

How to thrive on stress and stay sane in a crazy and changing world

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Stress is a perfectly natural response to life's pressures (or stressors). Some pressures are physical, others are mental. Both can produce similar sensations although long-term the effects of physical and mental pressures may be markedly different.

Physical stress causes the body to adapt and grow stronger. Athletes have bigger hearts, better lungs, better circulatory systems and enjoy a better overall physique. However, even athletes can overdo training and at the extreme, may lose weight, be continuously fatigued and have sleepless nights. (These symptoms may suggest stress, burnout, over training or even depression).

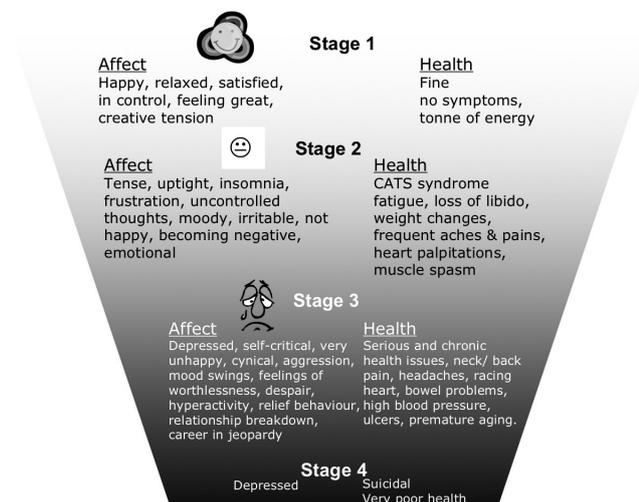
"Diseases of the body are diseases of the mind." Cicero 130 AD

Mental stressors can be either good or bad. Very positive mental stressors can even be exhilarating.

Accomplishing significant amounts of work and feeling the satisfaction that comes with getting things done can be 'good' stress. On the other hand, mental stress can be debilitating and one of the biggest culprits is worry. Worry is 'interest paid on problems before they fall due'. Why worry? Most of the things that you do worry about will not ever happen. It is not logical to spend too much time thinking and feeling bad about things that have not yet happened (and probably won't).

Read the warning signs

Death Spiral: The Stages And Symptoms Of Stress



If a person (a 'close friend' of yours), is suffering from stress, he/she will almost certainly be experiencing a number of the Affect Issues and Health Symptoms.

Getting balance right

The keys to handling life are summed up in three words... Balance, control and perspective.

BALANCE: Aim for balance in all things

A quick checklist...

- Do you have a balance between work and play, physical and mental activity?
- Do you take holidays (holidays are an organised mental breakdown)?
- Do you have a balanced diet?
- Do you balance your financial and emotional bank accounts?

CONTROL: Don't be a victim – take charge.

If you feel you are in control of any situation in life you can handle far more pressure... stresslessly.

Control your thoughts and you will control your world.

PERSPECTIVE: See it from another angle.

How significant are your problems really? If you think you are the only one with problems in the world, take a walk through a hospice or travel to other parts of the world where injustices, atrocities, disease and starvation are daily occurrences... and then ask yourself the question "are my 'problems' such a big deal."

Unless we come apart and rest awhile, we may just come apart.

Appreciate that life is a journey and direction of travel is one-way. And remember there are two rules:

Rule one – don't sweat the small stuff

Rule two – it's all small stuff

Avoid being a square peg in a round hole

One of the major causes of job-related stress is incompatibility between the individual and his/her job and work environment.

How many people do you know who are not satisfied with their jobs yet keep on keeping on because they lack either the motivation or courage to change? If you are not right for your job, it's best to admit it and chance your arm doing something else. If you are an introverted, quiet, analytical perfectionist type, don't go into a sales role where assertiveness, sociability, fast pace and self-management are key.

Equally, if you are a gregarious person in a dry, analytical job, you will probably be frustrated. When you work at a job that suits your skills, values, ambitions and personality, work can be a lot more fun. Don't do stuff you are not suited to. Being a square peg in a round hole is stressful.

Match your career to your personality, skills and attributes.

Attitude is everything...

Your 'necktop computer' is the most important computer in your world. That computer will ultimately determine where you go in life. Studies show that optimists have fewer stress issues.

Attitude starts with self-talk. Are you self-critical and never happy? Or are you satisfied with who you are and what you see when you look in the mirror? Your call. The mental picture you have of your self-image is the most powerful driver and determinant of your destiny.

"Vision without action is merely a dream. Action without vision just passes the time. Vision with action can change the world." Joel Arthur Barker

Become a goal setter

Goals define your direction in life. If your goals are linked with your purpose in life, you will get what you want.

And unless you have a definite purpose in life, you are unlikely to achieve anything of great significance. (That's what makes purpose so important). In achieving your purpose you will need to overcome your natural likes and dislikes and your natural preferences, which means you must be prepared to do things you don't naturally like to do in order to achieve the purpose you want. Successful people are successful because they are prepared to do the things that failures don't like to do.

The things that failures don't like to do are the same things that you and I don't like to do. So why do successful people do things they don't like to do? Because they can link their behaviour (doing what they don't naturally like to do) to the purpose that they wish to accomplish. That's what makes purpose so important. Most people find it's easier to adjust themselves to hardship of a poor living than it is to adjust to the hardships of creating a better one. And unless you deliberately form good habits you'll unconsciously form bad ones.

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How important are you?

If you are hit by a bus tomorrow the world will go on. Sure someone will miss you for awhile but are you so indispensable that you are unable to take your annual leave? Or take on new responsibilities?

In both work and play, you need to put your health needs into the equation. The workaholic is likely to have a heart attack (a heart attack can ruin your whole day) and a miserable existence. Workaholics usually think they're indispensable... which is flawed thinking. Besides, if you're indispensable you'll never be able to be promoted.

Manage your time. If you make it to 80 years you have 29,220 days (counting leap years) to strut your stuff. Around 10,000 of those days are spent in the workforce. You're not given a big allocation of time so why would you want to waste a single day being miserable?

Look after your health. In the end, it is all you have got.

Look after your friends and family – in the end you need at least six

Where did the romance go in your life? When was the last time you expressed love for your partner? And for your children? Are you in the habit of positively affirming the feelings and actions of others around you? Remember, what you give is what you receive.

Most people don't wear out – they rust out

As they say, life is a case of patch and repair after age 45. Take control of your health and avoid rusting out. This is best done by following this prescription.

Keys for thriving on stress... and staying sane in a crazy and changing world

1. Take charge

Emotionally healthy people tend to maintain a high degree of control over their life. Feeling in control helps reduce feelings of stress. Control your destiny – or someone else will.

2. Be positive and optimistic

An article in Success Magazine commented, “Those who feel a sense of purpose and a commitment, who view change as a challenge instead of a threat, aren’t affected by stress in a negative way”. An optimist lives a longer and happier life.

What you get out of life has a very direct relationship with what you put into it.

3. Since you can neither ‘save’ time nor ‘manage’ time, spend your allocation with care.

Take one thing at a time. Refrain from procrastinating. Choose how you spend your time.

4. Get things into perspective ... is life really that bad?

Avoid ‘pity parties’. Take a walk on the beach or through the park. And if you haven’t got time, then what is really important?

5. Laugh ... at yourself

Laughter is the only tranquillizer without a side effect. When was the last time you had a good, belly-wrenching laugh? So you have nothing to laugh about? Try taking a look at your passport photo.

6. Why worry? Worry is interest paid on problems before they fall due.

7. Worry comes from the Anglo-Saxon word meaning to strangle or choke. Worry restricts your ability to think and act effectively. As the old saying goes, “It ain’t no use putting up your umbrella until it rains.”

8. Talk to yourself... positively. Use your necktop computer to best effect.

9. Our self-talk and perceptions of events cause undue stress. We become what we think, and our perception of any event will determine our reaction to it. What we believe is what we become. Life is a self-fulfilling prophecy.

A rut is a grave with the ends knocked out.

10. Build friendships by being positive.

11. Focus on building quality relationships. Give up judging, criticising, holding grudges and unnecessary competition.

12. Give yourself a six-month WOF

13. Most people take better care of their cars than they do of themselves:

- Relax: it beats sitting around doing nothing
 - Exercise
 - Eat smart
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“Remember to adapt and create a code of behaviour to guide your actions toward a healthy lifestyle.”

14. It is good for both body and mind.
15. Turn adversity to advantage
16. Keep life in perspective. Concentrate on the positives. Keep failure and mistakes in perspective. Develop enthusiasm. See something good in every experience you have. Remember, failure is an event not a person.
17. Learn techniques of relaxation[®]
18. Relaxing sure beats sitting around doing nothing. If you cannot find the time to consciously relax (10-15 minutes per day) then you almost certainly need to. Relaxation training can put you back in charge of you emotions, giving you better feelings, less tension, uninterrupted sleep and (even) a better game of golf!

"The people who get on in this world are those who look for the circumstances they want and if they can't find them, they make them." George Bernard Shaw

"We live in a time of paradox, contradiction, and opportunity and above all, change. To the fearful, change is threatening because they worry that things may get worse. To the hopeful, change is encouraging because they feel things may get better. To those who have confidence in themselves, change is a stimulus because they believe one person can make a difference and influence what goes on around them. These people are the doers and the motivators." Buck Rogers – Getting the Best Out of Yourself and Others
