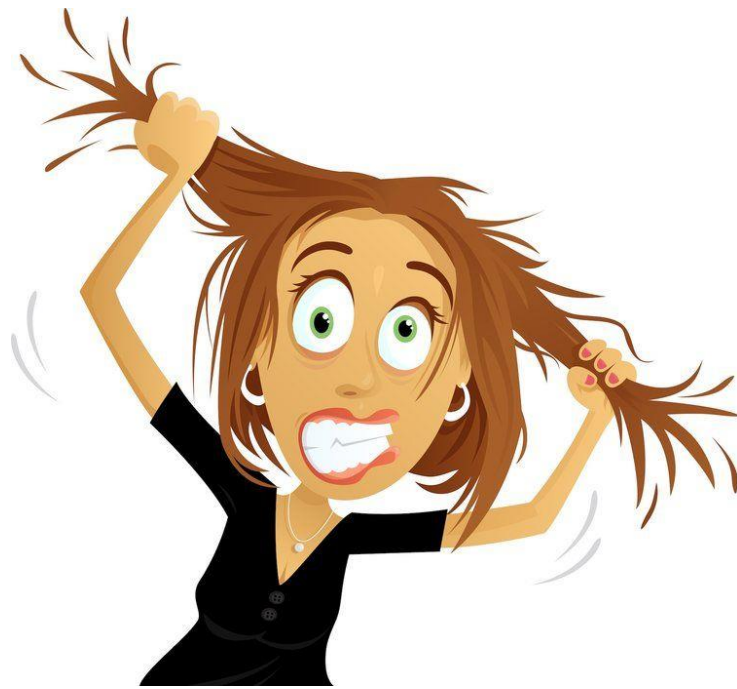


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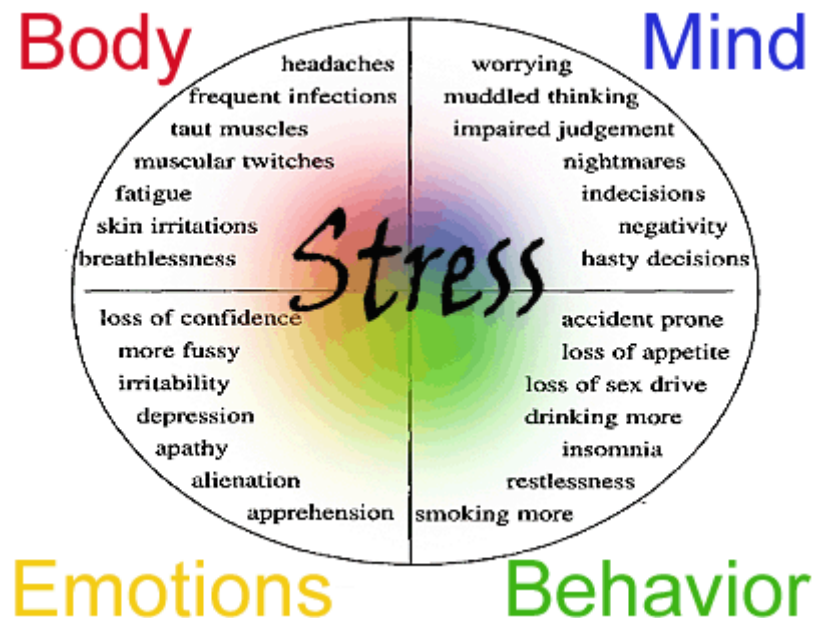
## 5 Simple tips for dealing with stress



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Stress! ...It's in-evitable, un-avoidable and guaranteed to be in your life at some point, if not every day.

Signs of stress:



If you're nodding your head at one or more at the symptoms above, then you're most likely to be stressed. But you didn't need me to tell you that did you!

Stress is the main cause of imbalance, on a physical, mental and emotional level but oftentimes we can become so used to it that we don't even know that we are stressed!

I've often heard clients say to me "*I didn't realise how stressed I was until I stopped*". It was like that state of being had become so entrenched in them that they what it was like not to be stressed.

So how can you deal with it / manage it so that it doesn't take over your head-space with negativity, worry and fear or lead to a long term dis-ease?

Well the truth is that you won't ever be without it so the only way is to arm yourself with tools and strategies that will help you to relax.

When you learn how to relax, then your head will calm down, your pulse will too and you'll be able to deal with your life with a much more positive perspective.

In this PDF, I will share with you 5 simple ways to help you deal with stress.

## **Tip #1 - Breathe!**

Yes, I know, kind of obvious but sometimes we don't see what's right in front of our noses, literally.

When we're stressed we tend to breathe shallowly and rapidly. The speed of your inhalation directly correlates to your anxiety levels. If it's short, rapid and panicked your mind will be racing. If it's long, open and slow, your mind will be calm.

In order to calm down your mind you calm down your breath.

Deep relaxing breathing helps to unwind and ground your mind so that you automatically become more relaxed. It gives you a break from the mental chatter and it's a chance to stop and take stock of what's going on in the moment.

The following exercise will help you to calm your breathing and so you mind, it can be done at any time of the day or multiple times throughout the day.

### **A one minute breathing exercise:**

1. Sit upright in a chair. If possible, bring your back a little way from the rear of the chair so that your spine is self-supporting. Your feet can be flat on the floor. Close your eyes or lower your gaze.
2. Focus your attention on your breath as it flows in and out of your body. Stay in touch with the different sensations of each in-breath and each out-breath. Notice what you can notice about the sensations of the breath. Observe without looking for anything special to happen, you do not need to change your breathing, just let it be as it is.
3. Your mind will most probably wander and if it does bring it back to your breath resisting any urge to criticise yourself. This is central to the practice of mindfulness.
4. Your mind may eventually become calm like a still pond – or it may not. Even if you get a sense of absolute stillness, it may only be fleeting. If you feel angry or exasperated, notice that this may be fleeting too. Whatever happens, just allow it to be as it is.
5. After a minute, let your eyes open and take in the room again.

## Tip #2 – Gratitude

Did you know that only 50% of your optimism and positive perspective is shaped by your DNA and upbringing? So if your parents were positive and encouraged you to be so also then that has an obvious impact on you.

This is something we can't influence very much

But if that's only 50%, what happens to the other half? How is that influenced? Can we train ourselves to be happier or is it to do with what happens in our lives? (Such as getting the promotion, finding The One, or having children etc.?)

Well research has shown that for lasting happiness, only 10% is based on life circumstances (partner, job etc.) and 40% is "intentional activity" that we can influence with our behaviour.

That means we can be up to 40% happier in our lives without changing our circumstances one bit, and one of the key intentional activities is the practice of gratitude.

According to the experts, consistently grateful people are happier, more energetic, more hopeful, more helpful, more empathic, more spiritual, more forgiving, and less materialistic. They're also less likely to be depressed, anxious, lonely, envious, neurotic, or sick.

### Daily gratitude exercises

Here are some options for you to try or you can make up your own. To start it can be challenging to think of things that you're grateful for but that does get easier with time. You can start small, like you're grateful for the bed you slept in or the ground under your feet, or your morning coffee and soon you as your perspective open up you will see more and more things to be grateful for.

One client said to me *"I knew I had to write in my nightly gratitude journal so all day I was looking out for things to fill it with"* That's not a bad way to spend your day!

- ॐ Every morning as your feet touch the floor, call to mind three things that you are grateful for in your life.
- ॐ At night: think of 1 meaningful event that happened in your day. Then spend 2 minutes writing down every detail about it. This plugs the experience into your mind and body and focuses your attention on the good things that are happening in your life. The event can be as simple as a hello you got from someone, or an email, smile, conversation etc.

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- ॐ Send thank you texts/phone calls/ emails/ messages / face to face to someone telling them what you appreciate about them or thanking them for the work that they do.
- ॐ Gratitude jar – get the whole family involved! Every day invited the members of your family to write down what they are grateful for on a piece of paper and put it in the jar. Leave it somewhere everyone will see it so that you are all enjoying seeing it fill up!



### **Tip #4 - Nutrition & Exercise**

There are nutrition and fitness changes you can easily incorporate into your lives that can naturally and efficiently improve your health and decrease your stress.

Your body is a tool that you use for major change, and you need your body to support you. If your body is stressed then it's more difficult to change negative beliefs, improve coping mechanisms or relax.

Therefore you need to look at body and mind. You wouldn't put a brand new car stereo system, into an old jalopy!!! Windows creaking, suspension gone, sure the sound system would be wasted.

Your body is exactly the same.

If your body feels weak, depleted, lacklustre, how on earth can you feel positive, strong or energetic?

If you feel weak physically, how will you cope with feelings of anxiety, panic, anger, frustration?

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You may cope, in so far as you keep functioning, but you will find it hard to rise above negative feelings and experiences or feel calm, relaxed, confident and happy.

### **When your body is weakened, your emotions are too.**

For example:

If you are not drinking enough water or eating healthily, (especially breakfast), you are putting your body under undue stress. This affects not only your physical but your emotional health too.

- ☞ You lose 2 cups of water a day just by breathing
- ☞ You lose 2 cups just by sweating and
- ☞ You lose 6 cups through excretion.

And that is not taking into account any exercise. Water is as vital as oxygen, yet not many people treat it as such.

People do untold damage by not drinking enough water. The body is clever and adapts, but not to its full potential.

You wouldn't expect to be able to drive with no fuel in the car.

Yet you are often running on empty. Water and healthy food give the body the strength and support it needs to make emotional changes which last.

What foods are good for you? - Water, whole organic foods, beans, pulses, fruit and vegetables for example.

Here is a chance for you to experiment, and try out new foods and new recipes. See what foods suit you and which don't. Eat the good foods that you enjoy. Don't force yourself to eat healthy foods you don't like just because they are healthy. Finding a healthy balance is the key to successful eating.

What foods decrease your energy levels?

Junk food, fizzy drinks, coffee, tea, chips, crisps, chocolate. Again it's all about balance. Don't deprive yourself. A little bit of what you fancy does you good - as the old saying goes. Just eat these in moderation.

#### **Also:**

Eat Slowly - Don't rush through your meals. Allowing your body to properly digest food reduces after-meal fatigue, boosts your immune system and enables your endocrine system to properly process nutritional intake.

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**Exercise** - Regular exercise boosts the immune system, improves cardiovascular health, muscle mass, and prevents bone loss. Stress reducing exercise such as yoga, mindfulness or tai chi can also be beneficial.

**Rest** - take a day out of the week for rest and rejuvenation allowing your mind and body recovery time. You will be more productive the rest of the week.

**Sleep** - Allow 6 to 8 hours of sleep per night in order to reduce stress and keep hormones balanced.

### **Tip #4 – STOP**

This is especially good for moments of overwhelm or overthinking.

We have over 80,000 thoughts a day and sometimes that can be higher, so if you find yourself in need of a little breathing space, use the STOP mindfulness technique:

1. **Stop** what you're doing. Put things down for a minute Take stock. Ask yourself what you are experiencing right now. What are your:
  - a. Thoughts, feelings emotions. Let the answers be as they are, resist the urge to judge.
2. **Take** a few long slow deep breaths. Let your breath anchor you to the present moment.
3. **Open and Observe.** Expand the field of your awareness around and beyond your breathing, so that it includes a sense of the body as a whole, your posture, and facial expression, then further outward to what is happening around you: sights, sounds, smells, etc. As best you can, bring this expanded awareness to the next moments...
4. **Proceed / new possibilities.** Let your attention now move into the world around you, sensing how things are right now. Rather than react habitually/mechanically, you can be curious/open, responding naturally. You may even be surprised by what happens next after having created this pause.... Continue without expectation.

### **Tip #5: What are your signs of stress?**

Everyone experiences stress differently. Some people feel it in their stomachs, other grind their teeth, some people reach for the cup of tea others can't eat or drink.

In getting to know your signs of stress you will become empowered to recognise the first symptoms so that you can intervene and significantly reduce the consequences.

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So my invitation to you is to take some time now to write down your signs of stress, physically, mentally (what thoughts do you have such as there's not enough time etc.) and emotionally. You might like to add to this list over the next few days; the more signals you can be aware of the better.

### **Physically my first signs of stress are:**

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### **Mentally the thoughts that I have:**

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### **Emotionally the feelings that I experience are:**

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### **Habits I engage with when I'm stressed:**

(Reach for the sugar, bite my nails, etc.)

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## **What works for you?**

This last tip leads me directly to this section. What works for you? Everyone is different and what will be a stress- reliever for you might not be for someone else.

For some people watching TV is a wonderful way to relax. I tend to think it depends on what you're watching!

Take some time now to identify things that you already do that help you to unwind, relax and re-connect with yourself. For example, having a bath, ringing a friend, reading a good book, walking in nature, etc. You can also add in some of the tips from here if you would like to try some of them.

Perhaps over the last year you've discovered some new ways to relax or things that you enjoyed.



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### What works for me:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

Now that you know what your signs are you can directly intervene and use something from this list to break the cycle.

If you wish to see anything change, change yourself.

That's it for the stress busting tips.

Thank you for reading and I hope that these tips help you reduce your stress levels so that you can enjoy life more.

### *Ellen*

I have read, studied and practiced mindfulness for the past 15 years. During that time I have trained with some of the leading experts, gone on retreats all over the world and held some of my own.

I am passionate about mindfulness as I can honestly say that it has changed my life! I know that can sound very OTT at times and

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it wasn't this sudden flash of light that came down and I was enlightened. Sitting lotus position, emanating love (wouldn't that be wonderful!) No, it was over time and with patience and commitment I found that old behaviours that didn't serve me well melted away, negative beliefs no longer held me captive and I wasn't a victim of my emotions. Finally I could breathe and access a peace within I had never felt before and has stayed with me since.

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