



# Stress

Relieving Mantra

## TRAINING GUIDE



## Say Goodbye to Stress

Anxiety, and Tension by Incorporating  
Healthier Lifestyle Changes in Your Life!



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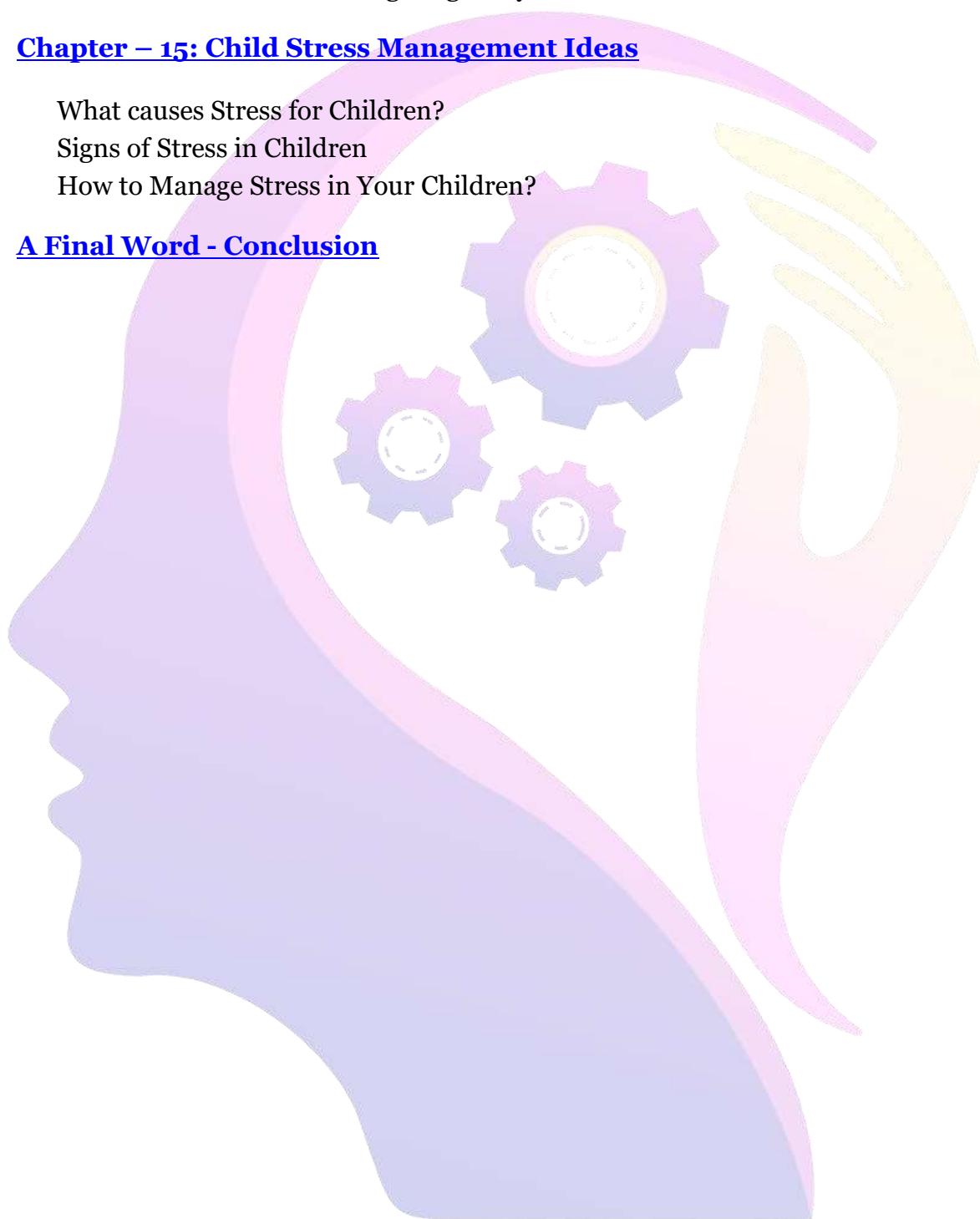


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## Introduction

In today's fast-paced modern world, we are experiencing stress in our everyday lives. Stress is a fact of life, wherever you are or whatever you are doing. You cannot avoid stress, but you can learn to manage it so it doesn't manage you.

Stress is caused by changes. Any change in life including enrolling in college, getting married, changing jobs or illness are frequent causes of stress. Keep in mind that changes that cause stress can also benefit you. Moving away from home to attend college, for example, creates personal-development opportunities—new challenges, friends, and living arrangements. That is why it's important to know yourself and carefully consider the causes of stress.

Learning to do this takes time, and although you cannot avoid stress, the good news is that you can minimize the harmful effects of stress, such as depression or hypertension. The key is to develop an awareness of how you interpret, and react to, circumstances. This awareness will help you develop coping techniques for managing stress.

Inside this guide, we will provide you some basic information on stress and simple recommended techniques to effectively manage and deal with stress. You'll learn how to combat stress in your daily life and prevent it from becoming a serious medical problem for your health and well-being.

The book focuses on what stress is, what causes it, and most importantly what you can do to manage your stress. It will provide you a detailed idea about how to identify your sources of stress, understand the stress and its root cause along with the ability to generate alternative solutions, and select the best solutions for your physical, mental and social well-being.

Let's embark on your stress management journey and get ready to say goodbye to troubled days in your life.



# Stress

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## Chapter 1



## Stress – An Overview



Stress — just the word may be enough to set your nerves on edge. Everyone feels stressed from time to time. Stress is a common part of life but sometimes we don't recognize its effects on us.

Have you ever found yourself in a situation where your to-do list seems endless, deadlines are fast approaching and you find yourself saying 'Eek! I feel stressed!'? But what is stress really, and how does it affect us? Well, let's find out...

### 1.1 What is 'Stress'?

Stress can be defined as the brain's response to any demand. Many things can trigger this response, including change. Changes can be positive or negative, as well as real or perceived. They may be recurring, short-term, or long-term and may include things like commuting to and from school or work every day, traveling for a yearly vacation, or moving to another home.



Changes can be mild and relatively harmless, such as winning a race, watching a scary movie, or riding a rollercoaster. Some changes are major, such as marriage or divorce,



serious illness, or a car accident. Other changes are extreme, such as exposure to violence, and can lead to traumatic stress reactions.

Stress impacts people in different ways and can have both physical and emotional effects. Everyone feels stressed from time to time. Not all stress is bad. All animals have a stress response, and it can be life-saving. Some people thrive on stress and even need it to get things done. When the term 'stress' is used in a clinical sense, it refers to a situation that causes discomfort and distress for a person and can lead to other mental health problems, such as anxiety and depression.

Therefore, stress can be a good thing but too much of a good thing can become unhealthy.

Stress can result from external factors (e.g., events, environment) or from internal factors (e.g., expectations, attitudes, feelings).



Stress often occurs in response to situations that are perceived as being difficult to handle or threatening. Common causes for stress (called stressors) include illness, injury, fear, and anxiety.



Each person reacts to stress differently. A healthy response to stress begins quickly; is appropriate in degree and in length; and can improve function, motivation, and productivity.

## 1.2 Stress—a good thing or a bad thing?

Feeling stressed can feel perfectly normal, especially during exam time. You might notice that sometimes being stressed-out motivates you to focus on your work, yet at other times, you feel incredibly overwhelmed and can't concentrate on anything. While stress affects everyone in different ways, there are two major types of stress: stress that's beneficial and motivating — good stress — and stress that causes anxiety and even health problems — bad stress.



In general, good stress is short-term and pushes you to accomplish greater things. In these situations, you tend to have a lot of control over the outcome and the stress can motivate you. Bad stress can be short-term or long-term. Bad stress is often accompanied by feelings of helplessness because you don't have a lot of control over what's happening and you may begin to feel compressed or trapped.



So-called "good stress," or what psychologists refer to as "eustress," is the type of stress we feel when we are excited. Our pulse quickens, our hormones change, but there is no threat or fear. We feel this type of stress when we ride a roller coaster, gun for a promotion, or go on a first date. There are many triggers for this good stress, and it keeps us feeling alive and excited about life.

Even in modern society, stress is useful. If college students didn't experience any stress over tests, they probably wouldn't study or show up for class. If workers didn't experience stress about project deadlines, they might end up getting fired.

So, stress keeps us accountable for our actions. It motivates us and inspires us to be better citizens.



Unfortunately, there are equally as many reasons why stress is bad called distress. Whereas mild stressors—such as what to get your spouse for his or her birthday—are motivating, major stressors can be debilitating. For instance, caring for a loved one who has a chronic illness is a serious stressor.



Major stressors are extremely taxing on the brain and the body, possibly leading to depression and other mental health consequences, as well as physical health issues.

On the other hand, there are various health benefits with a little bit of stress.

Researchers believe that some stress can help to fortify the immune system. For instance, stress can improve how your heart works and protect your body from infection. In one study, individuals who experienced moderate levels of stress before surgery were able to recover faster than individuals who had low or high levels.

Eustress, or positive stress, has the following characteristics:

- Motivates, focuses energy
- Is short-term
- Is perceived as within our coping abilities
- Feels exciting
- Improves performance

In contrast, Distress, or negative stress, has the following characteristics:

- Causes anxiety or concern
- Can be short- or long-term
- Is perceived as outside of our coping abilities
- Feels unpleasant
- Decreases performance
- Can lead to mental and physical problems

It may be tough to tell when you're experiencing good or bad stress, but there are important ways that your body lets you know that you're struggling with too much stress. Watch out for the following warning signs:

- Inability to concentrate or complete tasks
- Get sick more often with colds
- Body aches
- Other illnesses like autoimmune diseases flare up



- Headaches
- Irritability
- Trouble falling sleeping or staying awake
- Changes in appetite
- More angry or anxious than usual

Stress is an inevitable part of life, but you can improve the way you respond to stress and avoid or change some of the situations that create negative stress.

### 1.3 How stressed are you?

Maybe it's your demanding boss, morning gridlock, or relationship problems with a friend or family member. Whatever the cause, it's likely you experience some level of stress on a daily basis.



But while some day-to-day stress is normal (and can even be a good thing if it motivates you), overwhelming stress can have a negative impact on your physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing.

Here are a few questions to ask yourself when evaluating your stress levels:

#### 1. Is the stress continuous?



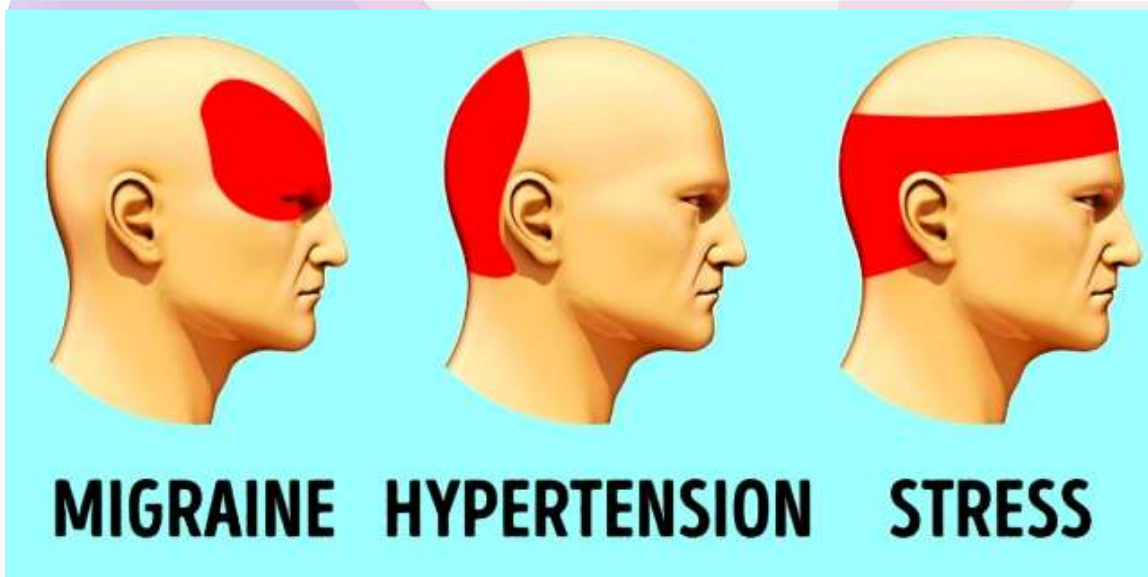
Stress that occurs because of a pressing project at work, a tight deadline, or juggling multiple priorities at once often happens. Once the event or work is complete, you should feel a sense of relief and accomplishment. If the stress continues and doesn't seem to decrease after completing a task, then this might be a sign of chronic stress which will end up making you feel more overwhelmed and overworked.

## **2. Are you sleeping?**

Stressful events can cause disrupted sleep, but over a period of time, normal sleep patterns should resume. If sleep issues persist, this might be a sign that you are overstressed, which can negatively impact your emotional and physical health.

## **3. Do you have constant headaches?**

Tension headaches occur from too much stress. These headaches should go away after taking a break or resting. If you suffer from continuous headaches for an extended period of time you are probably overstressed.



Knowing how much stressed you are will help you in determining whether you are experiencing good or bad stress and help you find out the effective solutions before it starts affecting your health.



## 1.4 Facts you need to know about stress

Here are five things you should know about stress:

**#1 Stress affects everyone:** Everyone feels stressed from time to time. Some people may cope with stress more effectively or recover from stressful events more quickly than others. There are different types of stress—all of which carry physical and mental health risks. A stressor may be a one time or short-term occurrence, or it can be an occurrence that keeps happening over a long period of time.

### Examples of stress include:

- Routine stress related to the pressures of work, school, family and other daily responsibilities
- Stress brought about by a sudden negative change, such as losing a job, divorce, or illness
- Traumatic stress experienced in an event like a major accident, war, assault, or a natural disaster where people may be in danger of being seriously hurt or killed. People who experience traumatic stress often experience temporary symptoms of mental illness, but most recover naturally soon after.

**#2 Not all stress is bad:** Stress can motivate people to prepare or perform, like when they need to take a test or interview for a new job. Stress can even be life-saving in some situations. In response to danger, your body prepares to face a threat or flee to safety. In these situations, your pulse quickens, you breathe faster, your muscles tense, your brain uses more oxygen and increases activity—all functions aimed at survival.

**#3 Long-term stress can harm your health:** Health problems can occur if the stress response goes on for too long such as when the source of stress is constant, or if the response continues after the danger has subsided. With long-term stress, those same life-saving responses in your body can suppress immune, digestive, sleep, and reproductive systems, which may cause them to stop working normally.



Different people may feel stress in different ways. For example, some people experience mainly digestive symptoms, while others may have headaches, sleeplessness, sadness, anger or irritability.

**#4 There are ways to manage stress:** The effects of stress tend to build up over time. Taking practical steps to manage your stress can reduce or prevent these effects.

Although stress seems so much overwhelming at first, it can be managed and reduced with time and proper care. Efforts required to reduce the levels of stress but it can save your life.

**#5 If you're overwhelmed by stress, ask for help from a health professional:**

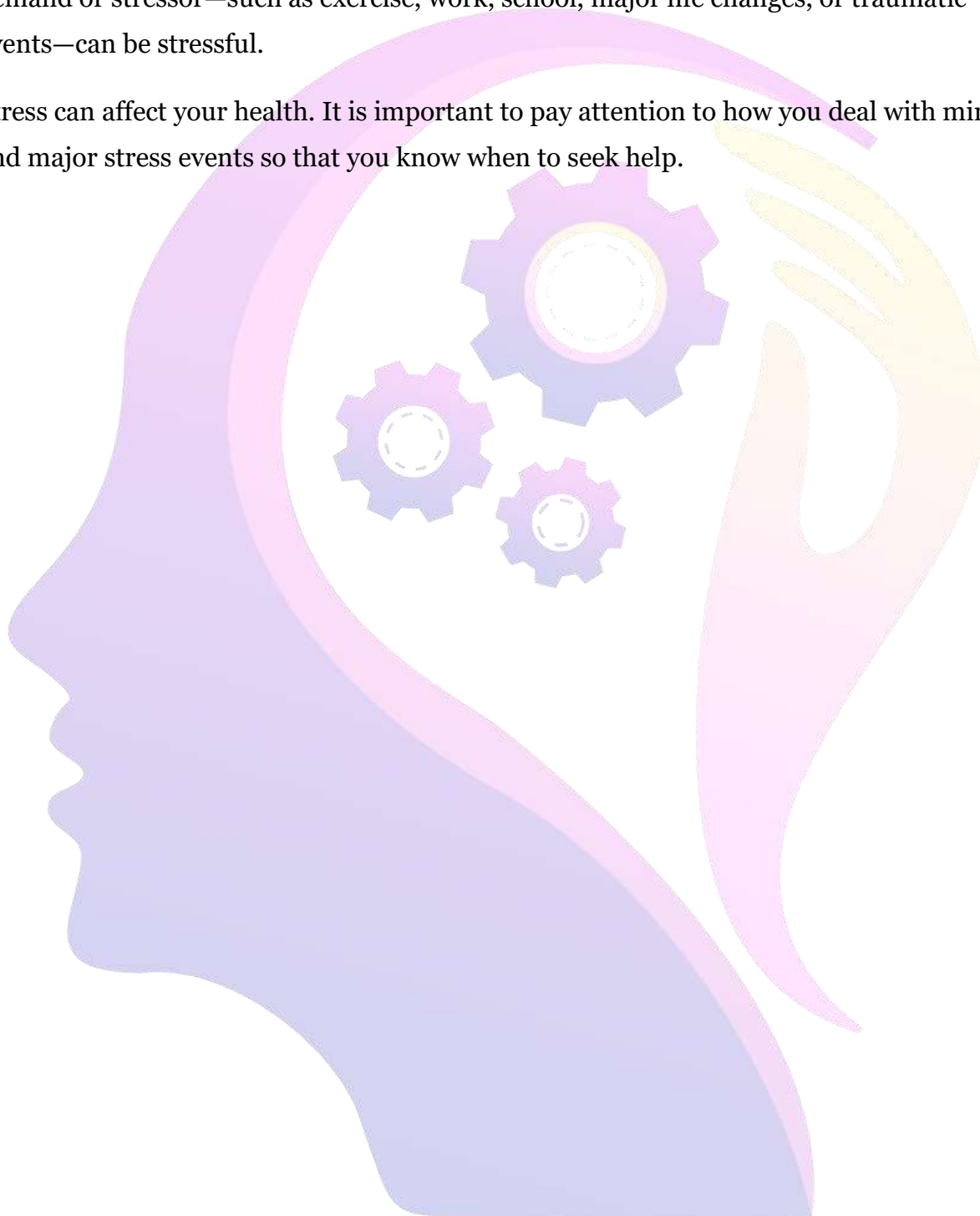
You should seek help right away if you have suicidal thoughts, are overwhelmed, feel you cannot cope or are using drugs or alcohol to cope. Your doctor may be able to provide a recommendation.

## **Conclusion**



Stress is how the brain and body respond to any demand. Stress can be generally defined as an undue, inappropriate or exaggerated response to a situation. Every type of demand or stressor—such as exercise, work, school, major life changes, or traumatic events—can be stressful.

Stress can affect your health. It is important to pay attention to how you deal with minor and major stress events so that you know when to seek help.





# Stress

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## Chapter 2



## Types of Stress



Stress is a feeling that people have when they are struggling to cope with challenges related to finances, work, relationships, environment, and other situations. Moreover, stress is felt when an individual perceives a real or imagined challenge or threat to their well-being. People often use the word stress interchangeably with anxiety, feeling anxious, fearful, nervous, overwhelmed, panic, or stressed-out.



The body is an intelligent operating system, but the body cannot determine the difference between the life-threatening external threat from imagined or perceived non-life threatening stressors. The body reacts the same either way.

Stress management can be complicated because of the different types of stress. Therefore, they require different levels of treatment interventions, management, and psychological treatment modalities due to the nature of the person's environment, lifestyle, developmental history, coping resources, and personality.

## 2.1 Types of Stress

The types of stress related to how the stress comes on or what symptoms are associated with the stress, but psychologists typically differentiate between the different types based on how long the periods last. Learning more about the different types of stress can help individuals learn how to battle stress.



**#1 Acute Stress:** Acute stress is the most common form of stress. Acute stress is the type of stress that throws you off-balance momentarily. This is the type of stress that comes on quickly and often unexpectedly and doesn't last too long, but requires a response and shakes you up a bit, like an argument with someone in your life, or an exam for which you don't feel adequately prepared.



It comes from demands and pressures of the recent past and anticipated demands and pressures of the near future. Acute stress is thrilling and exciting in small doses, but too much is exhausting. A fast run down a challenging ski slope, for example, is exhilarating early in the day. That same ski runs late in the day is taxing and wearing. Skiing beyond your limits can lead to falls and broken bones. By the same token, overdoing on short-term stress can lead to psychological distress, tension headaches, upset stomach, and other symptoms.

Acute stress isn't always negative. It's also the experience you have when riding a roller coaster or having a person jump out at you in a haunted house. Isolated episodes of acute stress should not have any lingering health effects. In fact, they might actually be healthy for you, as these stressful situations give your body and brain practice in developing the best response to future stressful situations.



Severe acute stress such as stress suffered as the victim of a crime or life-threatening situation can lead to mental health problems, such as post-traumatic stress disorder or acute stress disorder.

**#2 Episodic acute stress:** There are those, however, who suffer acute stress frequently, whose lives are so disordered that they are studies in chaos and crisis. They're always in a rush, but always late. If something can go wrong, it does. They take on too much, have too many irons in the fire, and can't organize the slew of self-inflicted demands and pressures clamoring for their attention. They seem perpetually in the clutches of acute stress.



It is common for people with acute stress reactions to be over aroused, short-tempered, irritable, anxious and tense. Often, they describe themselves as having "a lot of nervous energy." 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. The workplace becomes a very stressful place for them.

There are 2 main personality types that frequently present with Episodic Acute Stress:

1) “Type A” personality

2) The “Worrier”

“Type A” personality: Type A personality have an excessive competitive drive, aggressiveness, impatience, abrupt, and a sense of time urgency. In addition, Type A personality presents as reactive with hostility, and almost always deep-seated insecurity about performance. These personality traits create frequent episodes of acute stress for the Type A individual. The cardiologists, Friedman and Rosenman found Type A’s to be significantly likely to develop coronary heart disease.

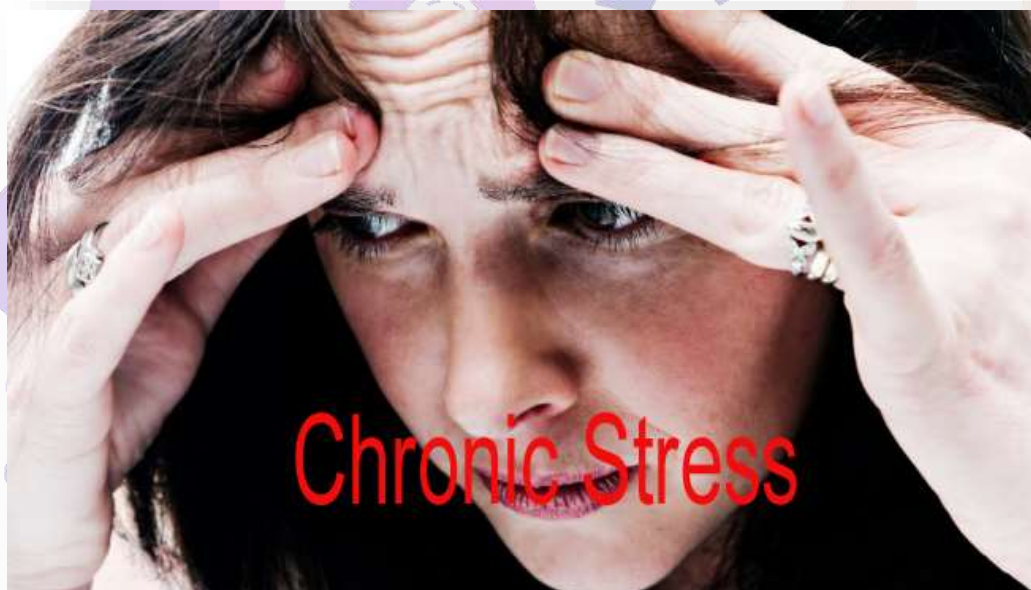
The “Worrier”: The Worrier presents with almost incessant negative thoughts causing episodic acute stress on physical and mental health. “Worrywarts” project probable disaster and negatively forecast catastrophe in almost every situation. They have core beliefs that the world is a dangerous, unrewarding, punitive place where something awful is always about to happen. These negative binge thinkers also tend to be over aroused and tense, but are more anxious and depressed than angry and hostile. Their thoughts are frequently filled with “What if...” statements that are with projected negative outcomes. They are often diagnosed DSM-5 with generalized anxiety disorder.

**#3 Chronic stress:** While acute stress can be thrilling and exciting, chronic stress is not. This is the grinding stress that wears people away day after day, year after year. Chronic stress destroys bodies, minds, and lives. It wreaks havoc through long-term attrition. It's the stress of poverty, of dysfunctional families, of being trapped in an unhappy marriage or in a despised job or career. It's the stress that the never-ending "troubles" have brought to the people of Northern Ireland, the tensions of the Middle East have brought to the Arab and Jew, and the endless ethnic rivalries that have been brought to the people of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.



Chronic stress comes when a person never sees a way out of a miserable situation. It's the stress of unrelenting demands and pressures for seemingly interminable periods of time. With no hope, the individual gives up searching for solutions.

Some chronic stresses stem from traumatic, early childhood experiences that become internalized and remain forever painful and present. Some experiences profoundly affect personality. A view of the world, or a belief system, is created that causes unending stress for the individual (e.g., the world is a threatening place, people will find out you are a pretender, you must be perfect at all times). When personality or deep-seated convictions and beliefs must be reformulated, recovery requires active self-examination, often with professional help.



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 through suicide, violence, heart attack, stroke and, perhaps, even cancer. People wear down to a final, fatal breakdown. Because physical and mental resources are depleted through long-term attrition, the symptoms of chronic stress are



difficult to treat and may require extended medical as well as behavioral treatment and stress management.

**#4 Emotional Stress:** Out of all the different kinds of stress, emotional stress is the most common. This can occur after you go through an intense breakup or divorce, lose a loved one, have a fight with your spouse or experience any other problem that causes you to feel depressed or anxious. Emotional stress often manifests in the same way that depression does. You may experience weight changes, changes in how you fall asleep or how long you sleep, feelings of isolation and mood swings. Emotional stress can also occur when you feel overwhelmed at home or at work.



The pain of emotional stress can hit harder than some other types of stress. For example, the stress that comes from a conflicted relationship tends to bring a greater physical reaction and a stronger sense of distress than the stress that comes from being busy at work.

**#5 Physical Stress:** A common type of stress is physical stress, which refers to actual physical activities and events that wreak havoc on the human body. One good example is



travel. Traveling frequently can send you to different time zones, which makes sleeping and waking difficult.

Physical stress also includes stress brought on by sleeping too much, not getting enough sleep, spending too many hours on your feet or working long hours. If you ever spent a day chasing your kids around an amusement park or stuck in an airport and dealing with flight delays, you have likely experienced physical stress.

**#6 Traumatic Stress:** When thinking about the types of stress, many people don't think about traumatic stress. Traumatic stress is a type of stress that occurs because of some type of trauma to the human body and may lead to intense pain, coma or even death.

It often relates to some kind of physical change that occurs. If you went through an operation, your body may experience stress until you recover from that surgery. A car accident, second or third-degree burns or even a case of pneumonia may all cause traumatic stress.

The result of a profound event that alters one's beliefs and assumptions. Affected individuals recover over time, but are permanently changed. Such stresses may exceed our capacity to cope, eventually causing fatigue, exhaustion, or breakdown.

## **2.2 What are Albrecht's 4 Types of Stress?**

Everyone suffers from stress at times, and everyone experiences it in their own way. The most common stress situations were described by management consultant Karl Albrecht in his 1979 book *Stress and the Manager*. In it, the stress reduction specialist discusses Four Types of Stress. According to Albrecht, the first step to overcoming stress is understanding stress.

Albrecht's four common types of stress are:

1. Time stress
2. Anticipatory stress
3. Situational stress
4. Encounter stress



Let's discuss each of them in detail.

- 1. Time Stress:** Time stress is the best-known form of stress in a modern, fast and demanding work environment. Often, projects have deadlines and tasks have to be completed within an agreed upon time. If that does not happen, it will lead to stress.

In the case of time stress, people are worried about a lack of time. They will feel trapped in time, which will make them unhappy. Especially managers feel that they are responsible for this. Trying to get the task finished in time or rushing to make the deadline can have a negative effect on the final quality because tasks are being rushed.

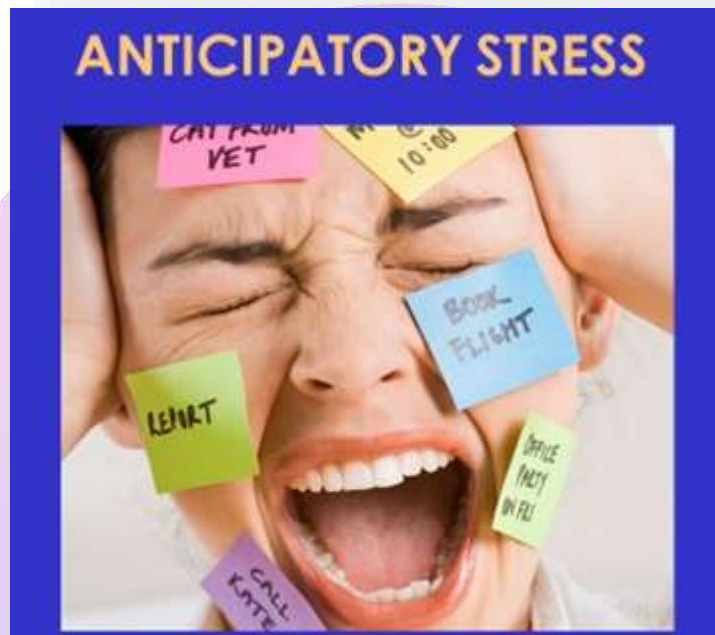


Sometimes, additional resources are necessary to make the deadline. This can all cause time stress and that is why good time management is important to reduce stress.

- 2. Anticipatory stress:** People often also suffer from stress about events that still have to happen. This anticipatory stress is also called future stress. Its causes



include uncertainty about future events and/or the uncertainty someone feels about their personal responsibility.



This stress can be very frustrating, mostly because nothing can be done about it yet and people have no control over it. Sometimes, this stress can be related to a specific event, like giving a presentation. It can be accompanied by vague feeling: 'What if something will go wrong?'

3. **Situational stress:** People experience situational stress during tense situations over which you have no control. This can happen for instance in emergencies when making major mistakes or during conflict situations. This stress results in a feeling of powerlessness and lack of support. Like there is no easy solution.
4. **Encounter Stress:** Encounter stress revolves around people. You experience encounter stress when you worry about interacting with a certain person or group of people – you may not like them, or you might think that they're unpredictable. Encounter stress can also occur if your role involves a lot of personal interactions with customers or clients, especially if those groups are in distress. For instance, physicians and social workers have high rates of encounter stress, because the people they work with routinely don't feel well, or are deeply upset.

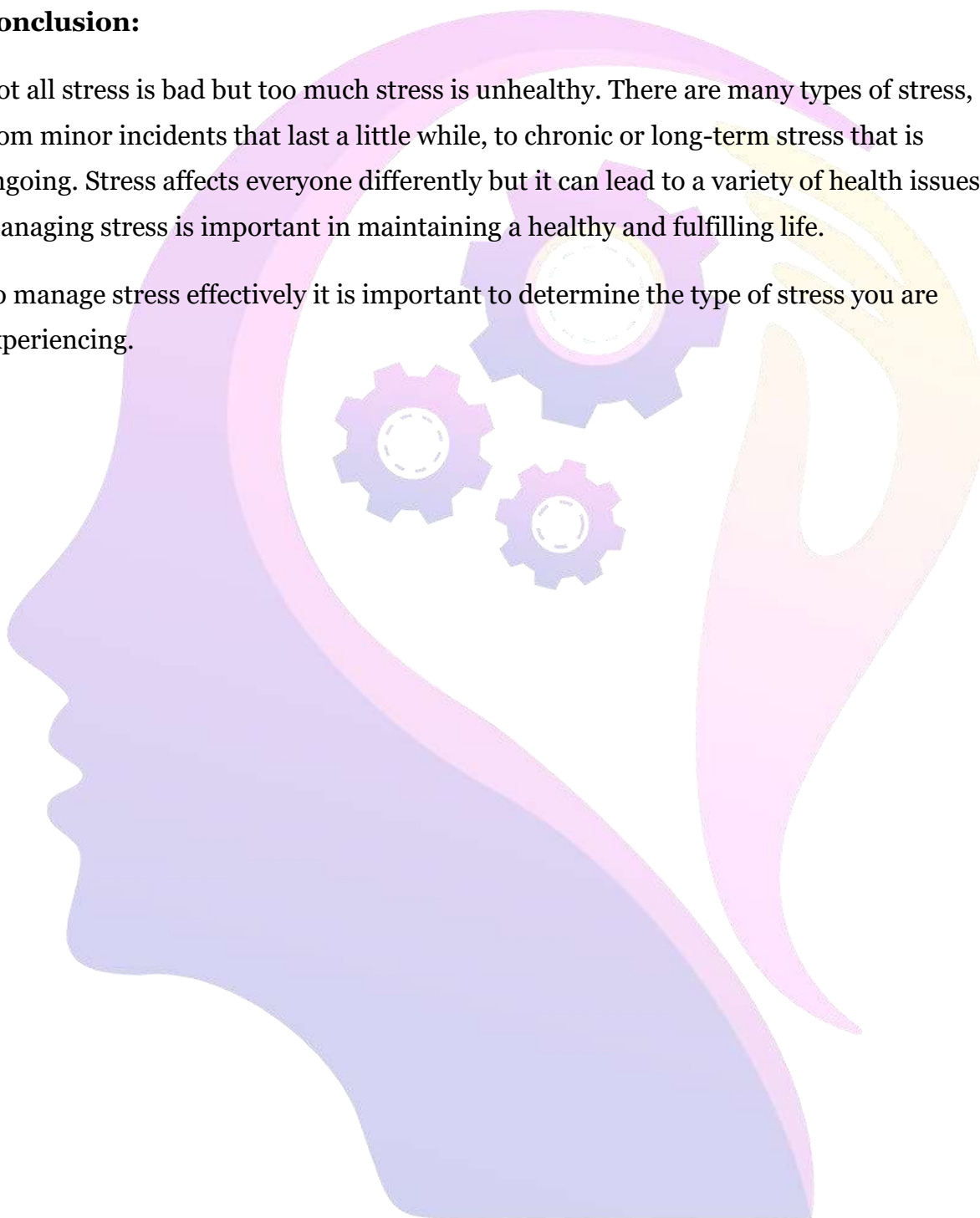


This type of stress also occurs from "contact overload": when you feel overwhelmed or drained from interacting with too many people.

**Conclusion:**

Not all stress is bad but too much stress is unhealthy. There are many types of stress, from minor incidents that last a little while, to chronic or long-term stress that is ongoing. Stress affects everyone differently but it can lead to a variety of health issues. Managing stress is important in maintaining a healthy and fulfilling life.

To manage stress effectively it is important to determine the type of stress you are experiencing.





## Chapter 3



# What Causes Stress?



We all deal with stress at some point in our lives. Maybe it's your job, a family illness, or money troubles. These are common triggers. According to a recent study, about half of all Americans say they're dealing with moderate stress.



Exposure to stressful situations is one of the most common human experiences. These situations can range from daily annoyances and the consequences of overstretched, time-pressured lifestyles, to unexpected events such as illness, loss, natural disasters, and the dramatic effects caused by war-torn environments with ever-present uncertainty and armed conflict. All of these can cause life-shattering chronic stress.

### **3.1 Causes of Stress**

Stress is different for everyone. What stresses you out may not even bother your best friend and vice versa.

Still, your bodies react the same to stressors. That's because the stress response is your body's way of dealing with tough or demanding situations. It causes hormonal, respiratory, cardiovascular, and nervous system changes.



Now, what are stressors? The situations and pressures that cause stress are known as stressors. We usually think of stressors as being negative, such as an exhausting work schedule or a rocky relationship. However, anything that puts high demands on you can be stressful. This includes positive events such as getting married, buying a house, going to college, or receiving a promotion.



Of course, not all stress is caused by external factors. Stress can also be internal or self-generated, when you worry excessively about something that may or may not happen, or have irrational, pessimistic thoughts about life.

What causes stress depends, at least in part, on your perception of it. Something that's stressful to you may not faze someone else; they may even enjoy it. While some of us are terrified of getting up in front of people to perform or speak, for example, others live for the spotlight. Where one person thrives under pressure and performs best in the face of a tight deadline, another will shut down when work demands escalate. And while you may enjoy helping to care for your elderly parents, your siblings may find the demands of caretaking overwhelming and stressful.



### 3.2 What are our "Stressors"?

We briefly mentioned "stressors" in the last lesson. To recap, a "stressor" is an incident, event or change where we feel like we cannot cope. Since this demand may deplete our tangible, physical and mental resources, it can create stress in our lives. We can divide stressors into two types – external and internal.

#### 3.2.1 External Stressors:

There are a variety of external stressors including Environmental Stressors – Extreme noise, traffic gridlock, excessive crowds, smog and other types of pollution can contribute to stress.

1. **Social Stressors:** Human interaction and communication can be a major stress in society. Things that people such as family members, bosses, co-workers, customer service representations or even neighbors say or do can ratchet up your stress levels. Even happy events like planning a wedding, getting married, getting a new job or having a baby can contribute to stress.



2. **Life Changing Events:** Unhappy events like a loss of a close family member, job loss, accidents, house fire, getting robbed and natural disasters can contribute to major stress.



- 3. Demands of everyday living:** Everyday living like paying your bills, doing your taxes, losing your wallet or losing your way while driving can cause stress. The social system we live under also imposes rules, regulations, deadlines, unnecessary work, useless meetings, non-stop e-mails, and office politics—all which contribute to our stress levels.



- 4. Pushing your body too hard:** A major source of stress is overdriving yourself. If you are working (or partying) 16 hours a day, you will have reduced your available time for rest. Sooner or later, the energy drain on your system will cause the body to fall behind in its repair work. There will not be enough time or energy for the body to fix broken cells, or replace used up brain neurotransmitters. Changes will occur in your body's internal environment. You will "hit the wall," "run out of gas". If you continue, permanent damage may be done. The body's fight to stay healthy in the face of the increased energy that you are expending is a major stress.



- 5. Environmental Factors:** Very hot or very cold climates can be stressful. Very high altitude may be stress. Toxins or poisons are stress. Each of these factors threatens to cause changes in your body's internal environment.
- 6. Tobacco Use:** Tobacco is a powerful toxin!! Smoking destroys cells that clean your trachea, bronchi, and lungs. Smoking causes emphysema and chronic bronchitis, which progress to slow suffocation. The carbon monoxide from cigarette smoking causes chronic carbon monoxide poisoning. Tobacco use damages the arteries in your body, causing the insufficient blood supply to the brain, heart, and vital organs. Cigarette smoking increases the risk of cancer fifty-fold.



Chewing tobacco or snuff is no safe haven. It also damages your arteries, and it carries the same cancer risk. (Cancers of the head and neck are particularly vicious, disfiguring, and deadly).

Poisoning the body with carbon monoxide, and causing the physical illnesses of emphysema, chronic bronchitis, cancer, and arterial damage, tobacco is a powerful source of added stress to one's life.

- 7. Allergic Stress:** Allergic reactions are a part of your body's natural defense mechanism. When confronted with a substance which your body considers toxic, your body will try to get rid of it, attack it, or somehow neutralize it. If it is



something that lands in your nose, you might get a runny, sneezing nose. If it lands on your skin, you might get blistery skin. If you inhale it, you'll get wheezy lungs. If you eat it, you may breakout itchy red hives all over your body. Allergy is definite stress, requiring large changes in energy expenditure on the part of your body's defense system to fight off what the body perceives as a dangerous attack by an outside toxin.

### 3.2.2 Internal Stressors:

In addition to stress from external sources, we can also create our own stress. We do this by excessive worrying, being negative, planning poorly, setting artificial deadlines for ourselves, visualizing worst-case scenarios, fearing failure, and fearing what others may think of us just to name a few.

We also have a little voice in our head that talks to us and give us unsolicited positive and negative advice. For example, we may have a voice telling us "You look great today; this suit makes you look really good. On other occasions, it way say something like "The salesperson is ignoring you; you should do something about it."



This is called "self-talk" and it sometimes triggers stress reactions within us. We also react to what is known as "anticipatory stress." This is stressing about things that might



happen. You may start thinking about how to pay your mortgage if you lost your job or what you would do if your car stalled on the highway.

Finally, we become stressed when things don't go the way we planned. For example, a document that we thought was perfect is changed by a manager or your performance appraisal was pretty good, but you expected more praise or a bonus for all your hard work.

- 1. Emotional Stress:** When arguments, disagreements, and conflicts cause changes in your personal life – that is stress.
- 2. Taking Responsibility for Another Person's Actions:** When you take responsibility for another person's actions, changes occur in your life over which you have little or no control. Taking responsibility for another person's actions is a major stressor.
- 3. Illness:** Catching a cold, breaking an arm, a skin infection, a sore back, are all changes in your body condition.
- 4. Hormonal Factors:**
  - a) Puberty:** The vast hormonal changes of puberty are severe stressors. A person's body actually changes shape, sexual organs begin to function, new hormones are released in large quantities. Puberty, as we all know, is very stressful.
  - b) Pre-menstrual syndrome:** Once a woman passes puberty, her body is designed to function best in the presence of female hormones. For women past puberty, a lack of female hormones is a major stress on the body. Once a month, just prior to menstruation, a woman's hormone levels drop sharply. In many women, the stress of sharply falling hormones is enough to create a temporary overstress. This temporary overstress is popularly known as Pre Menstrual Syndrome (PMS).
  - c) Post-partum:** Following a pregnancy, hormone levels change dramatically. After normal childbirth or a miscarriage, some women may be thrown into overstress by the loss of the hormones of pregnancy.
  - d) Menopause:** There is another time in a woman's life when hormone levels decline. This is the menopause. The decline in hormones during menopause is



slow and steady. Nevertheless, this menopausal decline causes enough stress on the body to produce overstress in many women.

### 3.2.3 Personal Stressors:

- 1. Relationships:** Arguments with your spouse, parent, or child can increase your stress levels. When you live together, it can be even more stressful. Problems between other members of your family or household can also cause you stress, even when you're not directly involved.
- 2. Personal beliefs:** Arguments about personal, religious, or political beliefs can challenge you, especially in situations where you can't remove yourself from the conflict. Major life events that cause you to question your own beliefs can also cause stress. This is especially true if your beliefs are different from those of the people closest to you.
- 3. Money:** Financial trouble is a common source of stress. Credit card debt, rent, or the inability to provide for your family or yourself can put a serious amount of stress on you. In this society, where so much emphasis is put on what you have and what you can afford, financial stress is something that nearly everyone can relate to. According to the APA, nearly three-quarters of Americans say that finances are a source of stress in their life.





4. **Occupation:** Research has shown that pressure and conflict from a job can be a major source of stress. According to the APA, an estimated 60 percent of Americans experience stress related to their work.
5. **Discrimination:** Feeling discriminated against can cause long-term stress. For example, you may experience discrimination on the basis of your race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation. Some people face discrimination and the stress it causes nearly every day.



### 3.2.4 Traumatic events:

People who've experienced a traumatic event or life-threatening situation often live with long-term stress. For example, you may experience long-term stress after surviving a robbery, rape, natural disaster, or war. In many cases, you may actually have post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

PTSD is a chronic anxiety disorder brought on by a traumatic event or series of traumatic events. According to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs' National Center for PTSD, the estimated lifetime prevalence of PTSD among Americans is about 7 percent. The disorder is more common among women, as well as veterans and survivors of abuse.

### Conclusion:



If we look at all of the events that take place around us each day and if all of these events cause us stress, then every one of us would be completely stressed out. Yet, we see that some people are not bothered by events while others are.

The reason is that stress is not caused by the event itself but our perception and interpretation of the event and our stress reaction to it. For example, a mother requires her teenage son to call each day when he returns home from school. The mother anticipates this call at a certain time. If he does not call on time, the mother's stress level shoots up because of the inner voice setting up all types of anticipated scenarios of what could have happened to him.

However, by understanding where our stress originates from, we can create solutions that reduce stress by eliminating the stressors. In the mother's case, she gave her son a cell phone and called him if he did not call her after school. In most cases, he just got caught up watching television and simply forgot to call. However, having the option of getting in touch with him decreased the mother's anxiety and stress levels.



# Stress

Relieving Mantra

## Chapter 4



Signs, Symptoms and  
Reaction of Stress



The most dangerous thing about stress is how easily it can creep up on you. You get used to it. It starts to feel familiar, even normal. You don't notice how much it's affecting you, even as it takes a heavy toll. That's why it's important to be aware of the common warning signs and symptoms of stress overload.

#### 4.1 Emotional Signs and Symptoms of Stress

Stress, defined as emotional tension or mental strain, is all too common of a feeling for many of us. The emotional symptoms it causes are:

1. **Depression:** The Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADAA) defines depression as an illness in which an individual experiences a persistent and severe low mood.

Research suggests a link between high levels of stress and the onset of depression.



2. **Anxiety:** Anxiety differs from depression. It's characterized by feelings of overwhelming dread, rather than just feelings of sadness. However, like depression, studies have suggested that stress may be linked to anxiety and anxiety disorders.



- 3. Irritability:** Irritability and anger can become common traits in people who are stressed.

In one study, higher levels of anger were associated with both mental stress and the possibility of a stress-related heart attack.

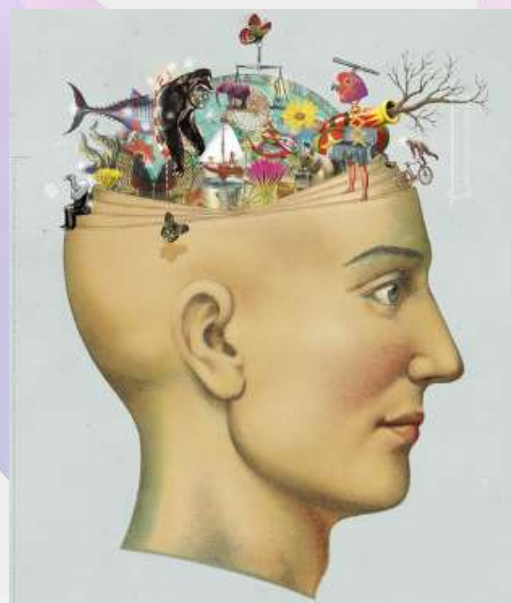
- 4. Low sex drive:** In some people, too much stress can have a negative impact on sex drive and the desire to be intimate.

A study published in 2014 found that chronic stress levels had a negative impact on sexual arousal. The research suggested that both high levels of cortisol and a higher chance of being distracted led to lower levels of arousal.

Much of the research surrounding stress and low libido involves women, but it can certainly affect men too. One animal study showed that social stress during adolescence affected the sexual appetite of male hamsters during adulthood.

- 5. Memory and concentration problems:** If you find yourself having trouble with concentration and memory, stress may be a part of the problem.

An animal study found that adolescent rats exposed to acute stress experienced more memory performance issues than their non-stressed counterparts.





Another review investigated the stress-response pathways in the brain and their effect on long-term memory. Researchers found that certain hormones following a stressful or traumatic event can have the ability to impair memory.

- 6. Compulsive behavior:** There has long been a link between stress and addictive behaviors.

One paper expanded on the idea that stress-related changes in the brain may play a role in the development of addiction. According to the researchers, chronic stress can change the physical nature of the brain to promote habit- and addiction-forming behaviors.

Another study even found that in certain people, genetic variations can play a further role in the stress response and vulnerability towards addiction.

- 7. Mood swings:** The many emotional effects of stress can leave you feeling like you're experiencing mood swings.

One study from 2014 examined the role of various types of stress tests on physiology, mood, and cognition. The research showed that both social and physical stressors can have a big impact on emotional well-being and mood. With the many other emotional signs of stress, it's easy to see just how big of influence stress can have on your overall mood.

#### **4.2 Physical Signs and Symptoms of stress**

Identifying physical symptoms can help you to identify your stress and you can actually do something about it.

- 1. Neck pain:** Muscle tension is one of the first physical manifestations of stress, and it tends to be most pronounced at the base of the head. That's why your masseuse may ask if you've been stressed lately when your neck and shoulders feel insanely tense.
- 2. Headaches:** Many studies have found that stress can contribute to headaches, a condition characterized by pain in the head or neck region.  
A study showed that increased stress intensity was associated with an increase in the number of headache days experienced per month.



Another study surveyed 150 military service members at a headache clinic, finding that 67% reported their headaches were triggered by stress, making it the second most common headache trigger.

Other common headache triggers include lack of sleep, alcohol consumption, and dehydration.

3. **Nausea:** Whether a knot in your stomach or straight up nausea, stress can have a wide range of GI consequences. That's because digestion is often disrupted and slowed down when your nervous system is trying to cope with stress. Pike adds that irritable bowel syndrome can also be linked to stress—the colon is partially controlled by the nervous system, and those with IBS tend to have colons that are more reactive to stress, according to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America.
4. **Hair loss:** "Hair loss is more likely to be the product of really long sustained periods of high levels of stress". Typically one isolated stressful situation isn't going to make your hair start falling out. But experiencing a life-altering event, like the death of a loved one or a huge career change, can actually cause your hair to stop growing temporarily as your body dedicates its efforts to surviving said event. When it starts growing again, the hairs that were stalled in the middle of growing get shed all at once, so you may find yourself combing out what seems like handfuls at a time.





5. **Weight gain:** High stress means high levels of cortisol coursing through our veins. "Cortisol is a stress hormone that not only prompts you to eat but also causes you to retain calories because it thinks you're in an emergency situation.
6. **Acne:** Acne is one of the most visible ways that stress often manifests itself. When some people are feeling stressed out, they tend to touch their faces more often. This can spread bacteria and contribute to the development of acne. Cortisol surges can also lead to cystic acne—aka, red, painful zits that won't go away no matter how much benzoyl peroxide you slather on.
7. **Rapid heartbeat and chest pain:** When we're stressed, our bodies release cortisol plus other stress hormones—adrenaline and noradrenaline—to get us ready to fight. This causes a short-term increase in heart rate and blood pressure and even chest pain. Over time, stress really can take its toll on your heart. Chronic stress leads to cardiovascular disease, though the connection isn't crystal clear, the American Heart Association suggests that stress can cause high blood pressure and cholesterol levels, plus encourage other habits that are linked to heart disease like smoking, physical inactivity, and overeating.
8. **Insomnia:** Stress may also disrupt sleep and cause insomnia, which can lead to low energy.  
One small study found that higher levels of work-related stress were associated with increased sleepiness and restlessness at bedtime. When you're feeling super worried and having a tough time shutting down your mind, chances are you'll also have some issues falling asleep at night.
9. **Irregular period:** Too much cortisol can interfere with the sex hormones that regulate ovulation and make your period irregular. Extreme stress may stop your body from releasing an egg (it's called anovulation), which means you won't get your monthly visitor. This shouldn't happen under normal levels of stress, though—this is typically only seen in instances of very heavy, chronic stress.
10. **Fatigue:** If you're not sleeping well, you're probably walking around all day exhausted. Plus, when your body feels overwhelmed and is working overtime to handle the stressors it registers, it takes a lot out of you. When you're tired, you get more irritable and it's harder to cope mentally with stress, creating a vicious cycle. Tried and true stress relievers like exercise, meditation, taking some time



for yourself, and even massage or acupuncture, can help relieve tension and calm your mind and body.

#### 4.3 Behavioral Signs and Symptoms of Stress

1. **Lack of Punctuality:** Timekeeping is one of the first things to suffer when an individual is stressed. The reason is, they may take too many tasks on, or try to avoid tasks and thus leave them until the last minute or they may have become so overcome with worry/anxiety that they become forgetful.



2. **Absenteeism:** Stressed persons tend to regularly miss work. They may be trying to avoid a difficult situation or they may be suffering from the consequences of one of their coping mechanism e.g. alcohol.
3. **Withdrawal:** Withdrawal is another common behavioral symptom of stress. The individual's self-esteem and confidence may have taken a hit and as consequence, they may no longer feel capable of coping with social situations. In order to protect their fragile confidence, they may choose to avoid all such situations.
4. **Unhealthy eating habits:** Comfort food is often sought as a solution to stressful solutions. Indulging in convenience foods can make you feel better



temporarily and saves time, however, these foods are rich in salt, sugar, and fat which can lead to obesity, high blood pressure, and heart-related illness.

While we associate comfort eating with stress, some people have the opposite response to stressful situation i.e. they avoid eating.

- 5. Risk-taking behaviors:** A sudden development of risk-taking behavior can be a clear sign of stress. Individuals may be experiencing a low sense of self-worth or lack of excitement in their lives. They need a buzz in their life and are willing to take bigger risks in order to get that buzz. Unfortunately, the level of risk they need to take to get the buzz may increase steadily over time.
- 6. Suicidal talk or behavior:** Stress can diminish an individual's self-esteem and sense of self-worth to the point where they feel they cannot go on. In many cases, we do not get the opportunity to help the individual but in some cases, they do drop the subtle hints of their intentions.



#### 4.4 Cognitive Signs and Symptoms of Stress

Stress disturbs the effective working of those parts of your brain essential for cognitive or perceptual activity, just as it modifies the functioning of the all the sections incorporated in emotion. When it does, it inhibits with your cognitive procedures on



several numbers of levels. Here we are listing few cognitive signs and symptoms of stress:

- Amnesia
- Reduced productivity
- Declined psychomotor reactivity and synchronization
- Uneasiness
- Hindering Blurred vision
- Faults in judging distance
- Lessened or inflated fantasy life
- Abridged creativity
- Negative assessment of involvements
- Coordination to the past
- Lack of attentiveness
- Lack of responsiveness to detail
- Attention shortfall
- Inefficiency of thought
- Undesirable self-esteem
- Weakened sense of meaning in life
- Lack of control/requisite for too much control
- Undesirable self-statements
- Lying or finding excuses to cover up bad work

#### **4.5 The reaction of Stress – Fight or Flight Response**

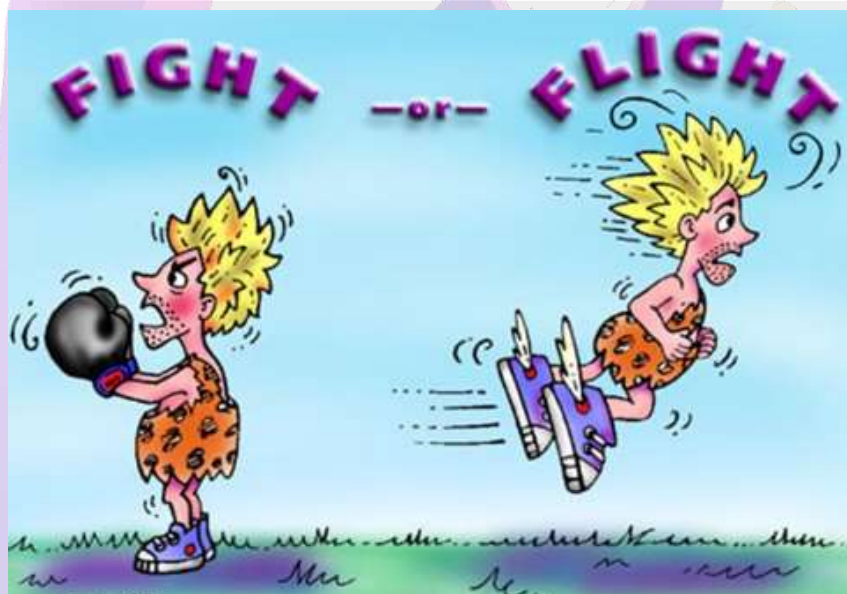
The fight-or-flight response, also known as the acute stress response, refers to a physiological reaction that occurs in the presence of something that is terrifying, either mentally or physically. The response is triggered by the release of hormones that prepare your body to either stay to deal with a threat or to run away to safety.

The term 'fight-or-flight' represents the choices that our ancient ancestors had when faced with danger in their environment. They could either fight or flee. In either case,



the physiological and psychological response to stress prepares the body to react to the danger.

In response to acute stress, the body's sympathetic nervous system is activated due to the sudden release of hormones. The sympathetic nervous systems stimulate the adrenal glands triggering the release of catecholamines, which include adrenaline and noradrenaline. This results in an increase in heart rate, blood pressure, and breathing rate. After the threat is gone, it takes between 20 to 60 minutes for the body to return to its pre-arousal levels.



Some of the physical signs that may indicate that the fight-or-flight response has kicked in include:

- **Rapid Heart Beat and Breathing:** The body increases heartbeat and respiration rate in order to provide the energy and oxygen to the body that will be needed to fuel a rapid response to the danger.
- **Pale or Flushed Skin:** As the stress response starts to take hold, blood flow to the surface areas of the body is reduced and flow to the muscles, brain, legs, and arms are increased. You might become pale as a result, or your face may alternate



between pale and flushed as blood rushes to your head and brain. The body's blood clotting ability also increases in order to prevent excess blood loss in the event of injury.

- **Dilated Pupils:** The body also prepares itself to be more aware and observant of the surroundings during times of danger. Another common symptom of the fight-or-flight response is the dilation of the pupils, which allows more light into the eyes and results in a better vision of the surroundings.
- **Trembling:** In the face of stress or danger, your muscles become tense and primed for action. This tension can result in trembling or shaking.

The fight-or-flight response plays a critical role in how we deal with stress and danger in our environment. By priming your body for action, you are better prepared to perform under pressure. The stress created by the situation can actually be helpful, making it more likely that you will cope effectively with the threat.

This type of stress can help you perform better in situations where you are under pressure to do well, such as at work or school. In cases where the threat is life-threatening, the fight-or-flight response can actually play a critical role in your survival. By gearing you up to fight or flee, the fight-or-flight response makes it more likely that you will survive the danger.

### **Conclusion:**

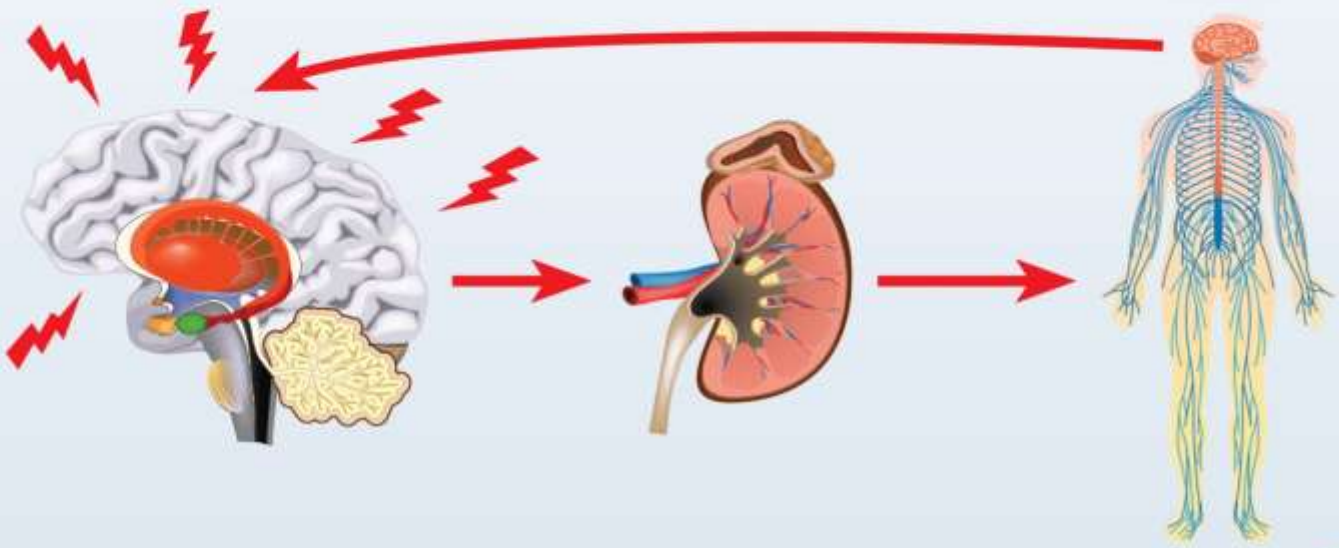
Many people feel too embarrassed or ashamed to openly discuss their experiences with stress. Therefore, it is essential that we familiarize ourselves with the signs & symptoms of stress so that we may be able to identify what they are going through and remind them that the channels of communications are open and that we are willing to help them or find help for them. You may, in fact, be experiencing stress yourself. It may be helpful to regularly remind yourself of the symptoms of the stress so that you can identify them early and take appropriate actions.



# Stress

Relieving Mantra

## Chapter 5



Stress Hormones –  
An Introduction to Cortisol



Thanks to the work of our sympathetic nervous system, the "fight or flight" system that takes over when we're stressed, when you see your boss's name in your inbox late at night, your body reacts like there's a lion on the loose.



Behind the wide range of both physical and mental reactions to stress are a number of hormones that are in charge of adding fuel to the fire.

### **5.1 Stress Hormones**

Stress hormones are produced by your body in situations that might be perceived as potentially dangerous. Daily activities, physical and emotional, that cause increased anxiety may cause your body to release some of these hormones and may cause you to feel more stressed about a routine situation.

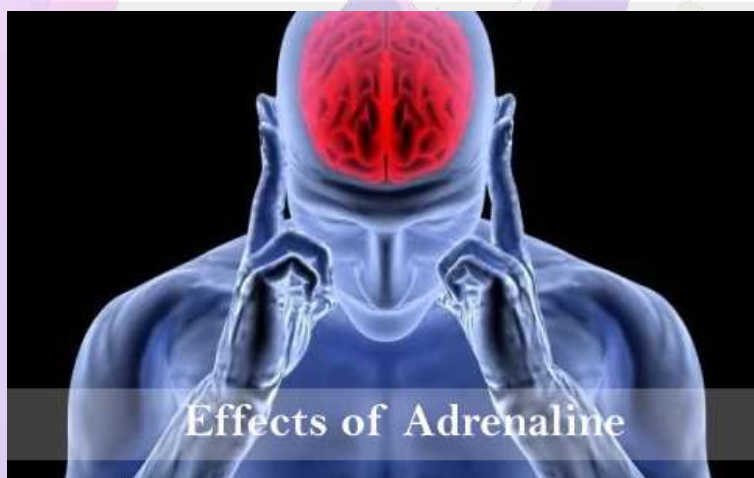
Stress hormones are a normal body response, but when constantly under stress through daily situations, this can lead to long-term health problems.

Major stress hormones are:



- 1. Adrenaline:** Commonly known as the fight or flight hormone, it is produced by the adrenal glands after receiving a message from the brain that a stressful situation has presented itself.

Adrenaline, along with norepinephrine (more on that below), is largely responsible for the immediate reactions we feel when stressed. Imagine you're trying to change lanes in your car. Suddenly, from your blind spot, comes a car racing at 100 miles per hour. You return to your original lane and your heart is pounding. Your muscles are tense, you're breathing faster, and you may start sweating. That's adrenaline.



Along with the increase in heart rate, adrenaline also gives you a surge of energy - which you might need to run away from a dangerous situation -- and also focuses your attention.

- 2. Cortisol:** A steroid hormone, commonly known as the stress hormone, produced by the adrenal glands.

It takes a little more time -- minutes, rather than seconds -- for you to feel the effects of cortisol in the face of stress because the release of this hormone takes a multi-step process involving two additional minor hormones.

First, the part of the brain called the amygdala has to recognize a threat. It then sends a message to the part of the brain called the hypothalamus, which releases corticotropin-releasing hormone (CRH). CRH then tells the pituitary gland to



release adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH), which tells the adrenal glands to produce cortisol.



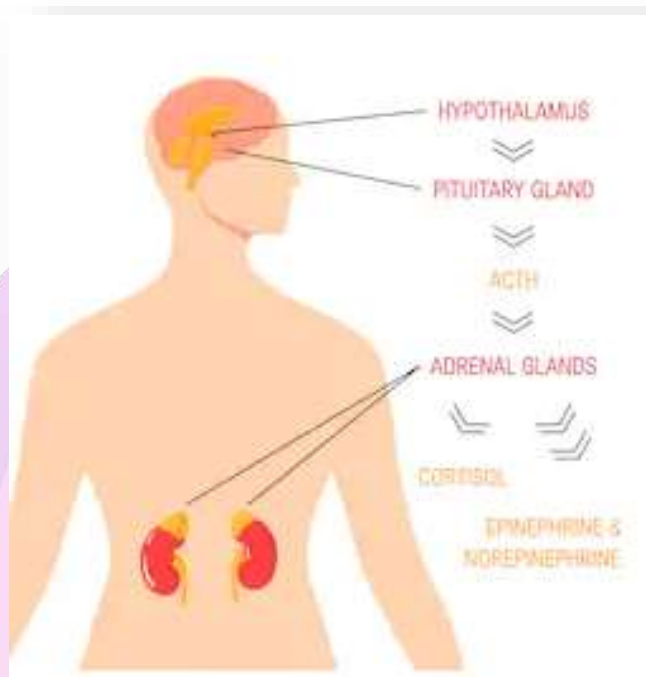
In survival mode, the optimal amounts of cortisol can be lifesaving. It helps to maintain fluid balance and blood pressure, while regulating some body functions that aren't crucial at the moment, like reproductive drive, immunity, digestion, and growth.

But when you stew on a problem, the body continuously releases cortisol, and chronically elevated levels can lead to serious issues. Too much cortisol can suppress the immune system, increase blood pressure and sugar, decrease libido, produce acne, contribute to obesity and more.

Of course, estrogen and testosterone are also hormones that affect how we react to stress, as are the neurotransmitters dopamine and serotonin.

**3. Norepinephrine:** A hormone similar to adrenaline, released from the adrenal glands and also from the brain.

The primary role of norepinephrine, like adrenaline, is arousal. When you are stressed, you become more aware, awake, focused. You are just generally more responsive. It also helps to shift blood flow away from areas where it might not be so crucial, like the skin, and toward more essential areas at the time, like the muscles, so you can flee the stressful scene.



Although norepinephrine might seem redundant given adrenaline (which is also sometimes called epinephrine), it was imagined that we have both hormones as a type of backup system. Say your adrenal glands are not working well you still want something to save you from acute catastrophe.

Depending on the long-term impact of whatever's stressing you out -- and how you personally handle stress -- it could take anywhere from half an hour to a couple of days to return to your normal resting state.

## 5.2 Why Is Cortisol Called The 'Stress Hormone'?

Cortisol is made in the adrenal glands and it's released during times of fear. A great example is your body's response to 'fight or flight' which is an example of when cortisol is often secreted. When your brain feels threatened it tries to decide whether it should run away or fight for survival and therefore receives heightened cortisol levels.

So, how exactly does cortisol affect the body during times of stress?



Cortisol is within a class of hormones called glucocorticoid and it increases blood glucose levels.

- With a process called gluconeogenesis, Cortisol works against insulin to keep glucose around while breaking down glucose from stored fat to release energy.
- One of the principal effects of cortisol on the metabolic systems of the body is a reduction of the protein stores in essentially all body cells except those of the liver.
- Increases blood pressure from the release of cortisol into the bloodstream.
- Cortisol also suppresses the immune system because those functions aren't vital to surviving immediate threats.

These responses are all great if we're actually running away from a bear. Not so good if you're just stressed about paying your taxes.

### 5.3 What does stress hormone 'Cortisol' do to your body?



Here are the 10 signs to show you that you've got too much cortisol in your body:

- 1. Poor Sleep:** Cortisol peak around 8 am in the morning and then slowly drop towards the evening which allows your body to relax and recharge. If your cortisol levels are high you might notice that you've been tired all day only to receive a second wind of energy around bedtime. Due to the extra cortisol, you'll end up tossing and turning and feel tired again the next day.



- 2. You're tired even when sleeping well:** High cortisol depletes the adrenal glands over time and exposes you to chronic fatigue-like symptoms. If you always feel tired, regardless of how you sleep, this is a good sign that you've got an overload of cortisol which is reducing your ability to feel rested and energized.
- 3. You're gaining weight, even with exercise:** Repeated elevation of cortisol can lead to weight gain. Cortisol can mobilize triglycerides from storage and relocate them to visceral fat cells. Cortisol tends to make you chubby around your waist even when you're doing everything right.
- 4. You get sick easily:** Cortisol reduces the effectiveness of your body's natural self-repair mechanisms. This means that your body becomes vulnerable more easily because cortisol has deactivated your immune systems.



- 5. You crave bad foods:** Cortisol raises your blood sugar, putting you at risk of diabetes. High glucose levels then bump up your insulin levels, which then drop your blood sugar – and all of a sudden – yes, you guessed it – you're struck with wild cravings for Twinkies.



- 6. You experience back pain & headaches:** When you suffer from raised cortisol levels from a prolonged period your adrenal glands become depleted. This depletion raises prolactin levels, increasing your body's sensitivity to backaches and muscle aches. Excessive cortisol hypersensitizes the brain to pain and even the smallest pain can set off significant nerve reactions.
- 7. You have no sex drive:** Libido inducing hormones like testosterone completely drop when suffering from increased cortisol.
- 8. Your gut acts up:** Your digestive system is incredibly sensitive to stress hormones. Increase stress can cause nausea, diarrhea, constipation and many other issues with your gastrointestinal system.
- 9. You feel anxious:** Cortisol and epinephrine can lead to jitters, nervous stomach, feelings of panic, even paranoia.



- 10. You feel sad:** High levels of cortisol suppress production of serotonin, and next thing you know, you're awash in doom and gloom.

#### 5.4 What happens if you have too little cortisol?

Too little cortisol can be due to a condition called Addison's disease. It has a number of causes, all rare, including damage to the adrenal glands by autoimmune disease. The onset of symptoms is often very gradual.

Symptoms may include fatigue, dizziness (especially upon standing), weight loss, muscle weakness, mood changes and the darkening of regions of the skin. Urgent assessment by a specialist hormone doctor called an endocrinologist is required when a diagnosis of Cushing's syndrome or Addison's disease is suspected.



## Too Little Cortisol

### Conclusion:

Cortisol is a hormone, which is mainly released at times of stress and has many important functions in your body. Having the right cortisol balance is essential for human health and you can have problems if your adrenal gland releases too much or too little cortisol.

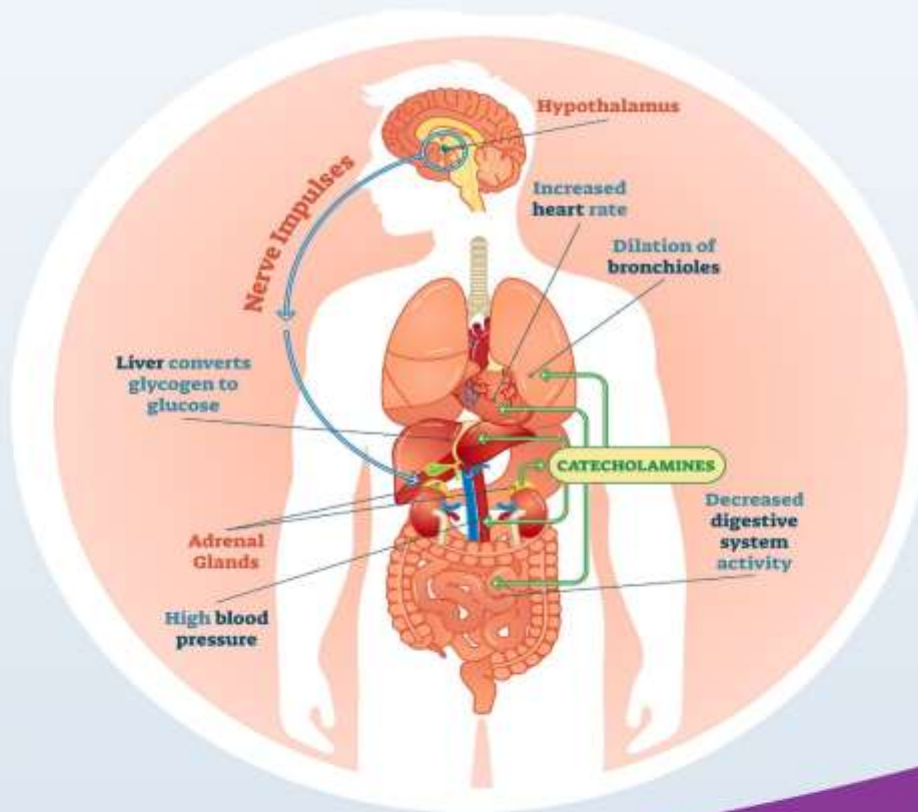
It's sometimes called the "stress hormone." That's because levels of cortisol in the body spike during times of high stress.



# Stress

## Relieving Mantra

### Chapter 6



The Impact of Stress  
on Our Body

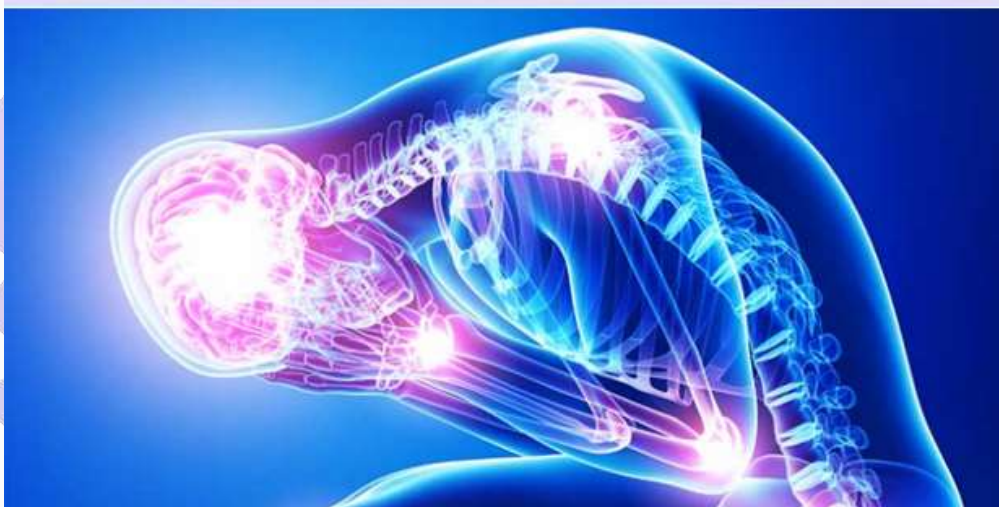


We all experience stress, to some degree, in our daily life. From work to busy schedules, from important relationships to our goals and dreams, we have competing priorities and it's a lot to keep on top of.

But while a limited amount of stress is normal, and even healthy, continuous or severe stress can be very harmful to your physical and mental health. Because all stress isn't the same and different types of stress affect us in ways that are somewhat unique, it helps to understand the different types of stress and how to best manage each, so you can tackle stress in the most effective ways.

## 6.1 The Impact of Stress on Your Health

### Impact of Stress on Your Health



When faced with chronic stress and an over-activated autonomic nervous system, people begin to see a negative impact on their health. The first symptoms are relatively mild, like chronic headaches and increased susceptibility to colds. With more exposure to chronic stress, however, more serious health problems may develop.

#### 6.1.1 Central Nervous and Endocrine Systems:



Your central nervous system (CNS) is in charge of your “fight or flight” response. In your brain, the hypothalamus gets the ball rolling, telling your adrenal glands to release the stress hormones adrenaline and cortisol. These hormones rev up your heartbeat and send blood rushing to the areas that need it most in an emergency, such as your muscles, heart, and other important organs.



When the perceived fear is gone, the hypothalamus should tell all systems to go back to normal. If the CNS fails to return to normal, or if the stressor doesn't go away, the response will continue.

Chronic stress is also a factor in behaviors such as overeating or not eating enough, alcohol or drug abuse, and social withdrawal.

### **6.1.2 Respiratory System:**

Stress and strong emotions can present with respiratory symptoms, such as shortness of breath and rapid breathing, as the airway between the nose and the lungs constricts.

For people without respiratory disease, this is generally not a problem as the body can manage the additional work to breathe comfortably, but psychological stressors can



exacerbate breathing problems for people with pre-existing respiratory diseases such as asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD; includes emphysema and chronic bronchitis).



Some studies show that an acute stress — such as the death of a loved one — can actually trigger asthma attacks. In addition, the rapid breathing — or hyperventilation — caused by stress can bring on a panic attack in someone prone to panic attacks.

Working with a psychologist to develop relaxation, breathing, and other cognitive behavioral strategies can help.

### **6.1.3 Cardiovascular:**

Chronic stress, or a constant stress experienced over a prolonged period of time, can contribute to long-term problems for heart and blood vessels. The consistent and ongoing increase in heart rate, and the elevated levels of stress hormones and of blood pressure, can take a toll on the body. This long-term ongoing stress can increase the risk for hypertension, heart attack or stroke.



Repeated acute stress and persistent chronic stress may also contribute to inflammation in the circulatory system, particularly in the coronary arteries, and this is one pathway that is thought to tie stress to heart attack. It also appears that how a person responds to stress can affect cholesterol levels.

The risk for heart disease associated with stress appears to differ for women, depending on whether the woman is pre or postmenopausal. Levels of estrogen in premenopausal women appears to help blood vessels respond better during stress, thereby helping their bodies to better handle stress and protecting them against heart disease.

Postmenopausal women lose this level of protection due to loss of estrogen, therefore putting them at greater risk for the effects of stress on heart disease.

#### **6.1.4 Digestive System:**

Under stress, your liver produces extra blood sugar (glucose) to give you a boost of energy. If you're under chronic stress, your body may not be able to keep up with this extra glucose surge. Chronic stress may increase your risk of developing type 2 diabetes.



The rush of hormones, rapid breathing, and increased heart rate can also upset your digestive system. You're more likely to have heartburn or acid reflux thanks to an increase in stomach acid. Stress doesn't cause ulcers (a bacterium called *H. pylori* often does), but it can increase your risk for them and cause existing ulcers to act up.



Stress can also affect the way food moves through your body, leading to diarrhea or constipation. You might also experience nausea, vomiting, or a stomachache.

### **6.1.5 Musculoskeletal system:**

When the body is stressed, muscles tense up. Muscle tension is almost a reflex reaction to stress — the body's way of guarding against injury and pain.

With sudden onset stress, the muscles tense up all at once, and then release their tension when the stress passes. Chronic stress causes the muscles in the body to be in a more or less constant state of guardedness. When muscles are taut and tense for long periods of time, this may trigger other reactions of the body and even promote stress-related disorders.



For example, both tension-type headache and migraine headache are associated with chronic muscle tension in the area of the shoulders, neck and head. Musculoskeletal



pain in the low back and upper extremities has also been linked to stress, especially job stress.

Millions of individuals suffer from chronic painful conditions secondary to musculoskeletal disorders. Often, but not always, there may be an injury that sets off the chronic painful state. What determines whether or not an injured person goes on to suffer from chronic pain is how they respond to the injury.

Individuals who are fearful of pain and re-injury, and who seek only a physical cause and cure for the injury, generally have a worse recovery than individuals who maintain a certain level of moderate, physician-supervised activity. Muscle tension, and eventually, muscle atrophy due to disuse of the body, all promote chronic, stress-related musculoskeletal conditions.

#### 6.1.6 Male reproductive system:

In the male anatomy, the autonomic nervous system, also known as the fight or flight response, produces testosterone and activates the sympathetic nervous system which creates arousal. Cortisol is important to blood pressure regulation and the normal functioning of several body systems including cardiovascular, circulatory and male reproduction. Excess amounts of cortisol can affect the normal biochemical functioning of the male reproductive system.

- **Sexual desire:** Chronic stress, ongoing stress over an extended period of time, can affect testosterone production resulting in a decline in sex drive or libido, and can even cause erectile dysfunction or impotence.
- **Reproduction:** Chronic stress can also negatively impact sperm production and maturation causing difficulties in couples who are trying to conceive. Researchers have found that men who experienced two or more stressful life events in the past year had a lower percentage of sperm motility (ability to swim) and a lower percentage of sperm of normal morphology (size and shape), compared with men who did not experience any stressful life events.
- **Diseases of the reproductive system:** When stress affects the immune system, the body can become vulnerable to infection. In the male anatomy,



infections to the testes, prostate gland and urethra, can affect normal male reproductive functioning.



#### 6.1.7 Female Reproductive System:

- **Menstruation:** Stress may affect menstruation among adolescent girls and women in several ways. For example, high levels of stress may be associated with absent or irregular menstrual cycles, more painful periods and changes in the length of cycles.
- **Sexual desire:** Women juggle personal, family, professional, financial and a broad range of other demands across their life span. Stress, distraction, fatigue, etc., may reduce sexual desire — especially when women are simultaneously caring for young children or other ill family members, coping with chronic medical problems, feeling depressed, experiencing relationship difficulties or abuse, dealing with work problems, etc.
- **Pregnancy:** Stress can have significant impact on a woman's reproductive plans. Stress can negatively impact a woman's ability to conceive, the health of her pregnancy, and her postpartum adjustment. Depression is the leading complication of pregnancy and postpartum adjustment.



Excess stress increases the likelihood of developing depression and anxiety during this time. Maternal stress can negatively impact fetal and ongoing childhood development and disrupt bonding with the baby in the weeks and months following delivery.



- **Premenstrual syndrome:** Stress may make premenstrual symptoms worse or more difficult to cope with and premenstrual symptoms may be stressful for many women. These symptoms include cramping, fluid retention and bloating, negative mood (feeling irritable and "blue") and mood swings.
- **Menopause:** As menopause approaches, hormone levels fluctuate rapidly. These changes are associated with anxiety, mood swings and feelings of distress. Thus menopause can be a stressor in and of itself. Some of the physical changes associated with menopause, especially hot flashes, can be difficult to cope with. Furthermore, emotional distress may cause the physical symptoms to be worse. For example, women who are more anxious may experience an increased number of hot flashes and/or more severe or intense hot flashes.



- **Diseases of the reproductive system:** When stress is high, there is increased chance of exacerbation of symptoms of reproductive disease states, such as: Herpes Simplex Virus or Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome. The diagnosis and treatment of reproductive cancers can cause significant stress, which warrants additional attention and support.

### Conclusion:

Stress symptoms may be affecting your health, even though you might not realize it. You may think illness is to blame for that nagging headache, your frequent insomnia or your decreased productivity at work. But stress may actually be the culprit.

Indeed, stress symptoms can affect your body, your thoughts and feelings, and your behavior. Being able to recognize common stress symptoms can give you a jump on managing them. Stress that's left unchecked can contribute to many health problems, such as high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity and diabetes.



# Stress

Relieving Mantra

## Chapter 7



Stress Management -  
Tips to Reduce Everyday Stress



Everyday stress is the most harmful kind of stress, and it should be avoided at all costs.

Everyone has stress. It is a normal part of life. You can feel stress in your body when you have too much to do or when you haven't slept well. You can also feel stress when you worry about things like your job, money, relationships, or a friend or family member who is ill or in crisis.



In response to these strains, your body automatically increases blood pressure, heart rate, respiration, metabolism, and blood flow to your muscles. This response is intended to help your body react quickly and effectively to a high-pressure situation. However, when you are constantly reacting to stressful situations without making adjustments to counter the effects, you will feel stress which can threaten your health and well-being.

Sad to say, a lot of us are badly affected by unnecessary, but can easily be avoided, stress today.

### **7.1 Ways to Reduce and Overcome Everyday Stress**



- **Get enough sleep:** Inconsistent sleep can have some serious consequences. Not only does it affect our physical health, but lack of sleep can also contribute to overall anxiety and stress. And sometimes it turns into a vicious cycle since anxiety often leads to disruptions in sleep. Especially when feeling anxious, try to schedule a full seven to nine hours of snooze time and see what a few nights of sweet slumber do for those anxiety levels throughout the day.



Adequate sleep fuels your mind, as well as your body. Feeling tired will increase your stress because it may cause you to think irrationally.

- **Eat well:** Foods rich in vitamin C, like oranges, lemons, and grapefruits, may help lower your stress hormones. Omega-3s, like those found in salmon and other fatty fish, as well as nuts and seeds also have a calming effect. In general, fuelling your body well with a balanced diet can help your body to better handle stress. Part of eating well means focusing on getting whole grains, vegetables, and fruits.



Fancy something sweet? Dark chocolate has a calming effect and eating chocolate, in general, makes you feel good.

- **Breathe deeply:** Stopping and taking a few deep breaths can take the pressure off you right away. You'll be surprised how much better you feel once you get good at it. Just follow these 5 steps:
  - a. Sit in a comfortable position with your hands in your lap and your feet on the floor. Or you can lie down.
  - b. Close your eyes.
  - c. Imagine yourself in a relaxing place. It can be on the beach, in a beautiful field of grass, or anywhere that gives you a peaceful feeling.
  - d. Slowly take deep breaths in and out.
  - e. Do this for 5 to 10 minutes at a time.
- **Say no:** People pleasing is a one-way ticket to stress because guess what? You can't please all the people all the time! Give yourself permission to say no. If you're worried that people won't like you as much for saying no – think again. People will probably like and respect you more if you are honest with them instead of over-committing yourself and having to cancel things at the last minute. Work on considering the best ways to say no.



Think about your personal boundaries and the situation at hand. When saying no, do so in a polite way that makes your boundaries clear. Also very important, work on avoiding guilt after saying no. You always have a right to turn down an invitation or refuse a favor. It's okay to make yourself and your mental health a priority.

- **Exercise:** Regular exercise is a popular way to relieve stress. Twenty to thirty minutes of physical activity benefits both the body and the mind. It might seem contradictory, but putting physical stress on your body through exercise can relieve mental stress.



The benefits are strongest when you exercise regularly. People who exercise regularly are less likely to experience anxiety than those who don't exercise. Exercise is a way to manage stress that doesn't have to add to your financial woes. For example, a 20-minute walk or jog around your block can yield up to 12 hours of improved mood. The main thing is to find a physical activity that you enjoy, whether it's dancing or fly fishing.



Exercise can act as a buffer against the negative effects of emotional experiences. So, by exercising, you'll reduce overall anxiety in the short term (in the gym), and be better able to maintain that reduced anxiety when confronted with emotional events in the long term (outside of the gym).

- **Slow down:** Modern life is so busy, and sometimes we just need to slow down and chill out. Look at your life and find small ways you can do that. For example:
  - a. Set your watch 5 to 10 minutes ahead. That way you'll get places a little early and avoid the stress of being late.
  - b. When you're driving on the highway, switch to the slow lane so you can avoid road rage.
  - c. Break down big jobs into smaller ones. For example, don't try to answer all 100 emails if you don't have to -- just answer a few of them.
- **Make time for hobbies:** You need to set aside time for things you enjoy. Try to do something every day that makes you feel good, and it will help relieve your stress. It doesn't have to be a ton of time -- even 15 to 20 minutes will do. Relaxing hobbies include things like:





- a. Reading
- b. Knitting
- c. Doing an art project
- d. Playing golf
- e. Watching a movie
- f. Doing puzzles
- g. Playing cards and board games
- **Meditate:** Mindfulness, the practice of learning to focus on moment-to-moment experiences with an attitude of curiosity, openness, and acceptance are found to be effective in treating psychiatric symptoms, pain, and stress. Try it for yourself; zero in on present thoughts, emotions, and sensations to calm the brain and soothe the spirit.

A few minutes of practice per day can help ease anxiety. “Research suggests that daily meditation may alter the brain’s neural pathways, making you more resilient to stress,” says psychologist Robbie Maller Hartman, Ph.D., a Chicago health and wellness coach.



It's simple. Sit up straight with both feet on the floor. Close your eyes. Focus your attention on reciting -- out loud or silently -- a positive mantra such as “I feel at



peace” or “I love myself.” Place one hand on your belly to sync the mantra with your breaths. Let any distracting thoughts float by like clouds.

- **Laugh:** Laughter is the best medicine! Laughing out loud increases oxygen and blood flow which automatically reduces stress. Not taking life too seriously can help everyone live a better and easier life. Is there a funny meme or YouTube clip that always makes you laugh?

When it comes to stress, laughter is a powerful way to change your state of mind. Next time you feel stressed by a situation, try to see the humor in it. By reframing the circumstance, you loosen the hold a stressful situation has on you.

- **Talk about your problems:** If things are bothering you, talking about them can help lower your stress. You can talk to family members, friends, a trusted clergyman, your doctor, or a therapist.

And you can also talk to yourself. It's called self-talk and we all do it. But in order for self-talk to help reduce the stress, you need to make sure it's positive and not negative.



So listen closely to what you're thinking or saying when you're stressed out. If you're giving yourself a negative message, change it to a positive one. For



example, don't tell yourself "I can't do this." Tell yourself instead: "I can do this," or "I'm doing the best I can."

- **Positive thinking:** The positive thinking that usually comes with optimism is a key part of effective stress management. Sometimes we just think too much and our overthinking mind leads us to the worst-case scenario.

To beat the stress this causes, we need to avoid that kind of doom-and-gloom thinking. Positive thinking can give you more confidence, improve your mood, and even reduce the likelihood of developing conditions such as hypertension, depression and other stress-related disorders. Next time you find yourself thinking negative thoughts, ask yourself, "Is this true?" Slowly shift to better-feeling thoughts — you'll probably feel a tangible sense of relief.

- **Give someone a hug:** Hugs are good stress relievers. Getting a good squeeze before going into a stressful situation can help you relax and calm down a bit. The hug could even help you stay calm, cool, and collected during the event. The reason for this is that when we hug or kiss a loved one, our oxytocin levels go up. This powerful hormone is often called "the bonding hormone", because it promotes attachment in relationships, including between mothers and their newborn babies. And the more the better! If you feel weird about hugging your colleagues at work, save those hugs for friends and family.





- **De-clutter the brain:** Physical clutter = mental clutter. Simplify everything. Your schedule, commitments, finances, to-do list, and workspace.  
A messy workspace can make it more difficult to relax and make it seem like our work is never-ending. So take 15 minutes or so to tidy up the living space or work area, and then make a habit of keeping things clean and anxiety-free. It'll help us think rationally, and there won't be as much room for anxiety.  
Write down your schedule and to-do items. Writing it down in a place where you can see it often frees up the time you spend trying to remember and can help you eliminate the things that are not urgent or necessary.
- **Be flexible:** If you find you're meeting constant opposition in either your personal or professional life, rethink your position or strategy. Arguing only intensifies stressful feelings.  
Make allowances for other's opinions and be prepared to compromise. If you are willing to be accommodating, others may meet you halfway. Not only will you reduce your stress, but you may also find better solutions to your problems.
- **Chew gum:** For a super easy and quick stress reliever, try chewing a stick of gum. One study showed that people who chewed gum had a greater sense of wellbeing and lower stress. One possible explanation is that chewing gum causes brain waves similar to those of relaxed people. Another is that chewing gum promotes blood flow to your brain.





Additionally, one recent study found that stress relief was greatest when people chewed more strongly. The researchers say the underlying mechanisms behind these effects are unknown but they think when we chew gum, we're improving blood flow in the brain, which has a marked influence on these emotions.

- **Learn to avoid procrastination:** Another way to take control of your stress is to stay on top of your priorities and stop procrastinating. Procrastination can lead you to act reactively, leaving you scrambling to catch up. This can cause stress, which negatively affects your health and sleeps quality. Get in the habit of making a to-do list organized by priority. Give yourself realistic deadlines and work your way down the list.



Work on the things that need to get done today and give yourself chunks of uninterrupted time, as switching between tasks or multitasking can be stressful itself.

- **Listen to soothing music:** Specific kinds of music can have measurable stress-reducing effects in people. Slow-paced instrumental music can induce the relaxation response by helping lower blood pressure and heart rate as well as stress hormones.

Some types of classical, Celtic, Native American and Indian music can be particularly soothing, but simply listening to the music you enjoy is effective too.



Nature sounds can also be very calming. This is why they're often incorporated into relaxation and meditation music. Music is even used as a therapeutic tool in the treatment of different diseases; although the scientific background is poorly understood, the so-called “Mozart effect” can make people feel centered, reduce anxiety, depression, and stress-inducing cortisol levels.

- **Eliminate your triggers:** Figure out what are the biggest causes of stress in your life. Is it your job, your commute, your schoolwork? If you're able to identify what they are, see if you're able to eliminate them from your life, or at least reduce them.

If you can't identify the main causes of your stress, try keeping a stress journal. Make note of when you become most anxious and see if you can determine a pattern, then find ways to remove or lessen those triggers.

- **Spend time with your pet:** Having a pet may help reduce stress and improve your mood. Interacting with pets may help release oxytocin, a brain chemical that promotes a positive mood. Having a pet may also help relieve stress by giving you purpose, keeping you active and providing companionship — all qualities that help reduce anxiety.





A study in the International Journal of Workplace Health Management found when people bring their dogs to work it lowers office stress and boosts employee satisfaction. It's even better if you get your own; dogs make excellent running buddies.

- **Maintain a healthy support system:** Maintaining your positive relationships can ensure that you have someone to go to in a time of need. Think of these people as your relationship bank account. The more you do for them, the easier it will be to ask for help. The idea isn't to manipulate or keep score, but rather maintain a healthy give and take. Additionally, you might want to check out a mental health treatment center or mental health services.

### **Conclusion:**

Although stress and anxiety may arise in your workplace and personal life, there are many simple ways to reduce the pressure you feel.

These tips often involve getting your mind away from the source of stress.

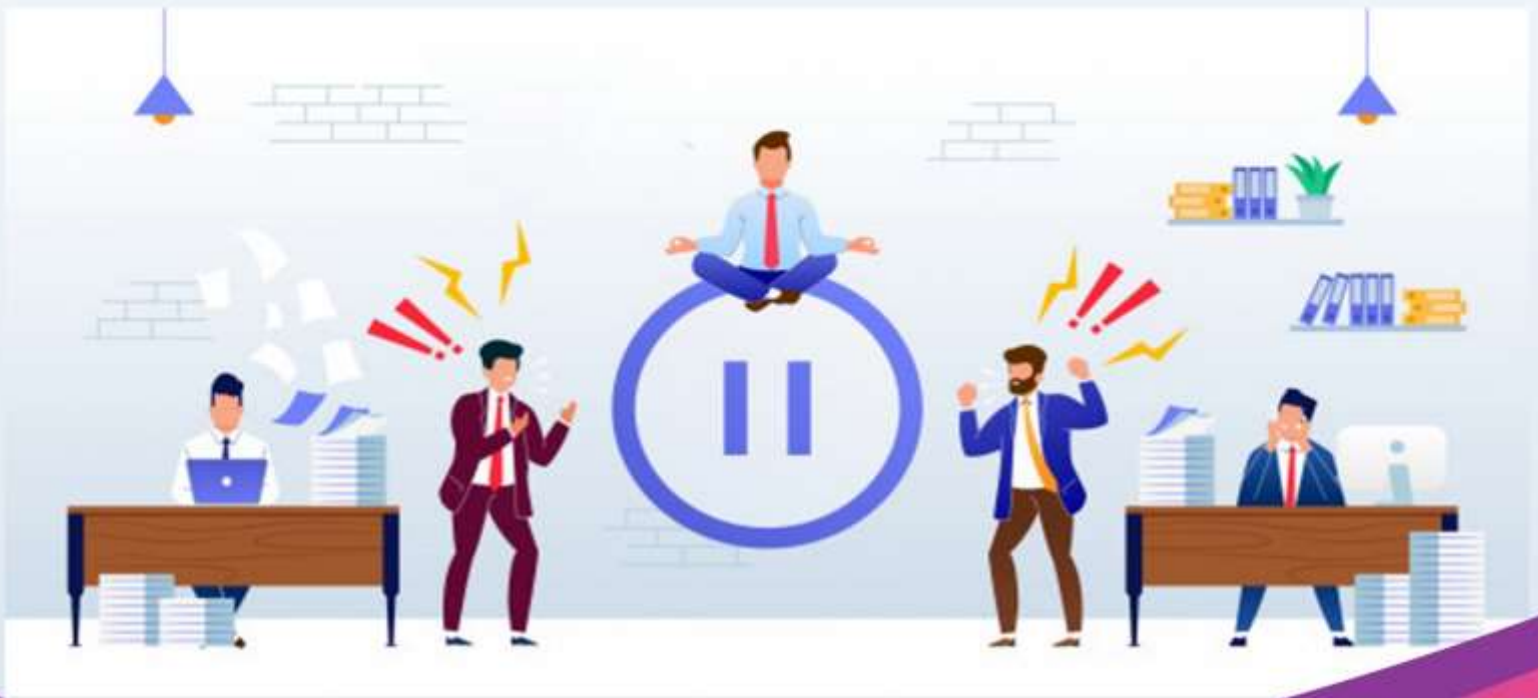
Exercise, mindfulness, music and physical activities can all work to relieve anxiety — and they will improve your overall work-life balance as well.



# Stress

Relieving Mantra

## Chapter 8



How to Eliminate Workplace  
Stress Effectively?



Everyone who has ever held a job has, at some point, felt the pressure of work-related stress. Any job can have stressful elements, even if you love what you do. In the short-term, you may experience pressure to meet a deadline or to fulfill a challenging obligation. But when work stress becomes chronic, it can be overwhelming — and harmful to both physical and emotional health.



Unfortunately, such long-term stress is all too common. In fact, APA's annual Stress in America survey has consistently found that work is cited as a significant source of stress by a majority of Americans. You can't always avoid the tensions that occur on the job. Yet you can take steps to manage work-related stress.

### **8.1 What causes stress at work?**

Are you stressed at work?

If so, you wouldn't be alone. According to the 2014 Work Stress Survey conducted by Nielsen, 80% of Americans indicated that they're stressed out on the job.



This statistic should be alarming to all decision-makers, especially considering that a recent study from Harvard and Stanford revealed that workplace stress can have as negative an impact on health as secondhand smoke.



Stress can lead to heart disease, insomnia, depression, and obesity, among other ailments, according to Today. Don't forget: employees can't be productive when they're sick.

The good news is that by identifying the major causes of work-related stress, managers can make a few changes here and there to help make sure employees are more relaxed in the office.

Let's take a look at six of the major causes of stress at work.

**8.1.1 Demands:** This includes the demands of the workload, the work pattern and the work environment. When employees feel that the demands of their workload and the associated time pressures are a source of stress, for example:

- Unrealistic deadlines and expectations
- Technology overload
- Unmanageable workloads
- Under-recruitment of staff for work already timetabled



- Long work hours



**8.1.2 Lack of Control:** This is about how much authority employees have about the way they do their work. Lack of influence and consultation in the way in which work is organized and performed can be a potential source of pressure, for example:

- Little control over aspects of the job
- Not enough involvement in decision making
- Account not taken of staff ideas/suggestions relating to the role
- No influence over performance targets
- Lack of time

**8.1.3 Minimal Support:** It's always important to know that we are supported in what we do. Knowing that your colleagues and management support you, will give you a boost, especially on difficult days. However, having no support or very little, can lead to feelings of frustration and being undervalued.

A company should have the following in place to ensure employees are supported in their role:



- Policies and procedures to support employees.
- Systems in place for managers, so they can support their staff, including managing workplace stress training.
- Systems in place for employees to encourage their colleagues, including workplace stress management training.
- Make employees aware of where they can find support and how to access it.
- A feedback system, so that employees get regular and constructive feedback.

**8.1.4 Role Ambiguity:** Work-related stress can be caused when an employee does not understand their role fully, if they have not been given adequate training to carry out their role or if their role has conflicting responsibilities.

Role ambiguity and conflict decreases workers' performance and are positively related to the probability of workers leaving the company.

**8.1.5 Work-life Balance Issues:** A hot topic that is never going to go away, until we get it right. The pressure of an increasingly demanding work culture is perhaps the biggest and most pressing challenge to the mental health of the general population.



The demands of work have the potential to spill over and affect personal and home life and so put a strain on relationships outside of the work, for example:



- Long hours
- Over-demanding and inflexible work schedules
- Pressure on family relationships
- Unsocial working hours
- Excessive travel time
- Work interfering with home/personal life

**8.1.6 Poor Relationships:** Being the human beings that we are, we are not all going to get along with everyone and that's ok. What is not ok, is when personalities clash and in turn into conflict and possible workplace bullying.

## **8.2 Ways to Eliminate Stress at Work**

Work stress has significant health consequences that range from the relatively benign—more colds and flu—to the more serious, like heart disease and metabolic syndrome. But, because stress at work is so common, finding a low-stress job may be difficult or impossible for many people.

A more realistic choice would be to simply adopt more effective strategies to reduce stress at work. Here are some stress management techniques to try.

- 1. Start Your Day Off Right:** After scrambling to get the kids fed and off to school, dodging traffic and combating road rage, and gulping down coffee in lieu of something healthy, many people come in already stressed, and more reactive to stress at work.  
In fact, you may be surprised by how much more reactive to stress you are when you have a stressful morning. If you start off the day with good nutrition, proper planning, and a positive attitude, you may find the stress of the workplace rolling off your back more easily.
- 2. Act Rather Than React:** We experience stress when we feel that situations are out of our control. It activates the stress hormone and, if chronic, wears down confidence, concentration, and well-being. It is advised that you identify the aspects of the situation you can control and aspects you can't. Typically, you're in

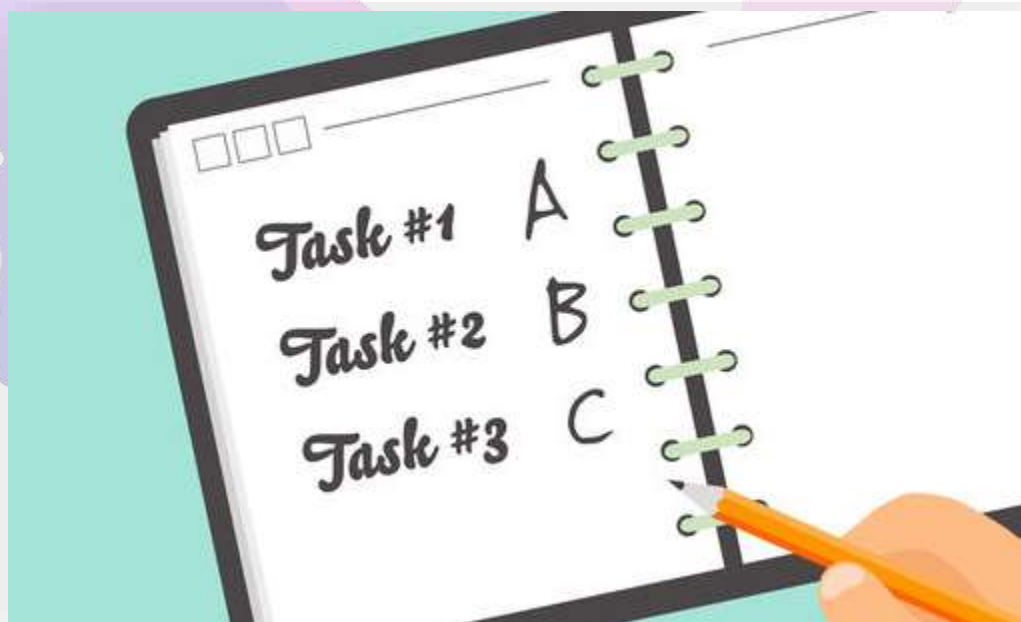


control of your actions and responses, but not in control of macro forces or someone else's tone. Be impeccable for your 50% and try to let go of the rest.

- 3. Eliminate Interruptions:** Most of us are bombarded during the day, emails, phone calls, pop-ins, instant messages, and sudden, urgent deadlines conspire to make today's workers more distracted than ever. While you may not have control over the interrupters, you can control your response.

Experts advise that responding in one of three ways: Accept the interruption, cut it off or diagnosis its importance and make a plan. Many interruptions are recurring and can be anticipated. You want to have preset criteria for which response you want to make. You can also train those around you by answering email during certain windows, setting up office hours to talk in person or closing the door when you need to focus.

- 4. Schedule Your Day For Energy And Focus:** Most of us go through the day using a "push, push, push" approach, thinking if we work the full eight to 10 hours, we'll get more done. Instead, productivity goes down, stress levels go up and you have very little energy left over for your family.



Experts suggest that scheduling breaks throughout the day to walk, stretch at your desk or do a breathing exercise. "Tony Schwartz of the Energy Project has



shown that if we have the intense concentration for about 90 minutes, followed by a brief period of recovery, we can clear the buildup of stress and rejuvenate ourselves.”

5. **Be Clear on Requirements:** A factor that contributes to job burnout is unclear requirements. If you don't know exactly what's expected of you, or if the requirements keep changing with little notice, you may find yourself much more stressed than necessary. If you find yourself falling into the trap of never knowing if what you're doing is enough, it may help to have a talk with your supervisor and go over expectations, and strategies for meeting them. This can relieve stress for both of you!
6. **Track your Stressors:** Keep a journal for a week or two to identify which situations create the most stress and how you respond to them. Record your thoughts, feelings, and information about the environment, including the people and circumstances, involved the physical setting and how you reacted. Did you raise your voice? Get a snack from the vending machine? Go for a walk? Taking notes can help you find patterns among your stressors and your reactions to them.





- 7. Stay Away From Conflict:** Because interpersonal conflict takes a toll on your physical and emotional health, and because conflict among co-workers is so difficult to escape, it's a good idea to avoid conflict at work as much as possible. That means don't gossip, don't share too many of your personal opinions about religion and politics, and try to steer clear of colorful office humor. Try to avoid those people at work who don't work well with others. If conflict finds you anyway, learn how to deal with it appropriately.
- 8. Identify Self-Imposed Stress:** Learn to stop self-imposing stress by building your own self-confidence rather than seeking other's approval. If you're too caught up in others' perceptions of you, which you can't control, you become stressed out by the minutia or participate in avoidance behaviors like procrastination. Ironically, once you shift your focus from others' perception of your work to the work itself, you're more likely to impress them.
- 9. Stay Organized:** Even if you're a naturally disorganized person, planning ahead to stay organized can greatly decrease stress at work. Being organized with your time means less rushing in the morning to avoid being late and rushing to get out at the end of the day. Keeping yourself organized means avoiding the negative effects of clutter, and being more efficient with your work.
- 10. Prioritize Your Priorities:** With competing deadlines and fast-changing priorities, it's critical to define what's truly important and why. That requires clarity. It's important to understand your role in the organization, the company's strategic priorities, and your personal goals and strengths. Cull your to-do list by focusing on those projects that will have the most impact and are best aligned with your goals.
- 11. Take Time to Recharge:** To avoid the negative effects of chronic stress and burnout, we need time to replenish and return to our pre-stress level of functioning. This recovery process requires "switching off" from work by having periods of time when you are neither engaging in work-related activities nor thinking about work. That's why it's critical that you disconnect from time to time, in a way that fits your needs and preferences.  
Don't let your vacation days go to waste. When possible, take time off to relax and unwind, so you come back to work feeling reinvigorated and ready to perform at



your best. When you're not able to take time off, get a quick boost by turning off your smartphone and focusing your attention on non-work activities for a while.

**12. Forget Multitasking:** Multitasking was once heralded as a fantastic way to maximize one's time and get more done in a day. Then people started realizing that when they had a phone in their ear and were making calculations at the same time, their speed and accuracy (not to mention sanity) suffered. There is a certain kind of frazzled feeling that comes from splitting one's focus that doesn't work well for most people. Rather than multitasking, try a new strategy known as chunking.



**13. Develop Healthy Responses:** Instead of attempting to fight stress with fast food or alcohol, do your best to make healthy choices when you feel the tension rise. Exercise is a great stress-buster. Yoga can be an excellent choice, but any form of physical activity is beneficial. Also, make time for hobbies and favorite activities.

Whether it's reading a novel, going to concerts or playing games with your family, make sure to set aside time for the things that bring you pleasure. Getting enough good-quality sleep is also important for effective stress management. Build



healthy sleep habits by limiting your caffeine intake late in the day and minimizing stimulating activities, such as computer and television use, at night.

**14. Get Some Support:** Accepting help from trusted friends and family members can improve your ability to manage stress. Your employer may also have stress management resources available through an employee assistance program (EAP), including online information, available counseling, and referral to mental health professionals, if needed. If you continue to feel overwhelmed by work stress, you may want to talk to a psychologist, who can help you better manage stress and change unhealthy behavior.

**15. Influence Others:** Even if you're responsible for your behavior and outlook, you're still left dealing with other people's stressful behavior. It is advised to confronting a problem coworker or employee by stating the bad behavior in a respectful tone, describing the impact on the team and the individual, and requesting a change.

For example, constant negativity might be addressed in this way: When you speak in a critical tone, it makes others uncomfortable and less likely to see you as a leader. Instead of shouting try the tone that "I understand your frustration but request you to bring concerns directly to me, so we can talk them through." By transferring the ownership of the problem, you're more likely to resolve it.

**16. Listen to Music on the Drive Home:** Listening to music brings many benefits and can offer an effective way to relieve stress after work. Combating the stress of a long day at work with your favorite music on the drive home can make you less stressed when you get home, and more prepared to interact with the people in your life.



**17. Be Your Own Best Critic:** Some 60,000 thoughts stream through your mind each day, and internal negativity is just as likely to stress you out as an external event. The fix? Instead of being harsh and critical of yourself, try pumping yourself up. Encouraging thoughts will help motivate you to achieve and ultimately train you to inspire others.

### **Conclusion:**

Stress isn't always bad. A little bit of stress can help you stay focused, energetic, and able to meet new challenges in the workplace. It's what keeps you on your toes during a presentation or alert to prevent accidents or costly mistakes. But in today's hectic world, the workplace too often seems like an emotional roller coaster. Long hours, tight deadlines, and ever-increasing demands can leave you feeling worried, drained, and overwhelmed. And when stress exceeds your ability to cope, it stops being helpful and starts causing damage to your mind and body, as well as to your job satisfaction.

If stress on the job is interfering with your work performance, health, or personal life, it's time to take action. No matter what you do for a living, or how stressful your job is, there are plenty of things you can do to reduce your overall stress levels and regain a sense of control at work.



# Stress

Relieving Mantra

## Chapter 9



Managing Stress with  
Exercise and Meditation



As our society becomes more health-conscious, there has been an increased focus on the importance of exercise. Many people exercise to control weight and get in better physical condition to become more healthy or physically attractive, but exercise and stress management are also closely linked.



Studies show that exercise is very effective at reducing fatigue, improving alertness and concentration, and at enhancing overall cognitive function. This can be especially helpful when stress has depleted your energy or ability to concentrate.

### 9.1 Exercise and Stress Relief

Exercise increases your overall health and your sense of well-being, which puts more pep in your step every day. But exercise also has some direct stress-busting benefits.

- **It pumps up your endorphins:** Physical activity helps to bump up the production of your brain's feel-good neurotransmitters, called endorphins. Although this function is often referred to as a runner's high, a rousing game of tennis or a nature hike also can contribute to this same feeling.
- **It's meditation in motion:** After a fast-paced game of racquetball or several laps in the pool, you'll often find that you've forgotten the day's irritations and concentrated only on your body's movements.



As you begin to regularly shed your daily tensions through movement and physical activity, you may find that this focus on a single task, and the resulting energy and optimism, can help you remain calm and clear in everything you do.

- **It improves your mood:** Regular exercise can increase self-confidence, it can relax you, and it can lower the symptoms associated with mild depression and anxiety. Exercise can also improve your sleep, which is often disrupted by stress, depression, and anxiety. All of these exercise benefits can ease your stress levels and give you a sense of command over your body and your life.

## 9.2 What Types of Exercise Help With Stress?

While any exercise will naturally reduce stress, there are several exercise activities that specifically act to connect mind and body – promoting an instant feeling of calmness and wellbeing. These physical activities provide a good workout for your body while also being relaxing and therapeutic.

Try out one of these stress-relieving exercises the next time you need an instant pick-me-up:

- **Yoga:** This popular mind-body practice brings together physical and mental disciplines to help you relax while increasing physical strength and flexibility. It combines poses with controlled breathing and mindfulness. Yoga can help reduce stress, lower blood pressure, and lower heart rate.

Anyone of any age or fitness level can practice and benefit from yoga. Contrary to popular belief, you don't have to be flexible or strong to hit the mat. Another perk of yoga? There are many different styles, forms, and intensities, so you'll never get bored of this powerful mind-body workout. Try out 15-minute stress relief yoga sequence for beginners.



- **Tai Chi:** Tai Chi is an ancient Chinese non-competitive martial art. It's popular due to its health benefits and known to be one of the most effective exercises for both mind and body. Like yoga, there are many different styles and forms of Tai Chi. This exercise links flowing physical movements with breathing. According to Tai Chi for Health Institute, studies have shown that Tai Chi improves muscular strength, flexibility, immunity, and can help relieve pain – all while achieving a sense of peace and serenity.
- **Qigong:** Similar to tai chi, qigong is considered one of the cornerstones of Chinese medicine, along with acupuncture and herbs. Practicing qigong regularly can promote feelings of serenity, improve sleep and digestion, and increase energy. Like tai chi, qigong helps you be more present in your body. Its slow gentle movements and focus on moving in harmony with the breath are extremely relaxing to the nervous system.



- **Pilates:** This fitness system is designed to strengthen muscles, improve posture and flexibility, and heighten mental awareness. Pilates is known to help relieve both stress and anxiety symptoms. It releases tension in the muscles while using breathing techniques to provide more oxygen to the brain – causing a feeling of calmness and wellbeing.



- **Gardening:** Get your hands dirty! Gardening isn't just a hobby – it's a workout. In fact, gardening for about 30-45 minutes a day can burn anywhere from 150 to 300 calories. A 2011 Netherlands study shows that gardening leads to a positive



mood and promotes relief from acute stress. It was also said to combat stress better than other relaxing leisure activities.

Since gardening doesn't seem like a "workout", you might forget to warm-up before you start. Start small. Even one or two herb plants are grown on a sunny windowsill can increase your connection to nature.

- **Kickboxing:** This workout burns calories like crazy and helps maintain a high metabolism. Kickboxing is a blend of martial arts and boxing and can be practiced for general fitness, self-defense, or sport. It reduces stress by teaching proper breathing techniques, building confidence, and giving you an instant energy boost.



- **Dancing:** Dancing is as fun as it is stress-relieving. Dancing provides an outlet for self-expression and creativity. It helps build confidence, and the ability to express yourself in a safe environment is great for a healthy mindset. Not to mention, dancing has amazing fitness benefits as well. Getting groovy can assist in weight loss, build muscle, improve heart health, and strengthen bones. And researchers have found that people who ballroom dance twice a week have less risk of developing dementia, perhaps because learning new steps challenges



your brain too. Dancing also fosters a sense of community and connection to other people, which lowers stress levels and boosts happiness.

- **Walking:** It's easy to do and requires no classes or special equipment. Walking frequently can reduce the incidence of many of the stress-related conditions, including cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure and cholesterol, and type 2 diabetes. People with regular walking regimens also report reduced stress levels and self-confidence that comes from taking an active role in their well-being. Walking releases tension from the major muscle groups deepens the breathing and quiets the nervous system. It also gets us out into nature, which is relaxing. If you're just getting started on walking for exercise, aim for two 10-minute walks a week. After two or three weeks, gradually increase the frequency and duration of your walks. Five or six 30-minute walks a week are usually recommended to maintain health and stress management. To lose weight, you'll have to make those walks longer when you have time (say, 90 minutes on Sundays) and/or more intense (take a hilly route or ramp up speed). Your breath should be heavy but not labored.
- **Circuit Training:** Circuit training alternates weight-training moves with cardio, with short rests in between. The result is a high-intensity workout that offers the same benefits of longer exercise sessions in less time (30 minutes or less). It's short, sweet and pumps up your body's endorphin level, which improves your mood. Better yet, you don't have to stress about finding lots of time to fit a workout in.





- **Tennis:** A great cardio workout, tennis can prevent many stress-related conditions, such as high blood pressure and heart disease. And because you can't play tennis alone, the sport keeps you connected to others – a key component of stress reduction.

Working out on the tennis court triggers your brain to release endorphins into your body. Those are the biochemicals that produce euphoric feelings of peace and satisfaction

- **Outdoor Activity:** Being active outdoors just might be the cure to all things stressful. Plenty of research has shown the health benefits of spending more time outdoors. Admiring nature calms your brain and melts stress away. Taking a bike ride, going for a run, or even taking a walk in a park will improve your mood and clear your mind.

Remember that any type of physical activity that increases your heart rate is sure to reduce stress! Try out some of these exercises when you are craving an instant rush of tranquility and calmness.

### 9.3 Stress Management and Meditation

Meditation has many health benefits and is a highly effective way to relieve stress and maintain a healthier lifestyle. With practice, meditation becomes both more of an easy habit to maintain and more of an effective one as well, given that it builds resilience to stress over time. Putting in the effort to learn and practice meditation can actually transform your experience of stress in your life.

With practice, you can use this technique to feel inner peace whenever you need it.

Meditation has become one of the most popular ways to relieve stress among people of all walks of life. This age-old practice, which can take many forms and may or may not be combined with many spiritual practices, can be used in several important ways.

- It can be a quick-fix stress reliever to help you reverse your body's stress response and physically relax.
- It can be a part of your daily routine and help you build resilience to stress.



- It can be a technique you use to get centered when you're thrown off by emotional stress.

A form of meditation can even be used for weight loss and healthier eating.



By learning to calm your body and mind, your physical and emotional stress can melt away. This leaves you feeling better, refreshed, and ready to face the challenges of your day with a healthy attitude. With regular practice over weeks or months, you can experience even greater benefits.

#### **9.4 Types of Meditation**

Meditation is an umbrella term for the many ways to a relaxed state of being. There are many types of meditation and relaxation techniques that have meditation components. All share the same goal of achieving inner peace.

Ways to meditate can include:



- **Guided meditation:** Sometimes called guided imagery or visualization, with this method of meditation you form mental images of places or situations you find relaxing.

You try to use as many senses as possible, such as smells, sights, sounds, and textures. You may be led through this process by a guide or teacher.

- **Mantra meditation:** In this type of meditation, you silently repeat a calming word, thought or phrase to prevent distracting thoughts.



- **Mindfulness meditation:** This type of meditation is based on being mindful, or having an increased awareness and acceptance of living in the present moment.  
In mindfulness meditation, you broaden your conscious awareness. You focus on what you experience during meditation, such as the flow of your breath. You can observe your thoughts and emotions, but let them pass without judgment.
- **Transcendental meditation:** Transcendental Meditation is a simple, natural technique. In Transcendental Meditation, you silently repeat a personally assigned mantra, such as a word, sound or phrase, in a specific way.  
This form of meditation may allow your body to settle into a state of profound rest and relaxation and your mind to achieve a state of inner peace, without needing to use concentration or effort.



## 9.5 How to Begin a Basic Meditation Practice?

Basic Meditation Practice involves these given steps.

**Step 1: Get into a comfortable position:** Many people like to sit in a comfortable chair while others prefer to sit cross-legged on the ground. You want to be able to completely relax while still staying awake.

Ensure that your posture is correct. It is easier to stay awake through long meditations if your back is straight. If you begin your meditation practice with this in mind, your body will become used to the position as you move on to longer periods of time.

**Tip:** Should you feel your shoulders slump while meditating, simply straighten back up. A straight back will also prevent soreness during longer meditations.

If you choose to sit in a chair, sit toward the front of the seat and place your feet firmly on the floor. This will improve your posture and help you concentrate on your practice.



**Step 2: Close your eyes gently:** When you are in a comfortable position, look into the distance with a soft gaze, and then slowly lower your lids. Keep your jaw slack and slightly open as well. You want to relax all of your facial muscles.

**Tip:** Do not squeeze your eyes tight. If you feel your face tighten, slowly open your eyes, refocus on that soft gaze and lower them again.

At this stage, your goal is to relax every part of your body. If you feel some tension in certain parts of your body, take a deep breath and allow it to relax you.



**Step 3: Clear your head:** This is the part of meditation that takes the most practice and it can cause the most frustration. Keeping your mind clear is the most important and most challenging aspect of the practice. Learning to do this during your meditation practice can help you to let things go in the rest of your life as well.

The idea is to stay unattached to thoughts of any kind. That means that, if the inner narrative voice in your mind speaks up, gently “shush” it and opt for internal silence.

**Tip:** Do not be discouraged if you cannot clear your thoughts completely. Our minds are constantly filled with thoughts and even the most experienced meditators must silence their inner voices. The goal is to recognize the thought then mentally tell it to go away (even if for just a second before the next one pops up).

**Step 4: Keep Going:** That’s it, really! Keep letting go of any thoughts that may pop into your mind. The quiet spaces between thoughts will become longer and more frequent the longer you practice.

You’re on the road of meditation!

**NOTE:** Don't judge your meditation skills, which may only increase your stress. Meditation takes practice.





Keep in mind, for instance, that it's common for your mind to wander during meditation, no matter how long you've been practicing meditation. If you're meditating to calm your mind and your attention wanders, slowly return to the object, sensation or movement you're focusing on.

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

### **Conclusion:**

Except during illness, you should exercise or meditate nearly every day. That doesn't necessarily mean hitting the gym or training for a marathon. But it does mean 30 to 40 minutes of moderate exercise such as walking or 15 to 20 minutes of vigorous exercise. Or go for merely half an hour of meditation. More is even better, but the first steps provide the most benefit.



# Stress

Relieving Mantra

## Chapter 10



Natural Herbal Remedies  
to Reduce Stress



Steering clear from stress is almost impossible in today's high-pressure society. We live in a chronically stressed culture. Most of us exist in a state of near-constant overwork and overwhelm. And all this stress is taking a serious toll. An estimated 90% of all visits to primary care doctors are for stress-related complaints.

Some stress can help you, by driving you to heightened alertness or intensity of focus. But too much stress can cause serious damage to your health — from contributing to weight gain to damaging your heart and making you look older. Stress can also affect how you feel physically and mentally.

Plus, chronic, or lasting, stress is linked to every chronic disease because it lays the foundation for inflammation and other health ailments.

You can't avoid all the stress in your life. So, what's the solution? How can you cope and not let all the little things, or the big ones, get you down?

You have more power over your stress than you may realize. Life isn't only about what happens to you — it's also about how you respond. The right herbs can be a potent tool to help you calm the stresses and enjoy more resiliencies.

### **10.1 Herbal Remedies for Stress Relief**

Getting a handle on your stress levels is essential to looking and feeling healthy, as well as aging gracefully. Luckily, there are a handful of herbal remedies for balancing cortisol and alleviating stress and anxiety naturally.

They are safe, non-toxic, and have a generalized, normalizing, balancing influence on the body—these herbs not only help the body to cope with stress, but they also enhance immunity, combat fatigue, promote strength, and encourage muscle development and repair.

Take a look at some of the most popular adaptogenic herbs and how you can benefit from their use:

- 1. Kava Root:** According to research, Kava may be one of the most effective herbal supplements for stress and anxiety. Unlike other herbal anxiety supplements,



kava is not only effective for anxiety symptoms - it's effective for anxious thoughts as well. Kava's calming effect may relieve anxiety, restlessness, sleeplessness, and stress-related symptoms such as muscle tension or spasm. Take kava as a concentrated extract in capsule or tablet form or hold back your taste buds and attempt the liquid form.



- 2. Brahmi:** Brahmi is well-known for reducing stress. It is known to decrease the levels of cortisol, the stress hormone. This herb counteracts the effects of stress by regulating hormones involved with the stress response. It further enhances your concentration power, revitalizing the brain cells leaving a soothing effect on the nervous system.



- 3. Ashwagandha:** Ashwagandha is a highly revered medicinal herb used in Ayurveda for millennia and praised as a longevity and vitality tonic. Its herbal actions benefit you by replacing your body's vital reserves, helping your body adapt to stress, and strengthening your body's systems, such as the nervous system and the adrenals. Many of the ashwagandha benefits are thought to come from the extract's ability to lower the stress hormone, cortisol. When you're under chronic stress and your cortisol levels creep up, your body's other hormones and neurotransmitters become unbalanced, leading to symptoms like anxiety, depression, and poor sleep.





- 4. Chamomile:** This amazing herb, related to ragweed, can be brewed in a tea or taken as a supplement, and it has been used for centuries to ease the mind and calm frazzled nerves. Chamomile has wonderful calming and anti-inflammatory properties and is often used in the treatment of insomnia and nervous complaints. Chamomile has a mild sedative action helping to promote a sense of calmness, which eases anxiety, along with inducing restful sleep. It is also useful for treating digestive problems associated with anxiety including nervous dyspepsia, IBS, diarrhea, constipation, and nausea.



- 5. Holy Basil:** Holy Basil, also called tulsi, is known in India as the “elixir of anti-aging.” Preliminary studies suggest that holy basil may be effective in helping fight fatigue and stress; boosting the immune system; and regulating blood sugar, blood pressure, and hormone levels.
- This plant is a powerful antioxidant. While people have used it for a variety of treatments, it’s most significant potential might be for stress-relief and relaxation. People who take it often report that it gives them calming energy and a general sense of well-being. Tulsi has also been found to help regulate your blood sugar and support heart health.



- 6. Lavender:** The amazing scent of this plant is known to put even agitated babies to sleep. If you can't get a good laugh to reduce the edge from your day, try smelling lavender, or drinking lavender-infused tea. It should immediately calm your frazzled nerves.



Believe it or not, the smell of lavender can promote quick stress and anxiety relief. Mix about 5 drops of lavender oil in your bath or diffuse a few drops of it



into the air when you are feeling stressed out. In a Florida study, students who inhaled lavender oil scent before an exam has less anxiety—although some students said it made their minds "fuzzy" during the test.

7. **Lemon Balm:** Valerian herbs have been used throughout the world to help treat anxiety and insomnia. It is one of the most well-known remedies and promotes feelings of tranquility and peace. For most people, lemon balm is considered safe to take daily. Some health practitioners even recommend using it to soothe teething children. Many people use it to improve their mood and stress levels, as well as for anxiety or seasonal affective disorder.



If you have leaves from this plant, you can simply rub a leaf between your fingers to absorb some of its essential oils aromatically. Fresh lemon balm has its own special benefits, and it's easy to grow in containers.

8. **Passionflower:** Passionflower helps to reduce stress, improve quality of life and support increased resilience. Surprisingly, it has also been shown to improve mood and lower stress when taken prior to surgery or dental procedures. Passionflower is a first-rate sedative, a nerve calming agent and a sleep aid. Its properties are well known to help you relax, unwind and enjoy a decent night's sleep.



**9. Ginseng:** This well-known, but often misunderstood, the herb has been shown in human studies to have a long-term anti-stress effect; to improve physical and mental performance, memory, and reaction time; and to enhance mood. Ginseng increases physical working capacity in humans in many ways, including stimulating the central nervous system, lowering blood pressure and glucose levels when they're high, and raising them when they're low.

Ginseng could reduce exercise-induced muscle damage and inflammatory responses.

Ginseng is generally indicated for daily, consistent use in moderate doses.

Ginseng and other adaptogens work best after one to three months of moderate use by regulating hormone levels and other biological functions to protect against the damaging effects of chronic stress.



- 10. Curcumin:** Curcumin is the most active compound in the turmeric root. You've probably heard about the vast range of health benefits curcumin and turmeric can provide. In fact, here are 600 reasons turmeric may be the world's most important herb. But you may not be aware that this magical herb can help relieve stress and anxiety.



Some people eat turmeric with black pepper and a fat source, such as ghee or coconut oil, as has been done traditionally in India for many centuries to boost bioavailability. But many people find it easiest to achieve optimal levels with curcumin supplementation.

- 11. Hops:** When we think of hops, we usually think of beer, but it's a traditional stress-buster as well. Hops have been shown to support calming



neurotransmitters such as GABA in the brain. They also help reduce anxiety and improve sleep quality.



**12. Magnesium:** Magnesium is a mineral that is essential for good health and vitality. It is considered the ‘anti-stress’ nutrient as it helps to calm and support the nervous system making it beneficial for people with anxiety and trouble sleeping. Magnesium deficiencies are associated with fatigue, weakness, twitching and muscle cramps, and a predisposition to anxiety and insomnia.





Magnesium occurs abundantly in whole foods and the best dietary sources include legumes, seeds (flaxseeds, pumpkin seeds, sesame seeds), nuts (cashews, peanuts, almonds), whole grains (oats, millet, quinoa), avocados, sea vegetables, and green leafy vegetables such as spinach. Up to 70% of the population is deficient in magnesium. The recommended dosage is 300-400 mg of elemental magnesium daily.

**13. B Vitamins:** B vitamins are important nutrients for helping maintain emotional and mental health. B vitamins are needed for proper nervous system function and for the production of energy from food. They are also considered 'anti-stress' nutrients, as B vitamins help to combat stress and relieve anxiety. Deficiencies in B vitamins can cause mood changes, depression, insomnia, anxiety, and fatigue. The best food sources of B vitamins are dark leafy greens, lentils, bell peppers, grass-fed beef, wild caught fish, eggs, almonds, walnuts, sardines, oats, and sea vegetables.



**14. Tart cherry:** It is an anti-inflammatory, natural source of melatonin. Tart cherry fruit is most known for reducing inflammation after exercise. It has also been shown to contain a small amount of melatonin, which along with its antioxidant properties provides benefits in a stress relief formula.



**15. Astragalus:** Astragalus is widely used for a variety of ailments and functions. It is typically valued for supporting healthy immune function but being an adaptogen it also helps protect the body from physical, mental, or emotional stress. It increases the amount of anti-stress compounds our bodies use to repair and prevent stress-related damage. Astragalus is available in the form of dried whole root, dried sliced root, root powder, which can be encapsulated, and tincture.



**16. Jatamansi:** Jatamansi as a plant has a great history of medicinal use. It has been valued for centuries in Ayurvedic medicine because it has the ability to



reduce stress and anxiety. It works by balancing the secretion of neurotransmitters in the nervous system and controlling the biochemical reactions occurring in the body. It keeps the mind calm and relaxed thus improving mental health.



Because it is an effective rejuvenator for the mind, it prevents the wavering of thoughts and brings in a sense of serenity. This action is helpful for the prevention of depression, anxiety disorders, and bipolar disorders. It also comfortable and restful sleep to those who have a stressful routine.

- 17. Valerian Root:** Valerian has been used for 1000 years as a sedative and calming agent. Its modern day uses include; treatment for anxiety, promoting sleep, controlling panic attacks, relieving headaches, menstrual cramps, digestive cramping and relax the body. By reducing anxiety and improving the length and quality of sleep, Valerian root can significantly help with daily stress management. Chronic stress can make you feel anxious, but anxiety can also make you feel more stressed out.



By improving GABA levels, Valerian makes it easier for both the mind and body to relax. Since relaxation is the antithesis of stress, Valerian root is an excellent natural way to help keep your stress down and your quality of life up.

- 18. Theanine:** Green-tea-derived theanine has become a well-known stress reliever. When swallowed, theanine is readily absorbed and easily crosses the “blood-brain barrier,” allowing it to quickly reach brain cells. Studies suggest theanine has the ability to support brain health, promote calmness and boost cognitive function. L-Theanine reduces the stress response and promotes focused relaxation and alertness. One way it does this is by increasing calming neurotransmitters in the brain, such as serotonin and GABA.



**19.Skullcap:** Skullcap is a very popular herb that helps to balance the hormones in your body, as it stimulates the release of endorphins, and generally balances your mood. It works well in acute situations and can be taken over time to decrease chronic stress, along with lifestyle modifications.





It can also be taken over time as a nerve tonic to support nervous system health in people who have been through prolonged periods of stress and feel like their nerves are constantly on edge. It is especially helpful for relieving neck and shoulder tension brought on by mental or emotional stress. Some people find that skullcap can also help reduce mild stress-induced insomnia.

- 20. Magnolia bark:** Magnolia bark contains nutrients that cross the blood/brain barrier and support stress reduction. Research has shown practical benefits for the extract, such as helping with day to day issues like worry, anxiety, and irritability that so many of us deal with.



- 21. Oat Straw:** Oat straw is a licensed traditional herbal medicine in Europe for the relief of mild mental stress and anxiety. Herbalists have used it for centuries to support nervous system health and reduce mild stress.



- 22. Rhodiola:** For centuries, Siberians have used Rhodiola, also known as golden root or Arctic root, to thrive in cold climates. Traditional folk medicine in China, Serbia, Scandinavia, and Ukraine, tea made from Rhodiola root helps people deal with physical stresses.





Folk use and modern research tell us that Rhodiola supports the nervous system, immunity, exercise capacity, energy, memory, and sexual performance, and may even lengthen lifespan. A recent study found that Rhodiola root extract had benefits for physical fitness, mental fatigue, and coordination tests for students during stressful examinations.

- 23. Bhringaraj:** Bhringaraj tea helps in detoxifying the body and energizing your brain by consistently supplying oxygen to them and increasing blood circulation. The calming effects of the tea will leave your mind and body relaxed.



- 24. Vacha:** The magical root of this herb has a reliever action over various mental disorders. Its calmative properties help you sleep better and calm an anxious mind. It is also known to increase and improve memory power.

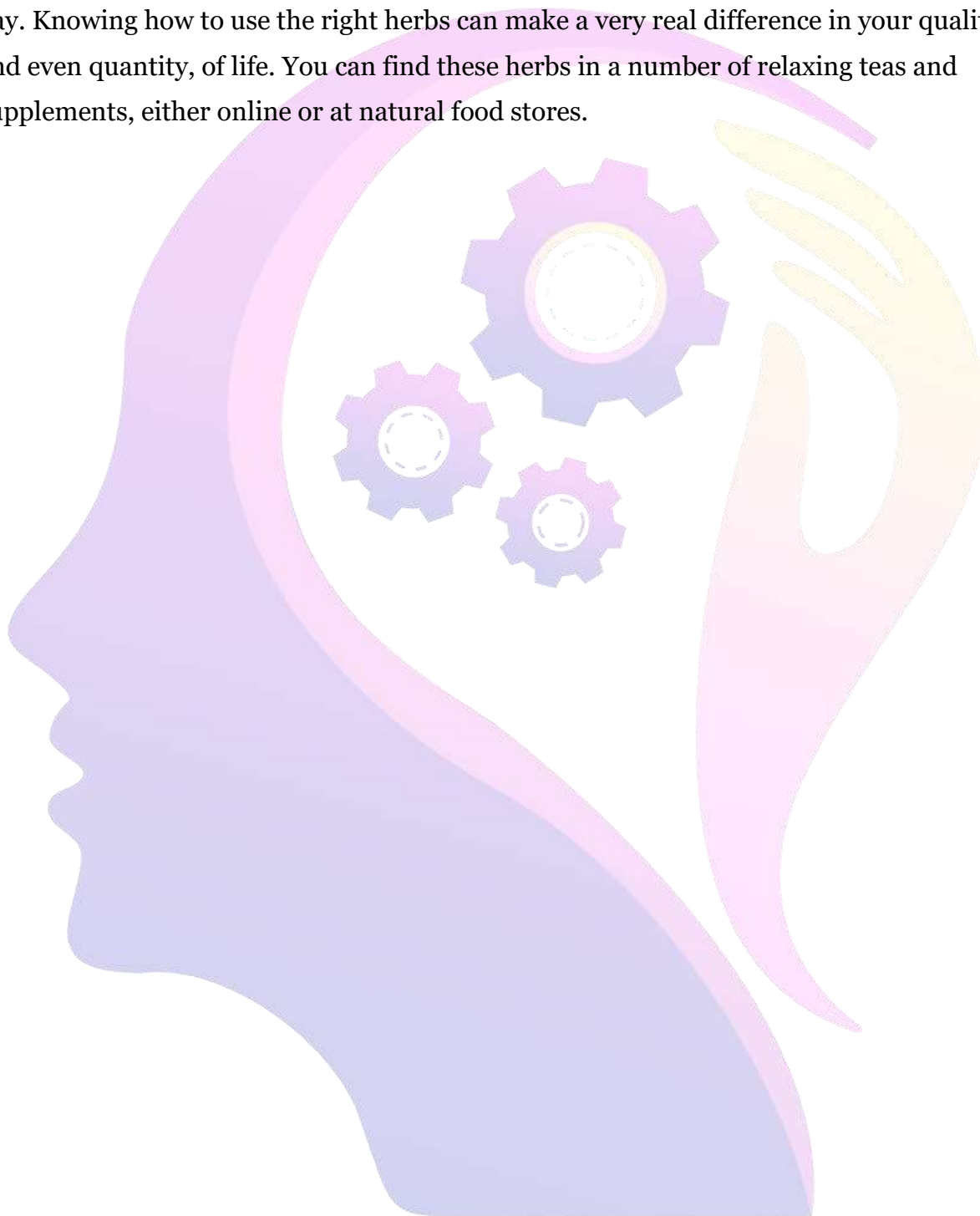


- 25. Licorice:** Rich in both saponins and flavonoids, licorice root is anti-inflammatory. The structure of the saponins resembles adrenal hormones. This herb also enhances immune system functioning. Additionally, licorice is a potent liver herb, assisting the liver's role in hormone balance. This herb is commonly used in Ayurveda to improve eyesight, strength, sexual potency, and libido. Like many adaptogens, it is thought to enhance the effects of other herbs, which is why licorice is widely used in combination formulas. The generally recommended dose is 500 mg per day.



**Conclusion:**

These stress relief herbs can help you get a better handle on your emotions and your day. Knowing how to use the right herbs can make a very real difference in your quality, and even quantity, of life. You can find these herbs in a number of relaxing teas and supplements, either online or at natural food stores.





# Stress

Relieving Mantra

## Chapter 11



The Importance of Positive  
Self Talk to Deal with Stress



Is your glass-half-empty or half-full? How you answer this age-old question about positive thinking may reflect your outlook on life, your attitude toward yourself, and whether you're optimistic or pessimistic — and it may even affect your health.

Indeed, some studies show that personality traits such as optimism and pessimism can affect many areas of your health and well-being. The positive thinking that usually comes with optimism is a key part of effective stress management. And effective stress management is associated with many health benefits. If you tend to be pessimistic, don't despair — you can learn positive thinking skills.

### **11.1 Understanding self-talk**

Many people are conscious of an inner voice that provides a running monologue throughout the day and even into the night. Cheerful and supportive or negative and self-defeating, this internal chatter is referred to as self-talk. This inner voice combines conscious thoughts with unconscious beliefs and biases. It's an effective way for the brain to interpret and process daily experiences. This voice is useful when it is positive, talking down fears and bolstering confidence.

Even though you might not know it, you're already practicing self-talk.

Take a minute and think about what you've said to yourself today. Was it critical? Or was it kind and helpful? How did you feel after you engaged in this inner discussion?

Your thoughts are the source of your emotions and mood. The conversations you have with yourself can be destructive or beneficial. They influence how you feel about yourself and how you respond to events in your life.



Human nature is prone to negative self-talk, however, and sweeping assertions like “I can’t do anything right” or “I’m a complete failure” are common diatribes. This negativity can be unrealistic and even harmful, paralyzing people into inaction and self-absorption to the point of being unaware of the world around them. The good news: That negative inner critic can and should be challenged; becoming more aware of it is just a first step.

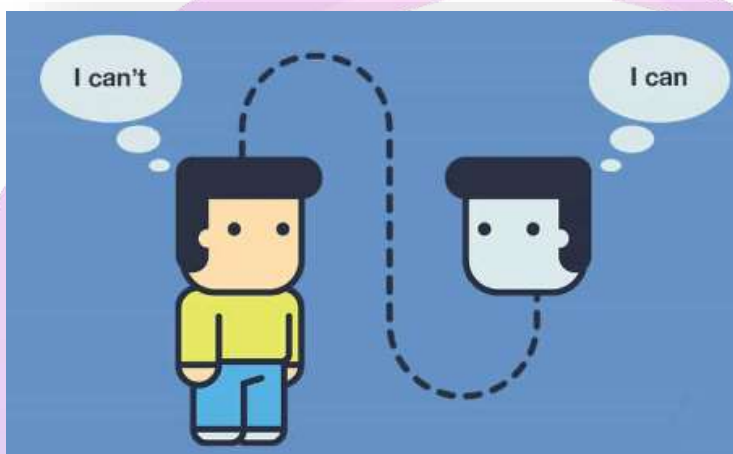
### **11.2 Positive Self-Talk – What is it?**

You may have a negative message that replays in your head every time you make a mistake. As a child you have been told, “You’ll never amount to anything” or “You can’t do anything right.” When you make a mistake—and you will because we all do—you can choose to overwrite that message with a positive one, such as “I choose to accept and grow from my mistake” or “As I learn from my mistakes, I am becoming a better person.” During this exercise, mistakes become opportunities to replace negative views of who you are with positive options for personal enhancement.

Positive self-talk is not self-deception. It is not mentally looking at circumstances with eyes that see only what you want to see. Rather, positive self-talk is about recognizing the truth, in situations and in yourself. One of the fundamental truths is that you will



make mistakes. To expect perfection in yourself or anyone else is unrealistic. To expect no difficulties in life, whether through your own actions or sheer circumstances, is also unrealistic.



When negative events or mistakes happen, positive self-talk seeks to bring the positive out of the negative to help you do better, go further, or just keep moving forward. The practice of positive self-talk is often the process that allows you to discover the obscured optimism, hope, and joy in any given situation.

### 11.2.1 Some Examples of Positive and Negative Self-talk:

These scenarios are examples of negative self-talk and what are the positive alternatives for them.

- **Negative:** I'll disappoint everyone if I change my mind.
- **Positive:** I have the power to change my mind. Others will understand.
- **Negative:** I failed and embarrassed myself.
- **Positive:** I'm proud of myself for even trying. That took courage.
- **Negative:** I'm overweight and out of shape. I might as well not bother.
- **Positive:** I am capable and strong, and I want to get healthier for me.
- **Negative:** I let everyone on my team down when I didn't score.
- **Positive:** Sports are a team event. We win and lose together.



- **Negative:** I've never done this before and I'll be bad at it.
- **Positive:** This is a wonderful opportunity for me to learn from others and grow.
- **Negative:** There's just no way will this work.
- **Positive:** I can and will give it my all to make it work.



If you believe your self-talk is too negative, or if you want to emphasize positive self-talk, you can learn to shift that inner dialogue. It can help you be a more positive person, and it may improve your health.

### 11.3 What are the Benefits of Positive Self-talk?

As a human being, you are constantly talking to yourself, having an inner monologue with yourself. It's called self-talk. Self-talk is an internal dialogue that can affect your confidence and self-esteem. One kind of this is positive self-talk, a personal (mental) conversation with a positive mental attitude towards your life and yourself. This is said to be the optimistic voice in your head – soliloquy that makes you look at the bright side of things.

So why should you immerse in positive self-talk on a consistent basis? Here are several benefits that you can expect from a constructive self-dialogue:



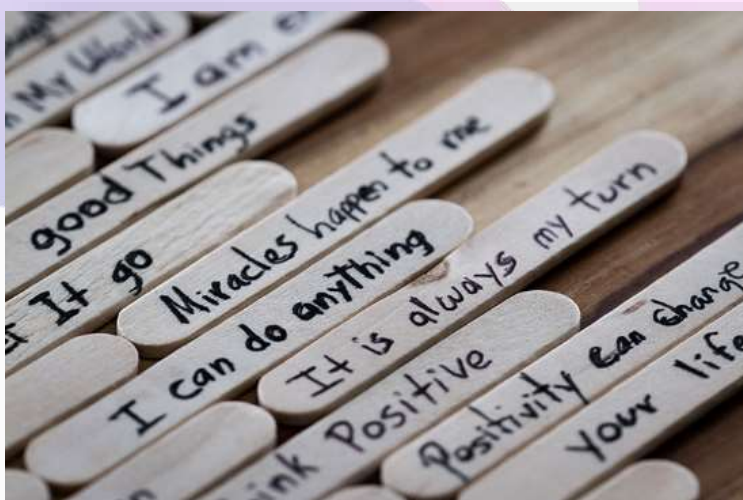
**1. It helps boost your confidence:** Do you feel shy in front of a huge audience?

Do you have little belief in your talents and skills? Positive self-talk can help you get through this – thus making you feel more confident. Most of the time, negative self-talk can hinder you from performing at your fullest. This gives you second thoughts about your ability to carry out the task.

With positive self-talk, you can put your doubts on the wayside – so you can focus on accomplishing your feat with flying colors. And if you think confidence doesn't really equate to success, think again. Those who are successful at what they do truly believe in themselves and their abilities. In fact, confidence is so important to success that many psychologists believe that it is one of the primary prerequisites to personal and professional success.

**2. It introduces optimistic thoughts — that save you from depression:**

Depressed people often feel useless, worthless and hopeless. Not only does it take a toll on the mind, but it also affects the body as well. Depressed people exhibit a variety of physical symptoms, such as sleeplessness, eating problems and lethargy, to name a few. If you suffer from depressive mood, positive self-talk can help you turn the other way around. Optimistic thoughts such as “I can do this” and “The world is a beautiful place” can pull you away from the path that leads to depression.





- 3. It eliminates stress:** Stress can truly get the best of you, as it affects every bit of your persona. So if you want to escape from the mental and physical burdens of stress, then positive self-talk is something that can help you out. According to the American Heart Association, positive self-talk can help control stress. As a result, it makes you feel calmer and less anxious.
- 4. It shields your heart:** Stress is one of the many aggravating factors that can lead to cardiovascular diseases. Since positive self-talk can reduce stress, it gradually lowers your risk of suffering from heart problems as well. In one research, results show that those who have positive outlooks in life demonstrated lower risks for mortality – at least in the next five years.
- 5. It can help you improve your performance in anything you do:** Say that you are very tired and drained, having run several kilometers for a marathon. Just when you think of giving up, positive self-talk can give you the nudge you need in order to go on and finish the race. An essential part of sports psychology, positive self-talk can help athletes reduce their pre-race jitters and performance anxieties, and help them get in the zone. In fact, studies show that continuous positive self-talk can help an athlete enhance his overall performance.

#### **11.4 How to Reduce Stress with Positive Self-Talk?**

Patterns of negative or positive self-talk often start in childhood. Usually, the self-talk habit is one that's colored our thinking for years and can affect us in many ways, influencing the experience of stress in our lives. However, any time can be a good time to change it! Here are some ways you can stop yourself from using negative self-talk and use your mind to boost your productivity and self-esteem and relieve stress.

##### **#1 - Notice Your Patterns:**

The first step toward change is to become more aware of the problem. You probably don't realize how often you say negative things in your head, or how much it affects your experience. The following strategies can help you become more conscious of your internal dialogue and its content.



- **Journal Writing:** Whether you carry a journal around with you and jot down negative comments when you think them, write a general summary of your thoughts at the end of the day, or just start writing about your feelings on a certain topic and later go back to analyze it for content, journaling can be an effective tool for examining your inner process.



- **Thought-Stopping:** As you notice yourself saying something negative in your mind, you can stop your thought mid-stream by saying to yourself “Stop”. Saying this aloud will be more powerful, and having to say it aloud will make you more aware of how many times you are stopping negative thoughts, and where.
- **Rubber-Band Snap:** Another therapeutic trick is to walk around with a rubber band around your wrist; as you notice negative self-talk, pull the band away from your skin and let it snap back. It’ll hurt a little, and serve as a slightly negative consequence that will both make you more aware of your thoughts and help to stop them! (Or, if you don’t want to subject yourself to walking around with a rubber band on your wrist, you’ll be even more careful to limit the negative thoughts!)

## #2 Replace Negative Statements:



A good way to stop a bad habit is to replace it with something better. Once you're aware of your internal dialogue, here are some ways to change it:

- **Use Milder Wordings:** Using a strong word can make an experience seem more intense.

If someone asked you to describe your “pain,” you might feel it intensely. But if you were asked to describe your “discomfort,” it might not seem so strong. When you talk to yourself, turn strong negative words into more neutral ones. That helps make your experience more neutral rather than so negative. Instead of using words like “hate” and “angry,” use words like “don’t like” or “annoyed.” Instead of using words like ‘hate’ and ‘angry’ (as in, “I hate traffic! It makes me so angry!”), you can use words like ‘don’t like’ and ‘annoyed’ (“I don’t like traffic; it makes me annoyed,” sounds much milder, doesn’t it?)

- **Change Negative to Neutral or Positive:** As you find yourself mentally complaining about something, rethink your assumptions. Are you assuming something is a negative event when it isn’t, necessarily? (For example, having your plans canceled at the last minute can be seen as a negative, but what you do with your newly-freed schedule can be what you make of it.) The next time you find yourself stressing about something or deciding you’re not up to a challenge, stop and rethink, and see if you can come up with a neutral or positive replacement.





- **Change Self-Limiting Statements to Questions:** Self-limiting statements like “I can’t handle this!” or “This is impossible!” are particularly damaging because they increase your stress in a given situation and they stop you from searching for solutions. The next time you find yourself thinking something that limits the possibilities of a given situation, turn it into a question. Doesn’t “How can I handle this?” or “How is this possible?” sound more hopeful and open up your imagination to new possibilities?

### #3 Get Rid Of Outside Influences:

It's hard to get rid of the negative voices inside your head when you are surrounded by people who are pessimistic. Once you start to hear those phrases all the time, it's hard to not agree with them. Sometimes you don't even notice the negative until someone brings it up and your positive outlook on things start to crumble down. While there are a lot of ways for you to deal with negative people, it might be best for you to simply get rid of them. People who are verbally negative all the time are most likely internally negative, too. People like this can be toxic and you don't need that in your life when you are trying to better yourself.





#### **#4 Focus On The Present:**

When you focus on the here and now, you will have a better chance of not being negative about yourself because you are not thinking about past mistakes. By constantly thinking about these, you are allowing yourself to beat yourself up. When we start to think about our past mistakes, we try to always use this saying to make ourselves stop, "By thinking of this now, is this going to change the past?" Of course, the answer is no. The mind can become really irrational when you let it run totally wild. Sometimes we need to take a step back and come back to Earth to understand exactly what we are thinking and why. Let the past be in the past; embrace your mistakes and look forward to your future instead.

#### **#5 Use Possible Thinking:**

When you are constantly hearing negative thoughts, it might be hard for you to believe all the positive self-talk that you are trying to tell yourself. Instead, use possible thinking. We feel a lot of pressure to turn it all around and make it positive. But research has found that when you're down and out and force yourself to say positive things to yourself, you end up feeling worse. Instead, be more realistic with yourself.

Try having more neutral thoughts about the situation and bringing more facts to the table. If you know you have been negative at work lately, acknowledge it, be honest with yourself about the changes you need to make, and do it. Turning that negative thought into a neutral stance of understanding will make you aware of the changes you need to make, which will make you feel better because you know that you are trying.

#### **#6 Treat Yourself Like You Would A Friend:**

Sometimes we are our own worst enemies. It's really sad how destructive we can be to ourselves when we would never dare say half those thoughts out loud or to our own friends. Every time you start feeling like you are talking down to yourself, try to think about if you would say those things to your friend. If the answer is no, then you need to stop what you are thinking and change it to something more positive.



According to a research people who are self-compassionate are less likely to be, depressed, anxious, insecure and stressed, and are much more likely to be happy, resilient, optimistic and motivated to change themselves and their lives for the better.

**Conclusion:**

Don't let the brain trick you. Whether you believe it or not, you have control over your thinking and if you want, you can start to feel more powerful about yourself sooner than you would imagine.

Positive self-talk can help you improve your outlook on life thus effective in reducing stress. It can also have lasting positive health benefits, including improved well-being and a better quality of life. However, self-talk is a habit made over a lifetime.

If you tend to have negative self-talk and err on the side of pessimism, you can learn to change it. It takes time and practice, but you can develop uplifting positive self-talk.



# Stress

Relieving Mantra

## Chapter 12



Alleviating Stress with Nutrition



As we get busy and stressed, we tend to make poor nutritional choices that can actually increase our stress levels and cause other problems. We may do this because we're in a hurry and it's easier to grab pre-packaged food that may be less healthy, Or we may do this because we crave less healthy food when we're stressed. We may get so busy we forget to eat or skip meals, filling them in with unhealthy snack foods.



Whatever the reason, when we eat an unhealthy diet, we may experience short-term and long-term consequences. We may feel less energetic, and this lack of energy can affect our productivity and stress levels.

### **12.1 How Too Much Stress Affects Your Eating Habits?**

Worry and overwork can lead to unhealthy lifestyle habits, which causes more stress, leading to a very harmful cycle. For example, if you are facing a very tight deadline at work, you might make poor choices about what to eat, relying on sugar and caffeine to



get you through the day. Unfortunately, these food choices can create more stress in the long run, as well as other problems. Below is a list of common bad habits people sometimes indulge in when overwhelmed and worried.

### **Stress-Induced Bad-Foods Habits:**

- **Drinking Too Much Coffee:** When burning the candle at both ends, you may find yourself drinking several cups of coffee through the day to keep yourself going.



- **Eating the Wrong Foods:** Due partially to increased cortisol levels, the stress hormone, stressed people tend to crave foods high in fat, sugar, and salt. Many will turn to potato chips, ice cream or other junk foods after a rough day.
- **Skipping Meals:** When you are juggling a dozen things at once, eating a healthy meal often drops down in priorities. You might find yourself skipping breakfast because you're running late or not eating lunch because there's just too much on your to-do list.
- **Mindless Munching:** Conversely, stress also makes us prone to emotional eating, where we eat despite not being hungry but eat because it feels comforting.



- **Forgetting Water:** With busy lives, it's easy to forget to drink your water, In fact, a good portion of Americans drink no water, and get water only from soda or coffee.
- **Fast Food:** People these days eat at home less than in generations past, as it's easier to just drive through a fast food place or go to a restaurant than to go home and cook something. Unfortunately, this gets expensive and is often unhealthy.
- **Crash Diets:** Because of weight gain from stress, some people intentionally eat less food than they need, or try dangerous fad diets in order to lose the excess weight. Diets that aren't balanced with fruits and vegetables, protein and healthy carbohydrates can often be bad for your health in the long run, even if they look attractive short term.

## 12.2 Superfoods for Stress Relief

When you're feeling tense, there are many ways to manage and, in fact, reduce stress levels. Your diet and nutrition choices can make your stress levels go up or down. Certain foods provide comfort and actually increase levels of hormones in the body that naturally fight stress. Other types of foods and beverages can reduce stress by lowering the levels of hormones that trigger it.

**#1 Asparagus:** Depression has been linked to low levels of folic acid, and one vegetable that boosts this mood-enhancing nutrient is asparagus. A single cup provides two-thirds of your daily value, and it's easy to fit asparagus into almost any meal. Some ideas: Sauté some asparagus tips for a tasty omelet. Go with steamed or grilled spears as a side vegetable for meat, fish or poultry. Snack on some steamed spears by dipping in some dressing.



**#2 Avocados:** We need B vitamins for healthy nerves and brain cells, and feelings of anxiety may be rooted in a B vitamin deficiency. Avocados are rich in stress-relieving B vitamins. Bonus: Avocados are not only delicious mashed into guacamole or sliced onto a salad — they're also packed with omega-3 fatty acids. These healthy essential acids are known to reduce stress and anxiety, boost concentration, and improve mood.





**#3 Blueberries:** Blueberries may seem small, but just a handful packs a powerful punch of antioxidants and vitamin C, making them mighty stress-busters. When we're stressed, our bodies need vitamin C and antioxidants to help repair and protect cells. Anthocyanins are the pigments that give berries like blueberries and blackberries their deep color. These antioxidants aid your brain in the production of dopamine, a chemical that is critical to coordination, memory function, and your mood.



**#4 Milk:** A glass of warm milk before bed is a time-tested remedy for insomnia and fidgetiness. That's because milk is high in antioxidants, vitamins B2 and B12, as well as protein and calcium. The protein lactium has a calming effect by lowering blood pressure, while the potassium in milk can help relieve muscle spasms triggered by feeling tense.





**#5 Almonds:** Get some stress-relief munching on almonds, which are rich in vitamins B2 and E. Both of these nutrients help bolster the immune system during times of stress. Just a quarter cup of almonds each day does the trick. For variety, spread some almond butter on fruit slices or whole wheat crackers.



**#6 Organic Turkey:** That sleepy feeling you get after eating Thanksgiving dinner is due to the amino acid tryptophan found in turkey. Tryptophan signals the brain to release the feel-good chemical serotonin, which promotes calmness and even tiredness. Tryptophan significantly decreased quarrelsome behaviors and increased agreeable behaviors and perceptions of agreeableness.





**#7 Eat Fatty Fish:** Fatty fishes are also a good source of omega-3 fatty acids and an excellent way to use diet and nutrition to reduce stress because they also offer a major benefit to cardiovascular health. Omega-3 fatty acids and fatty fish have also been found to ease depression because the chemicals improve communication between nerve cells. Put more fish on your dish to help you feel at ease. A diet rich in omega-3 fatty acids helps keep cortisol and adrenaline from spiking when you're feeling tense. Fatty fish include tuna, halibut, salmon, herring, mackerel, sardines, and lake trout are effective for stress.



**#8 Pistachios:** One study found eating two servings of pistachios a day lowered vascular constriction during stress, which means the load on your heart is reduced since your arteries are more dilated.<sup>13</sup> Not to mention, you might find the rhythmic act of shelling pistachios therapeutic, as doing a repetitive activity can help quiet racing thoughts in your head.

Pistachios are at high risk of contamination by a carcinogenic mold called aflatoxin and may be bleached or fumigated during processing; choose organic pistachios and avoid those that are dyed, bleached, or show signs of decay.



**#9 Dark Chocolate:** If you're one of these individuals who gets a nice mood boost whenever you sink your teeth into a bar of pure, unadulterated chocolate, it is not happenstance. There's a chemical reason behind it called anandamide, a neurotransmitter produced in the brain that temporarily blocks feelings of pain and depression. It's a derivative of the Sanskrit word "bliss," and one of the great things about chocolate is that it not only produces this compound, it also contains other chemicals that prolong the "feel-good" aspects of anandamide. Chocolate has even been referred to as "the new anti-anxiety drug".





**#10 Spinach:** Make like Popeye and fill up on spinach. Leafy greens may not be your idea of comfort food, but spinach can have a comforting effect. Spinach is packed with magnesium, the mineral that helps regulate cortisol levels and promote feelings of wellbeing. A mere cup of spinach fills 40 percent of your daily quota, so slip some in with your morning eggs, swap for lettuce in your sandwich, have a salad, steam it as a side dish, or drop a handful of leaves into your soup.



**#11 Oranges:** There's a reason orange juice is said to be part of the breakfast of champions: Vitamin C is another vitamin known to lower blood pressure and the stress hormone cortisol. One double-blind study reported on the value of taking 3,000 milligrams of vitamin C in a slow-release formula to reduce stress and levels of the stress-related hormone cortisol. For a quick burst of vitamin C, simply eat a whole orange or drink a glass of freshly squeezed orange juice without added sugar. Or take a stroll down to the local Jamba Juice and pick yourself up one. Go with the Purely Orange.



**#12 Seeds:** Magnesium, which acts as a precursor for neurotransmitters like serotonin, is well-known for its role in helping to regulate your emotions and enhance well-being. Flaxseed, pumpkin seeds, and sunflower seeds are all great sources of magnesium (as are leafy greens, yogurt, nuts, and fish). Loading up on the mineral may help regulate emotions. Magnesium has been shown to help alleviate depression, fatigue, and irritability. Bonus: For women, when you're feeling especially irritable during that time of the month, the mineral also helps to fight PMS symptoms, including cramps and water retention.





**#13 Soothing Tea:** Sometimes, it's the effect of a food or drink that can help reduce stress, not necessarily its nutrients. A warm cup of tea can actually calm many people. There's the soothing effect of sipping a warm drink, regardless of the flavor — but certain herbs, like lavender and chamomile, have been shown to have a relaxing effect on their own. Drinking herbal teas like chamomile, peppermint or ginger can be wonderfully soothing to the digestive tract, which can help with stress by calming the nervous system in your gut.



**#14 Oat Meal:** If you're already a carb lover, it's likely that nothing can come between you and a doughnut when stress hits. The first rule of thumb: Don't completely deny the craving. Carbohydrates can help the brain make serotonin, the same substance regulated by antidepressants. But instead of reaching for that sugary bear claw, go for complex carbs. Stress can cause your blood sugar to rise, so a complex carb like oatmeal won't contribute to your already potential spike in blood glucose. Instead, oatmeal is another food that helps get the calm-inducing hormone serotonin flowing.



**#15 Red Peppers:** While oranges get all of the vitamin C hype, red peppers have about twice as much (95 vs. 50 mg per 1/2-cup serving). In a study in Psycho-pharma-cology, people who took high doses of C before engaging in stress-inducing activities (oral presentation followed by solving math problems aloud) had lower blood pressure and recovered faster from the cortisol surge than those who got a placebo. Diets loaded with vitamin-C-rich foods lower cortisol and help people cope.



**Conclusion:**

Your diet and nutrition intake greatly influence your stress levels. Some foods are particularly known for calming effects while others enhance your stress. You need to make wise food choices while feeling stressed out.





# Stress

Relieving Mantra

## Chapter 13



Combating Stress with Essential Oils



Stress is so common these days that it has become a normal part of daily life. Stress is one of the mechanisms the body used to deal with perceived threats and can have positive as well as negative effects. The problem is that often stress remains long after a stressful event, causing feelings of anxiety with negative impacts on the nervous system and the physical body.

If you had a rough day or if you suffer from stress day in and day out, having a natural go-to solution, as an essential oil on hand, can help to relieve stress symptoms (without the side-effect of drugs) and do wonders for calming your anxiety and relaxing the mind.

### **13.1 The Role of Essential Oils in Dealing with Stress**

Essential oils are one of the safest ways to deal with acute or chronic stress. The powerful components in essential oils are the essence of natural organic plants that provide immediate relief from stressful feelings with no side effects.

They are convenient and easy to use anywhere and can help reduce even deep-rooted stress. They can be used at home, in massage therapies, to enhance the effectiveness of meditation or whenever you need help to calm down or relax your nerves.

Pure essential oils penetrate the cellular membranes of the body, crossing the blood-brain barrier to reach the emotional center of the brain. The effects can be felt in the mind and body in a matter of minutes with the long-term results of a calm mind and relaxed, healthy body.

A blend of essential oils specifically for the treatment of stress can do much more than just relax the mind and the body, it can reduce inflammation, balance hormones, enhance digestion, improve energy levels, boost immunity, and induce healthy sleep patterns.

Put simply, essential oils have aromatic, fragrant molecules that can actually pass right through the blood/brain barrier, having a direct effect on the areas of our brain in charge of controlling feelings of stress and anxiety and even panic and depression.

### **13.2 Essential Oils that are Best for Stress**



Stress-related symptoms can be relieved by using essential oils. Below are some of the best essential oils recommended for the quick relief of tension and stress:

**#1 Lavender:** One of the best-known essential oils in aromatherapy, lavender oil is prized for its calming effects on the body and mind and ability to lessen anxiety. The reason people like lavender as an essential oil for anxiety is because not only does it contain linalool, which has a sedative effect, it also relaxes the muscles, lowers blood pressure, increases circulation, and lowers the cortisol in our bloodstream—all things that we are looking for to help us deal with stress.



In a study published in International Journal of Nursing Practice, aromatherapy using a 3 percent lavender oil spray on clothing was found to be effective in reducing work-related stress for three to four days.

Lavender oil can be found in a variety of aromatherapy products, including bath salts and massage oil. Another way to take advantage of the soothing scent of lavender: sipping lavender-infused herbal tea, which is sold in many natural-foods stores. Lavender is the best remedy for dealing with sleep problems naturally with no side effects like those experienced with sleeping pills.

**#2 Ylang Ylang:** Ylang-Ylang essential oils contain calming as well as uplifting properties that are highly effective in dealing with stress, anxiety, and depression. The



heavenly sweet aroma immediately calms the nervous system and relaxes the senses, helping to overcome feelings of fear, negativity, and anxiety replacing them with feelings of optimism and courage.



Ylang ylang essential oil can be both stimulating or calming depending on what the person using it is feeling. It is especially effective when dealing with anger-induced stress and can bring a feeling of immediate calm and peace.

The scent of Ylang-Ylang is said to be sedating, making it excellent for anxiety relief and a stress relief aid. It is relatively young in the world of essential oils but offers many strong properties for medical and psychological benefits.

**#3 Clary Sage:** The wonderfully fragrant Clary Sage is also a fantastic essential oil for calming anxiety and stress. Like Lavender, it is rich in linalool and linalyl acetate, two compounds which have been demonstrated in multiple scientific studies to calm and relax the central nervous system.



It has a woody, herbal odor. Due to its calming abilities, it's often used as an aphrodisiac. It's a terrific muscle relaxant, and clary sage has a really potent effect on the hormonal system, which would be highly effective for people whose lives are being ruled by difficult hormonal shifts in their body. Think anything from menstruation and pregnancy to other hormonal disorders. In fact, clary sage oil could reduce cortisol levels by up to 36 percent and has an antidepressant-like effect, according to a study published in the Journal of Phytotherapy Research.

All in all, Clary Sage is a wonderful, pleasant-smelling essential oil for anxiety, stress and uplifting mood that makes a nice natural, non-toxic perfume as well.

**#4 Chamomile:** The quintessential calming herb, Chamomile has been used for thousands of years to calm the nervous system, reduce anxiety and induce sleep gently but effectively. And its essential oil is equally effective for reducing anxiety, stress and calming the nervous system.



Inflammation and disturbances in the digestive tract can have powerful effects on our mood and have been linked to increased levels of anxiety, depression and countless other diseases. As such, Chamomile essential oil can help reduce anxiety and stress by also working to heal and relax the intestines.

In short, chamomile is a peaceful and calming scent that can help reduce overthinking, anxiety and worry. It is especially good at relieving stress and tension and promoting a good night's sleep.

**#5 Jasmine:** Derived from the jasmine flower, recent research suggests that Jasmine oil is good at calming the nerves and overcoming stress. Traditionally, jasmine oil has been used for centuries as a natural remedy for anxiety, insomnia, low libido and depression, and today's research proves that our ancestors knew what they were doing.

Jasmine oil not only alleviates feelings of depression but it stimulates the mind and helps uplift the mood and produce feelings of confidence and optimism.



Jasmine essential oil is particularly useful for depression, stress, and anxiety associated with lethargy and low energy. A number of studies have found that Jasmine essential oil has a stimulating/activating effect on the brain, which also helps improve mood simultaneously. Improved mood and energy levels have been correlated with lower anxiety and stress and a greater tolerance for the two, so in that sense, Jasmine essential oil helps with nervousness indirectly as well.

**#6 Bergamot:** The oil that gives earl grey tea its signature fragrance, bergamot essential oil is widely used in aromatherapy. Sourced from the peel of a citrus fruit known as Citrus bergamia, this essential oil may help to lessen your stress.

With its distinct aroma, this essential oil is most effective at treating stress as well as depression and insomnia. In combination with Lavender oil, it is even more effective at reducing the symptoms of anxiety, stress, and depression as well as reducing pulse rate and blood pressure.

When using bergamot essential oil for stress relief, the oil should be combined with a carrier oil (such as jojoba, sweet almond, or avocado) before being applied sparingly to the skin or added to a bath. You can also inhale the soothing scent by sprinkling a drop or two of the oil onto a cloth or tissue or using an aromatherapy diffuser.



**#7 Cedarwood:** Cedarwood oil is great at relieving stress and tension and has a calming effect on the mind. Biologically, the aroma of cedarwood promotes the release of serotonin, responsible for stabilizing moods. Cedarwood essential oil can also act as a natural sedative, as serotonin is converted to melatonin - which helps control and regulate sleep patterns and brings a feeling of calmness.



**#8 Lime:** Lime essential oil, as you perhaps guessed, smells just like the real thing - a fresh and tart lime. It works well to refresh and uplift the mood and invigorate without



being too overly powerful. It can work wonders for those suffering from the stress of fatigue, grief, and a heavy heart - and help to stimulate a person to embrace the positivity in life.



Rich in linalool (a compound found in lemons, oranges, basil, mangos, grapes, lavender, and other foods and flowers), practitioners of aromatherapy often use lemon essential oil to relieve stress, improve mood, promote sleep, and ease symptoms of depression.

**#9 Rose:** Rose oil is known as the queen of essential oils when it comes to dealing with anxiety and stress related issues such a panic and depression. Its grounding, tranquil, and calming properties used in aromatherapy helps to calm the body and help the mind release feelings of stress and anxiety.

A slight dab is all you need to feel the powerful effects of rose essential oil - great for stimulating the mind and promoting a sense of peace, tranquility, and well-being. It helps to boost self-esteem and promotes feelings of joy and hope.

Blended in equal portions with lavender and bergamot, the effectiveness of rose oil is multiplied and intensified.



**#10 Orange:** Another strong citrus fruit with a powerful, uplifting fragrance, orange oil has proven stress-relieving benefits. In fact, a study conducted at Mei University in Japan concluded that patients taking orange oil were significantly able to reduce their antidepressant medicine intake. Need to unwind? Preliminary research suggests that breathing in the sweet aroma of orange essential oil may help alleviate your anxiety.





**#11 Sandalwood:** Looking for increased mental clarity and focus? When you're dealing with the challenging demands of the daily grind, having a moment of harmony and peace is essential for your overall well-being and mental health. Sandalwood oil, with its amazing woody aroma, has a powerful therapeutic effect on the brain's limbic system and is an excellent emotional balancer.



**#12 Frankincense:** Rich in sesquiterpenes, molecular structures that can travel through the blood-brain barrier, frankincense essential oil can help alleviate the adverse effects of both anxiety and depression.





Sourced from a tree native to Somalia in Africa, frankincense is derived from the resin of the *Boswellias carterri*/sacara tree, which is known to grow in unfavorable, barren and arid conditions. Commonly associated with many different faiths, frankincense is believed to increase intuition and spirituality.

With its exotic scent, Frankincense encourages feelings of inner peace by promoting calmness and relaxation. It helps to reduce feelings of stress and its associated symptoms, such as headaches and shallow, quick breathing.

**#13 Vetiver:** Vetiver essential oil is used most effectively in trauma situations to help restore a person's sense of self-awareness and help them feel calmer and more stabilized. It's grounding, reassuring, and tranquil effects make it a wonderful nerve tonic for panic attacks, hypersensitivity, and jitteriness.



Throughout Sri Lanka and India, Vetiver essential oil is known as “the oil of tranquility” for its nervous system-soothing and anxiety-reducing properties. In Ayurvedic medicine, it has been observed to relax and calm the mind and it is traditionally used as an essential oil for alleviating stress, anxiety, insomnia, panic attacks, trauma, and depression. In Traditional Chinese medicine, Vetiver essential oil was prized for its ability to calm the body and mind and to harmonize the emotions.



**#14 Yuzu:** A scent long used in aromatherapy, Japanese yuzu essential oil is sometimes touted as a natural solution for stress relief. It's thought that breathing in the citrus fragrance of this essential oil can suppress sympathetic nervous system activity (responsible for the body's fight or flight response) and, in turn, promote relaxation.



Ten minutes of yuzu scent inhalation was found to decrease salivary chromogranin A (an indicator of stress and sympathetic nervous system activity) and negative emotional stress, according to a small study.

**#15 Valerian:** Valerian is an herb that has been used since ancient times. It's thought to contain compounds that promote sleep and calm nerves. It can have a mild sedative effect on the body.





Valerian is a powerful anxiety-fighting essential oil and herb. It too increases levels of GABA and other relaxing/sedating neurotransmitters in the brain and body. One study suggests that Valerian extract may cause GABA to be released from brain nerve endings and then blocks GABA from being taken back into nerve cells, which increases its concentration in the nervous system. In addition, Valerian's medicinal compound valerenic acid inhibits an enzyme that destroys GABA, which is another way that valerian helps reduce anxiety, again by causing elevated levels of GABA in the brain and body.

**#16 Lemongrass:** The aromatic, calming fragrance of lemongrass wafting through the air is enough to transport you to another world. That said, one of the best ways to use lemongrass oil to relieve anxiety, agitation, insomnia, and stress is through aromatherapy.



Breathing in the fresh scent of lemongrass oil can relieve the symptoms of anxiety and promote a feeling of relaxation. A study found that participants exposed to lemongrass essential oil had an immediate reduction in anxiety and tension and recovered quickly from an anxiety-inducing situation compared to those who inhaled a control aroma (tea tree oil) or a placebo.



**#17 Jatamansi:** This is hands-down the most powerful essential oil for anxiety on the planet. Jatamansi is widely regarded as the most powerfully relaxing and anxiety-reducing herb in the ancient Indian system of medicine known as Ayurveda.



Jatamansi and its essential oil increase levels of the neurotransmitter GABA (Gamma-Aminobutyric Acid) in the brain. It is also believed to reduce depression and anxiety by increasing the levels of monoamines in the brain. Both GABA and monoamines are key neurotransmitters that cause relaxation of the nervous system. Many pharmaceutical drugs for anxiety like Xanax and Valium work by causing the brain to increase levels of GABA artificially, whereas Jatamansi is a safe and non-addictive, natural alternative.

**#18 Holy basil:** One of the most revered herbs in the ancient Indian system of medicine known as Ayurveda, Holy Basil essential oil has powerful anxiety- and stress-reducing effects, among many other beneficial medicinal properties. Holy Basil is what's known by herbalists as an adaptogen, meaning that it works to bring the body and mind into balance based on what it most needs at that moment.

For example, if you are constantly stressed out and anxious, Holy Basil essential oil will be calming and relaxing. On the other hand, if you are tired and exhausted all the time, Holy Basil can help rejuvenate your body and restore your energy levels. Meditators



have also traditionally used Holy Basil and its essential oil to calm the mind and reduce nervous thoughts in preparation for deep meditation. Many people also use Holy Basil essential oil to treat panic attacks with good success.



**#19 Lemon balm:** Lemon Balm and its essential oil have been used medicinally for millennia to reduce anxiety, alleviate stress, improve sleep disorders (from restlessness to insomnia) and generally induce a state of calm and peace. Lemon Balm has been fairly well studied by researchers over the last few decades and has been found to have a variety of active medicinal compounds, such as flavonoids, polyphenols and more, with a number of impressive health benefits, including the ability to modulate neurotransmitter activity in the nervous system, making it one of the top essential oils for reducing anxiety and stress.





**#20 Cinnamon:** Cinnamon leaf oil has anti-inflammatory properties and works wonders for soothing aching muscles and joints after a long stressful day. It can also help to reduce drowsiness and give you an instant energy boost if you're feeling exhausted - both physically and mentally.



**#21 Peppermint:** You might think peppermint oil is an excellent breath freshener, but it certainly does a lot more than that! Peppermint oil contains menthol, a natural anesthetic that gives an amazing, cooling sensation (think of the refreshing taste of peppermint gum). An important point to note is that peppermint oil is a lot more concentrated than most essential oils so it is best used when diluted with a carrier oil such as fractionated coconut oil, jojoba oil or sweet almond oil.

With its uplifting energizing scent, peppermint oil keeps you alert, helps you concentrate and alleviates feelings of mental fatigue and restlessness.



**#22 Grapefruit:** The aroma of fresh fruit can have an amazing effect! Similar to lime, grapefruit also belongs to the citrus family and its aroma is uplifting, refreshing and clarifying. A great stress buster - grapefruit essential oil is excellent for alleviating mental fatigue, depression and stress-induced headaches. An instant whiff can give you the ready-to-go feeling you need to get on with your day.



**#23 Eucalyptus:** Want to feel refreshed instantly? Let the cooling effect of eucalyptus oil work its magic. With its strong minty aroma, eucalyptus oil is great for alleviating



stress, boosting energy and mitigating mental fatigue. Eucalyptus oil is highly effective and works wonders when dealing with a cold, congestion and the flu. If you're under the weather or simply feeling sluggish and mentally exhausted, use this powerful essential oil to rejuvenate and stimulate the mind and body!

**Conclusion:**

Any natural therapy that can help calm the mind and nerves can help to relieve stress and anxiety. There is no fixed recipe when it comes to essential oils and what might work for you might not work for someone else. Since we are all biochemically exclusive, it's best to experiment with a variety of essential oils, pay attention to your body, and find the "personal blends" that work most optimally for you.



# Stress

Relieving Mantra

## Chapter 14



Effective Stress Management  
Techniques during Pregnancy



In some ways, pregnancy is really a mixed blessing. The excitement and expectation of having a new baby are combined with radical and sometimes difficult changes to a woman's body, financial concerns, emotional ups and downs, reorganizing rooms for baby, and much more. Reducing stress during pregnancy can help you enjoy this special time.



### **14.1 What are the Causes of Stress during Pregnancy?**

For some women, finding out that they are pregnant can be a stressful experience in itself. You could feel like you have lost control or don't have enough resources to manage what you'll be experiencing. Other things that could cause stress in pregnancy include:

- Waiting for the results of your antenatal tests
- Previous negative experiences with pregnancy, birth or motherhood such as a miscarriage or death of a baby
- Having a pregnancy that is unplanned
- Dealing with the physical changes of pregnancy
- Having a complicated pregnancy
- Being a single parent or teenager and wondering how you will cope
- Experiencing difficulties in your relationship, which could include family violence
- Being overloaded with advice from other people



- Experiencing financial difficulties
- Moving house
- Changes in your job
- Grief, such as a death in the family
- Drug and alcohol problems
- Past anxiety, depression or other mental illness



### **14.2 How Can Stress Affect Your Baby and You?**

Stress can do much more than simply make you anxious. Over time, unmanaged stress can:

- Decrease your ability to sleep restfully
- Decrease your ability to eat enough nutritious food throughout your pregnancy
- Lead to high blood pressure, which is particularly dangerous during pregnancy
- Lead to headaches and other physical issues which can make pregnancy more difficult
- Lead to premature birth, which is associated with a number of health and developmental issues



The better you are able to avoid stress, and manage it effectively when it does arise, the better you'll be able to avoid the physical problems that could injure your baby.

### 14.3 How to Reduce Stress during Pregnancy?

While everyday pressure is a part of modern life, a high level of chronic stress can boost your odds of preterm labor or of delivering a low-birth-weight baby. If you're used to caring for others or giving 110 percent at work, making yourself a priority may seem unnatural or even selfish.

But taking care of yourself is an essential part of taking care of your baby. Cutting down on stress — or learning how to manage it — makes for a healthier pregnancy.

Here are the tips that will help you out in stress management during your pregnancy:

- 1. Focus on your Baby:** It's good for you and your baby if you can relax, so don't feel guilty about taking some time to yourself. Whenever you get a chance, just pause for a while and focus on your bump.  
From about 23 weeks, your baby can hear your voice, so try chatting, singing and reading to your bump. It's a great way to bond with your baby and may help you to feel more positive about your pregnancy.
- 2. Laugh as much as you can:** Laughter is a great way to reduce stress during pregnancy. Laughter releases chemicals in the brain that improve our mood and help us feel better. Take time during your pregnancy to rent some comedies. Spend a quiet evening or afternoon watching movies that make you laugh. Look for the amusing things that naturally happen around you. Laughter will make you feel happier and more relaxed.



- 3. Invite Visitors:** Coping with pregnancy and everyday responsibilities can become overwhelming and stressful. A second tip to reduce stress during pregnancy is to have people visit you. Invite friends or family you enjoy being with to come to your home and visit you. Friends can help with chores or talk to you while you do things around the house. Having visitors in your home will help to provide you with support, socializing, chatting and laughter. Friends and family can be a wonderful support network while you are pregnant and after the baby is born.
- 4. Get Enough Rest and Sleep:** Listen to your body. If you're feeling exhausted, take a break or a nap, and go to bed early. Sleep is important for anyone's mental health and it also supports a healthy pregnancy.  
If you're already a parent you'll know that it can be hard to get a break. But you do deserve time for yourself. Ask your partner, a friend or grandparents to look after your child or children for an afternoon and use the time for some rest and relaxation – not doing the chores!
- 5. Talk about it:** If you have worries about your baby's wellbeing or a personal problem, you can always turn to your midwife for reassurance. Don't be afraid to admit how you're truly feeling. If you are honest, you are more likely to get the support you need. Talk to your partner too. You may discover that you share similar worries, or that your partner has concerns you didn't know about. Talking things through can make you both feel better.



Meet other mums-to-be at the same stage of pregnancy as you, perhaps at an antenatal class or an exercise class. It's likely that at least some of them will be having the same feelings as you.

- 6. Take a Walk:** Walking is a safe form of exercise during pregnancy. Check with your health care provider about taking walks. Taking a brisk walk in the mornings before work or starting the day gives your body a chance to wake up and time to think about the upcoming day. You will feel more energy after walking and feel less stressed. Walks are also great at lunchtime or before supper. Avoid walking before bedtime, however, because you might have trouble falling asleep at night.
- 7. Eat Well:** Eating well is good for your brain, your body, and your baby. Make sure you eat regular meals so your blood sugar doesn't drop, which can leave you feeling tired and irritable. It's not always easy to eat well if you are not feeling great emotionally, or if you're suffering from pregnancy sickness. But if you can make even some small changes, you will feel better for it. Find out more with our healthy eating tips.  
Dehydration can also affect your mood, making you feel more irritable. So make sure you're getting your recommended six to eight 200ml glasses a day.



You might miss unwinding with a glass of wine in the evening, but to protect your baby, advice from the Chief Medical Officer is that it's best to avoid alcohol while you're pregnant. Try a non-alcoholic cocktail or a warm, milky drink instead.

- 8. Keep a Pregnancy Journal:** Many women find it fun and helpful to keep a pregnancy journal. You don't have to be a writer to keep a journal. Buy a colorful notebook. Once a day writes down what you are thinking or feeling. If you can't think of anything to write about, put it aside until later in the day. Keeping a pregnancy journal can help you relax during the day. Also, you can share your pregnancy journal with your child when they get older.
- 9. Try Gentle Exercise:** Even if it's the last thing you feel like doing, exercising can lift your spirits any time, including when you're pregnant. Part of the reason is that it releases feel-good chemicals in your brain.  
It's perfectly safe to do many types of exercise during pregnancy. Just avoid contact sports, and check with your midwife before trying anything too strenuous.  
Swimming is a great option because it keeps you toned, without being too hard on your joints. Find out if there's an aquanatal class running at your local pool. You could also try some pregnancy yoga. This not only tones and stretches your body, but it also teaches you breathing, relaxation, and meditation techniques that can help to boost your emotional wellbeing.
- 10. Drink plenty of Water:** Water helps our bodies stay healthy. During pregnancy, you can become dehydrated from sickness or loss of appetite.



Drinking water will help reduce stress because your body will have plenty of fluids. Water consumption can also eliminate some of the toxins in the body that cause stress. It is recommended that pregnant women drink at least eight glasses of water per day.



- 11. Take Naps:** Your body is changing and the baby is growing inside of you so your body requires a lot of extra energy during pregnancy. If possible, take a short nap for thirty minutes to an hour during the middle of the day. If you are working, you might want to take a thirty-minute nap when you get home. That way, your body will have time to unwind after being at work all day. If you cannot sleep, simply lay down for thirty minutes to give your body time to rest.
- 12. Foot Soaks:** Soaking your feet feels wonderful when you are tired or you have had a long day. Often during pregnancy, your feet may swell. Your feet may also be sore from the extra weight of the pregnancy. To soak your feet, you can take a large pan or shallow bucket and put warm water in it. Sit in a comfortable position and soak your feet for 20-30 minutes.



**13. Organization:** Believe it or not, getting organized is a great way to reduce stress during pregnancy. There are many things to do to prepare for the new baby.

If you organize the tasks into small lists, it will help with organization. You can make a list of things to buy. You can make another list of tasks to get the nursery ready. And yet another list for planning the baby shower. You can pick one list to work on each day instead of trying to get everything done all at once. Ask others to help you with the tasks on your list.

**14. Comfortable Clothing:** Too often women try to wear clothing that is too tight while they are pregnant. Comfortable clothing is important during pregnancy. Wearing comfortable clothing allows you to move more freely and to stay relaxed better during the day. Make sure shoes fit well and are easy to walk in during the pregnancy. Comfortable clothing will also make you focus less on your pregnancy weight gain.

**15. Try Complementary Therapies:** Massage is a fantastic way to de-stress. Many spas and beauty salons provide pregnancy massage treatments, too. Just make sure your therapist is qualified and experienced in working with pregnant women.

There's also a small amount of evidence to suggest that aromatherapy might help to reduce anxiety and help you feel calm and relaxed.

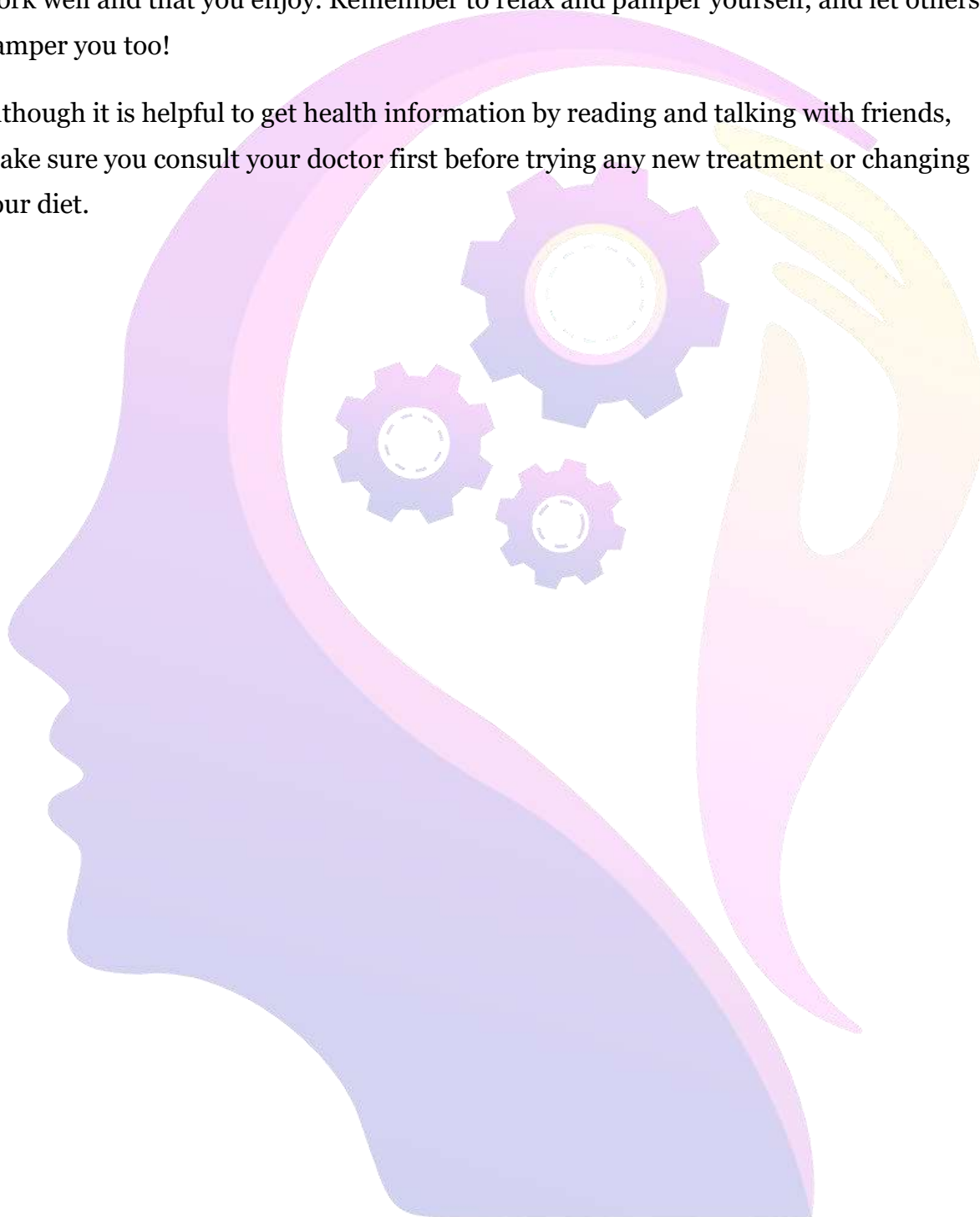


## Conclusion:



Reducing stress during your pregnancy is critical to enjoying this amazing time in your life. Figure out which stress reduction tips work best for you. Combine the ones that work well and that you enjoy. Remember to relax and pamper yourself, and let others pamper you too!

Although it is helpful to get health information by reading and talking with friends, make sure you consult your doctor first before trying any new treatment or changing your diet.





# Stress

Relieving Mantra

## Chapter 15



Child Stress Management Ideas



Kids may not have to worry about work, bills or what to cook for dinner, but that doesn't mean they don't face stress every day. Maybe your son gets butterflies before a class presentation, or maybe your daughter feels a little sick before every soccer game.



Every child is different, and so are their triggers and reactions to stress. It could make them sweat or fidget, or cause their hearts to pound. They may become distracted or even feel nauseous or dizzy. It's helpful for kids—and their parents, too—to know some active ways to deal with everyday stress.

### **15.1 What causes Stress for Children?**

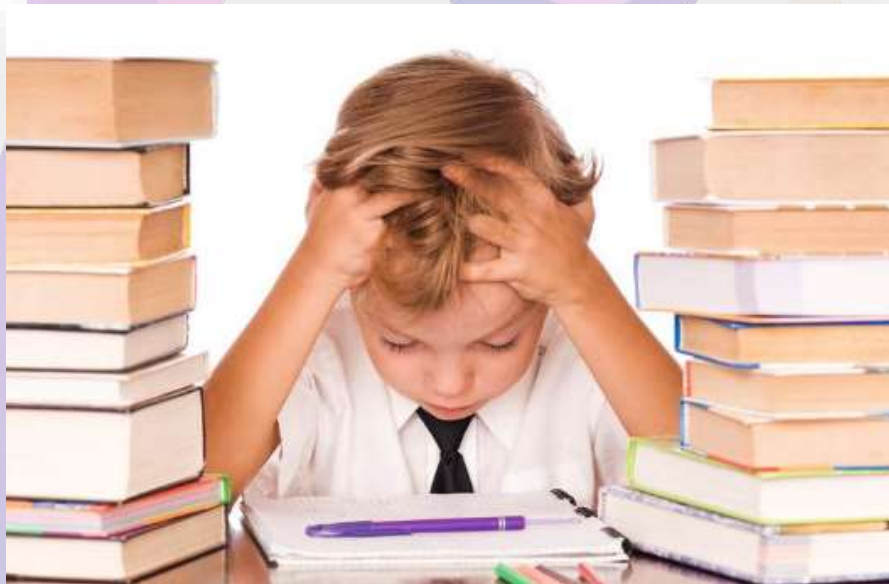
Many parents easily recognize the sources of stress in their own lives. But we often don't realize that children have very different—and sometimes unexpected—sources of their own.

- Outside sources such as expectations of families and friends can leave a child feeling overwhelmed and filled with anxiety. Peer pressure, bullying or



harassment is common in school but not something children often talk about with parents.

- Over-packed schedules at school, in sports or via other extracurricular activities can fill children with feelings of exhaustion and helpless and does not allow them enough time to relax and unwind. Many children are also not getting enough sleep, which can cause both physical and emotional stress.
- Sometimes the biggest stressor for children is self-imposed pressure. It is easy for children to feel like they are not good enough, especially in school, sports or other extracurricular activities.



- World news can also be a source of stress for children. Violent or disturbing images seen on television or discussions of terrorism, wars, and natural disasters may result in children feeling scared and fearful.
- Any major change in a child's life can be extremely stressful, such as relocating, divorce or death of a loved one.

## **15.2 Signs of Stress in Children**



Often, children -- particularly younger kids -- are not able to fully articulate their feelings of stress and anxiety. In fact, the signs of stress in children may be quite subtle, such as stomach pains, headaches, or changes in behavior. You may also notice mood swings and sleep problems as well as difficulty concentrating at school.

If there have been any major changes in a child's life such as a move or a new sibling, parents should pay particular attention and look for possible signs of child stress. Even if you can't pinpoint a particular stress factor, your child may experience stress from something at school or other sources you are not aware of.



Keep track of her behavior and moods, and watch for any signs of problems. Ask her teacher about how she is doing at school and observe how she is interacting with friends and family members.

It's also worth talking to your child about what she may be feeling, even though she may not be able to articulate it in "grown-up" terms. Stick to questions about what she might



be worried about or things that might not be making her feel good. Generally, younger children do not fully understand the concept of words such as stress and anxiety.

### 15.3 How to Manage Stress in Your Children?

The key to helping kids manage stress is teaching them to problem-solve, plan and know when to say yes and no to activities and commitments. It isn't to make everything smooth and comfortable.

If you don't teach your kids how to manage stress, they will self-medicate with food, drugs, and alcohol. In other words, kids will reach for something to make them feel better right away, and usually, it won't be something healthy.

Here's how you can help your kids manage stress successfully:

- **Talk with your Kids:** Encourage your child to talk to you about any problems he may be having, and to talk about his feelings openly and honestly. One of the most important and effective ways human beings can deal with stress is by talking to someone about their problem. Even if your child is unable to specifically express what she is upset about, just having you ask and encouraging her to talk can make a difference.





- **Focus on the Positives:** Many times anxious and stressed children can get lost in negative thoughts and self-criticism. They may focus on how the glass is half empty instead of half-full and worry about future events. The more that you are able to focus on your child's positive attributes and the good aspects of a situation, the more that it will remind your child to focus on the positives.
- **Listen before Offering Suggestions:** As much as you might want to jump in and help offer solutions, allow her time to fully express her thoughts and emotions before making comments or expressing your opinions.
- **Make Sleep a Priority:** Sleep is vital for everything from minimizing stress to boosting mood to improving school performance. If your child isn't getting enough sleep, that's another red flag that they're overscheduled. Again, reducing commitments helps. Also helpful is stressing the importance of sleep, and creating an environment that facilitates it. For instance, keep TV – and other electronics – out of your child's bedroom.



- **Reward Brave Behaviors:** If your child faces his or her fears, reward this with praise, a hug, or even something tangible like a sticker or a small treat. This is not



bribery if you establish this as a motivator prior to your child being in the situation. If you reward behaviors your child will engage in them more often.

- **Let them Know that it is Okay to be Imperfect:** Often we feel that it is necessary for our children to succeed in sports, school, and performance situations. But sometimes we forget that kids need to be kids. School becomes driven by grades, not by the enjoyment of learning if an 85 is good, but not good enough. This is not to say that striving is not important. It is important to encourage your child to work hard but equally important to accept and embrace your child's mistakes and imperfections.
- **Prepare them to Deal with Mistakes:** For kids, a lot of stress comes from the fear of making mistakes. Remind them that they're not supposed to know "how to do everything or do everything right." Also, while making good decisions is an important skill to learn, the skill that might be even more important is learning how to recover from a bad decision. "We can really stress out our kids by not helping them understand that screwing up is part of the process." Help your child learn to figure out the next steps after a bad decision or mistake. Help them figure out how to fix it, make amends, learn the lesson and move on.
- **Schedule Relaxing Activities:** Children need time to relax and be kids. Unfortunately, sometimes even fun activities, like sports, can become more about success than they are about fun. Instead, it is important to ensure that your child engages in play purely for the sake of fun. This may include scheduling time each day for your child to play with toys, play a game, play a sport (without it being competitive), doing yoga, paint, have a tea party, put on a play, or just be silly.



- **Stay Calm:** Children look to their parents to determine how to react in situations. We've all seen a young child trip and fall and then look to their parent to see how to react. If the parent seems concerned, the child cries. This is because the child is looking to their parent for a signal of how to react to the situation. Children of all ages pick up on their parent's emotions and resonate with them. If you are anxious, your child will pick up on that anxiety and experience an increase in his/her own anxiety. So when you want to reduce your child's anxiety, you must manage your own anxiety. This may mean deliberately slowing down your own speech, taking a few deep breaths to relax, and working to ensure that your facial expression conveys that you are calm.
- **Encourage their Hobbies:** These can be any activity that the child enjoys doing. Encourage the child to participate on a regular basis. Engaging in a favorite hobby brings children enjoyment, gives them a break from the stressful situation and may provide a fresh look at the situation. Offer children different activities to try if they don't have a favorite hobby. Providers may plan experiences in art, music, board games, reading, puzzles, or science for the children to try.



- **Stop Overscheduling:** One of the biggest stressors for kids is being overscheduled. And yet, today, kids are expected to pay attention and perform in school for seven hours, excel at extracurricular activities, come home, finish homework, and go to bed just to do it all over again the next day. Where's the downtime? Kids need downtime to rejuvenate. Their brains and bodies need to rest. And they might not realize this by themselves. So knowing when your child is overscheduled is important. It is recommended looking at your kids' schedules over the course of a week and making sure that there's enough downtime — when you're not watching the clock. Are there several hours on the weekend or a few nights during the week when your child can simply kick back and relax? Also, pay attention to how your family is eating their meals. Is everybody eating on the run, in the car, grabbing and going? That's an indicator that too much is going on.

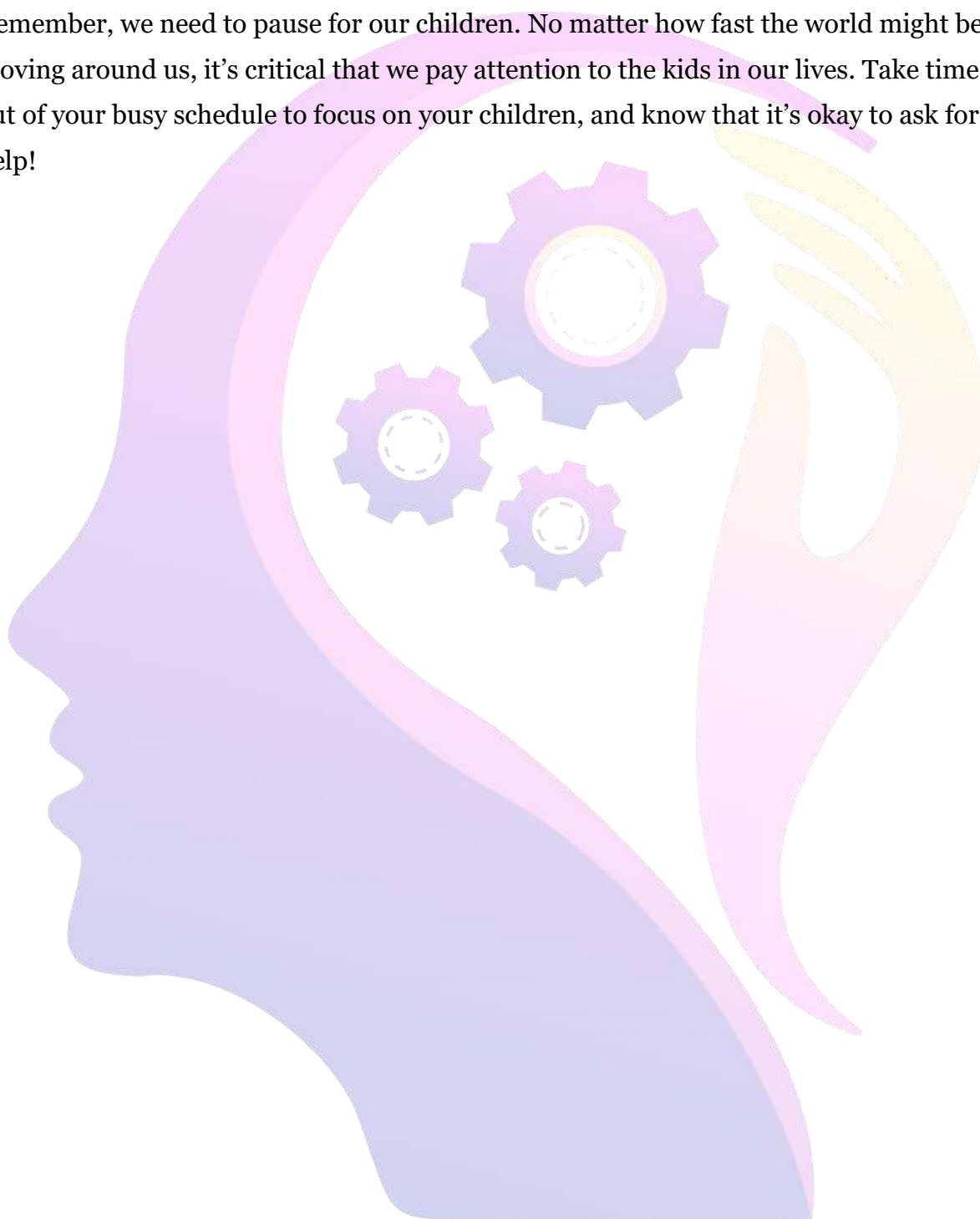
### Conclusion:

Make the decision to combat stress in your life and in the life of your child. Be aware of any changes in your child's behavior or health which could be signs of stress. Work to keep yourself healthy in order to help take care of your children and work together as a



family to reduce stress in your life by prioritizing (and trimming) your to-do list, getting things done and enjoying time together.

Remember, we need to pause for our children. No matter how fast the world might be moving around us, it's critical that we pay attention to the kids in our lives. Take time out of your busy schedule to focus on your children, and know that it's okay to ask for help!





## A Final Word - Conclusion

Stress can seem overwhelming. Stress can be isolating. Stress can be, well, stressful. But you are not alone; you shouldn't be ashamed; and you can overcome it.

Hopefully at this point, you have all the tools and knowledge you need to begin reducing and combating the stress in your own life.

This isn't going to be an easy ride. Stress for many of us has become a normal part of life and habits are hard to change.

But by using the techniques mentioned in this guide, you'll find that you can reduce your base level of stress and rebuild some of the damage to your brain caused by anxiety. What's more, implementing them will teach you to be more aware of your thoughts and better ability to control your anxiety levels and thereby steer your emotions.

Managing stress is all about taking charge: taking charge of your thoughts, your emotions, your schedule, your environment, and the way you deal with problems. The ultimate goal is a balanced life, with time for work, relationships, relaxation, and fun – plus the resilience to hold up under pressure and meet challenges head on.

It's time to wrestle back control of your mind. You tell your body when it needs to wake up and when it needs to focus. You decide what's worth worrying about. And when you're home and work is over, you use this power to allow yourself to rest, recover and forget all about the stresses of the day.

Once you can do all this, you'll find your mood improves, your productivity skyrockets and your health is greatly enhanced in both the long and short term.

*Stress less, live more!*



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