-- Albert Einstein

- What an admission! Ingenious, don’t you agree? Many a race has been lost when the will fails and falters a few feet away from the finish line. What frustration and stress when you discover the trophy that was almost yours was just an arm’s length. away! Avoid these pitfalls. Stay with the problem just that much longer and experience the sweet taste of success.

“You can either take action or you can hang back and hope for a miracle.”

-

-- Peter Drucker

- If over-action is stressful, inaction is not very different. Waiting around for miracles to happen may seem like a pleasant stay in an ivory tower, but the build up of tension soon becomes palpable. If there is a problem at home or work, what can you do about it? Assess your capacity, involvement and need to sort out things. Do what is best for the moment... for you.

“Are you bored with life? Then throw yourself into some work you believe in with all your heart, live for it, die for it, and you will find happiness that you had thought could never be yours.”

--- Dale Carnegie



- Boredom, lethargy and ennui are stressful. Shake off the bored feeling. It's all in your mind. Don't waste away. Find something to be passionate about. Get involved and come alive.

“The best thing about the future is that it comes only one day at a time.”

-- Abraham Lincoln

You can even eat an elephant, if you take it one bite at a time and someone, tongue-in-cheek. Every odyssey started with just one step forward. One step at a time is the way to a simple stress-free journey through life. And if you know the words of ‘Lead kindly light’, so much the better. Take life on, one tiny step at a time. Day by day. Plan by plan. Milestone by milestone...

10. From panic... to power and peace

Seven steps to cope with chaos... and emerge a winner.

1. Don't take it personally

Business changes and management changes. That's the nature of hi-tech. But there's no return on spending time obsessing over who's to blame.

2. Assess your achievements

After every project, it's important to sort out the positives and negatives, and then integrate the lessons learned into your new project, job, or career.

3. Don't focus on the negative

There is a positive outlook in every situation, and it's important to focus on that before anything else. Look at what you have accomplished and what wouldn't have happened if you hadn't been there. This will encourage you to move forward to the next challenge

4. Know when to give up

Truly believe that if you can go through the barricade, you can go over it, you can go under it, or you can go around it. But you also need to step back when it's too hard. If you feel you are constantly pushing uphill or hitting your head against a wall, it's time to let go or to take a new approach.

5. Know your purpose

Focus on your long-term goals. Don't get caught up in one particular aspect of a project. Take a step back and concentrate on the original purpose.

6. Balance your life

When a job or career isn't going as planned, it's important to have a satisfactory personal life to fall back on and to support you through the rough times. This can work both ways.

7. Keep exploring new avenues

Keep trying new things. There is always another angle or approach to a job. Try them all. You may just find the one that's right for you. Something even better than the old one.

So ... let change be a challenge to take you places. From chaos to comfort zone. Confidently.

“You are a child of the universe no less than the trees and the stars; you have a right to be here. And whether or not it is clear to you, do not doubt the universe is unfolding as it should.”

- Max Ehrmann

The ten commandments of stress management

- **Thou shalt manage thyself**

Most people talk about managing time in order to have more of what life has to offer. However, it is only in managing ourselves that we really see a difference in our lives. Manage yourself and other things will fall into place.

- **Thou shalt take charge**

Life is like a teacup. There's only so much that will fit into it. If you fill your cup with the wrong people and the wrong things, you won't have time for the right people and right things. The wrong people and things bring stress. The right people and things bring joy and contentment. Choose who and what gets your time and attention.

- **Thou shalt love thyself**

Appreciate yourself for the good you do! Be gentle with yourself when things don't go the way you want them to. There are some things that you just can't control, no matter how much you may want to. Love yourself for who you are right now.

- **Thou shalt reward thyself**

When you do things that bring you joy, you are re-creating your spirit. Nurturing your spirit is a great way to help you reduce stress. Take time to do things that reward you, everyday.

Thou shalt pamper thy body

Health and vitality depend on your body's ability to use oxygen and food effectively. One of the ways to help that happen is through exercise. Exercise also releases endorphins, which have been shown to improve your mood, making it a great way to deal with stress! Move your body every day!

Thou Shalt relax

What do you do really relax? Do you even take the time, or k now how to? Meditation, listening to soothing music, spending time with friends and people you love, conscious breathing... these are all ways to really relax. If your mind is pulled to be things that stress you, you aren't really relaxed! Take time to be absolutely quiet every day.

Thou Shalt rest

It's important to take breaks. If you work for yourself, it's critical to your success that you take time to rest – away from your office or desk. Take a nap if you feel like one! It's also important to get sufficient sleep. Most people need at least seven hours each night. Good sleep habits include having a set bedtime and a set waking-time. Following a pattern and establishing a rhythm for yourself and your body help you to be more relaxed and less stressed during the day. Go to bed! Don't apologise for wanting to 'turn in' early!

Thou shalt be aware of thyself

Pay attention to your body. It gives you clues as to what it needs and when something is wrong with it. Also know what makes you feel great and what makes you feel lousy. Being able to recognize these will help you in making great decisions for yourself. Listen to your intuition.

Thou shalt eat right

Our minds have really been confused with ideas of what a 'healthy' diet should be and what 'proper' nutrition is. Learn more about things like 'low fat' foods, sugar, caffeine and impure water and find out how they are affecting your body. Improper nutrition causes stress in the body. Eat good stuff! Your body will thank you!

Thou shalt enjoy thyself

There's only so much time in this life. Every moment of it is precious. Make it all count. When you do, you'll find you have less stress, fewer physical problems, and that you are more productive. You deserve the very best life has to offer and life deserves the very best you have to give!

11. Balance your life

Finally it's all in your head

HAVING A POSITIVE attitude towards life in general ,may be one of the most important characteristics of successful, happy people.

A positive attitude is not accidental .Successful people know how to create a positive attitude and positive motivation for themselves.They don't just wait for it to happen.

Having a positive attitude is not the same as blind optimism.We need not ignore the challenges in life .We simply need not well in a futile situation.

At the end of each day, instead of recounting all the difficulties and all that remains undone, write down your accomplishments.

End each day on a positive note by jotting down a few of the good things that happened during the day.

When things get busy or when the going gets tough, Its easy to let your attitude slip .Yet, this is when you need your positive attitude the most .Your attitude influences your actions.

Remember, it's when" the going gets tough, the tough get going."

When you feel low are stressed out-When you really need positive action, but cannot rid yourself of negativity-remember ,Ultimately, "It's all in your head". Think positively. You will leave the valley of doom... and stress far behind you.

Enjoy the journey!



Your friend, philosopher and guide.



Your friend, philosopher and guide.



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