

# **STRESS MANAGEMENT**

How to Break Free From a Stressful Lifestyle



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## Introduction - Stressed Out?

Just about everyone who you talk to nowadays will complain about being “stressed out.” Thirty years ago, no one ever even used this term. Today, however, it is a staple in most conversations. We often refer to ourselves as being “stressed out” when we discuss our careers as well as our personal lives.

Recent studies indicate that even children are “stressed out.” Little kids, who shouldn’t have a care in the world, are becoming “stressed” due to activities at home or at school. In most cases, they are simply inheriting the stress from their parents.

Psychologists who deal with “stressed out” individuals blame the current situation on everything from the foods we eat to our society. Most agree that people today attempt to do “too much” and end up getting burned out.

We all experience stress during the course of our lives. There is a difference, however, in being constantly stressed out and experiencing stress due to a certain situation. Anything that dramatically disrupts our lives is a cause for stress. Most people recover from the stressful situation after it has been resolved or over a period of time.

Other people tend to get stressed out all the time. In fact, their entire life appears to be one big stress factory. This is unhealthy and is gradually taking its toll on our society. Each year, billions of dollars are spent on symptoms of stress. There are dozens of prescriptive medicines on the market today that address stress and anxiety. Millions of people are on some sort of medication for “stress.”

What has happened in the past thirty years that has caused us to become such a nation of stressed out individuals? Is society expecting too much from us or are we expecting too much from ourselves? Why are so many people suffering from the following:

- Anxiety disorder
- Social anxiety disorder
- Obsessive compulsive disorder
- Anorexia Nervosa
- Depression
- Panic attacks

Years ago, no one ever even heard of these conditions, now they are featured in every magazine you encounter. There is a huge market to treat both depression and anxiety, which usually go hand in hand and are the offspring of stress.

Pharmaceutical companies are cranking out different anti-depressants all of the time. These are said to be “better” than the other anti-depressants that they discovered a year prior. Thirty years ago, no one ever even heard the term “anti-depressant.” If you used that expression back then, people would think you were talking about something to do with your car.

Today it seems as if every single person you encounter is “on something” for stress, depression or anxiety. All of them can neatly be lumped into the same category and are caused by stress.

Stress is usually at the root of all of the above psychological disorders. It also affects us physically as well. Stress has been linked to every disease known to man, including heart disease and cancer. Clearly, it is not a good idea for people to be under stress. But, as human beings, we are going to experience stressful situations. There is no avoiding this fact. Therefore, in order to really be able to help cure ourselves from being “stressed out” we need to know how to do the following:

- Identify stressors that affect our daily lives;
- Eliminate the stressors of which we can free ourselves;
- Learn to deal with stressful situations in a healthy way

If you are one of the millions of people who are feeling stressed out, you must take a look at the reasons why you are stressed out and try to do what you can to eliminate as much stress as you can from your life. If you continue to be “stressed out” you will most likely find yourself taking some sort of prescription drug for one of the above disorders. Taking prescription drugs for stress does not mean that you are “crazy.” This book will discuss alternative ways to deal with stress, but as a last resort, you are better off with the medications than allowing your body to be battered by stress.

Life is way too short to go through it being stressed out. And chances are that you will shorten your lifespan significantly if you continue to be “stressed out “ through the daily course of your life. This is especially true as many of the things over which you may be stressed are minor, but have been blown up in your mind to be worse than they actually are.

Wouldn't it be nice to actually be able to go through life without being “stressed out” over everything and without drugs or medications? This book will teach you everything you wanted to know about stress and how you can avoid this scourge that seems to be plaguing millions of people.

## Chapter 1 - What Is Stress?

Stress is an intrusion on your peaceful existence. All of us strive to have orderly and peaceful lives. We tend to develop well when we get into certain routines. Human beings are all animals. If you have ever owned a dog, you may have observed that the dog thrived very well on routine. You had to walk the animal a certain time each day, it had to be fed at a certain time each day and it slept at a certain time each day. The dog depended on a routine.

When the routine was broken, the dog would do things such as have accidents in the house, or behave in another destructive type manner. This is because the dog was actually stressed out. Why was the dog stressed out? Because his or her routine had been broken.

Human beings behave the same way. Parents often find that their children will behave much better when they have a set routine than if everything is pandemonium in the household. Routines give a child a feeling of security, which is the one thing that a child wants most of all.

Many people will complain that their kids are unruly and do not want to go to bed on time. Their bedtime "routine" involves telling their kids to go to bed. It then escalates into screaming at their kids to go to bed to threatening their kids with punishment if they do not go to bed.

The entire "go to bed" issue can be avoided if the parents simply set a bedtime routine. Milk and cookies. A bedtime story and being tucked in. Every night. The children know what to expect and actually end up looking forward to bedtime. This gives children an added sense of security, something that they really need in their lives.

We all want to feel safe and secure, but as we get older, we realize that we cannot always count on things being the same. We experience different incidents in our lives that turn our world upside down and cause us to feel stress. Most of these incidents we cannot control, others we can control to a certain degree. Some of us are fortunate enough not to experience these stressors until adulthood. Others experience stress as young children.

Stress can be pinned to an outside factor or something that we create in our own heads. If we are creating self induced stress, chances are that something from the outside triggered this condition and the resulting response.

Some of the more notorious causes of stress are the following:

### **Death of a loved one**

This can be a spouse, parent, child or friend. Death is part of life, but the death of a loved one is something that causes significant stress. Our hearts are broken as we

grieve for our loved one and our lives are seriously disrupted. This is something which we can do little about, unfortunately, and also something we all have to deal with, sooner or later. Many people recover from this stressor and continue with their lives. Others never fully recover. Death of a loved one can cause a number of serious illnesses that we take on ourselves, including depression.

The death of a child is probably the worst pain anyone can endure and many people never fully recover from this type of stress, however, they do manage to go on with their lives for the sake of others around them. Despite the fact that the death of a child is enough to put anyone over the edge, most people have more of a life force and feel compelled to go on. However, this is one stress factor that can be completely devastating to someone emotionally and is one from which one never fully recovers.

### **Divorce**

Even if we are glad to get rid of our ex-spouse, divorce is a major stressor in our lives. In addition to causing us to feel stress, it can also stress out our children. Many couples are so wrapped up with their own emotions during a divorce that they fail to notice the impact of the situation on their children. Chances are that the kids are feeling quite a bit of turmoil, even if they are too young to understand what is really going on. In fact, younger children can experience even more stress than older children in the case of their parent's divorce because they cannot put their emotions into words, nor can they understand that daddy or mommy going away has nothing to do with them. To a young child, everything in the world has something to do with them.

A child who experiences the trauma of his or her parents' divorce will feel stress. In some cases, the stress may manifest itself to a number of psychological disorders, including anxiety. The routine has been broken and the child no longer feels safe, so he or she will come up with a way to alleviate the stress and retain some sort of control over their lives by developing a disorder such as anorexia. Children should see a counselor when the parents' divorce, whether or not they appear "fine." Some children will be able to deflect the stress better than others, but it is always a good idea to make sure that the child truly is "fine."

### **Moving**

Even if you are moving from a shack to a palace, this is still stressful. It may be a happy occasion, but it is still a disruption of your routine. And any disruption of your routine causes stress. Moving disrupts the entire family. And it is a real pain in the neck. Plus you have to deal with the packing.

Everyone hates moving. Packing up all of your belongings and then unpacking them is just a hassle. Very few of us are fortunate enough to be able to have someone do all of this labor for us so it tends to be stressful. However, even if we do not have to lift a finger, moving is still a disruption of our normal routine.

It will take a while before you can get established into your new home. Until you do, you

should try to maintain as much of your normal routine as possible, especially if you have children.

### **Major Illness**

Any type of major illness is a significant stressor for the entire family. One person being ill does not just affect that person, but everyone around him or her. A major illness is one of the worst stressors we can endure as it can go on for years, taking its emotional toll on everyone around, especially children.

Many people who experience a major illness enter into a depression. This is usually due to the dramatic change in their life. Others will most likely also enter into a state of depression or exhibit unusual behavior. A young person who has a very ill parent may start turning to drugs, alcohol or other behavior to alleviate the stress he or she feels due to the parent's illness. They will be unable to deal with the stress and chances are that the rest of the family will be emotionally unavailable for help. Self medicating with drugs, alcohol or even promiscuous sex is a way for some young people to cope with the illness of a parent.

### **Job Loss**

In addition to being humiliating, the loss of a job will most likely throw you into financial turmoil. Losing a job often results in depression as well as anxiety. Not only did your self esteem take a hit, but you are also worried about money. You will probably experience stress until you get a new job or reconcile yourself to the fact that you will have to get by on less money.

Until you get your bearings, you will face a disruption in your lifestyle as well as your financial status. The uncertainty that surrounds getting another job also affects us when it comes to stress. Losing a job and having to find another job is very stressful.

Even if we quit a job for a better job, this is still considered a stress factor. Starting a new job, while a good thing, is stressful for most individuals. Why? Because it breaks our routine. And anything that breaks our routine causes stress.

These are just a few of the major stress factors that we, as a society, face. There are other things that can lead to stress, but these are among the worst.

In some cases, happy events such as the birth of a child, marriage, or even a new job can lead to stress. Even though these are joyous occasions, they are stressful. Why? Because they disrupt our lifestyle.

Are you sensing any sort of pattern here with regard to stress? Each of the aforementioned stressors all has one thing in common - they disrupt our lives. We don't like to have our lives disrupted and when it happens, even if it's a good disruption, it causes stress.

We cannot go through life like robots and expect for nothing to ever change. We are going to experience stressful situations throughout our lives. How we handle the stressful situations will determine how well we can manage stress. There are both good ways and bad ways to manage stress.

## Chapter 2 - Stress Manifestation

Stress usually takes a toll on us emotionally as well as physically. Many people who have been exposed to a series of stressful situations are diagnosed with anxiety disorders. Anxiety disorders encompass an entire range of symptoms. All anxiety disorders have one thing in common and that is that the desire for the person suffering from the disorder to control his or her environment.

Obsessive compulsive disorder is thought to be inherited, although it is a common reaction to stress. There is no specific gene that has been found that causes this disorder, yet, like most psychological disorders, it is common for someone who suffers from this problem to have close relatives who also suffered. Is this genetic or a learned condition on how to react to stress?

People who suffer from obsessive compulsive disorder usually cannot control their obsessive thoughts. They feel out of control most of the time and, to combat this “out of control” feeling, they go through a series of rituals, or compulsions, that help them feel that they have some control over their environment. This can be washing their hands over and over, locking and re-locking doors, or even repeated praying. The compulsions make them feel as though they are in control.

Anorexia Nervosa is similar to Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. In this case, a person, usually a young woman, will actually convince herself that she is fat and proceed to starve herself, in some cases, to death. The root of the problem is usually a desire to control something within her environment that appears to her to be out of control. Many young women exhibit symptoms of anorexia when they enter college, a stress factor because their lives have been disrupted.

General anxiety disorder is a name given to a condition where someone experiences severe anxiety but does not fall into known categories such as social anxiety disorder, where you fear social situations, anorexia, or obsessive compulsive disorder. Those with generalized anxiety disorder normally do not know that they have the condition until they wind up in the emergency room of the local hospital experiencing symptoms of what appears to be a heart attack. An anxiety attack, or panic attack, presents like a heart attack. It is usually brought on by stress, either real or imagined.

Stress usually manifests itself in anxiety and/or depression. Anxiety manifests itself in many different ways, including Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and Anorexia. Depression manifests itself in one way - the person does not get any enjoyment out of life. If left untreated, depression can be fatal.

Each year, we hear about young people who kill themselves. Suicide among teenagers and even younger children has been somewhat of an epidemic for the past two decades. Prior to 1980, we rarely heard of a suicide in young people. Most people did not know more than one person who killed themselves. Today, most school districts

can name quite a few students who killed themselves in the past two years. Most high school students can name at least two young people who they knew who killed themselves. This is tragic. Young people with their entire lives ahead of them are killing themselves due to stress. In most cases, the stress is self inflicted - the young person wants to get into a certain college and feels that they are not getting the best grades. At the age of 17, a young person feels that his or her life is over because they are just not good enough for the world. This is a tragedy.

In addition to causing mental problems, stress can also cause physical problems. It is linked to heart disease and is considered to be one of the primary causes of high blood pressure, heart attack and stroke. People who are under a great deal of stress often get sick with colds or flu. Stress is said to actually harm our immune system. There are some indications that stress can also be a contributory cause of certain cancers.

Although we cannot always control stressors in our life, we can learn how to effectively deal with stress so that it does not end up causing us either psychological or physical damage. We are all going to have to deal with stress in our lives so it is better to know how to react to stress in a positive way so that we can control our behavior and not allow stress to become a health threat.

## Chapter 3 - Identifying Stressors

Many of us may feel “stressed out” in our daily lives without knowing why. As many people are on medication due to anxiety and depression, it is obvious that many of us are under a great deal of stress. While medications to alleviate the symptoms of stress can help, they are merely a mask. The real problem is the stressful situation that we are enduring, either in our minds or in reality.

Janet was a secretary for a large law firm. She had a boss who would criticize her every move on a daily basis. Janet was in no position to leave her job as she was the sole supporter of her two young children. Her husband had died two years prior and this was the first job Janet had since his death. She worked hard, but no matter what she did, she could never please her boss. However, she had to work so she kept her mouth shut and never said anything. Janet’s boss had been through three secretaries in the past six months before he hired Janet.

Although her boss was very critical, Janet liked the people with whom she worked very much and considered herself lucky to be able to earn enough money to keep her children in the lifestyle to which they had all been accustomed when her husband was alive. She considered herself happy. She felt that she was finally able to get on with her life after the unexpected death of her husband.

She could not understand, therefore, why she felt anxious all of the time. Especially on Sunday evenings. One Sunday night she ended up in the emergency room of the hospital with heart palpitations. She thought she was having a heart attack so she got her mother to look after her kids and went to the hospital. After a series of tests, it was determined that Janet suffered from a “panic attack.” The ER doctor gave her a prescription for tranquilizers and advised her to see a psychiatrist.

A psychiatrist! Janet wasn’t “crazy.” And everyone knows that only “crazy” people have anything wrong with them mentally. So she took the tranquilizers and ignored the advice of the physician. She continued to experience “panic attacks” on a more frequent basis until one Monday morning, she couldn’t get out of bed. Her children got very upset and called their grandmother who found Janet in a catatonic state. She took her daughter to the hospital where she was admitted to the psych ward for a few days. Janet had what used to be called a “nervous breakdown.”

Was Janet “crazy?” No, she was just suffering from severe anxiety and depression caused by several stressors. One of them was her boss who was just a bully. The other was the fact that her husband had died and left her as the sole provider for her two children.

Fortunately, Janet’s mother took her to the hospital as Janet had been thinking more and more about joining her late husband. Even more fortunate for Janet was the fact that the doctor at the hospital was able to help Janet identify her stressors.

While Janet could not do anything about the death of her husband, she could do something about the second stress factor, which was her boss. She looked for a new job with a boss who was a bit more human and finally found herself not only with a better boss, but more money. She was still able to keep in contact with the friends she made at her old job, who regaled her with stories about how her bully boss kept going through secretaries.

Identifying stressors is not so easy for most people as it was in Janet's case. While some of us can point to different stress factors that have occurred recently in our lives, others have absolutely no idea why we are stressed. In some cases, the original stressor can be something that happened in our childhood.

In the film "The Three Faces of Eve," a woman is depicted as having a "split personality disorder." The film follows this very usual psychological disorder until they get to the root of the problem which was the fact that she was made to kiss the face of her dead grandmother as she lay in her coffin. This was not done as a form of abuse, but was a cultural belief. Her mother, who made her kiss the dead woman's face, did not do this to abuse her child, but believed that by kissing the face of the dead, it would cause you not to miss them and for them not to haunt you.

Unfortunately, the trauma that this girl endured caused her so much stress that she actually felt it necessary to retreat into her own mind and develop other "personalities" who usually emerged whenever she was under any sort of stress. The personalities took over her life and Eve had no recollection of what the personalities were doing when she was "out of it." She would simply black out and one of the personalities that she created in her own mind, would take over for her.

The film ended, of course, with the woman being helped. The simple recollection of the incident in her childhood that had been buried in her mind, was able to "cure" her of her split personality disorder. She no longer needed the personalities that she created to help her cope with stress in life.

While some of us can identify stressors as easy as Janet, others may have a difficult time putting our finger on what causes us to react to stress, such as in the case of the film example.

If you are feeling "stressed out" sit down with a pen and paper and try to identify the cause of your stress. In most cases, it will be more than one different problem that is causing you stress. Try to pinpoint the source of your stress by writing down everything that is worrying you.

Keep a journal of your day to day activities and how you feel periodically throughout the day. Think about the different people with whom you interact with during the course of the day and how you feel about each interaction.

Once you have identified the source of your stress, you can then make a determination on how you can handle the stress that is affecting your daily life. Chances are that your stress factors will be one of the following:

- A personal relationship;
- Money;
- Job situation;
- Health concerns.

Some of the stressors you will be able to control, others you will not be able to do anything about. But in order to help yourself, you are going to have to know what you are up against when it comes to the cause of your stress.

## Chapter 4 - Self Induced Stress

Some people are just so driven that they actually create their own stress. Not only do they create stress for themselves, but for others around them. You can often observe this in parents of young children who are so busy projecting their dreams onto their children that they create a tidal wave of stress throughout the house. These people are so obsessed about being “the best” at everything that they lose sight of what life is about. They rarely enjoy their lives and make sure that their children also do not enjoy the lives they have, either. They can be found heading up PTA drives and in a dozen other activities. People often look at them with envy because they seem to have it all and are so ambitious. In reality, they have very little. Ambition is good - driving everyone around you nuts to validate your life because of personal insecurity, is not.

Take the example of Shirley. A corporate attorney for a large company, she expected no less than the best from all of her employees. She couldn't understand why anyone would settle for anything less than perfection and became known as “Shirley the Slave driver” throughout the office. Shirley knew that this was the nickname that had been given her and didn't care. She was proud of being a “perfectionist.” A perfectionist, by the way, is not a good thing to be. Because it has the word “perfect” in it, many people proudly call themselves “perfectionists.” It stems from gross insecurity. A perfectionist will never be satisfied with anything and will rarely be happy. Worse yet is the perfectionist who becomes a parent or a boss.

Shirley caused many of her employees to quit or ask for a transfer because of her incessant demands. Many of her employees considered themselves to be “under stress.” The more she demanded, the more stressed they became and it seemed to them that she was downright impossible to please.

In addition to being herself a major stress factor for her employees, Shirley was also a stress factor for her children and husband, of whom, of course, she expected “the best.” Her children felt compelled to excel in everything they did in order to please their mother. Her husband felt that Shirley was beyond being pleased and sought refuge in other women on occasion.

When the children were young, they were “exposed” to many different sports, each of which they were expected to excel. Shirley was never really athletic, so she projected her wish to be athletic onto her children. After work, she spent most of her time driving her children back and forth to various games and sporting events. Her friends marveled at how much energy she seemed to have.

In private, Shirley worried about everything. She had come from an impoverished household and wanted to make sure that her children wanted for nothing. She wanted to be sure that they had every advantage to succeed in life that she never had. She remembered growing up and feeling inferior because of her poor clothing and the fact that she had to take charity lunches at school. Kids made fun of her old shoes. Even though she was now a successful corporate attorney, inside was a little girl with holes in

her shoes eating a government subsidized lunch.

Despite the fact that she seemed to “have it all,” Shirley was far from a happy person. She felt like she was on a roller coaster all of the time, yet she didn’t know how to stop it. Unfortunately, a heart attack was the result of her continued, self induced stress.

Fortunately, Shirley survived her heart attack, after which she began to look at life much differently. It no longer seemed to be important if her children were in every sport known to man or if they got a “B” instead of an “A on a quiz. When she finally returned to work, she began to realize that the place had been running well without her, despite the fact that she felt she was the only one who knew what she was doing.

The heart attack forced Shirley to relax and get grounded. She began to realize what was important in life. It also got her to understand that she was driving herself and everyone around her, into a state of stressful frenzy. She was really fortunate to have discovered a whole new life. Her husband also appreciated her new attitude and became more attentive. Her children relaxed. Her employees stopped calling her names behind her back and began to see her for the truly talented individual she was.

Many of us have only ourselves to blame for our stress. It is self induced because we feel compelled to have to “do everything.” Self induced stress is a product of modern times. People today tend to judge success on how many material possessions they have and how well their children compete with others. Many parents today involve their kids in some sort of organized sport in which the parent, instead of the child, is competing. While organized sports are great for kids who express an interest in athletics, it is not right to force your child to participate in sports that he or she is not interested in joining.

The fact that most women work outside the home has also led to more stress in our daily lives. Thirty years ago, many families had only one car. A woman usually stayed home while the man worked. A man got home from work, the family ate dinner and the kids went out and played until it was dark. The kids came in, went to bed and the husband and wife had time alone.

Today, a man comes home from work and, if it is his turn to cook, heats up something or whips up a meal or picks something up from the nearest fast food restaurant. A woman comes home from work to do the same. The family wolfs down a few bites of their meal and it is off to one of the following:

- Soccer practice
- Cheerleading practice
- Baseball practice
- Dance lessons
- Karate lessons
- All of the above and more

It is no wonder that people are stressed out. We never give ourselves, or our children, a chance to just relax! When was the last time you went with your family on a picnic? Do people even do this anymore or has it become “a waste of time?”

There is little that we can do about the fact that both spouses work or that women work outside of the home. This is not a bad thing as it has given women an opportunity to be able to financially support their children. Years ago, if a husband died or decided to take off, many women had little choice but to just find another husband. And in some cases, the husband was not nice to his stepchildren. Today, neither men nor women are forced to stay married to someone who is abusive because they are unable to support themselves and their children.

However, this new way of life is not without a price. And the price is that most people end up eating poorly and feel “stressed out” because of their lifestyle. When we add kids into the mix and our expectations for them, which are really based upon our expectations for ourselves, we end up with one heck of a stressed out life.

We can either live with self induced stress and continue on a merry go round of anxiety like Shirley, or we can slow down and eliminate some of the stressors from our lives.

Are you experiencing self induced stress? How do you feel when you come home from work - are you happy to come home or do you feel that you are just coming home to a life of chaos? Many people say that they are more relaxed at work than they are at home. If you cannot relax at home, when can you relax? Do you even know how to relax? Some people actually feel guilty when they are “doing nothing.”

People today tend to expect way too much from themselves and very few people know how to relax. As a result, they are raising children who also do not know how to relax. What have we got to look forward to except a bunch of future stressed out adults? The only ones who will benefit from this are the pharmaceutical companies who are busy cranking out better and better medications for stress.

Allowing self induced stress to control your life or even enter your life is like volunteering to be shot out of a cannon. Other people will watch you appear to soar, but in reality, you will be in a lot of pain that could end up to prove fatal, even if it is just metaphorically.

Some signs of self induced stress are the following:

- You do not have time to talk to friends on the phone because you are always “running around;”
- Your children are involved in no less than two activities a week to which you provide transportation;
- You look forward to the day when Taco Bell offers charge accounts;
- Your kids do not know what mashed potatoes are unless they come in a KFC package;

- You feel you can relax at work better than you can at home;
- You feel guilty if you have nothing to do;
- You eagerly count the days until (pick one) Soccer, Basketball, Baseball or Ballet season ends.

If you identified with one or more of the above situations, chances are that you are experiencing some signs of self induced stress. Superman and Wonder Woman were fictional characters - stop trying to be a superhero to yourself and learn how to relax.

## Chapter 5 - The Wrong Ways To Deal With Stress

The right way to deal with stress will be discussed in the next chapter. Unfortunately, many people do not know the right ways to deal with stress and decide to deal with stress in the following ways:

- Drinking alcohol to excess;
- Illicit drugs;
- Tranquilizers;
- Risky sex practices;
- Overspending;
- Violent behavior

Most people who are alcoholics suffer from depression caused by stress. They use alcohol as a way to make themselves “feel better” about their stress and the related anxiety and depression that it causes. They are, in fact, self medicating. Instead of getting to the root of the cause of their stress, they prefer to mask the stress with alcohol.

Alcohol works to numb the effects of the stress and does relieve anxiety. Unfortunately, alcohol is a depressant and only serves to magnify the depression. Alcohol is also addictive both mentally and physically. People who abuse alcohol can expect to live a shorter lifespan than others due to diseases of the liver as well as the heart that are caused by alcohol abuse. In addition to that, they usually do not have many friends except those that they meet in the bar. Chances are that their alcohol abuse will take its toll on both their professional and personal life.

If you think that you can deal with stress by any of the above methods, you are wrong. Alcohol is not a “cure” for stress. It will, however, eventually lead to more stress in your life such as:

- DUI arrests;
- Being fired from your job;
- Your spouse leaving you;
- Your children not having any respect for you;
- Financial issues;
- Health issues.

Using alcohol is definitely a mask and not a cure when it comes to eliminating stress from your life. The same goes for using illegal drugs and tranquilizers. Many people will go to the doctor and complain about stress. Quicker than a fast draw at a Wild West shootout, the doctor will pull out his prescription pad and write a prescription for a tranquilizer. Tranquilizers are virtually booze in a pill. Only they are twice as addictive. Like alcohol, they have a tendency to build up a tolerance, requiring an increased dosage to get the same effect.

Tranquilizers can be very effective if they are used properly. For example, if someone experiences the loss of a loved one, they may be prescribed tranquilizers for a brief period of time. However, they should not be used as a long term cure for anxiety or depression caused by stress. And they should be monitored, not given out freely as many of them are in today's society.

Many people who are addicted to illegal drugs suffer from some sort of anxiety disorder or depression. The drugs allow them to cope. There is really no difference between someone who is an alcoholic or a drug addict except that one vice is legal and the other illegal.

Risky sex practices, overspending or violence can all be indicators of an underlying mental problem that was probably brought on by stress. In some cases, it can be the result of bi-polar disorder, which used to be called "manic depressive personality." Chances are that they are using money, sex or violent behavior as a means to control their environment because of undue stress.

If you are suffering from stress, do not assume that a tranquilizer will be the "cure all" for your condition. Again, doctors are very quick to prescribe tranquilizers, yet very few will tell you to "have a drink." Yet tranquilizers are just as dangerous and addictive. In fact, they can be more dangerous and very easy to abuse.

Do not attempt to self medicate yourself with drugs or alcohol. Although this may "take the edge off" of your stress, this is a case where the cure can be worse than the disease. In some cases, it can have tragic results, as in the case of Sam.

Sam was very stressed out after he lost his job and went to the doctor suffering from what the doctor diagnosed as a "panic attack." The doctor promptly prescribed an anti-depressant as well as a tranquilizer to "take the edge off" of the panic attack. Sam really liked the tranquilizer as it did, indeed, take the edge off of his panic. It felt pretty good and he didn't even get a headache from it.

The prescription for the tranquilizers was soon exhausted so Sam went back to the doctor to get some more tranquilizers. As these pills are only supposed to be used on a short term basis, the doctor did not want to prescribe them for Sam, but relented as Sam begged. He told Sam that he would give him one more prescription for the tranquilizers and that was it. He also advised Sam to "wean himself off" of the pills.

Sam couldn't "wean himself off" of the pills. As a matter of fact, he seemed to need more and more of the pills to achieve any effect at all. Where he began by taking one pill, he was not up to five at a time. He knew he was going to run out of pills, so he went to another doctor and got another prescription. He had it filled at another drugstore and felt better.

Then Sam found something wonderful - the internet world of drugs! He found that for a

few dollars more, he could order all of the controlled substances he wanted on the internet. So he began ordering more of his favorite prescription. While he was at it, he decided to try other tranquilizers as well. Sam was like a kid in a candy store. Before long, he had used up most of his savings on prescription medications he purchased online. But he didn't care because he was feeling good.

Although he knew that he shouldn't take the tranquilizers with alcohol, it didn't seem to bother him. He was now up to seven pills and that he could do with still taking a drink. It had been quite some time since he actually fell asleep without some sort of medication. His entire life revolved around getting more tranquilizers.

The one or two times Sam actually tried to quit taking the tranquilizers, he felt as though he was crawling out of his skin. It was pure agony. Sam decided that it was far better to continue taking the pills. Unfortunately, he never thought to go to the doctor and tell him about his problem. Like many others, he thought that stress was "no big deal" and that he could solve the problem himself. Besides, the drugs were legal, right?

One night, he took seven tranquilizers and a drink before going to bed. He got a little sleepy and "forgot" that he had already taken tranquilizers and took some more. His landlady found his dead body the next afternoon after his girlfriend kept calling without getting an answer and Sam never showed up at work. Sam was only 26 years old.

Tranquilizers are not the answer. Alcohol is not the answer. Marijuana, heroin, morphine or any other drug is not the answer. You cannot lose yourself in the arms of multiple sex partners nor can you find the answer at the mall with an unlimited spending account. Your answer will not come from using anyone as a punching bag, either.

The answer to dealing with stress is to find the source of the stress and either eliminate it or deal with it in a healthy, head on manner.

## Chapter 6 - The Right Ways To Deal With Stress

There are many ways that you can deal with stress that do not involve using drugs or alcohol. As a matter of fact, you are better off if you can avoid any type of prescription drug for your stress. Stress can be managed by many different natural methods.

The first thing that you need to do is to find out the cause of your stress. Once you have found the cause of your stress, you need to address this fact. The cause may be something that you can eliminate, or it can be something with which you have to live.

In many cases, stress is the result of something happening with your job. In such a case, you have to ask yourself if the job is worth your health and the health of your entire family. Remember, when you suffer from stress, it often causes others to suffer from the same stress. If you are employed at a place where you are actually stressed out all the time, is it really worth it to continue in this employ? What sort of quality of life do you have if you hate what you have to do every single day?

Quality of life has significant value, or at least it should. There comes a point in everyone's life when they have to decide what is truly important. Remember that no one ever, on their death bed, lamented that they didn't work hard enough. Many of us end up not seeing the truly important aspects of life until it is too late.

If you can eliminate the stressor, be it a personal relationship, a job, or even a certain situation, you will be all the happier for it in the long run. If a job or a person is really giving you that much stress, to the point that you have to seek professional help - is it or they really worth it?

Are you involved in a toxic relationship that is causing you stress? Get out of it now. Hate your job to the point where you dread going into work on Monday morning? Find another job that you won't hate. Even if you have to take a pay cut, it is well worth it to enjoy quality of life.

If the cause of your stress is something over which you have no control, you need to evaluate the problem, face it and seek help. There are many different counseling methods that incorporate behavior techniques to address stress. Medication can be useful in some situations, but tranquilizers should never be a long term "cure" for stress.

Natural cures for stress include behavior management techniques, proper diet and exercise, herbal remedies and yoga techniques. These will actually work towards alleviating your stress.

### **Behavior Therapy**

In some cognitive behavior therapy, a patient is monitored for signals of stress in their body by being hooked up to a machine. This will determine stressors by the heart rate,

which usually rises whenever stress is present.

The method used to train someone to behave in an appropriate manner is similar to how you might train a dog, except they don't get whacked with a rolled up newspaper. Instead, whenever the patient responds appropriately to a stressor, the machine lights up, indicating that this is the appropriate response. The patient continues with this therapy until he or she realizes how to behave whenever they encounter stress.

Have you ever hear anyone say to "count from ten backwards?" This is a popular method used to "calm people down" before they say or do something that they will regret. Counting is also used to control stress. Many of us, when we are trying to fall asleep, say we are counting sheep. This is a method used to keep our mind off of our stress and concentrated on something else. It is very difficult to worry about work while you are counting. In fact, it is difficult to think about anything else when you are counting, which is why counting is such a popular therapy for relieving stress.

If you find yourself in a stressful situation, start counting to 100. Every time you are reminded of the stress, start counting to 100. Is your teenager driving you nuts? Start counting to 100 whenever you start thinking about him or her. This will help relieve some of the stress.

### **Massage Therapy**

The demand for massage therapy has doubled in the past 10 years. This is largely due to the fact that massage therapy is so effective at relieving stress. Many people still think of massage therapists as prostitutes working out of sleazy massage parlors. This is no longer the case. Massage therapy is now big business as well as a licensed practice.

Massage is very useful helping with stress and particularly the symptoms of stress, which are tightened muscles, aches and pains. Massage therapy can work wonders on the stressed out body and also work to relieve your mind.

There are several different types of massage therapy that are available to people who are undergoing stress. They range from a traditional Thai massage to a soft tissue massage. In addition to relieving stress, massage therapy is also used to treat aches and pains resulting from exercise or sports injuries as well as a number of other ailments. A licensed massage therapist will be able to recommend the type of massage therapy for your particular situation. It is not that costly and even if you go once a week to the massage therapist, it is far less expensive than seeing a doctor and getting a prescription filled.

### **Proper Diet and Exercise**

Have you ever wondered why so many people are on medication for stress? What is it that is so different about now than 30 years ago?

One of the major differences in our lives is the food in which we eat. Most Americans do not eat a healthy diet and more than a fair share are overweight. Many doctors believe that stress and the onslaught of people suffering from depression is due to a vitamin deficiency. The stress that many of us suffer from today may be the result of simply not eating a healthy diet.

We all know that proper nutrition is essential for a healthy body, but what about a healthy mind? We are hearing more about good nutrition for mental health as well as physical health.

Certain foods are natural mood enhancers. These include:

- Dairy products. Dairy is usually high in protein and can improve a physical response to stress. You can take dairy in milk or cheese and expect less physical problems due to stress as well as enjoying a lighter mood.
- Fish. Fish that is rich in fatty acids, such as salmon, is good for the body as well as the mind. We all know that fish is considered “brain food,” but fish that is high in Omega-3 fatty acids is a natural way to treat depression. There are studies that indicate that people who suffer from depression related to stress have low levels of Omega-3 fatty acids in their body;
- Strawberries. These can keep your blood sugar levels stable, which can be another cause of stress. Strawberries are a natural way to stabilize your mood and are a lot tastier than any SSRI medications;
- Spinach. Folic acid is essential to good health and spinach is high in this B vitamin. Studies have also indicated that people who have low levels of folic acid are more prone to depression. Folic acid increases serotonin naturally, which is exactly the way that medications to treat depression work on the brain;
- Turkey. Another food that boosts the serotonin. Turkey contains Tryptophan, an amino acid that can actually make you calm. Remember how sleepy you felt after eating Thanksgiving dinner last year? That was from the Tryptophan, a natural tranquilizer;
- Brazil Nuts. These contain selenium, which is another mood enhancer, however, too much of this can prove toxic for your system so eat these nuts sparingly, but include them in your diet;
- Complex carbohydrates. These also contain tryptophan and, although we have been warned to “stay away from carbs” these past few years, we need complex carbs, not simple carbs. If you are watching your diet, stay away from simple carbohydrates, such as cakes, cookies and sweets, but eat complex carbs, such as sweet potatoes, that are rich in tryptophan;

- Clams, Oysters, Cottage Cheese - all are high in Vitamin B12. Raw clams and oysters have been considered an aphrodisiac for a long time, but cottage cheese is also rich in this vitamin that has been known to enhance your mood and stave off stress.

If you are not getting enough of these foods in your daily diet, consider taking a multi vitamin or a supplement. If you are suffering from stress, chances are that you may be deficient in vitamin B as well as Omega-3 acids.

Eating a proper diet certainly will not hurt you and may actually end up relieving much of your stress.

Exercise is also crucial to relieving stress. As a matter of fact, when you feel stress coming on, the best thing that you can do to stave it off is to exercise. Doing something physical can sometimes really work out the problem that you are having.

Cardio exercises are the best way to work out stress. These get your heart pumping and naturally raise the serotonin in your brain, putting you in a better mood. Stress can be very draining on your physical being and exercise can right the wrong and get your body back into shape. Exercise also boosts the body's immune system, which also suffers under stress.

Get yourself into an exercise routine. Work out in the morning or after work doing cardio vascular exercises that will give both your mind and body a boost, as well as help control stress. In the evening, you can practice yoga or stretching exercises that can help tone your body as well as relax you.

Don't want to exercise? Do something physical. Cleaning the kitchen floor will not only relieve your stress, but will also get the floor really clean. Doing something physical such as cleaning, is one of the best stress relievers available. It works better than any pill, costs nothing and, when you are finished, you will have a really clean house.

## **Herbal Remedies**

There are natural, homeopathic remedies that are also used to treat stress, although the jury is still out on just how effective they really are.

One way to treat stress homoeopathically is through the use of St. John's Wort. This herb has been used to treat stress and anxiety for years. There is an indication that it is very effective in treating mild anxiety and depression as well as stress. It naturally releases serotonin and has both mood stabilizing and calming effects. St. John's Wort is available in most drug stores and health food stores.

Most doctors will never recommend that you even try St. John's Wort. Nor will they tell you to eat properly. Today's doctors seem to be consumed by the need to prescribe medicine. The pharmaceutical companies are making billions of dollars making sure

that everyone is prescribed an SSRI or a tranquilizer every time they have a problem with stress.

Doctors and pharmaceutical companies are not the only ones to blame. We are as well. Have you ever wondered why Americans suffer from more stress than any other nation? We probably don't, but more of us are hooked on medication for this condition. One of the reasons we agree to take the pills for stress is because we want 'instant cure.' yes, we are always in search of the quick remedy for any problem.

Nobody wants to take the time to exercise or actually come to terms with different stressors. Nobody wants to hear that they have to eat right. Yoga? Meditation? We don't even give them a chance. We want a cure for what ails us and don't want to be inconvenienced with it any more than necessary.

This is not to say that anyone who is suffering from stress and depression should not seek medical attention or take medication when necessary. In some cases, it is necessary to take prescription pills. However, a prescription should be used as a last resort, not the first thing that we try whenever we feel stressed.

Throughout our lives, we are bound to encounter stress. We have to learn how to deal with it effectively or we will be doomed to taking medication just to get through every day life.

If you are suffering from stress, try St. John's Wort, a natural herbal remedy, before you embark on a series of SSRI medications or tranquilizers.

## **Aromatherapy**

Aromatherapy is yet another natural treatment for stress and involves the use of essential oils. Essential oils are derived from natural by-products such as tree bark, flowers, fruits or grasses. They are very concentrated and can be used either with an infuser, in which case the healing powers are inhaled into the lungs, or on the body as a massage oil, in which case the healing powers of the oil is absorbed into the bloodstream by way of the skin.

Essential oils are very concentrated and should never be used directly on the skin. Lavender is the one exception and is pretty much a cure-all for just about whatever ails you. Lavender oils are available at a variety of different places including online. In order for the aromatherapy to actually work, you have to use pure essential oils and not anything that is chemically produced.

Essential oils are not meant to be taken orally, but have been used as a treatment for a variety of minor ailments for thousands of years. Aromatherapy is particularly effective when combined with massage therapy. Most massage therapists incorporate aromatherapy into their practice, although this is something that you can easily do on your own. Simply get some lavender oil and an infuser and burn the oil so that you can

inhale the scent. Not only will it relax and calm you, but it will also make the whole house smell fragrant.

## **Yoga and Meditation**

These are Eastern arts just like aromatherapy and, like aromatherapy, have been around for thousands of years. People in the West tend to want to hurry everything along, which can be one reason why we are so much more stressed than people in the East. Yoga involves a series of stretching exercises that are designed to allow you to concentrate on something other than yourself. Meditation is the process of clearing your mind of negative thoughts and concentrating on nothing. Both are equally effective at calming you down if you understand how to use these techniques towards alleviating stress.

Yoga and meditation work pretty much the same way as exercising, cleaning and counting do to relieve stress - they draw your attention away from the stressful situation and to something else. This is the secret to controlling your stress - to focus your attention on something that is either positive or neutral. Once you have learned how to use these different techniques to alleviate stress, you can then work on controlling how you react to stress.

## Chapter 7 - How Do You React To Stress?

How do you react to stress? Do you fly off the handle? Do you get an upset stomach? Do you rush to the nearest bar to grab a drink?

You cannot control the all of the stress in your life. There are some things that you can eliminate, such as negative people or a job that drives you crazy, but for the most part, you are at the mercy of the rest of the world.

Most mental disorders, such as anxiety disorders that are the result of stress, are related to control, or lack of control. When we feel as though our environment is out of control, it can be very disconcerting. Once we realize that we cannot possibly control everything in life, we can then start to learn to live.

Realizing that we are not in control of everything can take a lifetime and is something that some people can never quite “get.” The idea of being unable to control everything around us is so frightening that many of us spend a good portion of our life trying to dismiss this idea. As babies, we thrive on feeling secure and the idea that we are not in control conflicts with that sense of security. When we have conflicts in our life, it causes stress. How we choose to react to stress is entirely up to us.

While you may not control the stressors entering your life, you can control how you react to stress. Your reactions are one of the only things that you can control as you cannot control the actions of other individuals nor everything that happens in life.

You can choose to react to stress in a negative way, such as taking a swig of whiskey, or you can react in a positive way, such as cleaning the kitchen floor. With one way, you are bound to spend money and time and wake up with a headache. The other will cost you nothing but time and in the morning, you will have a sparkling floor.

### **Negative reactions to stress include:**

Drinking, drug use, being unable to get out of bed, having a panic attack, abusing a family member or even an animal, abusing prescription drugs, promiscuous sex, and compulsive behaviors such as gambling or over spending.

### **Positive reactions to stress include:**

Exercising, practicing yoga, meditating, cleaning, breathing techniques, talking your problems out with a therapist or friend, listening to calming music or even counting.

You can choose to react to stress in a negative way or in a positive way, it is all up to you. This is the only choice that you have when it comes to most stress.

Think about a stressful situation that you have in your life at the moment. If you are like

most people, you will not have to think for long as most of us have some sort of stress in our lives. Think carefully about the stress. Write it on a piece of paper.

Is this stress something that you can control? Is it something that you can do without? If the stress is something that you can eliminate from your life, why are you not ridding yourself of this stress?

If the stress is something that you cannot control, how are you reacting to the stress. Are your reactions negative or positive.

For example, suppose the one thing in your life that is “stressing you out” is that you are worried about money. Most of us worry about money at one time or another, so this is not an usual stressor.

Is this something that you can control? To an extent. One way to alleviate the stress is to look for a better job or a second job so you can earn more money.

What if you cannot control this problem? Suppose you cannot find another job? How should you react to the stress in the meantime?

If you react negatively by drinking or taking drugs, do you think that will earn you more money? Perhaps if you do something physical, you can not only alleviate the stress but also actually make some money.

Anne was always worried about money. She would “stress out” about it quite a bit. In her small town, there was little opportunity. She had a job, but she barely got by. She could never see a way out of her rut and this bothered her a great deal. She worried that if some catastrophic event occurred, she would be broke. How would she live? How would she pay the rent and be able to eat?

Anne could have reacted to her stress in a negative manner. Actually, she did do that for quite some time. She went to the doctor and was prescribed tranquilizers. These were soothing and her insurance covered the cost of the prescription.

When the insurance at work changed, however, the prescription for the tranquilizers was no longer covered. Fortunately for Anne, she had a doctor who understood her situation and helped her wean herself off of the tranquilizers. He then suggested some exercises to relieve Anne’s stress that have been mentioned in this book.

Instead of popping pills, Anne began to write. She enjoyed writing so much that she began submitting stories and articles on different sites on the internet. This took her mind off of her problems and allowed her to express herself creatively. One day, she got an offer of \$10 for one of her stories.

Pretty soon, Anne was writing in her spare time and earning extra money. It wasn’t long before she had a nice nest egg stashed away and the stress about money was far

behind. By choosing to react to her stress in a positive manner, she not only controlled her stress, but ended up eliminating the stress.

Choose to react to your stress in a positive manner instead of in a negative way and you will achieve positive results. Choose to react in a negative manner and you will begin down the route of self destruction.

## Chapter 8 - Tips To Break Free Of Stress

By now you realize that you cannot control stress and that, as long as you live in the world, you are going to encounter some sort of stress in your life. You have probably learned the types of stress that you have encountered as well as the types of stress that you were able to control and those of which you had no control.

You have also learned that although you cannot control stress in your life, you can control the way that you react to stress. You have learned the difference between negative reaction and positive reactions.

There are many different ways you can alleviate stress in a positive manner. Here are a few positive steps to alleviate stress:

1. Breathing exercises. Breathe in through your mouth and out through your nose. Take deep breaths and count to 10 in between each breath. Try to hold the air in your lungs for at least 10 seconds before exhaling through your nose;
1. Get into a routine of watching a certain television program every evening and stick to it. Make sure that it is entertaining and funny. You can look forward to seeing this bit of entertainment each night and will put some stability in your life;
1. Get a dog. Although a dog may be stressful at first, a dog will force you to slow down when it comes to life. Like people, dogs thrive on routine. In addition to getting you to slow down, a dog will also help you settle into a routine;
1. Find a creative pursuit. Stifled creativity can be very stressful for some people. This can also be the reason for your stress. Taking up a hobby that is fruitful such as painting or writing, can not only relieve your stress but eliminate the stress.
1. Read a book before bed instead of taking sleeping pills. Reading a book is a natural way to relax and is a much better for insomnia than sleeping pills;
1. Join a gym and force yourself to go. You may be more inclined to exercise if you actually shell out some money for the club. In addition to exercising, you will also get to meet different people;
1. Join a group where you can meet people who have interests similar to your own. This will give you a renewed sense of confidence, enable you to make new friends and get your mind off of your own stressors;
1. Volunteer to help someone else. Sometimes, just seeing other people who are way worse off than you is a real eye opener and instant stress relief. You end up doing something nice for another person who needs the help and everything gets put in its proper perspective;

1. Take a fast walk or run around the block. Sometimes, just getting out in the fresh air and running is a giant stress reliever. If nothing else, it is good exercise. Chances are that you will feel refreshed when you return home;
1. Cry! Johnnie Ray said it best - "go on baby and cry!" Crying, like laughing is a great way to release stress in an instant. Sometimes we all need a good cry. If you have been bottling up emotions, let it out by crying and chances are you will feel better.

## Chapter 9 - When To Seek Treatment

If you have been experiencing severe stress for more than a couple of weeks and have exhausted all natural remedies to no avail, you should seek medical attention. Yes, this book has repeatedly said that tranquilizers are bad, and they are, if taken at the first sign of a little stress and abused. However, if your blood pressure is shooting through the roof because you are stressed out all of the time, a little “chill pill” will not hurt.

If you are not finding any relief from your stress and feel that you are more stressed out than ever, despite everything that you are doing, talk to your physician.

Your doctor will most likely prescribe some sort of medication to relieve your stress or anxiety. He or she may diagnose an anxiety disorder after he or she examines you and asks a series of questions.

They will most likely want to know if you can identify the cause of your stress. They will want to know your family history and if anxiety disorders run in the family. They will also want to take a blood test and check you for diabetes as well as any thyroid conditions, both of which can be an underlying cause of anxiety or stress.

Your doctor will take your blood pressure and most likely want to see you again if your condition has not improved. If your blood pressure is high, he or she will probably want to see you again in a week.

In most cases, your doctor will recommend counseling or even a psychiatrist. Your regular physician is not a psychiatrist, who is a medical doctor who specializes in psychiatric medicine. A psychiatrist can make a more accurate diagnosis of your condition as well as prescribe medication.

In addition to seeing a psychiatrist, you will probably also want to see a counselor. While a psychiatrist is a medical doctor, he or she will be more interested in monitoring you with medication. A counselor, therapist or psychologist will be the person with whom you want to discuss all your issues.

Seeing a doctor for stress or anxiety does not make you “crazy.” As a matter of fact, it really makes you quite normal as more and more people are seeking medication for stress and anxiety disorders.

Your doctor will also want to know if you are having thoughts of suicide or harming others. If you have suicidal thoughts, seek emergency treatment. Do not think that this will be a solution to all of your problems. All it will do is hurt every single person who loves you for the rest of their lives. Do you really want to do that to them?

A doctor may also prescribe medication to balance your moods. If you are a woman who is close to menopause, the symptoms that you are experiencing could be due to

menopause and hormone replacement therapy may or may not be recommended. If given a choice between an anti-depressant and hormone replacement therapy, many women will opt for the anti-depressant as it has less of a chance of harmful side effects. The anti-depressants act to boost the body's production of serotonin and end up stabilizing your mood.

If untreated, stress can lead to a number of different ailments, including cancer. Stress is not something to mess around with or ignore. Going to a doctor for stress is very common today and there is absolutely no need for you to suffer in silence.

Try to use alternative means to relieve your stress with medication, if necessary. You may get to the point where you can control your reaction to stress and do not need the medication any longer. Do not attempt to self medicate yourself and do not abuse prescription drugs.

You can learn to overcome stress if you follow the tips that are given in this book. Eat right, exercise, have a routine, do not be afraid to laugh or cry and do not allow any person to continue to be a bane to your very existence. If you have a job that causes you a significant amount of stress, think about doing something else.

Get out of the rat race and re-join the human race. Quit allowing stress to run your life and the lives of those you love. Make a vow to stamp out stress and start loving life again.