

Little book of Managing Stress and Anxiety



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Thank you L, D and H for giving me the opportunity to help you through your problems and for providing input in my understanding of the subject. I truly hope that your hardships and challenges through this book help others to live a better life in the future.

1. Introduction

Over the years I have had many stresses in my life, being bullied at school, competition nerves, problems at work, paying the bills, being made redundant (several times), looking for jobs and the interview process and the big modern stress creator (PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT).

Finally through my martial arts I have been able to get to the position where I can happily say that I no longer get anxious or stressed (bad stress that is, good stress is OK, more on that later) and at the time of writing this have not been stressed in the past 10 years. I teach martial arts and have been fortunate to be able to help a number of my students (ages 4 to 75+) to resolve or reduce their anxiety and stress.

I have no medical or psychology background, I would not even say I am well educated, certainly not a professor with PhD's and the like, I am just like you, however what I have learnt interestingly is that we are not made for the modern world. Our world has change massively over the last century and a half but our mind is still using processing power that is thousands of years old, and with no upgrade. Just imagine trying to run todays applications on a computer from the 1970's. It is no wonder we get stressed.

In Japanese martial arts we use the word "Sensei" for teacher, what this title really tries to convey is the idea of "one who has gone before". This does not mean that the Sensei is always right just that they have trodden the path you now wish to follow. I am sure that what I have written down here will be picked full of holes and may not be as accurate as it can be but it has worked for me and my students (and I for one do not now get stressed) so I hope will work for you.

If I repeat anything then bear with it, the reason it is repeated is because it is important.

2. Definitions

These are the definitions I will use for stress and anxiety although you may come across others.

Stress is a state of physical, mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or demanding circumstances.

Anxiety is a feeling of worry, nervousness or unease about something with an uncertain outcome, typically resulting in compulsive behaviour or panic attacks.

To be honest these are very closely connected as you will see and so we can treat them together with the same positive results. Both of these relate to our in built process for dealing with a real or perceived threat. This is more commonly known as the "Fight or Flight" process, which to be honest is not really correct the actual process being "Freeze, Flight, Fight", more on that later.

3. Recognising that you are anxious or stressed

One of the biggest problems we have with anxiety and stress is denial, denial is a huge factor in stress getting to chronic levels and at times resulting in depression and suicide. In the modern world there seems to be a stigma around asking for help when you feel anxious or stressed, given what I have experienced (reading various articles on the subject, speaking to so called experts from the business, medical and academia) I put this down to the fact most people do not really know how to help someone who is anxious or stressed. You may get comfort from family and friends but although they care they do not know what to do to help, fear of them not understanding is major deterrent in asking friends and family for help. Added to this there is pressure from the modern world not to be seen to be having mental problems, this is especially an issue with parents as you do not want social services thinking you cannot cope.

An important part or stage/step of dealing with anxiety and stress is admitting you have it, either to yourself or maybe telling someone else!?

Some ways to recognising that you are stressed are;

- Constant self-doubt or a lack of self- belief, “myself and others that go through some of this stuff tell themselves they are good enough and they can do it but if you don't believe in what your telling yourself it adds to the anxiety”.
- Avoidance and (self) isolation, “people with anxiety can refer to this one most of all and it's usually an unspoken aspect”.

Stress can be a downward spiral, if you ignore it you become less capable to cope, problems will seem to get worse and the pressures will seem to increase making the suffering worse, the situation more complex and seeking help more difficult to do.

Hopefully this book will clearly describe what is happening to you (mind and body), why it is happening (evolution and the modern world) and show you a path to defeating the stress.

What is important to remember is the solutions are quite simple; however we need to fight to make the first steps. My observation tends to be we stop doing the very things we need to do to stop the stress. What the book will hopefully do is put a structure or glue to tie all that good advice (go for a walk or a drive, visit the country etc.) that is out there together so it makes sense to you and importantly why it will work.

4. How our instincts and body work

Over the century's our mind and body have become an ultimate machine of survival, it has allowed us to progress from hunter gatherer to the king of the modern world. However although our world has moved forward at lightning speed our minds have not.

Yes we are certainly more intelligent through what we have learnt and with an eye to the future we will continue to evolve for better or for worse, however our minds are still in the past and we need to understand some basics.

Our three minds: Believe it or not we have three minds, the “reptile”, the “monkey” and the “neo cortex”.

- **Reptile mind:** This is the unconscious mind and performs all the automatic functions and actions which allow us to live (breathing, heart beating, digestion, reflexes etc.) without it we would literally be dead.

Unfortunately this is the very area that causes us to be anxious or stressed. This is at the core of our survival instincts.

- **Monkey mind:** This is the subconscious mind and contains all the knowledge, experience, habits, beliefs and attitudes to life. This mind allows us to manipulate the world around us, if you say you can't do something then you can't and this is the part of the brain that makes that happen; to be honest this is the part of the mind we need to train to allow us not to get stressed.

- **Neo Cortex:** This is the modern thinking mind, our consciousness. This is the analytical part of our mind that analyses the data we gather from our senses then works out what to do with it.

Unfortunately it is not always that good, if it receives new information that conflicts with that already stored in our subconscious mind it will usually try to block that information.

This is why we sometimes find it difficult to change and will contribute to our anxiety.

Our senses: You often hear about our five senses and mysterious sixth sense, the five senses are Sight, Sound, Touch, Smell and Taste, our sixth sense is that tingling that tells you something is wrong and depending on your point of view could be either a combination of the other five or a new as yet undefined sense.

We use these senses at both the conscious and subconscious level, at a conscious level we eat a sausage roll and say this tastes nice, our taste buds are helping us here. However if as we eat we push our lounge through the sausage roll we get a whole different experience as we feel the texture. We may also have smelt the sausage roll and looked at the crusty pastry in anticipation as well as listening to the crunch of the pastry. This all creates an experience that we can at least understand and seems quite obvious.

When you were a child you might have gone to your room at night and felt scared, you ran down stairs and said to your parents that there is a ghost in your room (maybe there was, maybe there was not). Your parents being loving and caring (hopefully) would have said there are no such things as ghosts and did things to help you sleep such as put up charms or stayed in the room with you until you fell asleep.

The problem here is that the subconscious mind has picked something up, maybe you saw movement from an insect, or heard the faint rustle of cloth settling in the wardrobe, or soft breeze as the air circulated or maybe mum had been cleaning and moved something so it was out of place. What has happened here is that your senses at a subconscious level have picked something up but not been able to or had time to interpret it. Your parents say you are being silly or such and you suppress your subconscious mind without trying to understand what actually happened.

Distance: Our senses are set up to understand 3 distinct distances; these are not set distances but are more a rough guide and may vary from individual to individual.

- **The inner circle:** Imagine you are standing in a circle whose circumference stretches out one and a half foot around your body.

This is our intermit zone, this is the area where you only feel comfortable with family and loved ones (Brother, sister, lover, parents etc.).

If a stranger stood that close or tried to hug you, you would feel very uneasy, why? Well that is because if someone is that close to you then they can attack you and you have no way to defend yourself.

- **The middle circle:** Now expand this circle out to 3 foot (if you kick your leg out straight then the circle would be about 3 to 6 inches beyond that point).

This is the space that we feel comfortable allowing friends into or those we trust. That is because those people are unlikely to attack us (yeah right), but if they do then we have at least a chance to stop or deflect their attack and to defend ourselves.

- **Outer circle:** So what about all that space outside the 3 foot circle?

This is reserved for strangers, this is because to harm you they would need to step into the 3 foot area to launch an attack and so you are comfortable that so long as you can maintain that distance you will be ok.

You should note that this circumference will expand based on the weapons to hand the 3 foot distance is based on the person being unarmed. If they had a spear this distance might be 9 foot, if they had a pistol then the distance would be at least 15 foot.

These distances they are programmed into our unconscious mind; ever had that tingle up your spine when someone stands too close behind you? An understanding of these distances is important as they lead nicely on to threat recognition and analysis.

Threat recognition and analysis: So at an unconscious or subconscious level our mind and body through thousands of years of evolution will pick up that there is a real or perceived threat and our conscious mind will try and interpret the signals if it can, and here is the crux of the problem as the rules in the modern world override the rules of nature.

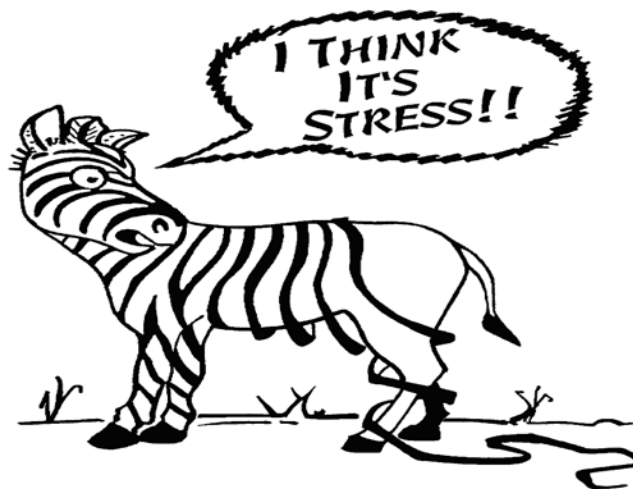
For example in an office it is ok for a stranger to stand closer than three foot. Our body says this is wrong and a threat and our conscious mind says don't be silly he is wearing a suit in the office so that is OK.

It is important for us to understand that when we feel anxious we have perceived a threat, at this point we may not know whether it is real or not, the subconscious is at work trying to assess the level of threat however at this point we cannot assess the level of the threat and so do not know what the appropriate response should be, this is potentially being compounded by there being too much information to assess, the rules of the modern world asserting themselves over our survival instincts or we have been through a traumatic event that has destroyed current perception of what is safe. The last point is particularly the case for victims of violence (domestic) or sexual assault.

Freeze, Flight and Fight: Once we have perceived that there is a threat our subconscious mind floods the body with chemicals (including adrenaline) that allow us to take action (do something).

The first thing that happens is our body freezes and time appears to slow down, in fact our conscious mind is working overtime to analyse all the data. Once we feel we have enough data we will act on that information, if we can we will run away otherwise we will fight, if we can't analyse the data we might just remain rooted or frozen to the spot.

In the modern world we cannot do what our instincts have been honed to do, for example the boss calls you into his office to tell you off, as you walk to the office you start getting butterflies in your stomach, find it harder to breathe, your body is preparing for a conflict. You go into the office and your boss lays into you because of something you did or did not do. Your body unconsciously floods with chemicals but you can't run away and you can't hit your boss. Neanderthal man welcome to the rules of the modern world.



So in summary what exactly is stress?

- Stress is an integral part of our survival mechanism (Freeze, Flight and Fight)
- It works unconscious and subconscious level to protect us
- It is a chemical dump of adrenaline and hormones that give us the power to deal with the situation
- It automatically prepares our body for action by
 - making the heart beat faster and blood pressure rises,
 - your muscles will harden through tension in readiness for action,
 - Your digestion slows as more acid is produced in the stomach,
 - we breathe quicker and harder as your lungs try to take up more oxygen to power the muscles,
 - blood is pumped to our brain and much more.

5. Stress in the modern world

Predators hunt using peripheral vision (yes we are predators), when hunting we would pick up movement using our periphery vision then turn and focus on our prey before pouncing. The reason we grew up to do this is because our prey would use its senses to pick up a threat and then run away or fight. If we stared directly at the prey it would sense us and run long before we could kill it.

We have grown up both as predator and prey and so when our senses pick up a threat (real or perceived) we will;

- Freeze (allowing us to assess the information and situation)
- Flight (our first instinct is usually to flee from the threat)
- Fight (If we need to (are cornered) then we will fight to protect ourselves)

This has allowed us to survive pretty effectively over the years, however in the modern world things change drastically.

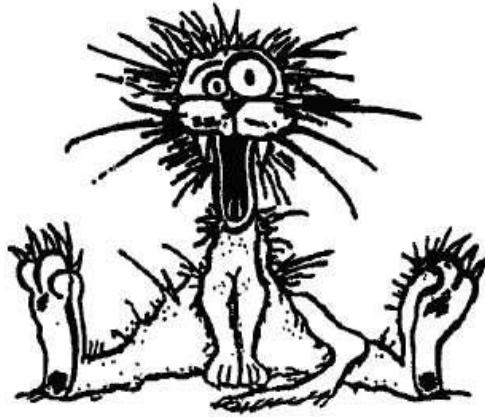
The modern world is a construct built on social rules such as;

- It is ok to get close to a stranger in the office (not necessarily their intimate space though),
- In a lift or on packed public transport a stranger is allowed into that intimate space,
- Our boss or an official can tell us off without fear of us running away or him receiving a punch in the face,
- There are legal limits on the response we can give in self- defence,
- If we want a job then we need to go to the interview,

- We have to pay the tax man what we owe them (unfortunately)

There are obviously hundreds of other similar examples.

In the modern world we usually cannot run away from the threat and we cannot fight it. This causes us a real problem as our primitive self is filling our body with chemicals (adrenaline and hormones) that if we do not use then turns you into the stress and anxiety. We can however put strategies in place to prevent stress and if stressed understand the causes and take effective actions for the management of stress. This is where sports, walks and the great outdoors can help us.



"STRESS"

THE CONFUSION CREATED WHEN
ONE'S MIND OVERRIDES THE
BODY'S BASIC DESIRE TO CHOKE
THE LIVING DAYLIGHTS OUT OF
SOMEBODY WHO DESPERATELY
NEEDS IT !

6. Not all stress is bad stress

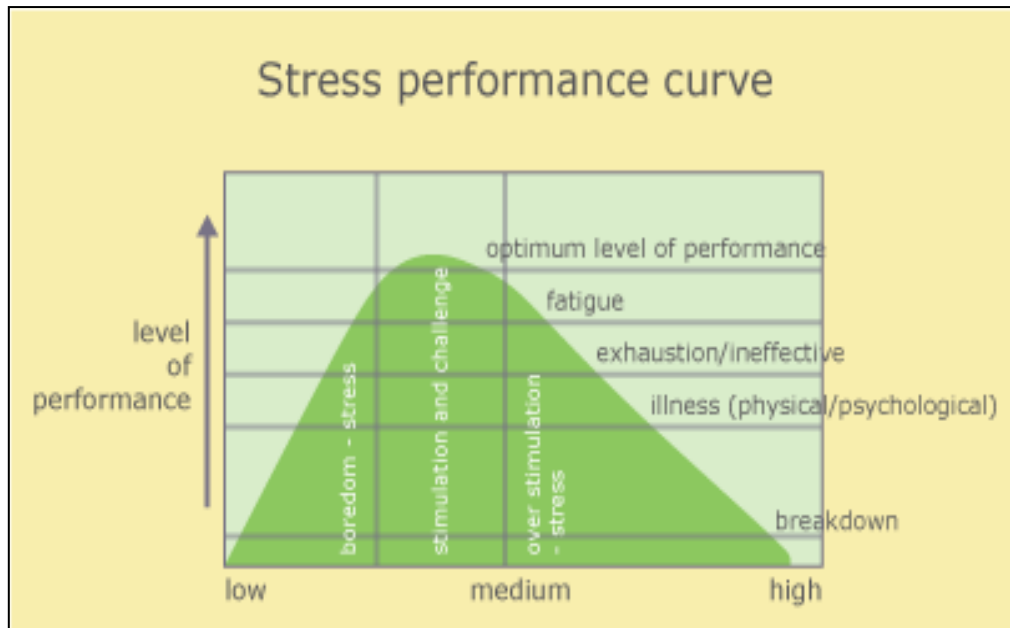
Believe it or not there is good stress and bad stress, not all stress is bad for us.

Good stress is where we have enough pressure in our lives to help stretch us, there is threat but we can manage it with suitable strategies. Some examples of this might be;

- Enough work to make the day pass quickly but not so much that you feel you cannot complete it all on time.
- A deadline that spurs us on.
- A target that motivates you.
- A challenge that inspires you.

Bad stress can be either;

- Not enough pressure in our lives and so we are not challenged and become lethargic
- Too much pressure which results in a perceived loss of control over our lives.



There are also plenty of myths around stress which cause confusion, some of these are;

- All stress is bad (nope some is good for you)
- Stress will not hurt you (yes it will)
- What stresses you out also stresses me out (nope we are each different and will perceive a situation differently, what is seen as a threat for you may not for me)
- No symptoms, no stress (stress can be a hidden disease)
- Only major symptoms of stress are harmful (not all the time)

7. Recognising bad stress

It is important to recognise that stress is starting to build up; these responses in the body will vary from person to person. What I have found is that it is hard for even so called experts to recognise the tipping point between bad stress and good stress. We make hundreds of decisions a day so we need understand when we start hitting the bad stress especially at work. So I would ask, do we feel;

- that we have lost control of our life or just losing it,
- that we have too much to do and not enough time to do it in,
- burned out,
- anticipation or fear that something bad is going to happen,
- we need to deal with unpredictable or uncontrollable people,
- "Butterflies" in your stomach
- our heart is beating faster, we are breathing harder, our head feels tight, our skin feels clammy etc.

Some warning signs that you might see in yourself or in someone that you are concerned may be stressed are;

Physical or physiological

- Weight loss or gain
- Headaches
- Back pain
- General increase in aches and pains
- Frequent colds or flu
- Increase in accidents
- Nail biting

- Sweaty
- Fatigue

Emotional

- Frequent mood swings
- Change in social behaviour with colleagues
- Tearfulness
- Apathy
- Tiredness
- Crying or wanting to cry
- Hostility

Cognitive

- Decrease in concentration or find it difficult to concentrate
- Forgetfulness
- Decrease in alertness
- Prone to errors or an increase in errors
- Feeling of numbness or emptiness
- Poor decision making
- Increased aggression

Behavioural

- Lack of social interest
- Missed appointments and deadlines
- Increase in frequency of mistakes
- Slamming doors or other items or hitting fist on desk
- Swearing
- Change in quality or quantity of work
- Change in eating patterns from absence to over indulgence

8. Dealing with our fears

We have another survival mechanism that we have not discussed yet but is the cause of much anxiety and stress and we need to discuss before we start looking at how to cure ourselves of stress, so here is a question for you;

“Why are we always so negative?”

Interesting question really as we all (without exception) look at the negative side of something before we look at the positive (if at all). Think on this, you are on a strange island and are hungry or thirsty; you come across a fruit that you have not seen before. Should you eat it?

If as a species we saw the positive in life we would tuck right in and there our blood line would end. Maybe not with this fruit but you can bet at some point before you reached 40 you would eat something that would kill you. So we have an unconscious process built in that says be careful it might harm or kill you. So as a species we have learnt to be cautious and thus done rather well for ourselves (maybe).

This is an important point to remember because this will stop you doing the things that you need to do to thrive rather than just exist. This is a whole topic in itself so we will not cover it here but just let the thought settle in your mind and stay there.

NO FEAR

When we want to make a decision we will usually have an irrational fear that something bad is going to happen, this is our subconscious at work helping us to survive, in an essence we perceive a threat. Now we have to analyse it and do something about it but there are so many fears how can we possibly work out what to do with each one? Well the first thing is to recognise the fear, above we only talked around one fear but there are only really five fears

- Ego death, the fear of humiliation
- Separation, the fear of abandonment
- Loss of autonomy, the fear of being immobilised
- Mutilation, the fear of losing part of our bodily structure or bodies boundaries invaded
- Extinction, the fear of ceasing to exist

All the other fears we have will fall into one of these five categories, we just have to work out which one.

Once recognised we can then rationally start to put strategies together to deal with this fear. If you replace the word fear with worry, nervousness etc. you can see this is where anxiety is born and its relationship with stress.

9. Managing anxiety

Anxiety is about rationalising the perceived threat level. The easiest way to manage this is to look at the anxiety and map it to the fear. You then need to rationalise the fear. The best way to do this is look at what is making you worried and what you see as the worst outcome. Once you have this halve the outcome and reassess. Repeat this at least twice until you come up with the most likely outcome.

For example you might have a fear of losing your job and if this happens you will lose your house, your wife and your family will hate you. If we look at halving this outcome we might come up with we may lose our house but it might be 6 months after losing our job, your wife may be upset with you and your family will be upset but will support you. If we halve it again we come up with you probably won't lose your job although you may not get a pay rise.

If we are still worried that we will lose our job and may lose our house we can look at how we can reduce that risk, maybe by taking on a second job for a period of time and putting aside 6 months' worth of money for the mortgage in case the worst happens.

One fear that comes up a lot is usually around death or separation, in reality death is very unlikely and separation from a group is never as bad as you think. If we take the above example redundancy is usually the fear of separation from a group, be it your work colleagues or family. In most cases you will move from one job to another and make new friends and so the fear is irrational but still real. If you are made redundant most families will pull together and support you. I remember the first time I was made redundant I went to the wood and just sat there numbed, I could not work out how I could tell my wife. In the end I did not lose my house or my wife and in fact she was

surprisingly supportive. Since then I have been made redundant four times and every time it has been hard but I have ended up with a better job paying me more money than the last job.

10. Prevention techniques

Prevention is always better than cure, hopefully you are reading this because you do not want to get stressed but I bet it is because you are already stressed or anxious. If so you might want to read the section on cures then return here so you can stop it happening again.

Take responsibility for our actions: We need to realise we are responsible for everything that happens to us and it is no one else's fault. This is a hard truth.

Realise we are in control: In martial arts you must learn to control the environment and your enemy (sometimes this is you and sometimes someone else). You could say it is your boss but who gave him permission to control you?

Review your lifestyle: Be aware that you are being controlled by others at every point in your life, your parent, your boss, the law, the government, your friends etc. Decide which things you want to control and which you are happy with others controlling. I tell my students that;

- If I am attacked I fight using my rules, after all I did not ask to be attacked
- If I attack someone I fight using my rules, after all I do not intend to lose
- If I enter a competition I will abide by those rules as I decided to enter, that does not mean I do not push the boundaries of the rules.

Make small changes: We almost always try to change everything at once and we will usually fail. We need to make lots of small changes or adjustment to our life.

While training in sword my teacher told me something his teacher (Tanigawa Sensei) told him that I think is truly inspirational in changing your life. He spoke about "Ki Kiri Do" or "the art of the wood cutter". What this means is if we try to cut the tree down with one stroke of the axe we will fail. Instead we need to be like the wood cutter. He will take lots of small cuts, stand back review what has happened then do some more. Eventually the tree will fall exactly where he wanted it to fall.

Learn to manage time: Time is the most precious commodity we have, you can never buy more of it no matter how rich you are, learn to manage your time. Why work 40 years hating your job, your life your circumstances so that when you retire you will have a better life. It does not work like that. If you get this right then you will always feel that you have retired, believe me I feel like I retired at 38 even though I work like you do.

Learn to say "No": Unless you learn to say no to others (and yourself) you will not be able to effectively change your life. That does not mean you say no to everything but it is your choice whether you do or do not.

"People take advantage of you only with your permission"

You always have a choice, even if that choice is to do nothing and ultimately this is your responsibility to yourself. Once you have done this make the changes. This is easier said than done and again is a subject for another short book.

11. Curing stress

Although you can never really cure stress as it is part of your survival mechanism there are things we can do when we are stressed that will allow us to deal effectively with it. Now we understand what stress is and what we need to do when we are stressed here are some other areas you might want to look at to help.

Learn to relax: Once we have learnt to assess the threat and can analyse which fear is being triggered we can help by learning to meditate. This will help us relax, if you learn to use mudras to help you then effectively switch into a relaxed mode at the switch of your hand.

A mudra is where you form a shape with your hand say touch the tip of the index finger and thumb together while you practice relaxing your mind. Initially you form the mudra and then focus on relaxing; eventually you program the mind to relax when you form the mudra.

Take up an activity: Sports will greatly help you as an activity, learn to mimic our natural urges to run or fight although to be honest most vigorous activities will help.

Take control of your environment and life: Learn about yourself and the world you live in, understand how you are controlled and assess whether you want to be controlled and if not look to either influence how you are controlled or do something about yourself so that you can take control.

“Do not move your enemy, move yourself”

Sun Tzu

For example do not hate your job, look for another job and if you do not have the skills work out how you can gain them, don't forget charities need help and as a volunteer you may have better opportunities to gain the skills and experience.

You cannot always force others to change but you can change yourself.

Take responsibility for your life: You cannot rely on anyone else all the time so learn to take responsibility for yourself. Don't wait for your company to give you the training you need for promotion, look at how you can gain the knowledge.

Take small steps: If you try to change too much or take on too much YOU WILL FAIL. Make a small change, assess how that has worked, then make another and keep making those changes until you succeed.

Learn new skills: Do you need to learn more skills? Look at YouTube or other how to video channels, look for someone who is already where you want to be and mimic them or ask them how they got there, what skills they need, maybe would they be willing to coach or mentor you?

Learn to ask better questions: Learn to ask questions to your advantage, use these 4 ideas to help you get the information you require.

WWWWW (5 bum's on a rugby post): Use “Who”, “What”, “When”, “Why”, “Where” and “How” to gain a general idea or understanding.

TED: Use “Tell”, “Explain” and “Describe” to gain a more detailed understanding, for example if you ask “Where is the station?” the response might be a vague over there with a

wave of the hand, if you get this you can then ask them to explain where it is located which might get third road on the right.

Pause: Use pauses to get more information, I use this all the time as an auditor, people do not like silence and will unconsciously volunteer information.

Closed questions (Yes, No): Use closed questions to confirm your understanding “So if I walk up this street and then take the third turning on the right I will come to the station?”. All too often we use closed questions in the wrong way “Is the station in that direction?”

Learn to deal with difficult people or recognise office politics: This is a whole subject in its own right but just become aware of office politics.

Learn to delay or drop tasks: We can build up lists of things to do, work out what is important to you, what will help you get where you want to go, if it does not contribute then learn to drop it or at least put it off until later.

Learn to delegate tasks: This is a key skill, don't try and do it all yourself delegate some tasks to others but remember that you still own the responsibility, this is all too often forgotten and leads to more stress when things do not go as expected.

Change your lifestyle: Learn to change the things you do not like in your life such as you're job.

12. Stress in the workplace

There is no more a dangerous environment for stress than the workplace, this is an environment you need to learn to navigate and effectively manage.

Staff: Much of what we have discussed will help you to control this environment so I will be brief with some of the ideas here that will help you.

Learn to relax: Meditation, holidays, days off, massages all of these will help you to relax and take your mind of work. Take time out for yourself.

Learn to observe (cup half full): Change your focus from negative to positive, try and write down one positive thing a day or tell a close friend one thing daily. The more you notice the positive the better your life will become. Even a negative can be a positive.

Learn to breathe: Strange as it sounds we breathe but we do not get the best out of our breathing, take some time out just to learn how to breathe and oxygenate the blood and your mind.

Learn to calm you monkey mind: Meditation and breathing are great for this.

Learn to use mudras: Mudras allow you to train the brain, learn how to do this you have no idea how it will change your world.

Learn visualisation techniques: This is a whole subject in its own right but it is worth looking into this and learning how to do it.

Learn to say “no”: You do yourself, your staff and those asking you to do something no favours by saying yes if you cannot deliver.

Learn to negotiate: Maybe “no” is not an option but that does not mean you cannot negotiate, do you really need it by then, if I do this can I drop or delay this?

Learn to manage your time: Be more productive with your time and don’t waste it, time is the only commodity you cannot buy more off.

Learn to manage appraisals: HR teams, performance management kills staff, stop it. Be clear at appraisals, are you happy doing what you do or do you want to exceed, if the latter learn to take on responsibility, ask your boss to delegate, if you want to just come in and do your job well then say so.

Get a coach or mentor: We can learn from our mistakes but if someone has already made the same mistakes why would we not want to learn from them, many managers will happily coach or mentor staff so find yourself a coach or mentor.

Don’t kill your dreams: Your fears will kill more dreams than you realise. Learn to see the positive.

Take up an activity or sport: We have already explained the benefits of this.

- Running
- Swimming
- Cycling
- Maybe a motor sport
- Go camping or visit new places

The key here is to “run away”

Take up a sport or activity that involves

- Hitting things (boxercise type class)
- A striking martial art like Kickboxing
- A spiritual martial art like Aikido
- A Grappling art like Judo
- Buy a punch bag and learn to hit or kick it

The key here is to “fight your fear”

Take time out for yourself.



Out of interest if you think this is a bit strange, chances are if you have a good manager they will know all this already.

Management: Come on guys you should know better and if you don't then why on earth are you managing others. **Directors** take time to look after your staff and they will look after you and your company, less sick days, less legal action etc. Deal with stress don't hide from it, as a manager you can't do it all.

Learn to say "no": You do yourself, your staff and those asking you to do something no favours by saying yes if you cannot deliver.

Learn to negotiate: Maybe "no" is not an option but that does not mean you cannot negotiate, do you really need it by then, if I do this can I drop or delay this?

Learn to delegate tasks: You cannot do it all yourself, delegate tasks, some of your staff want to exceed in their appraisals, train them to do your role by delegating and coaching and when you free up time use this to ask your boss to delegate responsibilities to you. But remember you still own the delegated task you have not palmed it off.

Learn to lead: No I do not mean this business term SLT (Senior Leadership Team), I absolutely HATE this term, get a life even if you call yourself a leadership team chances are you are still only really a manager. People follow leaders, you need courage, charisma and a vision for your staff to buy into. Ask yourself if you did not pay the staff below you would they still work with you to achieve your goal, in my 40 plus years of working I have only come across two managers I would really follow.

Get a coach or mentor: We can learn from our mistakes but if someone has already made the same mistakes why would we not want to learn from them, many managers will happily coach or mentor staff so find yourself a coach or mentor.

Don't kill your dreams: Your fears will kill more dreams than you realise. Learn to see the positive.

Simple ideas that help

Some simple ideas to round up with;

Relaxation

- Breathing: practice deep breathing
- Progressive muscle relaxation
- Guided Imagery
- Meditation
- Tapes, CDs etc.: Either something structured (commercial) or soothing music

Cognitive thoughts

- Take small steps
- Pay attention to what you say to yourself
- Identify negative thinking and irrational beliefs
- Negative thinking leads to stress and anxiety
- Learn thought-stopping techniques
- Learn mudras and affirmations

“Be positive, one negative thought, leads to another...
then another ... then another...
Pretty soon you have ruined your entire life”

Eating

- Cut down on sugar, caffeine, processed foods
- Eat nutritiously: all food groups, especially fresh fruits and veggies
- Eat a little every couple of hours or so
- Eat slowly

Ideas

- Laugh as often as you can
- Cry when you feel you need to, do not suppress it
- Try new things, do not worry about failing
- Get enough sleep
- Exercise
- Get enough fresh air
- Build a support system – friends, family and co-workers
- SAY “NO” occasionally
- Let go of perfectionism
- Learn to be flexible
- Relax your standards
- Focus less on pleasing others and more on pleasing yourself
- Stay away from negative people
- Surround yourself with positive, upbeat, flexible and fun people.

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**“What fits your busy schedule better,
exercising one hour a day or being
dead 24 hours a day?”**