

# **Living Stress Free**

***The Secret of How to Manage Stress  
and Live Life Fully***

By : Sonali Perera

# **Table of Contents**

**Introduction**

**Chapter 1: What is Stress?**

**Chapter 2: Symptoms of Stress**

**Chapter 3: How to Cope With Stress**

Breathing, relaxation, guided imagery and meditation

Time Management

Nutrition

Physical Exercise and Yoga

**Chapter 4: Stress in the Workplace**

**Chapter 5: When it's More Than Just Stress**

**Chapter 6: Living Stress Free and Live Life Fully**

Steps to living stress free

**Conclusion**

**Meditation For Beginners – By Sonali Perera**

**© Copyright 2014 by SP MEDIA MARKETING- All rights reserved.**

This document is geared towards providing exact and reliable information in regards to the topic and issue covered. The publication is sold with the idea that the publisher is not required to render accounting, officially permitted, or otherwise, qualified services. If advice is necessary, legal or professional, a practiced individual in the profession should be ordered.

- From a Declaration of Principles which was accepted and approved equally by a Committee of the American Bar Association and a Committee of Publishers and Associations.

In no way is it legal to reproduce, duplicate, or transmit any part of this document in either electronic means or in printed format. Recording of this publication is strictly prohibited and any storage of this document is not allowed unless with written permission from the publisher. All rights reserved.

The information provided herein is stated to be truthful and consistent, in that any liability, in terms of inattention or otherwise, by any usage or abuse of any policies, processes, or directions contained within is the solitary and utter responsibility of the recipient reader. Under no circumstances will any legal responsibility or blame be held against the publisher for any reparation, damages, or monetary loss due to the information herein, either directly or indirectly.

Respective authors own all copyrights not held by the publisher.

The information herein is offered for informational purposes solely, and is universal as so. The presentation of the information is without contract or any type of guarantee assurance.

The trademarks that are used are without any consent, and the publication of the trademark is without permission or backing by the trademark owner. All trademarks and brands within this book are for clarifying purposes only and are the owned by the owners themselves, not affiliated with this document.

## **Introduction**

I want to thank you and congratulate you for downloading the book, "*Living Stress Free*".

This book contains proven steps and strategies on how to break out of a life of stress and anxiety, and create one that is calmer and more balanced.

Stress can sap away our motivation and love for life, damage our relationships and undermine our careers. With this book, you can begin to eliminate needless stress from your daily routine and start living with purpose and energy again.

Thanks again for downloading this book, I hope you enjoy it!

## Chapter 1: What is Stress?

When someone gets that look on their face and tells you they are “stressed”, we all know what they mean. In fact, if you’re reading this book right now you likely are or have been that person in the past. We know stress when we feel it. The sensation that everything is just too much to deal with, irritation with everyone and everything around you, the feeling that life is just one thing after another and what you’d really like to do is run away and never come back...

Stress is a complicated frame of mind to be in. However, it’s even more complicated than most people understand. To put it directly, stress is primarily a physical response to the world around us. As creatures that needed to defend themselves and their families in sometimes hostile environments, human beings have evolved to recognize danger and remove themselves from it as quickly as possible.

Stress is our bodies’ natural way of telling us that something needs to change. We perceive a danger, and our bodies alert us to get out of the situation. But, unless you have a particularly stressful work environment, dealing with lions and snakes and other deadly animals is simply no longer a part of daily life. These days, our bodies react to other perceived threats – the loss of a job or a spouse, for example. While these things don’t directly threaten our survival, we have come to *perceive* them as if they do.

In the past, the human body perceived a threat in the environment and responded by producing hormones like cortisol and adrenaline. These hormones would make it easier for the human to “fight or flight”. Stress was a useful mechanism that prepared the body to stand its ground and defend itself or else hightail it and get to safety.

In today’s world, the things that stress us are subtler, more persistent, and more psychological than a bear lurking in the bushes. Even though we don’t need to run away or fight with our bare hands anymore, *our physical response is still the same*: our bodies flood with stress hormones. Understanding this evolutionary predisposition to stress helps us understand how to deal with it. First comes the perception of stress, then comes the physical reaction, then, hopefully, the body can return to a normal state after resolving the situation.

As you can probably imagine, the first step is the most crucial. What is stress? Stress is the perception of a threat. This perception causes the body to respond in physical ways. In an elegant example of mind-over-matter, we can see that what allows us to feel stress in the first place is our thoughts.

## Chapter 2: Symptoms of Stress

Stress is a psychological state of mind that has effects on the body and our body in turn has effects on our psychology. It is this intertwined nature of stress that can make it difficult to understand – and even more difficult to treat.

Stress manifests in our lives in all areas. When we are stressed, we can experience physical, emotional, psychological and cognitive symptoms. Here is a list of some ways your body might be trying to tell you something. You may be surprised by some of them:

### *Physical*

- Tension around the neck and shoulders, or down the back. Neck spasms or tension headaches from involuntarily tightening the muscles.
- Upset stomach, ulcers, diarrhea or constipation – stress can make our stomach muscles behave erratically.
- Changes in appetite, or cravings for sugar and caffeine.
- Disturbed sleep, nightmares, oversleeping or waking up too early and being unable to fall asleep again – the sign of an overactive mind.
- Weight loss or weight gain – especially around the waist due to increased levels of cortisol.
- Low energy levels.

### *Emotional*

- Feeling overwhelmed.
- Feelings of sadness, hopelessness or resignation.
- Lack of motivation or passion to do what once interested you.
- Irritation and being bothered easily by small things; snapping at people, having a “short fuse”.
- Feelings of low self-esteem and apathy

### *Psychological*

- Procrastination and avoiding responsibility.
- Being suspicious or even paranoid about others.
- Loss of sex drive or interest in your partner.

## *Cognitive*

- Forgetting things easily.
- Getting “brain fog” and being unable to concentrate on the task at hand.
- Being easily distracted.
- Having trouble following things through, feeling scattered and “all over the place”.

The above list is by no means exhaustive. It may surprise you to know that some people respond to stress in exactly the opposite way you’d imagine: they become withdrawn and sluggish, even depressed.

The way we respond to stress has a lot to do with our personal make-up, our upbringing, whether we are male or female, the culture we live in and how we have responded to stress in the past. For many, the above symptoms lead to the need to self-medicate with alcohol or substances and so this becomes part of the response to stress, too.

*Before we go on, we should take a quick look at Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, which is a situation in which stress has gone far past the normal range. PTSD follows a very traumatic event in which the person felt their life to be in jeopardy. The body’s response to this can last months or even years.*

*If you are experiencing “flashbacks” or nightmares of a traumatic event that happened to you, if you feel permanently stressed and “wired” and if you have been avoiding thinking or talking about the experience, you might benefit from booking an appointment with a mental health professional to see if you might be suffering from PTSD.*



## Chapter 3: How to Cope With Stress

Because stress is, as we've discovered above, a problem that affects many areas of our lives, the solution for it should also address these different areas. A stress solution that works should include the physical, the emotional, the psychological and the cognitive.

Of course, stress is not always something that needs to be fixed. The reason people become stressed in the first place is because as a species, learning to recognize a threatening situation was an adaptive and useful strategy. Likewise, in our modern lives stress can be a very powerful indicator that we have taken on too much work, that we are not on the correct life path or that our relationships need to be improved.

The kind of stress that ultimately helps us is often called *Eustress*. This is the feeling that pushes us to accomplish more when we are in a competitive situation, or reach our deadlines. It is the fight or flight response in its purest form. Flight for when we need to escape a harmful situation and fight for when we need to up our game, whether that's defending ourselves, working hard or pushing through a challenging situation.

*Distress* is not useful, however. This kind of stress occurs when the body is simply overwhelmed with external stimuli from the environment. There is no fight or flight; there is only immobilization and panic. A distressed person is not extra alert and able to take in what's happening around them. Rather, they are overwhelmed.

In our own lives, it's important to distinguish between the kinds of stress we experience. The most important question is, does the stress help or hinder? Some people thrive on tight deadlines and the expectations of others – the pressure makes them work that extra bit harder and they feel pride and relief when they succeed. Other people will wither under the same pressure, suddenly unable to think clearly or quickly and ultimately becoming less happy and productive.

Whether something is stressful, therefore, is not about the stimulus itself, but the way it is interpreted by individual people. We all have our specific triggers and we also all have unique strengths. The first step to reducing stress in your life is to figure out what kind of stress you want to reduce, and why. Does the stress help

you achieve your goals and become a better person, or does it numb you and make you less effective?

The solutions presented here will look at both eustress and distress and how they affect our bodies and minds. But remember that a little stress is normal and healthy for human beings. Without a little stress, there is also often no motivation, no thrill, and no sense of achievement at having overcome it. Whether you find something stressful or merely motivating will depend on your particular personality.

## **Breathing, relaxation, guided imagery and meditation**

As you may have noticed, a big part of the stress response begins in the mind. If you do not perceive something as stressful, you simply will not respond to it that way. Have you ever seen a very young baby encounter a dangerous looking spider? Without any conditioning or prior experience with spiders, the baby is perfectly calm and relaxed.

This is the principle behind the stress relief techniques we'll discuss now. It is the mind that alerts the body to danger and sets in motion all the hormonal and chemical changes that we associate with stress. And it is the mind that helps us calm down and regain our composure. How can we use the power of our minds to ease stress?

One of the first reactions our bodies have to stress is to breathe quicker and shallower. The body in fight or flight mode needs oxygen quickly. To deal with this reaction immediately, we can learn to control and regulate our breathing.

The next time you are feeling stress mounting around you, consciously take a moment to draw a few deep, slow breaths. Concentrate very closely on filling every corner of your lungs with clean, fresh air and pause a moment in that space between the inhale and exhale. Imagine the stress leaving your body on the exhale

You can quickly return back to the situation at hand, but now you would have disrupted the beginning of a physical stress response. While you are reminding your body to slow down and breathe, tell yourself that whatever happens, you can

deal with it gracefully and peacefully. Try to remember a moment when you felt calm and at ease, and try to recreate that feeling for yourself in that moment.

Every day, try to incorporate some relaxation into your life. However, don't simply pencil in "relaxation" on your to do list, because relaxation is not a chore but something you should enjoy and want to make time for. Instead, find a place in your daily routine, such as just before bed. Create a little ritual of relaxation for yourself. Do what makes *you* feel relaxed. Read a book, listen to music you love or do something else you enjoy.

It doesn't matter how long this relaxation session is, only that you consciously make the effort each day to find time for it. A good idea is to practice "guided imagery". Create, in your mind, a special place that only you can visit. The place can be whatever you want it to be, but conjure it up in your mind in as vivid detail as you can – tastes, smells, sounds, colors, everything. Take your time. This is your stress free haven, and you can close your eyes and visit it any time you feel overwhelmed.

If you enjoy the above activities, try taking up meditation as a daily exercise. You don't need anything complicated to start. Simply find a quiet place and peacefully watch your mind. Don't force yourself to "think about nothing", rather notice what thoughts come up and be aware of them. Then, you can put them aside and instead focus on your breath and your own peace. It is difficult at first to stop the endless inner dialogue, but with time you will find yourself better able to manage and regulate your breathing, your stress levels and your own thoughts.

## **Time Management**

The mind is a powerful tool, and if you can learn to control your mind rather than let it control you, you are already halfway to living stress free. Of course, there are certain realities in life that are not going to change no matter what we think of them. That we only have a finite number of hours everyday is one of those realities.

Practicing meditation, relaxation and breathing each day will make sure that you are not adding to the stress in your life by perceiving threats where there are none. But at the same time it pays to cultivate real-world skills to make sure that actual stress is not taking over.

Firstly, never compromise your free time. You should defend the time where you are off work and free of responsibilities. Don't think of your relaxation time as something extra and frivolous. Don't think of it as a treat. Rather, remember that relaxation is vitally important and that if you want to be mentally, physically and emotionally well, you cannot afford to let other things encroach on your free time.

Beyond that, time management is nothing more than a skill that everyone can learn. If you constantly find yourself double-booked, unable to finish projects you thought you would be able to finish and rushing to squeeze in every errand, chances are you are overloading yourself. Go over your schedule and try to find things that don't need to be done as often, or can be done by someone else. Instead of trying to cram everything in, ask whether you really need to do it in the first place. If you do, can it be done in a simpler way?

For example, many women kill themselves every evening trying to put together meals for their families. This easily eats up an hour or more of their time that could otherwise go to other pursuits. Don't try to play catch-up – think instead of a way around the problem. Perhaps there are recipes and meals that can be prepared more quickly, perhaps you could hire someone once or twice a week to take care of it for you, perhaps you could get help from other family members, or perhaps you could incorporate ready-prepared elements into your cooking that are healthy yet take no time to assemble.

Time management is not about desperately trying to fit more into an already busy day. It's about removing things that don't need to be there and making sure you give time to the things that are important. If you prioritize a peaceful evening over a time-consuming homemade meal, then it makes sense to go ahead and get some (healthy) take out and spend the time you saved on relaxing with your family.

## **Nutrition**

Speaking of healthy dinners, the other reality we have to negotiate with is the fact that our bodies are more prone to stress if they are unhealthy to start with. Luckily, nutrition is one of the easiest changes you can make to your life to reduce stress.

Fill your diet up with unprocessed fruits and vegetables, which have the added benefit of not taking much time to cook. The vitamins, minerals and antioxidants in fruits and vegetables stabilize our moods and help us remain resilient in the face of stress.

Consider adding more oily fish to your diet, such as salmon, pilchards or mackerel, as these will improve your general mental health immensely. Foods that ramp up stress and inflammation in the body include all refined carbohydrates like white wheat flour and white sugar.

Try to wean yourself off of coffee if you are indulging in more than two or three cups a day, and replace with chamomile tea. A heavy meal of macaroni and cheese for dinner may seem like a good idea if you're stressed and overworked, but choose instead a meal of quality protein, healthy fats and lots of vegetables.

## **Physical Exercise and Yoga**

There's a reason that physical exercise can relieve stress. Get moving and you'll increase blood flow to your entire body, and release endorphins that will instantly lift your mood. It's also good to simply get away from it all at times. Exercise can be the perfect way to unplug and reconnect with your body.

It's no exaggeration that if you're tense and stressed, a long walk can turn your mood around. Go alone, walk briskly and you get bonus points if you find a peaceful or beautiful place. The rhythmic walking will regulate your breathing, and the physical activity will take your mind off the never-ending thoughts that are stressing you out.

Some people also find huge relief from more energetic sports or even martial arts. Consider taking up jogging, wrestling, dancing or whatever takes your interest. The point is to "change channels" for a time and get out of your head. Even better if your exercise requires a bit of skill and practice – as you become more and more competent at it, you'll gain a sense of mastery over your life and the sense that with effort, intimidating and unpleasant things can be overcome.

Yoga, finally, is a particularly good choice since you will be required to incorporate body awareness, breathing, imagery and focus into your practice. A

weekly yoga session can serve as very valuable “me-time” and something to take you out of the everyday fray of life.

## Chapter 4: Stress in the Workplace

Perhaps you've read this far and thought that it was all well and good, but what to do about the stress that comes from work? Most of us spend most of our time at work with people who we wouldn't ordinarily choose to be with, doing a job we wouldn't do unless we were paid to. A corporate environment can be full of conflict, expectations, disappointments and miscommunication – and yet few of us can afford to just leave when stress gets too intense.

The reality is that any job, no matter what it is, will come with its fair share of stress. This happens most often when we are held accountable for things that we actually have no control over or when we just have too much to do in too little time.

What is a normal level of stress at work? If you are able to “unplug” at the end of the day, this is a good sign. Getting home and turning your mind to your family, or relaxing with hobbies without stewing over what happened at work earlier means you keep work where it belongs. If you dream about work, dread going in because of the chaos and pressure there, often feel like faking sickness to avoid duties, constantly feel in over your head or have irritable altercations with colleagues, stress has gone past being useful and into the territory of hindering your performance.

Here are some ways you can gain control of the stress in your workplace:

- Delegate. There is no shame in realistically putting limits on what you can and can't do. Focus on what's very important and recognize what simply cannot be taken on. Let it go.
- 
- Consider taking a holiday. If work is hectic, push for even a Friday off or something similar. The important thing is to actually take the holiday – don't spend a minute thinking about work.
- 
- Make sure you take care of yourself at work – keep a water bottle handy and makes sure you take a proper lunch break where you can eat a real meal without rushing.
-

- If you are in the kind of environment where it's impossible to even go to the bathroom without missing something, consider quite seriously whether it's a place you want to work in.
- 
- Speak to your superiors and explain that you feel a bit burnt out. If they understand that you will be more efficient if you're well rested, you could negotiate for temporarily lighter duties or a short break.
- 
- Don't rush. Get used to asking people to wait and try not to rush through projects, as this often just creates more problems and stress later on. "Under promise and over deliver" is still very good advice.
- 
- Remember to practice regular breathing and time out sessions while at work. Wear good shoes and try to make your workspace comfortable with the right kind of chair, adequate lighting etc.
- 
- Some workplaces have facilities available to employees who need help with managing their workload. If not, seek out a counselor or therapists to help you figure out ways to be calmer and more collected – or even if you need to consider a new job or line of work.



## Chapter 5: When it's More Than Just Stress

It is not possible to completely eradicate stress from your life. At best, we can find ways to work with the inevitable tensions and pressure of life, even using occasional stress to motivate and encourage us.

We have seen that stress can have many different causes, and sometimes stress really is “all in the head”. By removing what is causing us stress or by adjusting the way we look at events in our lives, we can reduce and manage the amount of tension we experience. With good stress management, it is possible to live a balanced and enjoyable life, one in which we are only rarely overwhelmed.

Sometimes, however, stress goes above and beyond what is “normal”. *PTSD* is a very serious condition that has already been mentioned. The difference between PTSD and the experience of everyday stress for most people is that PTSD follows a serious and traumatic event. If you or someone you know has had this happen to them, the next step is diagnosis by a professional and a look at therapy and medication options.

Panic is also another condition that can look like stress. If you have episodes where you feel physically overwhelmed with symptoms of shaking, not being able to breathe, feeling like you are going to die, sweating, heart palpitations or a very intense sense of dread and fear, you might be suffering from a *panic disorder*. This is different from everyday stress in that it can occur with seemingly nothing causing it. This, too, can be treated with medications and therapy, so if you suspect you are suffering from a panic disorder, definitely get a second opinion.

*General Anxiety Disorder* is a psychological condition characterized by feeling stressed and anxious pretty much all the time, with a very diffuse sense of what exactly is causing it. This can be a very serious and debilitating condition, so if you've been working on stress management for a while with no results, speak to a psychologist about whether you fit this diagnosis.

Lastly, it may be possible that you are not stressed, but in fact suffering from a form of *depression*. Watch out for symptoms of apathy, feeling hopeless and like you'd like to just disappear, negativity, low self-esteem, changes in sleep, appetite or libido and not enjoying the things you used to. Feeling stressed and overwhelmed may be merely a symptom of an overall depressed mood.

## Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

