

Stress

The Silent Killer

**How to instantly minimize, eliminate and manage stress levels
and dramatically improve your quality of life.**

Stress – The Silent Killer

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Stress: The Silent Killer

With most life threatening ailments, we're often alerted to potential problems long before they take their toll. We know how to identify side effects associated with the most common health problems and we are well informed of the many different lifestyle choices such as smoking or being overweight that put us at greater risk.

But there's a culprit that poses an incredible risk to our health that we often don't see coming. It creeps up on us, injects itself into our life and in many cases, it becomes a permanent fixture in our day-to-day living. Then one day it decides to bear down on us with all its might and while we suddenly feel the weight of its wrath, it's simply too overwhelming to resist.

Stress – When it fixes its powerful grip on you, it can take control of your entire life. Even the simplest of problems can suddenly feel increasingly difficult to overcome and we find darkness, anxiety and hardship with everything and everyone around us.

Here are a few awful truths about stress:

- Stress affects women almost twice as much as it does men.
- Anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in North America.

Stress – The Silent Killer

- Stress is more often than not, the cause of self-medicating such as smoking or drinking excessively.
- Stress ages us.
- Stress can cause ulcers, palpitations, chronic fatigue, hypertension, cysts, high blood pressure, acne and insomnia.
- Stress can turn into anxiety and ongoing depression that affects every aspect of our lives.
- Stress is a cause or contributing factor of up to 80% of all illnesses. Stress, if left untreated can be deadly.

The toll that stress has on our lives can affect our relationships with family and friends – it can destroy marriages, relationships and ultimately it squeezes all pleasure and joy from our lives, replacing it with hopelessness, depression and misery.

It's the silent killer, the ultimate enemy and the most common of all antagonists in the story of our lives.

Here's the cold, hard truth: Stress affects everyone at some point in time. There's simply no escaping it. But if you equip yourself with the tools you need to effectively manage and minimize stress levels, you will never suffer from excessive stress and anxiety again.

You will know how to identify stress-based toxins in your life and you will understand the many ways to protect yourself from long-term anxiety.

We've written this guide, "*Stress – The Silent Killer*" to help you better understand how stress affects your mind and body and what you can do about it. This is the first step in taking back control of your life.

Let's begin.

The Shocking Truth

The results are in and the hard data is absolutely shocking. 1 out of every 8 Americans between the ages of 18-55 suffers from some sort of stress or anxiety disorder.

This equates to more than 20 million Americans!

This information, collected by the National Institute of Mental Health, reveals that the **most common of all mental health ailments is stress and anxiety**. With an impact that's even greater than drug or alcohol abuse.

There was additional information uncovered through the research phase that was even more shocking. Most adults are not correctly diagnosed with having anxiety until they've seen an average of five doctors!

5 doctor visits before anxiety is even considered to be a culprit in a person's mental or physical health problems! Meanwhile, people continue to suffer from the many symptoms associated with high levels of stress and anxiety that could be eliminated if properly managed.

The problem is that we haven't been trained to identify WHAT stress and anxiety looks like when it's plaguing our lives. We can't always see it; we don't understand it and we simply overlook it as a *"normal part of life"*.

And while stress is absolutely a part of life from time to time, *long-term stress* or stress levels that are higher than normal, can have a tremendous impact on our ability to function and to live normal, healthy lives.

High stress levels can:

Mess up your digestive system

Stress can clog up your digestive systems natural process; upset your stomach, cause painful constipation and create intestinal ulcers and cysts.

Wreak havoc on your immune system

Chronic stress and high levels of anxiety can interfere with the normal functions of our immune system weakening it and leaving us susceptible to viruses and bacteria.

With immune suppression also comes the *amplification of existing problems* such as holding onto coughs, colds and flus for an extended period of time.

Increase our blood pressure

Increased blood pressure can result in strokes, heart attacks and other heart related complications.

Chronic migraines & headaches

Tension headaches are extremely common in people who suffer from anxiety and prolonged stress.

Panic Attacks

Stress is the most common trigger and cause of panic attacks, which are intense sessions of uncontrollable fear and anxiety that can lead to chest pain, rapid heartbeat and heart palpitations.

Skin Problems

Stress affects more than just the mind, it can literally cause skin rashes, hives and provoke allergic reactions to things that you normally aren't affected by.

Physical Pain

High levels of stress can cause tension in muscles, which results in chronic aches and pain that may feel similar to arthritis.

Depression

One of the worst ways that stress affects us is by welcoming its best friend into our lives – depression. Stress and depression always go hand-in-hand.

And if left untreated, it can kill us. In fact, stress accounts for **more than 80% of all illnesses**, either directly or indirectly.

Take a look at the following charts for a quick overview of the many different symptoms associated with high stress levels.

How many can you identify with?

Cognitive, Emotional, Behavioral and Physical Symptoms

Mood swings, memory loss and lack of mental clarity.	Inability to perform, focus or concentrate on simple tasks.
Irritability, anger, short temper and annoyance at small things.	Lack of appetite, insomnia, nausea or dizziness.
Isolating yourself from others, neglecting responsibilities.	Procrastination, lack of motivation or depression.
Loss of sex drive or interest.	Frequently sick (flu, cold, etc.)
Unusual aches and pains.	Increased use of alcohol, cigarettes or drugs.

So, what can we do to protect ourselves from long-term stress and toxic levels of anxiety?

We begin by identifying the most common symptoms of high stress levels so that you better understand the toll that it may be taking on your mind and body.

We then move on to identifying sources of stress and finally, we learn how to effectively manage stress and protect ourselves from complete system overload so you can live a happier and healthier life.

Identifying Your Primary Stressors

Stress management begins by identifying the main sources of stress in your life. Perhaps your job or career is the culprit, or it could be stress created by strained relationships, or your financial situation.

So, why are you so stressed out?

When it comes to managing stress levels and protecting yourself from long-term anxiety, the first step is to make note of every primary stressor in your life. We will then assign a value to each stressor so that you can better understand how different forms of stress have an impact on your day-to-day living as well as how to eliminate the primary sources.

Here are the most common stressors, based on research conducted by Thomas Holmes from the University of Washington.

Financial Issues

The leading cause of stress and anxiety is your financial situation. If you find yourself barely able to make ends meet and you are constantly struggling to get by, chances are you are suffering from *stress overload*.

With the rising cost of fuel, food and other important resources, combined with a shaky economy, high rate of unemployment and increasing debt, it's no wonder that financial problems are the leading culprit behind ongoing stress and anxiety.

Relationship Issues

Whether you find yourself arguing with family and friends, your marriage has hit a rough patch or you are busy raising young children, relationship and family issues are a common cause of high stress levels.

Even positive relationships can cause unwanted stress. For example, if you've ever been involved in planning a wedding or engage in public speaking you might have felt stress and anxiety about the upcoming event, despite the situations being both positive in nature.

Workplace Issues

One of the most common stressors is workplace related. Long hours, overbearing boss, disgruntled co-workers and the commute itself all adds additional stress on our lives.

Combine that with low pay, increasing layoffs and struggling to meet career goals and you've got the perfect recipe for high stress levels.

Lack of Time

It's easy to feel as though we haven't gotten enough done in a day. From a lack of proper time management, excessive procrastination or over-extending ourselves are all ways that we add stress into our day-to-day lives.

Many of us bite off more than we can chew only to wind up exhausted both emotionally and physically – and when we are drained of all energy and

creativity, we are left feeling overwhelmed and stressed out about what we weren't able to accomplish.

Big Life Changes

With change comes stress. Whether you are moving locations, changing jobs, helping to plan an upcoming wedding or anticipating the arrival of a new family member, life changes can often bring unwanted stress.

Lifestyle changes can also bring on higher stress levels such as quitting smoking, attempting to lose weight or learning something new.

Health Issues

Health problems add incredible stress to our lives, especially if it's accompanied by chronic pain. In addition, fear of potential health problems also causes stress especially with the increase of cancers, diabetes, hypertension and other illnesses in our society.

These are just a few of the more common sources of stress, and it's important that you evaluate all of the key triggers and causes in your own life.

Once you've identified key sources of stress, the next step is to prioritize each stressor.

Make a numbered list that starts out with what you believe are the most serious stressors, and move on to those that you feel are secondary forms of stress (that may not have as dramatic of an impact on your life).

Next to each stressor write a “C” or “NC” to reflect whether you feel that you have “Control” or “No Control” over each situation.

Once you have this list, you can start putting together a customized plan for managing stress levels while identifying situations that you can’t change, and situations that you can.

Note: Keep in mind that we all react to stress differently, and we can all handle different levels of stress. In addition, some people are more susceptible to stress than others where everyday decisions and events can quickly feel far more stressful than what we believe to be ‘normal’.

Don’t be too hard on yourself if you find that you are among those who can’t carry a heavy stress load. There are ways of leveling out high stress levels so that you are able to cope in even the most strenuous environment, and it all begins in reconditioning the way you respond to higher levels of stress.

I’ll show you some of the easy techniques that I personally use to successfully manage stress, so you can improve the quality of your life.

Commonly Overlooked Stressors

When it comes to stress, sometimes the cause isn't so easy to identify. Perhaps you're happy with your job, your finances are just fine and your relationships with family and friends are healthy ones.

When stress isn't easy to identify, we feel absolutely hopeless. After all, if we can't put our finger on the cause of our stress, we won't be able to properly manage it. If this sounds like you, here are a few overlooked sources of stress that could be the

The Pace

Sometimes just being in a constant rush lends to increased stress levels. We're trying to manage and juggle so many things in our lives that adding fuel to the fire by working under a deadline or at a steady pace tends to add layers of stress onto our already hectic lives.

Slow things down whenever possible. Make sure to take frequent breaks at work and if you work in an office setting, make sure that you stretch your body every couple of hours.

Not only will it help you relax and prevent tension from settling into your muscles, but also, it will help you stay focused which means better job performance.

The Commute

Your day begins with the blaring of an alarm clock, followed by a quick shower in the vain hope of shaking off the sleepiness.

Perhaps you grab a quick cup of coffee before heading out to the car. Within minutes you're racing down the highway, radio on to drown out the noise of the engines around you.

Then you are finally at work having suffered through another day of road rage, after someone nearly cut you off.

Not a great way to start your day!

The commute itself can be incredibly stressful. What should be a simple trip to and from work ends up being an exhausting task, adding intense stress to your daily life.

The solution? Give yourself a head start so that you can take your time getting to work and leave the hustle and bustle behind.

The Job

Office politics can be absolutely exhausting. Not only do you have to deal with the ongoing gossip but you find yourself needlessly suffering through endless company events and functions, surrounding by people you just want to be around.

Your overbearing boss adds a whole other layer of stress to your life and you find yourself desperate to escape the rat race.

Whether your job is in a cubicle, in a warehouse, a factory or it's scaling the high wire in an attempt to replace power lines, every job setting carries with it, it's fair share of stress.

The Overload

Add it all up, and you wind up with an overload of stress to work through. So, what can you do when you simply can't avoid stress-filled situations?

You build a **barrier that protects you** from stress-overload.

I'll show you how to create your very own customized system that reduces stress levels quickly, but before we explore your options it's important that you evaluate another stressor that just may be encouraging anxiety to enter into your life – YOU.

How You May Be Your Own Worst Enemy

Apart from the most common ways in which stress invades your life, there are other causes that may be well within your control.

In fact, **YOU** just may be the very cause of your own stress levels!

Here are a few ways that you may be welcoming stress into your life:

Negative Outlook & Mindset

If you find yourself thinking and feeling negatively about situations, experiences and people in your life, chances are you may be welcoming additional stress into your life.

While it's not always easy to think positively or to foster a happier attitude, you need to learn to let go of as much negativity and negative 'influences' as possible.

Sometimes that simply means changing your attitude one day at a time until you learn to rethink in a more positive and enlightening way.

Other times it requires a *complete overhaul* of your attitude and in the way that you think, feel and respond to others. If this sounds like you, take it one day at a time and force yourself to pause before reacting to situations.

Just a few minutes of pause before reacting can help you better absorb, understand and essentially manage emotions in a more positive manner.

Over Analytical & Critical Thinking

Do you always feel as though you can do better? Do more? Do you find yourself re-thinking situations, experiences or tasks in your head looking for flaws and mistakes in what you've done? If so, you just may have the "perfectionists obsession" mindset where you are always on the lookout for ways of improving yourself and others.

While analytical thinking can be a powerful skill, when you constantly obsess about everything around you, you are directly inviting stress into your life. You can't move on, and you can't focus on the present because your mind is too wrapped up in analyzing past situations.

If this sounds like you, your first step is to block these harmful behaviors from your day-to-day life.

You do this by **identifying**, **understanding** and **redirecting**.

Identifying:

Make note of every time you feel that negativity, perfectionist obsession or over-analytical or critical thinking has been the cause of stress. Keep in mind that stress symptoms include mental, social and physical manifestations. Do you feel over-tired despite getting lots of rest? Are you irritable or angry for no reason? Do you suffer from a lack of appetite, mood swings or depression? These are all symptoms of stress.

Understanding:

Consider the reasons why you felt the way you did about various situations

and how you can adopt a more positive outlook in life.

Redirecting:

Pay attention to the way you feel and react to situations and use the “10 second response delay” that gives you adequate time to absorb a situation or feeling rather than respond by natural trigger.

Part of redirecting stress away from your life relies in your ability to create emotional and mental barriers so that when you feel stress-related behaviors creeping into your life (such as anger, depression, and negativity), you instantly recognize it as a stressor and can give yourself a chance to channel it in a more positive way.

Since we can't eliminate stress from our lives entirely, learning how to manage and absorb it rather than allowing it to take control of our lives, is the easiest way to a happier and healthier life.

Before you can begin to manage your stress you need to identify the type of stress you believe you are experiencing.

- Do you consider your stress *temporary*? (You have a busy schedule, work hours are longer than usual, an upcoming event or function, etc.)
- Do you consider your stress an integral part of your work or lifestyle?
- Do you feel in control of stress sources, or do you blame outside sources such as co-workers, family, and friends or outside events and situations?

We discussed the importance of identifying your main sources of stress in an earlier chapter, however it's also important to understand whether stress is an ongoing problem in your life, a short-term problem or if you experience stress only occasionally.

Doing this will help you better understand the right approach to take when managing common stressors and channeling stress from your life.

For example, if you suffer regularly from high stress levels you might want to consider a long-term remedy such as professional counseling (an outlet in which you can openly discuss your feelings), regular exercise or daily meditation.

If you suffer from stress from time to time, you might find that deep breathing techniques are sufficient in diminishing stress levels.

The Difference Between Stress & Anxiety

Many people make the mistake of assuming that stress and anxiety are of the same, when in reality – while closely related – stress and anxiety are actually very different.

Stress is part of everyday life and when we learn how to filter it, manage it and minimize it, it ends up being a powerful ally.

For example, stress can alert us to potential dangers, sound off our internal alarm that something isn't right and help us avoid problems. In fact, many people thrive while under pressure (or stress) both personally and professionally, if they manage stress levels correctly.

Stress is adaptive and it helps us in many facets of life, such as with decision-making, and teaches us powerful coping mechanisms.

Anxiety however, is a whole other story, despite the similarities in how they affect us physically, mentally and emotionally.

Anxiety is more akin to fear, panic and paranoia where your brain is unable to cope with a situation or event in a way as to “filter it” and in turn, you may end up with an ongoing anxiety disorder. Anxiety can interfere with your ability to function, and can even exist without reason or cause.

With anxiety, you will still suffer from stress even when there is no real reason to feel that way, and in some cases, anxiety is classified as lingering chronic stress that continues to lie just below the surface. In other words, it stays with you even when there is no longer an imminent stressful situation in your life.

It's important to understand the differences between stress and anxiety because of the severity in which anxiety can affect your entire system, from mental illness to shutting down system processes.

If you aren't sure whether what you are feeling is stress or anxiety, or if you believe that you may be suffering from an anxiety disorder, please consult your family doctor to explore available options in controlling and minimizing anxiety.

The Effects of Chronic Stress

Your body is unable to make a distinction between physical and psychological threats. Whenever we are stressed out over a long workday, a busy schedule or conflicts within our family circle, our body reacts to the higher levels of stress that we are feeling in the very same way that we would if put into a life-or-death situation.

It's called the *"fight or flight response"* and it's a stress-based reaction that remains a core component in our ability and desire to survive. This fundamental physiologic response saves lives, it sets off warning bells in our head that something isn't right, it protects us against potential problems, and in the animal world it signals that danger is near.

Unfortunately, this strong reaction also affects our physical state and so in the case where stress is ongoing, it can take a tremendous toll on our body.

In fact, long-term exposure to stress can create such severe damage to our systems that it's sometimes irrevocable. This is why it's so important that we learn how to properly manage stress levels so that it never gets out of control.

Internally, we all response to stress in a similar way – our heartbeat quickens, our blood pressure rises and our muscles immediately constrict.

From a physical perspective however, chronic stress can affect us in many different ways with the most concerning being in how it can intensify existing problems, illnesses or disease.

So what can you do if you are facing chronic stress?

Explore the many different ways that your senses can help to rapidly reduce stress levels!

Sights:

Many of us consider ourselves ‘visual creatures’ and if this sounds like you, you’ll want to explore the different ways that visualization can help reduce stress levels. Look at some of your favorite paintings, art, photos or mementos from past travels. Find your comfort in visual-based activities.

Sounds:

If you are sensitive to sounds you will want to consider the many ways that sound has an impact on your emotional and mental state. Listen to music, sing, hum, or tune into some of your favorite sounds such as thunder, rain, waves, wind or birds.

Smells:

If you find yourself washed away with memories that are triggered by smells you can exploit your sensitivity to scent in order to combat chronic anxiety and stress. Consider energizing scents that will help fight off fatigue or drown out stress levels in a soothing calm of lavender, rose or vanilla. Lose yourself in a bouquet of your favorite flowers or spritz your office in a splash of your favorite perfume.

Taste:

One of the easiest ways to relax and unwind comes in the form of taste.

Indulge in your favorite foods, savor the tastes of new recipes or sip a calming cup of herbal tea.

Chronic stress doesn't have to take control of your life. By using the power of sensory triggers you can quickly reduce high stress levels.

Managing Common Stressors

It's not always easy to discern why you experience stress in certain situations or why at times it feels as though you feel higher levels of stress than others. Once you have identified the main sources of stress in your life however, you'll be able to apply powerful coping strategies to every situation and turn it into a positive.

Here are a few ways to effectively manage your stress:

The Power of Visualization

Visualization allows you to quickly clear your mind of all negative thoughts and feelings associated to high stress levels. Visualization reduces tension, minimizes anxious-thinking and calms your thought process so that your mind and body feel lighter.

Here's how to get started:

- Close your eyes and focus your attention on your breathing. Place one hand on your chest with the other hand on your lower stomach.
- Feel your breathing, as your chest rises and contracts.
- Take a deep breath in through your nose, and allow it to escape through your lips slowly – **deliberately** – maintaining a steady rhythm.

When you feel calm, slow your breath down so that every breath is longer and deeper.

- Free your mind of everything but one, consistent pattern, picture or image (such as a visualization of a peaceful place in your life – a beach with the ocean waves crashing against the shore – a serene abandoned park, a long dirt road in the countryside – etc.).
- You need to find your ‘image of peace’ and cling to it. Your brain will focus on recalling this place allowing you to free your mind of everything else.
- Continue focusing on your breathing, listening to the air entering and leaving your lungs. Do not pause between inhaling and exhaling. Make sure you transition very smoothly between each inhale and exhale.
- As you breathe, notice the sensation of the air entering and escaping. You should feel a slightly cool sensation as you breathe in, and a gentle warmth as you exhale.

As you practice this type of breathing, you will have more oxygen, and your circulation will improve.

Best of all, not only will deep breathing and visualization help you better manage your stress levels but it can actually help improve circulation and

respiratory processes as well!

Tips for deep breathing:

- Always inhale through your nose.
- Exhale through the nose, or the mouth if it makes you more comfortable.
- Pay attention to the coolness of the air as you inhale.
- Notice the warmth of your breath as you exhale.
- Try to make each inhale and each exhale last for 8 seconds.
- Don't strain your breath; let it flow naturally and comfortably.
- Practice for 10-15 minutes each and every day.
- Visualizations should be tailored to you specifically. Many people prefer to visualize a peaceful place in nature such as a beach, forest, stream, or waterfall.

I've used deep breathing and visualization regularly throughout the years as a way of coping with high stress levels caused by my position in a fast-growing Corporation.

I knew that it wasn't realistic to assume that I could eliminate stress entirely – after all, it's simple a part of life but I knew the power in freeing my mind, controlling my thought processes (especially after a long day in the office where my thoughts weren't always my own), and in using meditation to lower stress levels at the end of each day.

I looked at it as “*system resetting*”, where my mind and body accepted stress throughout the day and when it was over, I would visually channel it from my mind and body – free my system of the anxiety-based toxins – and ‘reset’ for the next workday.

The Power of Music

It’s important to find a way to channel stress and free it from your body, and for many people, music is a great way to unwind and relax. According to a recent study at the University of Buffalo, patients undergoing major surgery showed reduced stress levels when listening to music prior to surgery.

These same patients also exhibited lowered blood pressure. Music has also been linked to self-healing and to combating insomnia, even in chronic cases.

It’s no surprise – when you listen to music you free your mind of all other distractions. You focus instead on the lyric, the melody, the tempo – forgetting everything else. Music also invokes a sense of well being, security, protection and even creativity by lifting our mood, and increasing serotonin which takes us into a meditative state.

Choose a light ballad, perhaps a classical piece or a soothing melody from your past. You want the music to uplift your spirits, bring you peace and help you slow down and unwind.

You may prefer to listen to sounds of nature like the crashing of waves,

birds in a forest setting or a rainy day. If so, consider purchasing a CD (usually available in the meditation section of your music store) or download audio files online.

You could also purchase a nature sounds device designed to offer a variety of sound bites.

Binaural Beats

Binaural beats use a technique known as *brainwave entrainment* to trick the brain into entering a specific state.

You must wear headphones while listening to binaural beats in order to achieve the full effect, because the system works by playing one tone in one ear, and a slightly different tone in the other ear. The brain then entrains itself to the tone in between the two.

What this does is it helps the brain achieve a specific state. For example, beats between four and seven Hz are theta waves, which are associated with sleep, dreaming, and deep meditation. Those below four Hz are associated with deep sleep, so they wouldn't be good for meditation. You might just fall asleep!

Binaural beats are great for helping you achieve a meditative state faster than you might on your own.

It's important to be realistic with your expectations and to customize a stress-combat plan that works for your lifestyle.

If you have a hectic lifestyle, look for ways to slow it down. If you carry a great deal of responsibility in your job, look for ways to delegate tasks. It's important to always be on the lookout for ways of reducing your stress levels. You might be surprised at how easy that is!

Positive Thinking

When you're weighed down by day-to-day stress, or you are currently suffering from long-term stress associated with trauma or anxiety, it's not the easiest thing to think positively – and for someone to tell you to simply change your mindset to change your life, well, it can be quite frustrating.

As someone who has suffered from stress for many years, I understand how you feel. Stress can overwhelm us to the point where it feels like we really can't focus on anything else. It consumes all emotions and blocks out all light.

But as someone who has overcome stress and learned to create a powerful barrier so that I am able to manage stress effectively before it takes control of my life, I am here to tell you that there truly is power in positive thinking.

You need to crawl out from under the grey clouds above, and force yourself to find the light – the good – the positive in anything you can. If you are plagued by bouts of stress then try to see beyond it to a better, happier future.

Analyze your life and every measure of happiness that you can pull from it.

- How can you brighten your day?
- How can you cheer yourself on as you battle stress from your life?

Talk to a friend, share your thoughts and feelings with those you trust or consider seeing a professional therapist who can help you understand why you are experiencing stress or anxiety and what you can do to combat it.

Positive thinking is a powerful thing when you learn to use it your advantage. It can lift the heavy curtain of stress and reveal a happier side of life.

That quick glimpse of a happier you is often all that you need in order to push yourself beyond the cloak of stress that has wrapped itself around you.

Keep a Stress Log

A stress log (or journal) that outlines how and when we feel higher levels of stress can be an excellent tool in properly identifying triggers and key stressors that may otherwise be overlooked.

A stress journal can also highlight patterns where stress is more prevalent, helping us to better understand what else may be causing stress or anxiety.

Regular Exercise

Regular exercise has been proven to reduce stress levels while helping to decompress your mind and body. Not only will you experience a sense of

well being knowing that you are taking care of your body but you will improve cardiovascular, build muscle while reducing fat and improve your breathing.

Tip: Make time for at least thirty minutes of exercise at least three times a week.

Massage Therapy

Enjoy a massage session and experience the deep relaxation that comes from easing muscle pain, increasing flexibility and softening tissue.

Massages can also help to reduce blood pressure, improve blood circulation, eliminate migraines and headaches and because massage can release endorphins, you will be quickly be filled with an increased sense of well-being.

Massage therapy can also boost your immune system by increasing the level of oxygen in your body while boosting nutrient production. It's an important tool in natural-healing helping to increase oxygen flow, relieving tension and clearing the mind.

Reduce Caffeine Intake

Caffeine provides a temporary high before crashing out, leaving you feeling moody and lacking the energy you need to make it through the day.

Consider reducing your caffeine intake to just one cup a day. In addition, consider switching to a natural sugar, while also reducing the amount of sugary snacks, and soft drinks that you consume each day.

Eat Healthy

Maintaining a healthy weight will not only ensure that you feel at your best, but it will minimize your chances of being plagued by diabetes and cancers.

Eating healthy will ensure that your body receives important nutrients and is well nourished which will better prepare you for dealing with day-to-day stress.

Start your day off with a healthy breakfast, making sure not to skip meals and to eat a snack every 2-3 hours.

Stay hydrated!

Make sure you also consume enough water each day in order to keep your body hydrated. Your body can't function without proper hydration and you'll feel it in many different ways from lack of mental clarity, nausea, fatigue, and insomnia and of course, increased stress levels so drink up!

Aromatherapy

Scents can trigger a natural response to relax and so it's no surprise that aromatherapy is a fantastic way to de-stress.

Discover the many different essential oils and plant essences like lavender and vanilla, and see how they play a part in helping you unwind and relax.

The essential oils used in aromatherapy can be either inhaled directly or added into a hot bath or shower.

You can also massage them into your skin or use them as an air freshener in your home or office.

Popular Oils For De-Stressing:

<u>Basil</u> Also used to combat insomnia.	<u>Chamomile Roman</u> Reduces strain and tension.
<u>Cinnamon</u> Aromatic oil used for meditation.	<u>Cardamon</u> Effective at combating mental stress.
<u>Frankincense</u> Useful for minimizing stress, anxiety, confusion and negativity.	<u>Lavender</u> Very popular with massage therapy, meditation and mental agitation.
<u>Sandalwood</u> Effective at eliminating mental tension and ongoing anxiety.	<u>Ginger</u> Popular for use with aromatic therapy, fatigue and insomnia.
<u>Vetiver</u> Helps counteract mental exhaustion, burnout, chronic stress and tension.	<u>Rose</u> Provides temporary relief of stress, and stress-related ailments.

Self Hypnosis

An incredibly effective method of eliminating stress comes in the form of self-hypnosis. This is where the power of positive autosuggestion is most effective and can help you learn to cope with regular stress and anxiety.

Contrary to hypnosis, self-hypnosis is something that you can do in the privacy of your home, all on your own, without mediation or help from a third party.

Self-hypnosis will help to reduce stress levels very quickly by minimizing a rise in hormone levels often associated to anxiety. It carries you into a deeper state of relaxation, working at a level of subconscious, freeing your mind and body by suspending all critical and rational thinking.

Instead, you open your mind to positive affirmations, which will filter out anxiety and stress, leaving you stronger and happier.

Steps:

- 1: Prepare a quiet place – free of noise and distractions.
- 2: Dress comfortably – loose clothing free of restraint.
- 3: Relax – begin the session by breathing deeply through your nose, exhaling through your mouth.
- 4: Free Your Mind – Imagine all tension and anxiety slipping from your mind and body. This is called progressive muscle relaxation where you are forcing your muscles to relax through deep breathing.
- 5: Affirmations – Once you are in a state of relaxation, start blending repetitive affirmations into your breathing techniques. Breathe in and out before speaking out, and repeat.

Avoid – Alter - Adapt

Managing stress is actually very easy once you've begun to understand just how much power you have over the way your mind and body react to stress levels.

For many people, it's empowering to finally understand that you can remain in full control over the way that stress affects you, and that you can actually use normal stress levels as a powerful tool in improving your life.

The secret to successful stress management relies on 3 powerful components that include:

- Avoid
- Alter
- Adapt

Avoid – reducing the level of stress in your life.

The lower your stress levels, the better so begin by removing stressors from your life and avoiding unnecessary stress.

Don't over-extend yourself – Learn your own personal limits and avoid unnecessary responsibilities. Pace yourself and learn to say “no” to people when you need to.

Avoid people and places that trigger or cause stress – If a certain friend always leaves you feeling down, depressed and stressed out, avoid

them. If you feel anxious whenever you drive on a certain highway, seek out an alternative route. Whenever possible, minimize your exposure to stressful situations.

Take control of your situation – Cut out as many stressors as you are able to within your control. If reading the news causes you to get stressed out or brings you down, don't read it. If your work schedule is draining you of all joy, change it up.

Avoid hot conversations, trigger topics and dramatic emotional reactions – We all have hot buttons that when pushed, cause us to go over the edge. The same goes for certain topics such as religion, beliefs, or politics. You know yourself better than anyone so evaluate the things that make you crazy and avoid them.

Alter – Changing the situations that create stress

Altering your environment and taking control of your life is an important part of stress management because while we can't always avoid stress we can certainly avoid over-reacting to it.

Give yourself permission to be emotional – Whether you are normally someone who is free with their emotions or you bottle it up, it's time to learn to express yourself. Harboring ill feelings or bottling up emotions is a surefire way of building up anger, bitterness and resentment that will also build up stress levels.

Be assertive – Don't be afraid to speak up, to stand up for yourself, to

ask for what you want and to deal with problems and situations head on.

Learn to compromise – If you want others to change their behavior, be willing and open to change your own behavior. Consider the ways that you bring stress into other people's lives and take steps towards change. When it comes to the way you deal with family, friends, or co-workers, always look for ways of finding common ground or meeting halfway.

Adapt – If you can't change the problem, change yourself

Sometimes it's simply not possible to remove the stressor from your life or to even change it. In that case, you will need to learn how to adapt by changing yourself and the way you react to the problem.

Think positively – Learn to turn a negative into a positive. Become an optimistic and learn to see the brighter side of things.

Look to the future – Learn how to look at the big picture, beyond the current stressful situation so that you are able to get through even the most stressful situations.

When you can disassociate from a stressful environment by looking past it, you'll find it easier to minimize stress-based reactions.

Turn Stress Into Success

While chronic stress can be incredibly harmful, well-managed stress can actually be a powerful tool if used correctly.

Adjust Your Perspective

Seek out opportunity instead of obstacles. Those who suffer from the highest levels of stress are those that see the negative in everything (and we all know such a person, or two). Switch your mindset so that you let far more ‘roll of your back’, and focus only on the things that matter.

Use De-stressing as Success Enhancers

Whenever you meditate or use breathing techniques to manage stress, consider the other advantages to implementing a relaxation system into your life. Not only will it help to rid you of tension and stress but it will also improve your overall well-being, and confidence. You will perform better on the job, become more creative and give your mind the time to decompress, opening up the opportunity to explore new ideas.

Focus On The Bigger Picture

Pay attention to minor stressors that can pile up and eliminate all unnecessary tension from your daily life before it becomes ‘too big’. Doing this will help you professionally as well, as you’ll perform a regular check on your goals, objectives and key areas of your personal and professional life that may need more attention.

Explore Your Competitive Nature

Stress is an inevitable part of our daily lives and in our careers, so the more that we focus on building powerful coping skills and equipping ourselves with the tools we need to effectively manage stress, the better off we'll be, especially if the competition isn't handling stress as well.

If you can learn to perform well under pressure, you can utilize normal stress levels to increase your performance and remain competitive, and in the end, manageable stress levels can give you the career advantage.

Final Words

From overflowing “to do” lists, to our unyielding hunger to climb the corporate ladder to success, we’ve packed our lives full of stressors. In fact, stress is the defining characteristic of most of our lives.

Thankfully there are many different ways to combat stress and reduce stress-levels in your life and it’s important that you explore a variety of techniques so that you are able to create a personalized approach to tackling stress and dealing with it effectively.

Here are a few last minute tips to effectively managing stress levels and to seek out the calm in the everyday chaos:

TIPS TO MANAGING STRESS:

Remove yourself from stressful situations:

Whenever possible, remove yourself from situations that cause you to feel increased stress levels. If you are unable to remove yourself entirely, give yourself a break from the situation in order to calm down.

Learn to Prioritize Stress:

We can often control the way we feel about situations and events in our lives and by learning to let go and not to stress over smaller

problems or unimportant tasks, we can free ourselves from high stress levels.

Stay in control of emotional responses:

While it's not always easy to control your emotions or responses, learn to calm down and analyze a situation carefully before reacting. Not only will this minimize stress levels but it will help you gain better insight on situations, experiences and events in your life. Look for alternative viewpoints and seek an outside perspective whenever possible.

Distract Yourself from Stress:

Keep your mind busy whenever you feel stress is taking control of a situation. Call a friend or family member, take up a hobby or play a game. Use enjoyable distractions to free your mind of stressful situations until you feel more in control and able to manage stress levels.

Work Off Stress:

Whenever you feel stressed, work out! Exercise your mind and body while clearing your environment of toxic stress levels. Not only will doing this help you to remain in control but it will improve your quality of life!

Get Enough Sleep:

Lack of sleep is a common cause of stress and when you're overtired, it's also harder to effectively deal with stress. Make sure

that you are well rested and that you're getting adequate sleep.

Avoid Self-Medicating:

Alcohol and drugs may provide temporary relief but they only mask the problem. Explore safe, natural and healthy alternatives to managing stress – I've given you many different ways to get started!

Be Realistic

It's important that you set realistic goals for yourself both in your personal and business life. Implore time management systems in order to monitor your workload and break up larger projects or tasks so that you aren't overwhelmed. Give yourself adequate time and plenty of breaks so that your mind and body are performing at their optimum potential!

Use stress to your advantage:

When managed properly, normal levels of stress can actually be beneficial. Stress can keep you on your toes, help you make difficult decisions and it can help to alert you to potential problems or dangers in your life. Learn how to use stress in a productive and healthy way.

To a stress-free future!

Your Name