



Manage Stress

And be happy and effective
at work and in your private life

Dear all,

I would like to thank you once again for your participation in the Stress Management course. You were a wonderful group and I hope you enjoyed the course as much as I did! Together, we explored different stress management techniques, had many fruitful discussions and much fun.

You have got tools to assess, where your stress comes from, how it affects you and what you can do about it. The next steps are to compose your own toolbox that you can integrate into various aspects of your life and to create a stress resistant lifestyle.

Every day allow yourself at least some time to devote to your stress management program. It may only be a few minutes, but those minutes add up and can result in impressive stress management skills. It's a skillset for greater health, wellness and happiness.

Best wishes,
Olga



What is Stress?

The most commonly accepted definition of stress (by Richard Lazarus) is that stress is a condition or feeling experienced when a person perceives that "demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize." In other words, stress is the gap between demand and capacity. We experience stress when we feel "out of control."

The term stress as it is currently used was coined by Dr. Selye. He defined stress as "the nonspecific response of the body to any demand for change". It means, it affects all or most parts of a system and can be produced by many or all agents.

He also created a neologism and introduced the word *stressor* for the causative agent, retaining *stress* for the resulting condition.



Types of stress

A

Good or bad

eustress (good stress e.g. marriage, promotion) and distress (bad stress e.g. divorce, punishment, injury)

Stress is not good or bad, but there are differences in how stress affects you based on its type, intensity and how long it continues:

B

Duration

temporary or acute stress resolves within a short period of time. Stress becomes chronic or long-term, when we don't believe we can cope or the problem continues unresolved for too long

C

Intensity

major stress (divorce or serious illness), moderate stress (losing wallet or repairing the car) and minor stress (noisy traffic or long lines)

D

Stress in the workplace

- Time stress is worry about time or its lack
- Anticipatory stress is related to future e.g. an upcoming presentation
- Situational stress involves a scary situation e.g. conflict or a loss of status
- Encounter stress revolves around people you may not like or if you have many personal interactions

Stress mastery formula

Firstly, you need to **assess** your stress – to find out what it is and where it's coming from. Secondly, to **appreciate** it that you're aware enough to notice it and to take care about it. Finally, you can start to think about **adjustments** either to reduce demand, increase your capacity or both.

Energy Audit is a good way to analyze capacities and get clarity in which area the gap might exist. There are following life categories: time, energy, money, health, physical exercise, social support, fun, creativity, nutrition, meaning and purpose. Notice how energized you feel in each area on a scale of 0 to 10, with zero being totally empty and 10 being totally fuelled.

Energy Audit

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Time	5	5	3-4	5	5	8-9		
energy	8	10	9	8	8	8		
money	8	9	4	10	10	4		
health	7	7	9	8	9	9		
Ph. Exercise	8	9	7	5	5	7		
Soc. Sup.	7	10	9	9	10	6		
Fun	5	10	10	5	4	7		
Creativity	8	7	5	7	4	6		
Nutrition	8	7	2	7-8	7	3		
Meaning & Purpose	8	7	3	10	7	5		

Symptoms of Stress

Physical signs:

- Headache, chest pain and back pain
- Muscle tension and aches
- Tiredness, fatigue
- Heart palpitations and racing pulse
- Rapid, shallow breathing
- Tics, twitches
- Heartburn, indigestion, diarrhea, constipation
- Dry mouth and throat
- Excessive sweating

Emotional signs:

- Irritability, impatience, anger
- Worry, anxiety, panic,
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Moodiness
- Intrusive and/or racing thoughts
- Lowered productivity
- Social withdrawal or isolation
- Memory lapses
- Difficulties in concentrating

How We Respond to Stress

"Fight or flight" response by Walter Cannon defines that when an organism experiences a shock or perceives a threat, it quickly releases hormones that help it to survive - either to "fly" from the threat, or to "fight" it. These hormones increase heart rate, blood pressure and sweating. They focus our attention on the threat only.

We can experience this response in everyday situations e.g. working to short deadline, speaking in public or having conflicts. In this state, we are excitable, anxious and irritable.

General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) by Hans Selye describes three phases of a long-term exposure to stress:

1. The alarm phase, where we react to the stressor
2. The resistance phase, where we adapt to and cope with the stressor
3. The exhaustion phase, where we're "worn down" and cannot function normally

Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Model of Stress and Coping consists of three steps:

Step 1. Primary Appraisal: how will this event affect my well-being?

Step 2. Secondary Appraisal: Do I have the ability to cope with the event?

Step 3. Use Coping Strategies



Stress Diary

Date and Time	The Stressful Event Experienced	Fundamental Cause of the Event	How Happy Do You Feel? (Scale 0–10)	How Stressed Do You Feel? (Scale 0–10)	Physical Symptoms During Stressful	Your Mood	How Effectively Are You Working? (0–10)	How Well Did You Handle the Event?
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Stress Diary or a Journal can help to notice causes of stress in your life, your reaction to stress and levels of pressure at which you work best. Make regular entries in your diary throughout the day or after any stressful incident.

Once you've kept a Stress Diary for several days, you can analyze it and take action:

- Highlight the most frequent stresses and the ones that were the most unpleasant
- Look at the underlying causes and how well you handled the stressful events
- Check how you felt and explore how it affected your happiness and effectiveness

Acceptance-oriented approaches in managing your stress can help you reduce muscle tension and manage acute stress, as well as build resilience against stress:

1. Physical relaxation techniques:

- **Deep Breathing** involves breathing so that your lower belly expands. Begin slowly inhaling through your nose, first filling the lower part, then the middle and then the upper part of your chest. Exhale slowly through your parted lips, emptying lungs from top to bottom. Pause slightly and take in another breath repeating this cycle. Continue breathing this way for several minutes.
- **Centering** uses your mind to redirect the negative energy caused by stress to the center of your body, giving you a sense of inner calm. Focus on your breathing. Find your center of gravity, which is usually just below your waist, and focus your mind on it. Visualize all your negative energy collecting in your center, and then moving up towards your eyes flying away from you, leaving yourself feeling calm and quiet.
- **Progressive muscular relaxation** is useful for relaxing your body when your muscles are tense. The idea behind PMR is that you flex a group of muscles, so that they're tightly contracted. Hold them in a state of extreme tension for a few seconds, and then relax the muscles normally.
- **Body scan** is a good way to discover bodily tension during 1-minute scanning exercise from head to toes. If you feel any tension, just mentally let it go. Relax every part of your body and say to yourself: "My body is relaxed".
- **Warm towel on the face**

Acceptance-oriented approaches in managing your stress can help you reduce muscle tension and manage acute stress, as well as build resilience against stress:

- 2. Building supportive network in the workplace.** You need to build up a network of your allies - people who offer one another assistance, advice, information, friendship and support in difficult times. Strong and mutually beneficial alliances can help each party to get things done more quickly and smoothly than doing them alone. Your allies can be teammates, manager, senior management members, support staff etc.
- 3. Getting enough exercise and sleep.** It is important to find an exercise activity you enjoy: dancing, yoga or Pilates, jogging, walking, team sports or martial arts (boxing, karate). Exercising just 30 minutes every other day can relieve stress, make you happier and more productive, and boost your energy level. Good quality sleep, an uninterrupted stretch of 7-8 hours, is crucial for our health.



Acceptance-oriented approaches in managing your stress can help you reduce muscle tension and manage acute stress, as well as build resilience against stress:

4. Mindfulness. It involves being fully aware of your thoughts, emotions and actions. It means being present in every moment and paying close attention to what is going on right now without evaluating, explaining or interpreting. The term is often used interchangeably with "meditation". Mindfulness can increase your focus and resilience, strengthen relationships and improve mental health.





Action-Oriented Approaches used to take action to change the stressful situations:

1. Time management:

- **Goal Setting.** First, determine YOUR lifetime goals. Then break them down into the smaller targets creating a five-year plan, one-year plan, six-month plan, and a one-month plan. Review your plans and make sure that they fit the way in which you want to live your life. Make your goals SMART.
- **Prioritization.** For prioritizing the tasks many people use a coding system: letters or numbers. The Action Priority Matrix can help you to choose the activities you should prioritize and avoid: Quick Wins, Major Projects, Fill Ins and Thankless Tasks. Eisenhower's Urgent/Important Principle helps determine important (lead to achieving our goals) or urgent (lead to achieving someone else's goals) activities.
- **Managing interruptions.** You need to deal with the valid interruptions and find a way to block invalid interruptions. You can hold routine meetings; let people know when you are available; ask people to keep a list of things that they need to discuss.
- **Avoiding procrastination.** It occurs when you put off important tasks and choose to do something else instead. To combat procrastination you can e.g. reward yourself or scare yourself of the horrible consequences of not doing those boring tasks.
- **Effective scheduling.** Review your To-Do List and schedule in high-priority and urgent activities; know when you are most productive; schedule some extra time to cope with contingencies and emergencies; be generous to yourself.
- **Avoid multitasking.** You multitask when you write emails while talking on the phone. You can stop multitasking if set time for each task; practice mindfulness and take breaks when you find yourself multitasking.
- **Managing emails effectively:** check emails only at set points during the day; try the "Two-Minute Rule"; use labeling and notifications "FYI" and "FYC".



Action-Oriented Approaches used to take action to change the stressful situations:

- 2. Managing your boundaries.** Our personal boundaries set the limits that separate us from other people and help to keep relationships mutually respectful. People who set strong personal boundaries are generally happier. You need to monitor and maintain your boundaries - what you will and will not accept. But be realistic and adaptable when necessary. Remember not to isolate yourself or to simply stop collaborating.
- 3. How to be assertive.** This means being firm about your own rights, needs and boundaries, while considering those of others. You get your point across firmly and fairly and treat people with respect. Value yourself, voice your needs confidently, express yourself in a positive way, be open to criticism and compliments.
- 4. Saying "Yes" to the Person, "No" to the Task.** Doing so, make sure that you explain your justification, so that it's clear that you're only saying "no" to this particular task and possibly only on this occasion. If the other person understands why you've said "no", they are less likely to be left with the impression that you're simply being unhelpful. However, you may also have to be firm about how you say "no."

Healthy Nutrition



What you eat and how you eat it can contribute to your ability to cope with stress in your life. Choose the right food to put on your plate to fill your organism with vitamins and nutrients:

- Include some complex carbohydrates: pasta, cereals, potatoes, brown rice
- Reduce intake of simple carbohydrates: sweetened, sugary foods like soda or candy
- Eat adequate amount of proteins: fish, chicken, turkey
- Include vegetables: beans, peppers, tomatoes, carrots, whether cooked or raw
- Keep at least three meals per day without big breaks
- Eat smaller portions and supplement with healthy snacks: nuts, fruits, low-fat yogurt
- Drink a lot of water
- Manage emotional eating, do not feed your stress

Emotion-Oriented Approaches are useful when the stress comes from the way that you perceive a situation.

- 1. Experiencing negative emotions at work** like frustration, irritation, worry, nervousness, anger, dislike, disappointment and unhappiness, mentally stop yourself and look at the situation. Ask yourself why you feel them. Write it down and be specific. Then think of one positive thing about your current situation. Try deep-breathing exercises. Focus on how to improve the situation.
- 2. Conflict** is an inevitable part of work. When you resolve it effectively team members can develop stronger mutual respect and examine their goals and expectations closely. You can use the Interest-Based Relational (IBR) approach by separating people and their emotions from the problem.
- 3. Dealing with difficult people** you can control only one thing when dealing with difficult people - your reaction to them.
- 4. The ABC Technique** can help to develop a more optimistic outlook:
 - A** - activating event or potentially stressful situation
 - B** – beliefs, thoughts or perceptions about A
 - C** – the emotional consequences or stress that results from holding these beliefs
- 5. Negative thinking** very often causes stress and unhappiness. You can be a maladaptive perfectionist – a person who is never satisfied with achievements or have a fear of failure or fear of success, which stop us doing the things that can move us forward to achieve our goals.

Emotion-Oriented Approaches are useful when the stress comes from the way that you perceive a situation.

6. **Thought awareness** (process by which you observe your thoughts) is the first step in managing negative thoughts. The next step is to develop rational thinking - challenge the negative thoughts. Ask yourself whether the thought is reasonable? If there is a reason, the negative thinking has given you an early warning of required action.
7. **Affirmations** can help you overcome negative thoughts and build self-confidence. Your affirmations will be strongest if they are specific, expressed in the present tense and have strong emotional content. When you repeat them often, and believe in them, you can start to make positive changes in thinking.
8. **Visualization** technique helps to create a strong mental image of a future event. With good use of visualization, you can practice and prepare in advance for the event. By visualizing success, you can build the self-confidence you need to perform well.
9. **Guided imagery** is a stress management technique, where you use your imagination to picture a person, place, or time that makes you feel relaxed, peaceful and happy. Imagery relies on the use of all your senses what creates such a powerfully relaxing experience. The scene that you imagine is highly personal.



The PERMA Model by Martin Seligman, helps us think about what we need to do to flourish. "PERMA" stands for the five essential elements to experience lasting well-being:

1. **Positive Emotion (P).** We need to make sure that we often experience positive emotions as peace, gratitude, satisfaction, pleasure, inspiration, hope or curiosity.
2. **Engagement (E).** When we're truly engaged in a situation or task, time seems to stop. You can experience deep engagement when participating in sports, spending time with friends, or working on projects that you're fascinated with.
3. **Positive Relationships (R).** As humans, we are "social beings," and good relationships are core to our well-being. People who have meaningful, positive relationships with others are happier.
4. **Meaning (M).** Meaning comes from serving a cause bigger than ourselves e.g. a religion or a cause that helps humanity in some way.
5. **Accomplishment/Achievement (A).** Many of us strive to better ourselves in some e.g. master a skill, achieve a valuable goal, or win in some competitive event.

**Stress less,
live longer!**





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Thank you!