

MANAGING STRESS IN YOUR EVERYDAY LIFE

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MANAGING STRESS IN YOUR EVERYDAY LIFE

With burn-out prevalent today, most people suffer from unmanaged stress.

Statistics reveal that between 75 and 90% of illnesses – resulting in people being away from work sick - can be attributed to stress; this is something that needs to be managed. Absenteeism due to ill health averages between seven to fifteen days per annum. This translates into a substantial amount of money, lost hours, lack of productivity and suffering.

To be able to live successfully, free from stress-related illnesses, one has to acquire and apply the skills to manage and channel stress. Stress management is essential.

We require a certain amount of stress to function well; it is only when we lose the ability to cope with INCREASING stress that we become ill.

What is stress? It is a built in mechanism to warn us of danger – better known as “fight or flight”. If we do not re-act appropriately, although our body has prepared us by pumping the necessary adrenalin into our system, this unused hormone gets stored and is not utilised. It is said that people that

re-act badly to a situation, scream and shout are better off than those that try to stay calm, as the first lot of people use up the adrenalin that has been prepared for the particular situation that the body deems as dangerous. We need to find an outlet for this unexpressed “stress”, to prevent a build up, and causing us to explode at the smallest little thing.

We need to learn how to get balance between our work-life, private-life and social-life; As well as to learn how to recognise the “stressors” and how to manage them; through prioritization and planning as well as learning relaxation techniques. In other words, we need to develop new habits and coping mechanisms.

In this e-book, I will teach you how to recognize if you have reached the point of "Burnout", or heading in that direction. I will give you skills to be able to manage stress in your life, and also give you relaxation techniques, to apply in your everyday life.

There are two phases that precede the actual burnout phase, and recognizing them early enough, can prevent you from actually experiencing the devastating effects of BURNOUT.

UNDERSTANDING BURNOUT

There are three phases to burnout, and three keys to identify the phase that you are in.

PHASE 1: IN-BALANCE BETWEEN EFFORT AND PERFORMANCE.

The key to this phase is AWARENESS.

The first sign that gives you an idea that something is out of balance, is when you notice that it takes you longer to complete a task, than it previously did.



You start getting frustrated, because you are putting in the same amount of effort, but do not seem to be getting the same results. Although you are working harder than before, you are achieving less. An example would be if it previously took you 5 minutes to run one kilometre and it now takes you 10 minutes to run the same distance.

If you become aware that you are not achieving the results that you should be, according to the effort that you are putting in, and it feels as if you are swimming up stream, you know that there is a problem.

Once in this phase, and you recognise that there is a problem; you become **AWARE** that something is out of balance, and you are then able to do

something about it; preventing it from going in to the 2nd phase.

PHASE 2: EXHAUSTION

The key to this phase is DENIAL.

Once you get to the second phase, you become an unpleasant person to be around. You are moody, bad tempered, neurotic (thinking the worst) and have bad sleeping patterns. This puts you into a vicious cycle; you wake up in a bad mood, as you have not slept properly, and then even though you are absolutely exhausted, cannot seem to fall asleep again at night. And even if you do fall asleep, you have a fitful, disturbed night. You usually have bad dreams, and you think that the worst is going to happen. You worry about the smallest, insignificant thing. This is the phase where you are probably thinking that you are going to lose your job, or that people are talking about you behind your back.

Once in this phase, you do not admit that you have a problem and you do not see the need to change. You have a bad attitude and are not open to criticism as you are in **DENIAL**.



PHASE 3: BURNOUT

The key to this phase is DYSFUNCTIONAL.

By the time you get to this phase, it is a serious matter, and you probably need medication and need to seek medical advice.

Your eating habits have changed and are very bad. You eat junk food, chocolates, or whatever you can find that is not too much effort to prepare, and probably eat it in excess. Some people start drinking excessively and others abuse drugs.

You are most likely taking sleeping pills to sleep, and then using “uppers” to help you stay awake during the day. Once at this point, you are most likely in the burnout phase.



When you are in this phase, you are basically **dysfunctional**. You are working hard, but not achieving anything. You are getting no results. You go into the office, with a whole list of things to do, and go home again that evening, with nothing accomplished. You have a small concentration span and your memory is bad; and you are most likely suffering from depression. This is when you need to seek professional help.

You will most likely be booked into a nerve clinic, where you will be given anti-depressants and sleeping pills. You will be given sleep therapy, to enable your body to rest, and will receive psychiatric counselling and therapeutic treatments.



CAUSES OF BURNOUT:

There are many different causes that can result in burnout, but we will look at a few of the most obvious. Each person is different, and will respond differently to certain situations:

Cost of living

With rising costs due to inflation and small increases at work, it is hard to make ends meet. People are stretched and have taken credit out for everything, and now with interest rates escalating it is more difficult to find the money to pay for all the bills. Financial stress is one of the most common in our society today.

Parenting

Teenagers are on their own mission and are disobedient to their parents. With corporal punishment being made illegal, children are taking advantage and pushing their superiors all the way. The School system puts too much pressure

on children which in turn affects working parents.

Single parents are in abundance these days; far more common than ever before. Besides the financial burden on a single parent, the responsibility of decision making and disciplining is extremely stressful and draining.

Job insecurity

Due to Employment Equity and Affirmative Action, retrenchment is a common occurrence to provide space for previously disadvantaged races. This, however, creates un-employment for previously employed people, and those in jobs are never sure when they will be forced to leave their jobs, thereby creating job insecurity.

Convenience living

Due to driving everywhere we do not walk and therefore do not get enough exercise. As we are always rushing around, we never seem to make time to go to the gym either. We use the microwave for cooking, which is not the healthiest option, and eat fast and junk food, due to always being in a rush, and consequently are not eating a healthy, balance diet.



Rat race

People are running around trying to squeeze as much as possible into the

day. Juggling the role of parent; collecting children from school and taking them to extramural activities, while being a homemaker, and having a full time job, is extremely stressful.

Bosses are more demanding, and have higher expectations, as everything is computerised and at our disposal, with easy access to the internet.



Relationships

Marriage has become “just a piece of paper” and people are having affairs more frequently than ever before. People are not making lasting commitments and this creates insecurity.

Unexpressed emotions

People who are unable to express their emotions adequately, or do not like confrontation, are most likely to suffer with this condition. They are scared to make “waves” or “rock the boat”, and therefore become “Yes-men”, instead of standing up for themselves and their beliefs.

Now that you understand what burnout is, you are able to recognise it in your own life, make changes and learn how to cope with excess stress.

STRESS MANAGEMENT SKILLS

I will teach you stress management skills that you can apply to your life, to prevent this from happening to you. As we live in the rat race and our lives are so rushed and pressured, we need to learn coping mechanisms to be able to function effectively each and every day.

The stress starts at school, due to competition and high expectations and just continues to get worse as we get older and as the pace of life gets faster and faster. You will be able to teach these skills to your children, and enable them to learn to cope at an early age.

There are certain things that you need to do to get your lives back in balance again.

DUMPING:

A rested mind is more able to achieve.

There are several different ways of “dumping” all your worries. Here are a few examples:

Keeping a diary:

I find that by writing in my diary for a few moments every day, helps to unload all the anxieties and stresses of the day. I write about what happened through the day, of unexpressed emotions, due to me not asserting myself during a conflicting situation, and about any discontentment that I feel. As I am able to express my emotions freely in my diary, it helps to get anger off my chest, before it becomes un-forgiveness and later resentment.

It may sound odd, but discontentment stress, can be viewed in a positive way, as it is a sign that you have grown out of a comfort zone and are ready to change

and move on. Possibly you do not get on well with your boss, and have tolerated it for some time, but only recently have become discontented and feeling undervalued. Use this time to analyse and recognise that your discontentment is a sign that you are ready for a change. You do not necessarily have to confront your boss, but perhaps it is time to ask for a pay rise, or to start sending your CV out to other companies. The important thing is to address the discontent. That way you can look back and see that is what not just unhappiness, but time to move on and grow.

Journaling:

By writing in my journal on a daily basis, planning what needs to be done the next day, by making a To-do list, keeps it off my mind during the night, preventing me from lying awake worrying about what needs to be done, or that I may possibly forget something. If I do wake up during the night unable to sleep, I grab my journal and start writing what ever comes to mind, and I am often surprised at what flows out. Often things that we are not even aware of, are subconsciously worrying us and keeping us awake.

Letter burning:

If someone has hurt you in any way, for example a relationship break-up, then a great way to release the hurt is through writing a letter to them. Although the letter never gets delivered, it is a fantastic way to get it “off your chest”. Once you have told them exactly how they hurt you, and how you feel, you can then burn the letter. As you watch the smoke go up into the sky, imagine that all anger and feelings of hurt, rise up with the smoke and blow away, enabling you to let go of the hurt.

Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag and smile, smile, smile...

Visualise yourself holding a large, heavy suitcase of worries. You can fill it with lots of little things that all add up; an elderly parent's health, the overdraft bank balance, the deadline that is creeping up, an assignment that is due, the exam that is coming up, everything that you can think of. You can also put in any negative emotions that you are feeling. Once the suitcase is full, pick it up and feel how heavy it is now. No wonder you are drained. Then see yourself putting it down, feeling the lightness, and walking away leaving the suitcase behind. Feel how light you have become. Worry can be corrosive and make you feel bogged down. Freeing yourself of worry doesn't mean that you care any less, but it can replenish optimism and energy, which makes practical steps a whole lot easier.

These are only a few examples, that are all excellent in helping to dump worries and unload thoughts that are milling around in your head, and are helpful in getting a good night's sleep.

EXERCISE:

Exercise is an excellent stress reliever, as it promotes health, and encourages the body to produce the "well being" chemical, serotonin, in the brain.

You need to get your body grounded again, in other words, you need to get in touch with your body again. Even just a 10 – 20 minute walk outside in the fresh air, will help you to get grounded and focused again.

I have attached a few simple energy exercises that can be done at your desk in the office, or anywhere else that suits you.



Energy Exercises

These exercises are meant to increase energy flow throughout the body. They are mostly stretches for the acupuncture meridians and the spine.

As this set of exercises is easy and doesn't take much time to do, it's ideal to start the day with. If you're not used to doing exercise in the morning, you might find it wakes you up better than a cup of coffee. It makes you feel clearer and calmer and better able to face challenges.

For all exercises: keep your body as relaxed as possible and breathe from your belly. Do them for the left and the right side of the body.

Flexibility procedure for the feet

This exercise makes your muscles relaxed and supple, as several acupuncture points that have this effect are stimulated. As the rest of the exercises go more smoothly when the muscles are in better condition, this is the perfect one to start with.

Do this while sitting on something low, a bed e.g.

1. Put the lower part of your left leg on top of the other knee. Hold it with your

left hand by putting the hand over the ankle with the thumb over the Achilles tendon. (Do not press the thumb in the space between the tendon and the ankle.)

Hold the sole of the foot with your right hand by putting the hand over the ball of it.

Now rotate the foot with your right hand for say 20 times total. Turn both directions and keep the foot relaxed.

2. Hold the left foot with your left hand on top. Hold all toes with the right hand, by putting the fingers on top, thumb around the big toe and top part of the palm under the toes. Rotate the toes, both directions, about 20 times. Again keep the foot relaxed.

Repeat with the right foot.

Exercises done while sitting cross-legged

As these exercises are pretty light to do, they are good for doing in the beginning of the set.

Sit cross legged on a mat on the floor or on a bed.

- Hold your ankles with your hands, and slowly bend your back forwards and backwards.

Do 4 - 10 times.

- Sit with your lower legs tucked under you, with your buttocks on your heels. Slowly bend your back forwards and backwards, while keeping your hands on your knees.

Do 4 - 10 times.

- Cross your fingers and put them in your neck; alternate moving your upper back sideways, to the left and right. Let your elbow almost touch the ground at

each side.

Do 4 - 10 times.

- Turn your head and look back over your shoulder.

Do this twice on both sides.

- Gently pull at your ears at all sides.

As the ears contain acupuncture points that access the whole body, it is a good idea to enhance their connectivity by this exercise.

Exercise done while sitting

To open the meridians in the legs:

- Sit on a bed or a mat with your legs straight; alternate turning both of your feet to the right and to the left. Turn far enough for the sides of your feet to touch the surface.

Do about 1 minute.

Exercises done while standing

To wake up some more:

Get up on your feet and stand with your feet parallel, and shoulder width apart. The knees should not be locked, but a bit bended and relaxed, so energy can flow uninterrupted.

- Walk in place, by alternately stand on the toes of each foot. Move the opposite hand forwards, as if walking.

Do 10 - 20 times.

- Move just your shoulders around, up, to the back, to below, to the front.

Do 4 - 10 times.

- Turn your arms, in windmill fashion, in front of you.

Do 4 - 10 times.

- Turn your arm at the side, holding the muscle right under the armpit with the

other hand.

Do with both arms, 4 - 10 times.

- Gently stretch one arm up and one downward.

The upper hand with palm facing upward, fingers pointing to opposite side; the lower hand with palm facing downward, fingers pointing to the front. Keep for a one or two seconds, then slowly and relaxed change positions with palms facing each other.

Do 4 - 10 times.

- Put your hands on your hips and turn your bottom around, by moving it to the front, then to the right, to the back, to the left, the front, and so on. Also move counter clockwise.

Do 4 - 10 times.

- Let your arms dangle at the sides and turn your upper back around to the left, to the right, and so on. Keep your arms and upper body relaxed, move from your hips.

Do 10 - 20 times.

- Put your heel on a table or chair to stretch the back of your leg. Lay your hands near the knee to gently stretch a bit further.

Other helpful ways of getting moving:

Park your car further away and walk.

Take the stairs instead of the lift.

Stand when talking on the phone.

Take the dog for a walk.

Get up and walk instead of calling someone to come to you.

Play with the children in the garden.

Fresh air and sunshine are extremely beneficial, and we do not get outdoors enough these days in our rushed lifestyles. Take a stroll in the evening, before going to bed, instead of listening to the depressing news, or watching TV.

“Take a break from life to catch some crucial thinking time.”

I highly recommend yoga, as this teaches you not only to stretch, but also to breathe properly, slowly and deeply, and also helps you to relax.



LISTEN TO YOUR BODY:

The way your body communicates with you is by feelings, aches and pains. Generally we ignore these feelings and suppress them with pain killers, food, alcohol or drugs. Speak to your body, telling it that you are now ready to listen to what it is trying to tell you. Mentally scan your whole body and see if you have any aches or pains, and then listen to what your body is trying to tell you, instead of ignoring the signs. This works well when taking a shower.

DIET AND WEIGHT CONTROL:

If you are unhappy about your body shape, learn to celebrate your specialness. Look around you, there is no such thing as a normal or average-

sized person. Celebrate your individuality; spend some time thinking about the things that are unique to you. Maybe you have a knack of putting foods together and creating a great meal; or a gift for friendship; or good at interior decorating; or you are artistic; or good at dressmaking; or a hobby...

Once you recognise your separate qualities, you feel less pressured to be or look like someone else.

Instead of eating fast food or junk food, eat fresh fruit and fresh vegetables, preferably raw. Most South Africans eat far too much meat, as it is so easily available. But I encourage you to eat more fish and white meat, rather than red meat.

Vegetables are best when they are gently stir-fried or steamed. Instead of cooking in the microwave, use a slow cooker, or prepare your meals the day before or over the weekend and freeze them. Choose fresh fruit and vegetables over the pre-frozen ones, as they can also be eaten raw and salads are quick and easy to prepare. If you want to snack in between meals, grab a fruit or a carrot or a stick of celery. Fruit and raw vegetables are high in fibre and full of all the necessary nutrients. Nuts, raw and preferably unsalted, are extremely beneficial, as they are high in protein.



Buy my e-book on “Losing weight the healthy way” if you need to lose weight

or need to know what foods are good to eat.

TIME MANAGEMENT:

Learn to prioritize and to use a diary. Make a “To-do” list the day before. Planning is very important to get yourself organised, and in control again.

If your To-do list is overwhelming, then break it down into smaller chunks and prioritize.

Q. “How do you eat an elephant?”

A. “One bite at a time!”



If your To-do list overwhelms you, take a deep breath. The way you breathe has a direct link with the way you think, feel and act. Most of us breathe between 12 and 18 times a minute and more when we are anxious. But if you reduce your breathing to 9 a minute or less, you will feel more in control. Find a quiet, private spot, and take 10 slow, deep breaths. This “breathing” exercise can be useful whenever you need to stop an emotional reaction. If a friend or colleague is making too many demands on your time, it is important not to be led by your anger. Taking a breathing break creates a space and allows you to stay in control.

ASSERTIVENESS:

"If you find yourself agreeing to things you would rather refuse, practise breaking the "yes" habit. Practise saying "no" in the bathroom mirror for two minutes and then vow to go out and use the word today."

Learn to say NO without feeling guilty. Be **honest**; tell people in a tactful manner (in love) that you do not have time to do something. Also be honest about what you are feeling in a particular situation. Set boundaries for yourself, and then stick to them. Only you can set your own boundaries, as only you know how far you can be pushed.

You need to learn how to speak tactfully to people and not get offended when people give you constructive criticism.

Good people skills are important to keep yourself free from unnecessary stress, and are easily learned.

If you are being affected by someone else's behaviour, you must address it by constructive feedback. If a friend is always late to meet you, make time this evening to address the issue, vocalise your concerns and therefore get it off your chest. Rather than saying "Why are you always late?" which is likely to put their back up, rather say "When you turn up late I feel like you are taking me for granted; I feel disrespected and unappreciated by you". Equally with your spouse you might say "When you dump your clothes on the floor, I feel like a skivvy". This is making a statement about how the situation affects you as well as opening up the channels of communication; making it easier for the person to come back with a response that will turn into a dialogue,

which is much more productive than direct confrontation.

POSITIVE ATTITUDE:

Change your attitude and look on the bright side, be positive. Stop always thinking the worst is going to happen.

If you are feeling guilty or regretful about something, stop it right now. Both these emotions are very corrosive and will eat into any down-time that you may have, and more importantly, are usually useless. If you know that you have given something your best shot, then there is no need to feel guilt or regret. If you are aware that you have not, it is worth thinking about why – maybe you are over-worked or feeling resentful about what you've been asked to do. But instead of indulging in guilt and regret, analyse the situation to understand it more clearly and then use that information to move on.

Make an effort to smile. Practise smiling, even if it feels false, you will find that smiling has amazing power to lift your mood.

Happiness is a choice. Force yourself to lift your spirits, by singing or telling jokes, or just behaving as if you are happy, even if you aren't and the feelings of happiness will soon follow your actions.

Any fool can criticize, complain and condemn, and the truth is, most fools do.
ANON

You are what you think. If you change your thoughts for the better, you will change your life for the better. In other words, the situations and things that you attract in your life are as a result of the thoughts you dwell on. So choose to dwell on only positive thoughts and to

promote a positive state of mind. Banish negative thoughts and states of fear, worry and depression, as they are very limiting.



POSITIVE SELF TALK:

Stop thinking of yourself as a failure or a loser! Change the way that you think about yourself with positive self talk.

Here is a tool to help you to get positive about yourself again, using the Acronym – SWAT.

S = Strengths

Find out what your strengths are, and improve them. You can do a course on the personality types to find out what your strengths are. There are several books out on the subject, and the internet is full of them.

W = Weaknesses

Make use of other people who are strong in areas that you are weak in, and do not be so hard on yourself. Stop being a perfectionist.

A = Attitude

Attitude is vitally important as to how you face stress. Look at the positive in a situation instead of always finding the negative. You can train yourself to see the positive side.

T = Talk – Self

Use positive self talk every day. Write down positive things about yourself and repeat them to yourself everyday.

These are called daily affirmations. If there is an area that you are weak in, you can change it, by writing it down and then repeating it over and over at least three times every day.

Example: I have self control. I do not eat when I am not hungry. I AM successful!

“The relationship you have with yourself is the most important one you will ever have.”

A very successful way to change your thinking is through hypnosis. Hypnosis gets you to relax the conscious mind to a point of being off guard and thereby allowing access to the sub-conscious mind. This is where the changes take place. You can either go to a practitioner who can assist you, or do self-hypnosis.

See my website for a free self hypnosis script: www.regressiontherapist.co.za

RELAXATION

This is by far the most important skill that you need to learn. You need to train yourself to relax at least 5 minutes every day both in the morning and the evening.

When I say relax, I mean, no phones, or people, chores or anything that can distract you from this “time-out” with yourself. You need to be disciplined and faithful to yourself. It is vitally

important for your mental well being to learn to relax.

As a hypnotherapist, I enable people to relax to the point of hypnosis, (which is totally different to what people have been led to believe by the media). They have to allow themselves to relax, or the hypnosis will not work, as all hypnosis, is self hypnosis.

If you find that your mind is so active that you cannot relax, then I suggest you get your journal out, and start jotting down all the things that are on your mind at the moment.

When buying a journal, I suggest that you buy an A5 black hardcover book, with lines in. They cost under R10-00, and last for a few months.

I always put the date and time that I am writing in my journal, as it sometimes helps to look back, and see what things were worrying you at that particular time, and you will probably find that you can laugh at that same thing, today.

Once my mind is clear of clutter, I then can concentrate on actually relaxing. As you do this regularly, you find fewer things to write down, if at all, and will get into a state of relaxation so much easier and quicker.

I have a few suggestions that may help you to relax:

Peaceful Place:

Imagine yourself on a beach, lying in the sun. Feel the heat of the sun on your body and your face. Just lie there basking in the gentle sun until you feel totally peaceful.

Picture yourself lying on the grass alongside a flowing stream. Listen to the rippling water, as it flows over the pebbles. Feel the cool breeze on your face, and hear the birds chirping in the background. Lie there, listening to the sounds until you feel totally at peace.

Visualize yourself lying in a pastel shaded room, with lots of huge, marshmallow type pillows all around. Feel the soft, comfortable feeling of lying amongst these soft pillows. Feel your body being totally supported and just allow yourself to let go, until you feel relaxed.

Quick fix:

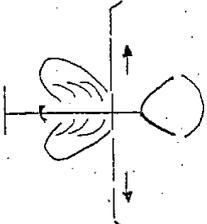
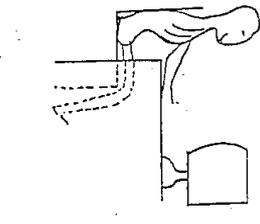
If you are having a stressful “moment” at work, pause for 5 minutes in your office or wherever you are, and go to one of the “Peaceful Places” to calm down and to relax. Take a “breathing” break (take 10 deep breaths to slow your breathing down).

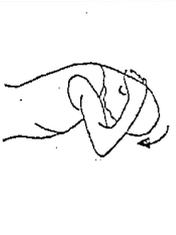
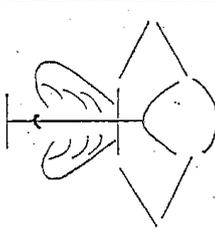
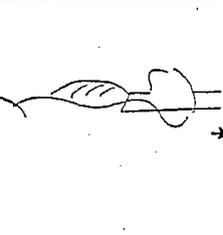
If you have a stiff neck or back and just need to take a few minutes to stretch, do the exercises that I have attached to the back of this chapter.

I will go into a deeper form of relaxation, known as meditation, later on in this book.

Another wonderful way of relaxation is to get a massage at a health spa.

You need to live a balanced lifestyle, in order to have a happy, healthy life. But, only you can make the changes in your own life, by combining the right diet and the right exercise, with assertiveness skills and positive self talk; rounded off with relaxation.

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|  | <p>Stretch arms sideways and pull hands backwards. Hold for 3 seconds. Repeat 10 times.</p> |
|  | <p>SITTING:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Back supported by chair. • Buttlock to reach back of chair. • Top of computer screen at eye level. • Position screen in front of operator – not more than 30° to the side. • Keyboard: at an angle of 15° to 25° to the desk with support for the forearms. • Desk height: elbows and forearms level with home row on keyboard (adjust height of chair). • Reading at a desk: reading material at a slope of up to 45° to the desk. • Writing at a desk: paper at a slope of 18° to 20° to the desk. |
|  | <p>DRIVING:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Backrest at 110° to 120° with low back support. • Ensure correct head and neck position by resting the head on the headrest at all times. • Exercises whilst driving: Roll shoulders backwards. "Double chin" exercise. Pull shoulders to ears and relax. |
|  | <p>SLEEPING:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain neutral spine position. • Sleep only on back or sides (never on stomach). • Use approximately 2 feather pillows (check width of shoulder to determine number of pillows). <p>GENERAL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never pick up or move heavy objects without help. • Keep back straight and knees bent when lifting objects from floor. • Never read or watch TV in bed (horizontal position). |

| | |
|---|--|
|  | <p>Stretch neck sideways and hold for 10 seconds. Repeat other side.</p> |
|  | <p>Clasp hands behind back of head. Pull chin to chest and hold for 10 seconds. Repeat 5 times.</p> |
|  | <p>Clasp hands behind back of head. Pull chin in and push elbows backwards. Hold for 3 seconds. Repeat 10 times.</p> |
|  | <p>Stretch left and right arm alternately above head. Repeat 20 times (10 times each arm).</p> |

LIVING EACH DAY TO THE FULLEST



*Yesterday is only a dream
And tomorrow is only a vision
But today
Well lived
Makes every yesterday
A dream of happiness
And every tomorrow
A vision of hope*

Unknown

RIGHT NOW, THE PRESENT IS A GIFT

You can never re-live this moment, right now! Once this moment has passed, it is gone forever.

We are always so busy rushing around, **DOING** instead of taking some time to savour this moment, and enjoy **BEING**.

When last did you stop to “smell the roses”? Yes a cliché I know, but a very apt one, I believe.

Those of you who are parents can relate to this: Before you know it, your children are all grown up and out of the home, and you cannot even remember half the time that you spent with them. You regret not having made more time to play with them, or do things together, but it is too late. The time has passed.

I remember when my dear mother died of cancer in 1997, it just seemed so

unfair. She was only 63 years old, and had never smoked in her life, yet she died of lung cancer. She was one of the most vibrant people I have ever known, and was still so full of life. But, it was her time to go, and I had to accept that. I felt that she still had so much to give, and I still had so much that I wanted to share with her.

The regret of not making the most of the time that we did have together was almost overwhelming. Eventually I just had to let it go, as I could never, ever turn the clock back, and have her with me again. Most people feel these same emotions when they lose a loved one, because they always think that “tomorrow is another day”.

Today, right now, this moment, can never be repeated again. What you do today is going to affect the future, whether you like it or not.

At Alcoholics Anonymous, the people who have addictions are taught to live every day fresh, and only worry about not having a drink right now. Not to think about tomorrow or the future, but only concentrate on this moment.

People who are on diet also have to concentrate on this meal, right now, and take every day, one at a time.

It is not easy not thinking about what needs to be done tomorrow, or next week, but for some people, it is the only way that they can function. They worry about everything, and then life passes them by.

Do not get me wrong, I am not saying that you must not have plans or set goals, but what I am saying is learn to enjoy today, this moment, right now, without worrying about the chores and things that need to be done.

Most people have to have a wake up call first, before they can live in the moment and appreciated every day. But, why wait until someone passes away or something tragic happens?

I LOVE TO WATCH THE SUNSET; IT MAKES ME FEEL ALIVE...

I encourage you to make an effort to take a few moments every day to “smell the roses”. Play with the children, or spend quality time with your partner or play with your pets, or water the garden.

I used to be a workaholic, and would get home late at night, and then hardly see my children or my husband. Even getting divorced, and seeing the children growing up so quickly and then losing my mother did not get my attention. Only eventually landing up in a nerve clinic with Burnout, did I finally get my wake-up call. But, once in this phase, it takes so much more time and effort to get back to a good place. It would have been much easier if I had listened earlier in my life, and made changes then and there.

Both my sons are now in their twenties, and we spend a lot of time together. We enjoy playing board games, and love to go on outings together. We are not merely mother and child, but are more like close friends. I appreciate that I am able to make up for all the years that were lost when they were younger, in this way.

I love to go out into the country... I adore mountains and streams or rivers and definitely the ocean. Just being close to nature re-charges my batteries. During my lunch time, if I feel really stressed, I take a walk to the little stream and waterfall in our business park. Just sitting there for a few minutes, is

enough to recharge my batteries again and help me to cope with the rest of the day.

I am an Accountant by day and a Hypnotherapist after hours. My goal is to do the hypnotherapy full time. As you can imagine, I have a very stressful job, and am also very busy, but I have learned how to cope, by using relaxation skills.



Try playing with either your child or dog, without thinking about the food that is cooking, or the work that is waiting for you to do, or watching the TV. Try concentrating on only playing with the child in this moment. Give them your full attention. If your thoughts wonder, bring them back and savour this very moment, right now, as you play with your child.

It is not as easy as it sounds, because we are so distracted, and our thoughts are on so many other things, that we need to train ourselves to do one thing at a time; to give it our full attention.

That is why exercise is such a good thing; besides the physical advantages, you have to concentrate on what you are doing, so you are totally focused on your body at this time. Any form of exercise is great... Yoga, swimming, walking, cycling...even cleaning the pool. Anything where you need to concentrate on what you are doing is

amazing for getting you to focus and live one moment at a time. Having a hobby is also a very good way of teaching yourself to focus on one thing at a time, instead of allowing your thoughts to be going all over the place.

FORGIVENESS:

I read a book years ago, that told you to write down the names of all the people that came to mind, that had hurt or offended you in any way; the list took me about a week to complete, as names kept popping into my mind; from school teachers, school friends, to people I had already forgotten about.

Once I was sure that there were no more names, I sat down, and deliberately forgave each person one by one. Mentioning each one by name and telling them aloud that I forgive them. It was very therapeutic and I felt a whole lot lighter after this exercise.

If you find someone has hurt you very badly, I suggest writing a letter to them, and then burning it, as I explained in the earlier chapter.

Regression, going back to a very hurtful or painful situation that happened as a child, is a good way to re-look at the situation through adult eyes. As a Regression Therapist, I am able to take a person back using hypnotherapy. Other therapists will use different methods of regression, but they are all very therapeutic enabling you to let go of past wounds.

Forgiveness of oneself is the hardest to do. Look into a mirror and tell yourself, that you forgive yourself, using your name. Do not take this lightly; it is very hard in the beginning to do that so I encourage you to persevere until you are able to look at yourself in the mirror

with love and forgiveness. (Keep tissues handy, as you are likely to cry.)

If you have built up anger that needs to be released, go into your bedroom and close the door. Hit a pillow and scream to get rid of all the anger and frustration. If you are concerned that someone will hear you, scream into a pillow and the muffled sound should not be too loud. Alternatively when driving your car, close the windows and have a good scream, but do beware that you do not lose concentration on the road.

GRATITUDE:

Stop always seeing the bad things and stop whinging and whining...sit down with a piece of paper and look at all the positive things, and the things that you are grateful for.

If you have a bad relationship, find all the good things in the other person, instead of always seeing the negative.



Each day when you get up, be grateful for the day, for your health, for your life, for your family and friends, for food to eat, for a warm bed at night, for ears and eyes, and legs and arms that work etc.

If we stop focusing on the negative and start focusing on the good things and being grateful for them, then our attitudes will change as well.

CLEARING OUT:

A few years ago, when my husband and I were in full time ministry, we were totally dependent on the offerings from the congregation to live from. I was in desperate need of new clothes, as we needed to look presentable but I had no money to spend on clothing at the time.

I remembered hearing a sermon once that we need to “sow in famine”; we need to give away in order to get back. So, I went to my closet and cleared out all the old clothes that I had not worn for over a year, and gave them to the local shelter.

A few days later, my sister in law, who is very wealthy, and buys new clothes regularly but only wears them once or twice, contacted me to see if I wanted any of the clothes that she was throwing out.

Needless to say, there were loads of new boutique suits and outfits that had not been worn, if at all.

As I had thrown out old clothes, I had made room for new. This principle can be applied to any area in your life.

Clutter can cause a lot of stress. Get your filing done, and get rid of unnecessary “things” lying around. It is good to have a spring clean at least once a year, and get rid of bits and pieces that do not serve a purpose. There are so many other less fortunate people than yourself, who will be more than grateful for the things that you have no use for.

Each year at Christmas time, I used to encourage the children to rummage through their toys, and then they would give away the toys that they had outgrown or were no longer using. There was a collection point at the local supermarket, and it gave them great delight to pass on these unused toys for less fortunate children.

IF YOU ARE BORED, PERHAPS YOU ARE BORING:

If you feel your life is empty, why not try putting something into it?

If you are bored, then stop looking at other people to stimulate, entertain and excite you. Blaming outside factors, like your job, your partner or your environment, and not going to alleviate your boredom. Take responsibility!

If you have no friends, try being a friend to someone. Take up a hobby where you can meet new people and make new friends. If your relationship is dull and uninteresting, find something that you can both do together; a sport or hobby that will spark a new interest, thereby having something in common to share.

If you are bored with life in general, then it is time to take a long hard look at yourself. Boredom is usually a selfish trait! Ouch. Usually if you are bored, you are self-involved and self-absorbed.

Reach out! Get involved in a charity organisation, or join a club. Stop being introspective, and make yourself more interesting.

Have you ever considered, that the person who you think is dull, thinks the same of you?

RELAXATION TECHNIQUES



MEDITATION:

Please do not think that “meditation” is ‘hocus pocus’. It is merely a way of forcing you to concentrate on one thing at a time, and to clear your mind.

Meditation can be “cleaning the pool” and having nothing on your mind other than concentrating on cleaning the pool, or watching fish swimming in a tank, or it can be hours of sitting in the lotus position (as the picture above shows).

Meditation is a fantastic relaxation technique:

Take a candle and lock yourself in your room for about 15 minutes. Sit down on the floor or your bed and light the candle and place it in front of you. Watch the flame. Ignore any thoughts that come into your mind, just let them “fizzle” out. Do not entertain them or allow yourself to think of them, just bring your mind back to the flame each time. You will find that you get better at it, and it becomes easier to just sit and

watch the flame. You will feel how peaceful you feel once you have finished as it is very relaxing.

Another form of meditation is “breathing”. By sitting quietly and following your breath you can get your mind to clear. Take a deep breath in, and hold it for a few moments, then let it out. As you breathe in again, with your eyes closed, follow your breath (imagine) going into your nostrils and down into your lungs and then as you breathe out again, follow it all the way up into your nose and out again. Feel the air coming in and out of your nose; feel the warmth of the breath; feel your diaphragm expand and relax.

You can lie down or sit up for the breathing meditation. If you are sitting up, ensure that you sit up correctly giving the air free passage to move in and out easily.

Using something to put your concentration on can also be useful, like a meditation bowl or gong, as used by the monks. Soft, gentle music also helps to distract your thoughts.

You might find going for a walk and then sitting in the garden listening at the birds can be useful as a meditation.

Prayer is also a wonderful form of meditation.

There are no rules and regulations; it depends on what works for you. There are several good books out on the subject of meditation, so if you are interested in learning more on the subject, I suggest you go to a second hand book shop where you can pick one up for a very reasonable price.

Hypnosis is also a wonderful relaxation technique and can be done with the use of a practitioner, a CD or self hypnosis.

DREAM BOARD

A dream board or book is a fun way of setting goals and also getting peace of mind. If there are things in your life that you really would like to have; like a dream vacation or a dream house etc; take the time to either make a dream book or a dream board. They both work on the same principle.

Get yourself a sheet of cardboard, and start collecting pictures of holidays or countries that you would like to visit, and then paste these on this board. If you want a nice new car, cut out a picture of any nice car in a magazine and paste it on the board. It is almost like scrap booking, but more personal. If you cannot find a picture, draw one.

It is good to dream again, like we did as children. You will be surprised how these dreams become reality if you add a bit of faith and keep focused on them.

COLLAGE:

Making a collage out of old photo's and memorabilia is also a cool way to relax and can be therapeutic if wanting to deal with a bad memory or just letting go of a lost relationship or loved one.

HOT BATH:

Taking a bubble bath at night, with candles is a fantastic de-stressor for me. The family knows that when I take a bath, they are to stay away and not disturb me, as this is my time. A lot of good ideas have come out of my bath times.

It is vitally important that we make "Me" time every day. Even if it is just to read a book or to take a nice relaxing bath.

HOBBIES:

Hobbies are also amazing to help people relax. I have an uncle who can sit for hours on end putting together model aeroplanes and then painting them. They are all over the house, but the fun for him is in the construction and the painting, which takes a lot of concentration as they are so small, but he says it is extremely relaxing for him.



OUTDOORS:

Spending time outdoors, listening to birds and smelling the flowers is extremely refreshing and relaxing too. Seeing the sunset does something for my soul. I love to look at the stars at night especially when out in the country, as they are so bright. It makes me feel so small in comparison, and puts things back into perspective. The full moon is absolutely beautiful to see. I make an effort to sit under the full moon, and drink in its energy.

Spending time at the pool, outside in the sunshine have wonderful benefits, as long as you do not overdo it and lie in the sun between 11am and 2pm. Make sure you have the correct suntan lotion on for protection, and enough liquids to

drink, to prevent de-hydration. The sun can recharge your batteries in no time if you do it correctly.

READING:

Reading a book is one of my favourite pass times. I love to spend my off days, just lazing around, reading a book. I get drawn into the story, as if I am one of the characters in the book, and then forget about everything else.

ENTERTAINMENT:

Watching movies can also be very relaxing, depending on the movie that you are watching. We prefer to get DVD's rather than going to the movie theatre, as then you can relax in your own home, wearing comfortable clothes and can laze around on your own furniture.

Watching sport on TV or going to a match is very relaxing too, especially if going with loved ones and friends.

Playing pool or darts or mini golf is great fun. Just being with friends and having a bit of healthy competition is very relaxing.

Socialising with friends and family is a great stress reliever and a lot of fun. Having friends around for a dinner party or a "braai" is a lot of fun. In South Africa a barbecue is known as a braai. We cook the meat on an outdoor fire, and make salads and bread rolls, which we eat while sitting outside in the garden. Usually we also play cards or board games, or swim, depending on the season, or occasion.

Taking a well earned holiday is essential to your mental and emotional well being; even if just for a weekend, as a change of scenery can be rejuvenating.

Going for a drive into the country is the least that you can do. Plan a day to take the family on a picnic. Take a ball or cricket set and get some fresh air and sunshine. You will also be doing some exercise and getting some well earned relaxation.



In the midst of movement and chaos, keep stillness inside of you.

Deepak Chopra

Learn to laugh at yourself, and don't take life too seriously. Enjoy every moment and make the most of every day.

*Life's too short to hold a grudge,
Time too short to fight;
Don't waste the minutes worrying,
Just try to do what's right.
Spread a little gladness
As you travel on your way,
And help to build a better world,
And make a brighter day.*

Unknown