



**KEEP
CALM
AND
REDUCE
STRESS**



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Introduction

It seems today as though everyone goes around saying that they are stressed out. But do you really know what stress is and what the difference between stress and depression is?

The definition of the word depression is:

"severe despondency and dejection, typically felt over a period of time and accompanied by feelings of hopelessness and inadequacy."

Most professionals would agree that stress is one of the leading causes of depression. Depression can lead to severe mental health issues and worse which is why any stress needs to be identified and treated as soon as possible.

The dictionary definition of the word stress is:

"a state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or very demanding circumstances."

"he's obviously **under** a lot of **stress**"

Other stress related words include:

strain, pressure, (nervous) tension, worry, anxiety, trouble, difficulty;

It is important to understand the difference between the words stress and stressor. Stress is the way you feel when under pressure. A stressor is the factor or thing in your environment that causes the way you feel. Common stressor's

include things such as noise, going out on a first date, or having to deal with unpleasant people.

Everybody leads extremely busy lives and who doesn't feel as though they are running around like crazy all day? I know I do! You get up and get yourself and your children ready for school. You spend all day at a job, you may or may not like, and then come home to a world filled with homework, dinner and household chores.

It is no wonder that you feel stressed out and unable to manage. The current statistics on stress show that that your job, money and health issues are the main causes of stress.

In the U.S. alone over 77% of people report feeling regularly stressed out from the above issues and more. Additionally 48% of people say that they lay awake at night because of stress.

Over 50% of stressed out people say that they experience fatigue and irritability due to stressful issues.

The worst part is if that stress is left untreated it can lead to more serious issues including anxiety, panic attacks and depression. Time off work due to depression is the largest reason that medical insurance companies have for paying out benefits.

Stress is such a huge issue that April is now declared as Stress Awareness Month.

If you regularly feel stressed out then it is time to take action and discover your root causes of your stress. Then, once identified, deal with them and minimize their effects. Otherwise your health will suffer and this will directly have an impact on your family.

Let's get started by discussing the common causes of stress in the next section.

Common Causes of Stress

The following list cover the most common causes of stress:

Health Issues

If you suffer from a chronic illness such as diabetes or arthritis this can cause you stress. Sometimes you may be in so much pain that you just do not know how to cope. It can often be difficult to convey, to family members, how much your illness is affecting you. While they may be understanding, they may not realize that sometimes just getting out of bed and getting dressed in the morning can be such a huge effort on your part.

Emotional & Relationship Issues

These can also cause you undue stress. You may be going through a divorce or suffering from low self-esteem or guilt and these can all be hard to handle. You may feel as though you do not have any friends or are feeling lonely. Another cause of stress is being in an unhealthy relationship. You may know it is time to break the relationship, but this is not always as easy as it sounds. Walking away and having to build a new life is tough on anyone.

Family Stress

This can be caused by various situations. You may have a sick child, or your children may be in their teens, both can cause huge amounts of stress in your family.

Other family stress can be caused by the death of your spouse, a child, or other close family member. Even having to deal with an elderly parent can put stress on all family members.

Job Stress

Again this is one of the number one causes of stress for people today. Thousands of people get up in the morning every day just dreading the fact of having to go to work. They may hate their job, their boss or the time it takes to travel from and to work each day. All of these things can put pressure on you, which eventually shows up as stress.

On the other hand you may be feeling stressed out because you were laid off and are unemployed. Not knowing where to get the money from each month to pay your bills, is a big burden for millions of people today.

Social Stress

Causes of social stress include not having friends and feeling as though you don't fit in. As well you may be discriminated against because of your religious or sexual beliefs.

Retirement

While most people can't wait to retire those who have retired often start to feel stressed out. Some of the highest numbers associated with depression are attached to this group. This can be caused by not being financially secure for your retirement. Or it could be that you suddenly find yourself without a social crowd around you.

Suggested Exercises

List from high to low those items that you feel are causing you the most amount of stress in your life.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Post Traumatic Stress

This type of stress can be caused by having to deal with an extremely traumatic event. You may have been subject to a violent crime, have been raped, seen someone murdered or suffered through a natural disaster. Adults and children who have lived through wars or political takeovers can suffer from post traumatic stress. Even losing a baby after or during child-birth can be cause for stress.

Post traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD as it is referred to, is a very serious condition. These are the symptoms that appear after being exposed to a very traumatic event. Normally this occurs when a person was directly involved in the event. Just witnessing an event that involves a threatening action, a death, or a stressful injury is enough to cause this type of stress.

The most common types of events are those that include natural disasters such as being caught in a hurricane, tornado, flood or earthquake. Serious car accidents, being personally assaulted or abused and even witnessing military attacks or acts of terrorism.

To suffer from PTSD you do not have to be physically hurt, just witnessing something is enough for most people. A normal reaction for most people is to feel super stressed out afterwards. Your emotions will be on edge, you will have trouble sleeping, eating and small noises may scare you like crazy. Sometimes it can be difficult to get those pictures of what you witnessed out of your head. This can cause sleeping issues including nightmares and night terrors.

If you are exposed to this type of traumatic event it is important to seek help and support from others. This may be from your family, a close friend or you may need to seek professional help. The majority of people can deal with their feelings and your fears and stress should be relieved within a couple of weeks.

If this does not happen, then you definitely need to seek professional advice. Support groups offer wonderful help and have access to local resources that can help you as well.

Most doctors would diagnose you with PTSD if your symptoms have not improved after a month. While most symptoms do occur immediately after the traumatic event, some people do have a delayed response. At first they feel fine and able to cope and then suddenly, a few weeks later, things start to go downhill.

Suggested Exercises

Write out any event that you may have witnessed, if any, that caused you sleepless nights, mood swings or nightmares. This can be a helpful exercise if you know someone who has witnessed a traumatic event and is struggling to deal with it.

Various exercises can help you relieve your PTSD symptoms. Select at least one of the following exercises to try.

1. Deep Breathing Exercises
2. Muscle Relaxation Exercises
3. Swimming
4. Daily stretching
5. Yoga
6. Meditation/Prayer
7. Spending time outside with nature
8. Listening to soothing music

The Symptoms of Stress

The most common symptoms of stress include:

- Headaches
- Increased heartbeat
- Stiff neck and shoulder area
- Back pain
- Increased and rapid breathing
- Sweating
- Nausea
- Upset stomach including diarrhea

As these symptoms increase over a period of time they can lead to more serious health issues.

If you are already dealing with a chronic disease, stress can make your symptoms worse. Your immune system is not in tip top shape, and this makes it very easy for you to get sick more often.

Stress is linked to diseases of the heart including; high blood pressure, abnormal heartbeats, blood clots, heart failure, hardening of the arteries and can also lead to you having a major heart attack or stroke.

Stress affects your muscles and you may notice that you suddenly suffer from more joint pain and muscle spasms. The neck, shoulders and lower back area are most often affected. If you have rheumatoid arthritis stress can make this condition worse.

Even your lungs are affected by stress. If you suffer from asthma, stress could lead you to having more asthmatic attacks. As well if you have COPD, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease your condition can worsen.

For women who are trying to get pregnant, stress can be a huge deterrent. It could be harder to conceive and stress has been known to cause fertility problems. In addition women under a lot of stress can suffer from painful menstrual periods each month.

If you suffer from any type of stomach issue including ulcers, irritable bowel syndrome or digestive issues, all of these can be made worse when stress enters your life.

Skin conditions in teens and young adults are often more pronounced when these individuals are dealing with stressful situations.

Your mind and your mood is also affected by stress. You may feel more tired and more irritable when you are stressed out. Your temper flares up more often and even the slightest thing makes you jump out of your skin.

People who are dealing with stress often find that they start worrying more, even over the smallest things. It can be difficult to focus and stay on task and you may start to feel as though things are just not worth doing any more.

Of course there are times when you feel stress that are associated with wonderful things. Going through childbirth can be stressful but the event is short lived and rewarded by a beautiful baby. Your body adapts to the situation and responds accordingly.

Buying and moving into a new home is another example of good stress. The event may have several stressful moments associated with it, but your rewards are worth it. The same applies when you get a new job or finally get that promotion you were longing for.

Suggested Exercises

List below any symptoms you may be suffering from and the frequency.

Symptom	Frequency

List at least one event in your life that was stressful but related to a wonderful event. This could be the birth of a baby, a wedding or a move to a new part of the country.

1.

2.

3.

Managing Your Stress

There are two main types of stress that you need to be aware of. **Acute stress** is referred to as stress that affects you instantly. You would be stressed out after being in a car accident and getting hurt, or when someone broke into your home.

Chronic stress is referred to as long term stress that builds up over a period of time. This can be caused by years of working in a job you hate, or having to deal with a chronic illness or health related issue.

Dealing with Stress

The thing about stress is that it affects people differently. What may be a stressful situation for one person, could be easily handled by another. This is also why it can be difficult to get someone to acknowledge and understand that you are indeed stressed out.

Your first step is to identify where your stress is coming from. You could be stressed out by your job, by another family member or by being in a bad relationship. Once you understand where your stress is coming from, it will be much easier to deal with.

You may be trying to help a family member or friend who is dealing with stress and become stressed out yourself. Caring for the young and elderly can be difficult and are all potential stress makers.

How Do You React to Stress?

This is an important point and one that you do not want to overlook. Everyone deals with stress in different ways. Some people turn to drink or food when feeling stressed. Others start to forget about taking care of themselves, both their dietary and exercise habits get neglected.

Suggested Exercises

Look at the types of stress you are dealing with and label them as acute or chronic stress.

Type of Stress	Acute or Chronic

Next write down your immediate reaction when you feel stressed. Do you start eating, sit down and cry or maybe you smoke or drink alcohol.

The thing I do most often when feeling stressed out is:

Dealing with Work Related Stress

In the U.K. people's jobs are known as the number one cause of stress for the entire population of that country. If you know that your job is causing you stress, there are certain things you can do to reduce the amount of stress you have to deal with.

First you need to take the time to record what it is exactly that is making you feel so stressed out. There could be several reasons including:

- Another employee
- Your boss or supervisor
- Job overload
- Working longer hours
- Working through your lunch break
- The time it takes to travel to work each day
- Daycare is in the wrong direction
- Sick child that needs extra medical appointments

Once you have pin pointed the exact cause you should start recording how often this affects your stress level. Is it on a daily basis, weekly or just once or twice a month? Then look for a specific cause for your stress. Do you have to give a presentation once a month and are getting so stressed because of it?

Make notes of how you react to each stressful situation. Do you get headaches, do you feel sick to your stomach or do you start sweating profusely?

Once you have all of these things in place you can work out a way to manage your stress. If your stress is caused by a specific person you may need to address this head on with your boss or supervisor.

If your issue is work overload keep a record of what you do each day along with the time you start and finish projects. Do this for a period of a few weeks, a month is good, if possible. Then set up a meeting with your supervisor.

During your meeting you are going to 'show' your supervisor how much you get done each day. You can show them where your time goes, and show them that you just cannot physically get anymore done. The important point here is that you are not going into a meeting to complain or whine about your work load. You are going in with evidence of how much you get accomplished each day.

Quite often your boss just doesn't realize how much you do. They get worked passed onto them and they in turn pass it on down the line. Once you have identified your issues your boss may decide that it is time to hire another employee or delegate some of your tasks to another employee.

Instead of sitting and getting more stressed out you have identified your issue at work and hopefully a solution will be found.

Other things you can do at work to reduce your stress levels include setting goals and prioritizing your work on a daily basis. Talking with fellow co-workers about how they manage their time and get everything completed.

You can manage your time more effectively at work by not keeping your email open all the time. Instead allocate specific times during the day to open and respond to emails. Let any phone calls go to voice mail if you have a deadline to meet.

Remember too that many employers have tools in place that can help you deal with work place stress. This includes things like having an employee assistance program in place and having an employee health and wellness program. If your place of employment has these take advantage of them.

Suggested Exercises

Your first step is to identify what the cause of your job related stress is. Record your main cause or causes of stress below.

Causes of Job Related Stress	Yes/No
Co worker or other employee	
Boss/Supervisor issues	
Work overload	
Working too much overtime	
Working through lunch breaks	
Travel time	
Daycare/Child related issues	
Other	

Next record how often these stress levels affect you:

Stressor	Daily	Weekly	Monthly

Next record how your stress makes you feel this could include feeling sick to your stomach, suffering from headaches or sweating profusely.

My main symptoms of stress are:

Write out at least 3 possible ways you could reduce your stress. Consider things like having a meeting with your boss, asking for help, asking for extra training for software and asking for help with car pooling etc.

1.

2.

3.

How to Relieve Your Stress

One of the best ways to relieve stress is to allow your body to get enough sleep. Unfortunately this is not always easy. If you are worrying about things, then your ability to sleep for eight hours at night is diminished.

Professionals refer to finding ways to deal with your stress as coping strategies. Again, these strategies are different for everyone and you have to find a method that works for you.

Below you will find some common coping strategies.

Writing - keeping a journal about the things that are bothering you can be extremely helpful and therapeutic. It often helps to allow your emotions to spill out onto paper. Sometimes you may not even be aware of how strong your feelings are about certain things. Give yourself 10 to 15 minutes each to record your feelings.

Letting Your Feelings Show - in today's world it can be hard to let your true feelings show. Some people could poke fun at you or just not understand where you are coming from. Unfortunately we have been taught how to bottle up and hide our feelings. How many times have you been told to just put on a brave face and get on with life?

Try talking with a good friend, family member, church member or even a therapist. You may just need to let your anger out, or you may just need to have a good cry on someone's shoulder, without feeling embarrassed or ashamed.

Activities - making time for you is important and a good way to do this is to find an activity you enjoy. This could be a sport, a hobby or just taking time to go out and enjoy your garden. Volunteer work has been shown to be really helpful for people who are feeling stressed. You may want to volunteer at a food kitchen, children's group or even at your local pet shelter. Helping others can really help to lift your spirits.

Let the Past Go - sometimes stress is caused by not allowing past events to stay in the past. What has happened has happened and you cannot go back and change things. For good or bad you must learn to leave those things behind and look forward to the future. Doing things like yoga or tai chi and meditating can help you focus on the present instead of the past.

Exercise - this is a wonderful way to reduce the amount of stress in your life. You may enjoy walking, swimming, cycling or even dancing. Any activity that gets you away from your current life is beneficial. Spending time out in your garden is another good stress reliever.

In this category we want to include deep breathing exercises as well. Learning how to breathe properly can help you reduce the stress in your muscles and your body. Plus when you know how to breathe correctly you can use these techniques any time you are in a stressful situation.

Relaxation - learning how to relax is vital for anyone dealing with stress. This can be achieved by taking a hot bath, going for a massage or having a sauna. Other relaxation techniques include listening to soothing music and inspirational tapes.

Nutrition - eating a well balanced and healthy diet is key to helping keep stress at bay. You should focus on eating a diet that includes lots of fresh fruits, vegetables, lean protein and low fat dairy items. Avoid things that contain a ton of sugar such as soft drinks, cookies and fast foods, as these can cause your blood sugar levels to spike. In turn this can mess up your emotions where one minute you are feeling great and the next you are tired and sluggish.

Suggested Exercises

Select two methods from above that you could see yourself using as a way to help reduce your stress. Commit yourself to using them by using a positive statement.

1. I will ...

2. I will ...

Learning to Avoid Stress

One way to learn how to deal with stress is learning how to avoid it in the first place. It is practically impossible to avoid stress these days. You have to deal with stress at work, at home and in pretty much every aspect of your life.

Learning how to think in a more positive way can be a huge help when it comes to managing stress. You want to focus on how to think on the bright side of things, as opposed to always looking at the negative side.

Another key to avoiding stress is to look at how you manage your time. It can be helpful to prioritize the things you do on a regular basis. You may find that there are things which you can leave to the weekend or even delegate to another family member.

Getting all family members involved in chores and tasks around the house can help lessen the stress on one or both parents. Even young children can be assigned simple chores, which will help to boost their self-esteem. Get your children to help with preparing dinner and setting the table, cleaning their rooms and even helping by sorting out their laundry.

If your family schedule is busy and overwhelming print out a family calendar and color code it according to tasks and appointments. Look for ways that you can car pool with other parents to help take your kids back and forth to activities and events.

By planning out your schedule you can discover things that may be missing. Did you pencil in a family vacation or schedule family time on the weekend? If not, then look for reasons why not and then evaluate what you are doing by priority. Is it more important to spend Sunday's with your family instead of going out with the guys or cleaning your car that day?

Finding a balance in not just your personal life but your family life is important. Too many parents tend to neglect themselves and put every ounce of energy they

have into their children. Then they wonder why they start to feel run down and worn out all the time.

If you really are running on a super tight schedule then ask other family members for help. Could one of the grandparents come and stay with the kids while you and your spouse go out together? Or is it really necessary for your children to be involved in so many after school activities? It is possible to find a balance in your life, you just need to be prepared to work at finding it.

Holiday Stress

Sometimes there are situations that occur that are only stressful to you personally. The holidays, for example, are a time when lots of people suddenly feel stressed out. This could be due to all the extra work that is involved or you may be stressed because you are lonely at this time of year. Your family could live thousands of miles away and you don't keep in touch that much. Bad weather can put off family get together's over Christmas and the New Year and this can leave you feeling upset and lonely.

Elderly people can feel extremely stressed out when not surrounded by family members over any holiday period. Whether you are the one who is feeling stressed, or know someone who is lonely, try to make an effort to include them in your plans if possible. Things like video chats and phone calls are easy to make and can really brighten up the day of someone far away.

Suggested Exercises

The best way to deal with stress is to learn how to avoid stress. Write out below the 3 top things that are giving you stress and then write out ways on how you can avoid them. You want to base your answers around things like time management, better scheduling and making time for family.

1. Cause:

How to avoid:

2. Cause:

How to avoid:

3. Cause:

How to avoid:

Children and Stress

Stress does not just affect adults and seniors, today more and more children are developing signs of stress. There are many causes of stress for children including:

- Social pressures
- Being bullied
- Being overweight
- Low self-esteem
- Lack of self-confidence
- Studying for exams
- Worrying about not fitting in
- Learning disabilities
- Physical disabilities
- Too busy of a schedule
- Not enough exercise
- Not eating correctly
- Being exposed to violence
- Teenage rape
- Alcohol/drugs

There really are more social pressures on your children today than ever before. They want and feel a need to fit in with the social crowd at school. Girls feel pressured to look and dress a certain way. Plus today kids want to have all the tools and devices such as laptops and Smartphone's like all their friends do.

When these things don't happen they start to feel stressed out. Just as with adults, each child will react differently to stress. Those that have allergies and asthma may start having more attacks. Those who are overweight may eat even more when stressed out.

If you think your child may be dealing with too much stress provide them with ways to cope with their stress. They may just have too much on their schedule and reducing their after school activities, is all that is required.

Sometimes children are hiding extremely unhealthy stressful situations. More and more children are committing suicide because they were bullied or raped, and had no-one to turn to. While your child may not be willing or able to share their experience with you, provide them with access to someone who is capable of helping them deal with their stress.

Encourage your children to reduce their stress by helping them manage their homework better. Plus they need to be getting adequate sleep, exercise and, as a parent, provide them with good healthy meals.

If your child is lacking in self-confidence or self-esteem try enrolling them in an activity such as martial arts or a self-defence program. This can really help boost their confidence levels and in turn this can help improve their grades at school.

Suggested Exercises for Children

A. It can be extremely difficult to get your child to open up if you think they may be dealing with stress. Provide them with various outlets that can help them express their feelings such as:

1. Giving them a personal journal
2. Providing them with art material or some form of personal expression

B. Get them to write or draw out their feelings and include things like if they are feeling happy, sad, lonely, and tired etc

C. Things you can do as parent to is look at their schedules and see where it is overloaded this includes:

Amount of homework

Too many afterschool activities

Lack of friends

Lack of social contact

D. Ensure that your child is getting enough sleep, good nutrition and exercise on a regular basis. Include them by letting them make dinner choices, helping you prepare dinner and giving them the choice of doing a family activity on the weekends.

The Stress of Being a Parent

As a parent you only want what is best for your child, but this alone can put an undue amount of stress on you. It can be difficult to juggle the routines of work, home and children on a daily basis. Of course, you love your children but sometimes you need more than this to manage.

Being home with small children is not always an easy task. You may be totally housebound during the winter with a newborn baby. Not going out and socializing with people can easily leave you feeling isolated and stressed out.

As your children grow they may require less supervision but you worry when they are away from home. Where are they, who are they hanging out with and just worrying about them getting home safely are all concerns for stress.

If you are a single parent then finding the time for yourself can be difficult, you just may not have the energy for anything but work and caring for your family. Even couples can have a hard time finding time for family events as well as making time for some quiet time of their own.

Regardless of your situation it is important to find a healthy way to manage your job, home, spouse and your 'me' time. Too many parents attempt to be super parents and be involved in everything. Sometimes this just doesn't work and can be the cause of stress, burn out and it could lead to depression and anxiety.

If you start to feel as though you just can't manage or deal with things anymore then you are on your way to developing stress. You will no doubt start to feel some of the symptoms of stress including headaches, backaches, getting sick or developing sleeping problems. You may even start to have trouble at work. You can't concentrate on your job the way you usually do, or you start to flare up at your co-workers.

If this happens you must remember that you do not have to do everything alone. Learn to recognize the symptoms of stress and take actions before things get out of control.

First look for the cause of your stress, are you worrying about your kids, is one of your children sick, or do you really need some downtime but don't know how to get it?

Once you have identified it you can take steps to manage your stress. Some of the best things you can do is to make time for yourself. After all if you get sick who is going to be there for your children? Learn to make time for an activity at least once a week. This could be as simple as taking a hot bubble bath, or you might want to take a yoga class or enjoy a weekly massage.

It takes a lot of time, energy and effort to look after your children, so of course, you need and deserve a break. Swap a time with your spouse if you have small children each week, then take turns in having some alone or quiet time.

Other ways to reduce stress include asking for help with your children. Do you have a neighbor or family member that can come over and babysit occasionally? Don't forget that grandparents love to spend time with their grandkids. If yours are close by why not have them come over to free up some time for you more often?

If you are at home with small children look for community groups and programs that you could join. Many communities have activities for parents and toddlers such as swimming groups, play groups and even yoga classes. Check out your local library for reading times which allows your kids to socialize with other children and you get to meet other parents.

If your children are old enough explain to them that mom or dad needs a little quiet time. They would be more than happy to snuggle on the couch with you and watch a movie so you can unwind.

One of the best things you can do for yourself and your children is to learn to say no. Your kids don't have to be in every school activity or sports group. Instead reduce the time spent in after school activities and increase your family outings!

Talking with your family is a great way to express feelings and to talk over any family issues and concerns. While you may be feeling stressed out, your children

may be as well. Setting aside time each week for some family time can be one of the best stress reducing activities that you can do.

Remember reduce your stress by talking, listening and laughing with all the important people in your life.

Suggested Exercises

List your main cause of stress that you feel you are getting due to your children. This could be feeling isolated, alone, lack of adult contact or just not having any time to yourself.

1. As much as I love my child my main cause of stress is:

Next write out your one wish that you would love to do if you had the time and energy. This might be going for a massage, going out to dinner with your spouse or just taking a hot bubble bath once a week.

1. If time was no issue I would just love to:

Conclusion

As you can see from reading this ebook learning how to deal with stress is something everyone needs to learn how to do. It is something that affects children, adults and seniors and can cause significant health issues if left untreated.

Stress can be viewed as the warning signs to more severe diseases such as depression, anxiety and panic attacks, heart attacks and more. If you feel stressed out then take the steps outlined in this book to deal with it.

Reducing your stress is important for everyone. No one has to be the 'go to' person for your family. Chores and responsibilities can all be handled equally and even small children can be given household chores to do.

Learning how to ask for help is difficult but is also vital in keeping your mental and physical health. Once you do start asking for help at home and at work, you may just be surprised at how many people offer assistance and support.

If you ever feel as though your stress is getting the better of you, please seek professional help and advice.

Thank you again for reading and hopefully you can put this information to good use.