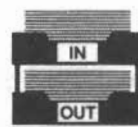


Stress

AN ACTIVE PARTNERSHIP
for the Health of Your Heart™



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Part 1

What Is Stress?

Stress can affect people of all ages and all levels of income. For instance, picture a busy restaurant at lunchtime. Put a check mark next to all the people who are under stress:

- The owner is worrying about the big payment that's due on her loan.
- The cook is furious at one of his assistants, who has just put garlic powder in the chocolate mousse.
- The assistant is wondering whether to quit, or wait to be fired.
- A waitress who is looking after three extra tables feels unable to keep up, no matter how fast she works.
- A customer whose fish is undercooked is unhappy, but doesn't want to draw attention to himself by complaining.
- A customer has just proposed to his girlfriend, and been accepted.
- Three executives at the corner table are putting the finishing touches to a three-million dollar deal.
- A man who is ten minutes late for his reservation is still circling the block, looking for a parking space.

Which of these people are under stress? Probably **all** of them. Stress takes many different forms; it's been defined as **any** change that you must adapt to. It can be brought on by emotions, thoughts, relationships, or outside events. You can feel it as anger, anxiety,

excitement, or as vague tense feelings that you can't pin down. Sometimes your conscious brain may not be aware of stress at all, even though your body is suffering from its effects.

Not All Stress Is Bad

You are under stress when you are getting ready to give a brilliant performance, or when you are watching your favorite team win the Super Bowl. A wonderful event in your life (like a new baby) can be just as stressful as a tragic event, like a death in the family.

Life without any stress at all would be very dull indeed, so we won't suggest that you try to cut it all out. You probably couldn't do that anyway. But you can learn to cope with or avoid stress, which will help you because:

- Certain types of chronic stress can increase the risk of heart disease.
- Too much stress can make it harder for you to adopt a healthy lifestyle.
- Many types of stress are no fun.



You have been through a very stressful experience. Even though the worst should now be behind you, you may be feeling quite fragile. This section will help you cope with everyday stress, as you get back to normal life. If you feel you need more help than we give you here, don't hesitate to ask your physician for suggestions. He or she may suggest that you follow a more structured stress management program.

This section will help you learn to understand and modify your stress in six parts:

- Part 1: What Is Stress?
- Part 2: What Stress Does—and Why
- Part 3: Keeping Track of Your Stress
- Part 4: Four Basic Ways To Cope with Stress
- Part 5: Stress Management Skills
- Part 6: Making Your Change Plans

Note to Spouse, Relatives and Friends

You can help your spouse, friend or relative learn to cope with stress. Here are some guidelines:

- Don't be over-protective. You can't keep people away from stress completely—and you don't need to. Instead, you can help them cope with it.
- Listen! Encourage your friend or relative to talk about any worries or concerns.
- Read through the section on "Speaking Up" on pages 40-41. It may help the two of you reduce stress by communicating with each other better.
- Encourage your friend or relative to listen to the relaxation audiotape regularly. In fact, listen to it yourself, so you can relax together. (It can help you too!)
- If your friend or relative is very tense, hostile or depressed, encourage him or her to face up to those feelings. If the feelings are very strong, this program may not be enough. If necessary, encourage your friend or relative to talk to a doctor about extra help or medication.

Part 2

What Stress Does—And Why

Under stress, the body reacts in predictable (and somewhat uncomfortable) ways:

- Adrenaline flows
- Breathing speeds up
- Heart rate speeds up
- Blood vessels to the digestive organs clamp down so that more blood gets to other muscles
- Blood pressure rises

These reactions were built into us as a sort of extra gear, giving us the added strength we need in emergencies. Imagine you are a cave-man (or cavewoman), coming face to face with a bear. Your body's reaction to stress helps you get ready to fight for your life, or make a rapid exit. Then, everything clicks back to normal.

Today, most of our emergencies are much less tidy. There may be no quick solution to the bear problem when the "bear" is a boss, a slow commute, a rebellious teenager, a job that feels out of control, a feeling of being permanently late, a bank overdraft, a funny noise in the car, a child's wedding, a transfer, or fears of global pollution.

In many of us, stress ends up taking the form of:

- Tense muscles that lead to headache, neck ache, jaw ache, backache
- Feelings of anxiety, nervousness, tension, helplessness
- A build-up of anger, or irritability
- Bad habits, as we try to soothe ourselves by drinking, smoking, overeating, or taking tranquilizers

How Does Stress Affect You?

Stress can affect everyone differently; you may have no physical symptoms, but still be uncomfortably anxious. You may not be aware of great anxiety, but may suffer from aches and pains as a result of tensed-up muscles.

Here are some of the common responses to stress. Check the ones that you experience:

How you feel physically:

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Headache | <input type="checkbox"/> Backache |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clenched jaw | <input type="checkbox"/> Neck ache |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tight muscles | <input type="checkbox"/> Stomach ache |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Choked feeling | <input type="checkbox"/> Sweaty hands |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tired for no reason | |

How you feel emotionally:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anxious | <input type="checkbox"/> Irritated |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Angry | <input type="checkbox"/> Impatient |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feel short of time | <input type="checkbox"/> Feel things are out of control |

How you act:

- Always in a hurry Speak and eat fast
 Can't sit for long

How you react:

- Hate losing Can't forget work
 Eat to calm down Drink to calm down*
 Smoke to calm down*

*Check these if you *used* to drink or smoke at times of stress, even if you've given up those habits since your heart trouble began.

You'll refer to this list when you start keeping your "Stress Diary," which will be the first step in learning to cope with—or change—the stress in your life.

You should also refer to this list after you finish this 12-week program, and see which symptoms have improved. If you are still seriously bothered by any symptoms of stress two or three months from now, then talk to your doctor. There's a limit to what can be done with a self-help program of this type!

What About "Type A"?

You have probably heard that certain people have "Type A" behavior, which increases their risk of heart disease. These people are fiercely competitive, often in a hurry, expecting a lot of themselves and others. They talk fast, eat fast, and can't always wait for you to finish your sentence before they interrupt.

Should you worry if you are "Type A"? Yes and no.

Working hard, speaking fast and being competitive are probably not the harmful aspects of "Type A" behavior. What is harmful is chronic (continual) anger, hostility and cynicism.

Do you often:

- Lose your temper?
- Feel rage at those who are in your way, whether at work or in a traffic jam?
- Always assume that other people are acting from selfish motives?

If you are unsure about your answers, ask someone who knows you well since they may have a different perspective. (Many people don't know that they're angrier than average, or they may know it deep down, but deny it to themselves.)

What To Do?

If you suffer from high levels of anger and cynicism, you can make life much more pleasant, and reduce your risk of heart attack at the same time. Practicing deep relaxation with the audiotape will help ease the physical tensions that come with "Type A" behavior, and give you a calmer outlook. You can also ask your doctor about programs or other resources in your community, such as those listed on page 43.

Part 3 Keeping Track of Your Stress

The first thing to learn about stress is that it's not only the **outside** circumstances (the stressors) that count. It's your reaction to them. All of us are different in our reactions, and one man's stressor may be another man's day at the beach. For instance:

- You may enjoy giving speeches, but your spouse may be miserable at the prospect of talking to more than three or four people.
- You may lose sleep for months at the prospect of moving to a new house, while to the person down the street, such a move might provide enough entertainment to last a year.
- You may feel paralyzed when you have deadlines to meet, while others find it hard to function without them.



Your Stress Diary

Keeping a stress diary will help you understand what elements in your life are causing you stress. The diary will be of great help when it's time to work through the stress plans at the end of this section.

You'll find blank forms on the next page. We've given you a sample entry below to get you started; your job is to write down your own stressors (the things causing you stress), and what effect they have on your mind and body.

Keep a record for at least a week. If you've filled up the form before that time, keep going! Use a regular notebook to keep track of your stress for the rest of the week.

At the end of a week, you'll be able to see the pattern of stress in your life. Then you'll be able to make plans to cope with the most stressful situations.

While you are keeping your diary for the next week, work through Part 4 of this section: "Four Basic Ways To Cope with Stress." That should keep your stress under control until you are ready to deal with your problems in depth.

Here's a sample, to help you get started:

| Date | Stressor | My response to it |
|------|------------------|--|
| 3/24 | Deadline at work | Stomach feels tight. Heart speeds up. Feel mad at Julie because she is slow. |
| 3/25 | Traffic | Get mad at slow drivers, headache. |

Stress Diary

| Date | Stressor | My response to it |
|------|----------|-------------------|
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Part 4

Four Basic Ways To Cope with Stress

While you are keeping your stress diary, work through the next two pages. They will help to “stress-proof” you, no matter what the cause of your stress.

1. Relax!

Relaxation does more than give you a pleasant “time out.” Studies have shown that regular relaxation can have a powerful effect on your body, balancing out the bad effects of stress. It’s not complicated: usually, it involves sitting comfortably in a quiet room; taking a few minutes to systematically relax the muscles in your limbs, body, neck and head; then imagining a soothing scene while you relax your brain.

The important thing about deep relaxation is that you need to do it regularly, even on days when you do not feel stressed. Don’t leave it up to chance, but set aside 15-20 minutes a day for your relaxation therapy. Right now, find a calendar, and write down the times you will relax today, tomorrow, the next day, and every other day this week.

How To Relax

- Listen to your relaxation audiotape, and follow the instructions.
- If you don’t have the tape that was packaged with this workbook, buy another. There are many excellent tapes on the market that will lead you into the relaxation process.

2. Emergency Stress Stoppers

Don’t let a small stressful episode build into a big one! Here are some tried and true techniques which will help you survive (or cut short) the stressful moments in your life.

Check the following tips that you think will work for you, so you can find them again quickly if you need them:

- Call a “Time Out.” Stop the activity (or conversation) that was causing you stress, until you feel calmer.
- Count to 10 before you speak.
- Move: go to another room.
- Walk! Exercise is the best natural tranquilizer there is.
- Sit quietly and breathe deeply for one or two minutes. Put your hand on your stomach, and make sure that it goes out every time you breathe in, and in every time you breathe out.
- Remember a favorite scene from your past—such as a happy day on a warm beach. Get all the details straight in your mind (the feeling of the sun on your back, the sound of the waves.) Return to that scene when you feel stressed.
- Don’t let negative thoughts take over. Zap them! When one creeps into your brain, say “Stop!” to yourself (or aloud, if you are alone). Try wearing a rubber band around your wrist, and snap it, to jolt the thought out of your system.
- Break big problems up into manageable sizes. For instance, if you are getting behind in your correspondence, make a start by dealing with one or two letters a day.

- Don't let others lay all their stress on you. Listen to their problems—but don't feel that you have to solve them.
- Get some perspective on life! Imagine you are drifting past the earth in a space ship. What does your problem look like from up there?
- Talk to someone about whatever is troubling you—to a relative, friend, physician, neighbor. The act of talking to someone about your problem is often enough to put it in perspective.
- Do some work that you have been putting off. You'll feel terrific afterwards.

Remember that you are very different from almost everybody else in the world, and what works for someone else may not work for you. So try out several of these tips, and see which are most effective.

3. Exercise

You can strengthen your resistance to stress by getting your body in shape through exercise. Many studies have shown that regular exercise can have an extremely beneficial effect in combatting stress.

So please follow the advice in the *Exercise* section of this workbook.

4. Reducing Chemical Stressors

Chemicals such as alcohol, caffeine and nicotine can all increase stress in the long term—even if at first sip, gulp or drag you may find them soothing.

To reduce chemical stressors:

- Quit smoking (if you haven't already).
- Limit alcohol to an occasional beer or glass of wine. (The latest research shows that it's best for everyone to stick to one drink or less per day.)
- Limit the amount of caffeine you get from coffee, tea or cola drinks, because caffeine is a stimulant and can make it hard to relax. Try switching to decaffeinated or caffeine-free versions. If you've been "hooked" on caffeine, you may feel sleepy for a while, and may even have headaches. These "withdrawal symptoms" should subside within a week or two, leaving you much calmer.

Remember: If you feel that you're under extreme stress, and these measures don't help--or if you are thrown off track by some major stressful event--don't suffer in silence. Talk to your doctor. He or she may suggest a more intensive stress management program, or maybe medication.



Part 5 Stress Management Skills

The Three “A”s, Speaking Up and Time Management

So far, you have learned how to relax, and you have acquired some stress-stopping techniques to use in emergencies. Now we'll start thinking about ways to change (or avoid) the situations in your life which may be a constant source of stress.

In this section, we'll introduce you to three stress-reduction techniques: the Three “A”s, Speaking Up, and Time Management. In the final section, you'll get to make formal plans to apply these techniques to the situations you've been recording in your stress diary.

1. The Three “A”s: Avoid, Adapt, Alter

When you are faced with a stressful situation, there are three different ways you can tackle it: You can avoid it; you can alter it; or you can adapt to it.

For example: suppose the kid next door has a loud stereo which drives you crazy.

- You can *adapt* to the problem with earplugs.
- You can *avoid* the situation by moving to Florida.
- You can *alter* it by sending the kid to Florida.

Okay, it may not be as simple as that. But starting with the three “A”s may help you deal with many of your stressors.

Can You *Avoid* the Stressor?

Avoiding can be a useful approach. You probably can't dodge all the stressors of your life, nor would you want to. If you did, you could end up isolated from everyone and everything that might be interesting. However, you might be able to adjust your life in a way

that lets you avoid some of its more stressful moments. For example:

- You can *avoid* rush-hour traffic by taking the train.
- You can *avoid* someone who irritates you.
- You can *avoid* the tension of entertaining at home by having friends meet you in a restaurant.
- You can *avoid* speaking in public, by getting someone else to take your place.

Can You *Alter* the Stressor?

This can be a useful option in those circumstances where you have some control. The first step is to consider the problem, and decide what aspect of it you may realistically be able to change without causing yourself more stress.

- If your boss is constantly leaning on you, you may be able to *alter* his behavior by talking to him.
- If a neighbor's dog is ruining your yard, you may be able to *alter* the situation by talking to the neighbor, using dog-repellent, building a fence, or buying a doberman.
- If you are panicked by the feeling that you have too much to do, you can *alter* the circumstances by arranging to share responsibility, or shifting your schedule.
- If a child is constantly asking for money, you can *alter* the situation by making a deal—for instance, by getting him or her to earn the money through useful work for you.
- If a job feels out of your control, you can *alter* the way it is set up for you. For instance, if you can control the number of widgets coming down the assembly line, you will feel less stress than if someone else is in control.

Can You Adapt to the Stressor?

Adapting may be your best option, even though it's not always easy. Remember that it's the effect on you that causes you stress—not the outside event itself. So if you can adapt yourself in a way that will help you resist the stressor, so much the better.

- You *adapt* to a situation when you change your attitude to it; for instance, when you change the way you talk to yourself about the problem.
- You *adapt* when you learn to control your anger, and speak up in a constructive way that doesn't ruffle anyone's feathers.
- You *adapt* when you get better at managing time—making plans that will help you avoid the rush.
- You *adapt* when you learn to anticipate stressful moments, and prepare for them—for instance, by rehearsing what you will say.
- You *adapt* when you make yourself less vulnerable to stress by practicing deep relaxation.
- You *adapt* when you reduce your stress level by taking up a regular exercise program.

2. Speaking Up

When you read over your stress diary, you may find that many problems came about because you didn't say what you wanted to say. Perhaps you didn't dare. Perhaps you tried, but the words came out wrong. Perhaps you were relying on the other person to do the communicating. Perhaps you let your anger carry you away.

Here are some examples of poor communication and better alternatives:

1. Your boss criticizes you for something you did wrong.

Bad solution 1:

You get angry and quit, or blame someone else.

Bad solution 2:

You accept the criticism meekly, and spend the rest of the day worrying about your future with the company.

Better solution:

You open a dialog that can lead to solutions: "I could do a better job if we took delivery of the widgets on Thursdays in the future. Then there would be less chance they'd get mixed up with the nubbins."

2. You had a coat altered, but it doesn't look right.

Bad solution 1:

You explode, giving the tailor your opinion of his talents.

Bad solution 2:

You spend the rest of your life in a lopsided coat.

Better solution:

You tell the truth calmly, saying: "I'm not happy with the way this shoulder looks now. I'd really appreciate it if you could work on it some more."

3. Your son is playing music too loudly.

Bad solution 1:

You turn on your own radio at top volume to drown him out.

Bad solution 2:

You can't stand it, so you leave the house.

Better solution:

You talk over the problem and make a deal: your son agrees to limit the loud music to certain times of the day, and to use headphones when you are at home.

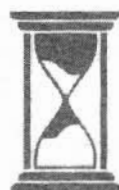
What To Say and When To Say It

It's not easy to find the right words at the right time—words that will resolve the situation without causing more stress. Here are some tips that can help. Check the ones that you think will work well for you.

- If you are really angry, don't try to suppress your anger completely. In other words, admit to yourself how mad you are. Don't feel you have to "release" your anger. People usually feel worse after yelling and screaming—not better. If you are too angry to continue a conversation, don't try. Arrange to discuss what's bugging you later, when you can talk more calmly.
- Listen! All too often, people guess what someone else is saying, without actually listening.
- If you need to discuss an important problem with someone, arrange for a time and place. Then you will both be ready to concentrate on the matter at hand.
- If you find the conversation drifting away from the subject, bring it back ("That's interesting, but let's get back to the question of your dog for a minute...")
- When you are talking about matters of concern to you, avoid blaming others, and use clear "I" messages: "I'm finding it hard to work in this system"; "I'd be much happier if you could put your dirty clothes in the hamper"; or "I'd like you to be back by 10:00."
- When you know you are going to have a conversation that might be stressful, rehearse it. Practice what you are going to say—try it out on a friend or spouse.
- If you are in the wrong, acknowledge the fact, but don't look defeated. Make good eye contact, stand straight, speak clearly, don't sound apologetic.
- Don't always try to "win" an argument (and make the other person lose). Don't let others always win (you lose). Aim for a "win-win" situation: you discuss the matter and come up with a solution that you can both live with, so nobody loses.

- Remember, you have a right to have opinions, to change your opinions, to disagree with others, to ask people to explain what they mean, to protest against unfairness, and to ask for help.
- Watch what you say to yourself. What's going on in your head can have a very definite effect on your emotions. You can change what's in your head, by the way you talk to yourself. For instance:

| Instead of | Try |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| "This is terrible" | "It could be worse" |
| "I'm so scared" | "This is exciting" |
| "I'm no good at this" | "I'm going to get better" |
- Try to avoid words like "can't", "never", "impossible", "scared". A more positive, hopeful word will bring with it more positive thoughts.



3. Time Management

If you are like most people, many of the stressful situations that crop up in your diary involve time, as in "there's never enough!"

You can't stretch the day—but there is a lot you can do to use time better, and avoid those last minute panics. We'll give you some suggestions for long-term planning, day-by-day planning and time-stretching.

Long-Term Planning

Think of the important decisions you have made in the last few months. How many of them were also urgent? In other words, how many decisions had to be made under the gun, at the last minute? From now on, make a deliberate effort to handle important problems before they become urgent.

Make a list of important decisions that are coming up. For instance:

- Find new tax accountant
- Plan vacation
- Help Grandma choose retirement home
- Get wiring checked
- Help Pete decide about school

Once a week, set aside a time to think hard about these problems, and discuss them with others who are involved.

Day-by-Day Planning

You can organize yourself to make sure you get the important things done each day.

- Every evening, write down the important things that need to be done the next day. Write down how long each will take.
- Make a rough schedule to show when you will get the important tasks done. Allow spare time before and after each main task, so that you won't be rushed.
- Don't set unrealistic deadlines. Instead of promising yourself you will do a big job this weekend, give yourself two weekends—but do it!

Time-Stretching

Do you want to get more time out of your day? For the next few days, try keeping a record of how you spend your time. Make a column for each of the main activities that take

up your time. Make your record as detailed as you like. For instance, you might want one category for telephoning, or two—one for business and one for pleasure.

Here are some suggested categories, in addition to work-related tasks:

- Food preparation and eating
- Shopping
- Personal business (bills, letters, etc.)
- Driving
- House/yard work
- Grooming
- Entertainment (including TV)
- Hobbies
- Reading

When you have kept a record for a few days, you may see where chunks of time can be saved. For instance, perhaps you could combine shopping trips; make all your phone calls at the same time of day; cut down on food-preparation time; hire someone to help out with yard work.



Part 6

Making Your Change Plans

This is it! You have been keeping a stress diary, so you know where your problems lie, and you have studied several techniques for dealing with those problems. Now you can make a plan for change.

Step 1: Study Your Diary

How does your stress diary look? If you have kept it up for a week, you have probably listed a fair number of stressors, maybe too many. So the first step is to shorten the list.

Can you see any patterns for what causes you stress? For instance, do you find that several different stressful episodes can all be traced to your supervisor, your car, your cat, your teenage relative, your neighbor, your bank manager, the president, or your favorite (but stumbling) baseball team?

Step 2: Write Down the Causes of Your Stress

Once you have decided what's really bugging you, write it down on your stress plans on the next page.

Step 3: Write Plans

Don't try to work on all your stressors at once. Think up plans for two or three stressors at a time, and write them on your planning sheet. When you have a satisfactory solution to those, start on two or three more.

Having trouble thinking of solutions? Remember that common sense is your best ally. If you are stuck, read Parts 4 and 5 of this section again, for suggestions.

Step 4: Test Your Plans

Now try out your plans and note on your planning sheet whether or not they worked.

Remember, different solutions work for different people. If your first try doesn't work—try something else! Gradually work through all your stressful situations. When new ones come up, you'll know how to cope.

Getting More Help

The fact that you are starting to take control over the stressors in your life should help to reduce your stress level considerably. Regular relaxation and exercise should help even more.

However, if you are still feeling stressed, don't let yourself think that you've failed. You've been through a lot, and your stress levels may simply be too high for you to cope with on your own.

If you need extra help, talk to your physician. He or she can refer you to places in your community where you can get additional help, such as rehabilitation programs, the YMCA or YWCA, city recreation departments, adult schools and community colleges. Books such as these may also be helpful:

The Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook, by M. Davis, M. McKay and E. Eschelman. New Harbinger Publications, Oakland, CA, 1982.

Beyond the Relaxation Response, by H. Benson and W. Proctor. Berkeley Publishing Group, New York, NY, 1985.

Progressive Relaxation, by E. Jacobson. The University of Chicago Press, Midway Reprint, Chicago, IL, 1974.

The Trusting Heart: Great News about Type A Behavior, by R. Williams. Times Books, New York, NY, 1989.

