

**The little book of managing
Depression, Anxiety and Stress**

Index

1. Introduction
2. Some definitions
 - a. Depression
 - b. Anxiety
 - c. Panic Attacks
 - d. Stress
 - e. OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder)
3. Our three minds
 - a. Neo Cortex
 - b. Unconscious
 - c. Subconscious
 - d. Monkey mind explained
4. How our instincts work
 - a. Our three minds
 - b. Our senses
 - c. Distance
5. Fear, Desire and our Emotions
 - a. 5 fears
 - b. Wants and needs
 - c. Desires
 - d. Emotions
6. Overlay of disorders and survival instincts
 - a. Negative view of the world
 - b. Threat recognition and analysis
 - c. Freeze, Flight and Fight
 - d. Loss of control
7. The modern world
 - a. Controls – Family and friends
 - b. Controls – Religion
 - c. Controls – Government
 - d. Controls – Corporations
 - e. Modern economics
 - f. Modern society
8. Depression
 - a. Exercise 1 – Positivity diary
 - b. Exercise 2 – Learn to relax
 - c. Exercise 3 – Thought rationalisation
 - d. Exercise 4 – Socialise
 - e. Exercise 5 – Exercise
 - f. Exercise 6 – Sleep
 - g. Exercise 7 – Daylight
9. Anxiety and Panic Attack
 - a. Exercise 1 – Get up and do something
 - b. Exercise 2 – Learn to relax
 - c. Exercise 3 – Positivity thoughts
10. Stress
 - a. Recognising that you are stressed (or anxious)
 - b. Stress in the modern world
 - c. Not all stress is bad stress
 - d. Recognising bad stress
 - e. Managing stress
 - f. Prevention techniques

- g. Exercise 1 – Take responsibility for our actions
 - h. Exercise 2 – Make small changes
 - i. Exercise 3 – Learn to relax
 - j. Exercise 4 – Learn to take control of your environment and life
 - k. Exercise 5 – Take up an activity or sport
 - l. Exercise 6 – Learn new skills
 - m. Exercise 7 – Learn to ask better questions
 - n. Exercise 8 – Learn to deal with difficult people and recognise office politics
 - o. Exercise 9 – Learn to delay or drop tasks
 - p. Exercise 10 – Learn to delegate tasks
 - q. Exercise 11 – Change your life style
- 11. Stress in the workplace**
- a. Exercise 1 – Learn to relax
 - b. Exercise 2 – Learn to observe (cup half full)
 - c. Exercise 3 – Learn to breathe
 - d. Exercise 4 – Learn to use Mudras
 - e. Exercise 5 – Learn visualisation techniques
 - f. Exercise 6 – Learn to say “no”
 - g. Exercise 7 – Learn to negotiate
 - h. Exercise 8 – Learn to manage your time
 - i. Exercise 9 – Learn to manage your appraisals
 - j. Exercise 10 – Get a coach or mentor
 - k. Exercise 11 – Don’t kill your dreams
 - l. Exercise 12 – Learn to delegate tasks
 - m. Exercise 13 – Learn to lead
- 12. OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder)**
- a. Exercise 1 - Facing your fears
 - b. Exercise 2 - Realise we are in control
 - c. Exercise 3 – Make small changes
 - d. Exercise 4 – Learn to manage your time
 - e. Exercise 5 – Learn to say “no”
 - f. Exercise 6 – Rationalisation techniques
- 13. Managing Habits**
- 14. Simple ideas that help**

Thank you C, 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.

Thank you Yasmin, Marissa and Larisa for creating the drawings for this book!

1. Introduction

Like many of you in this modern world over the years I have had many stresses in my life. Such as being bullied at school; having competition nerves; problems at work; paying the bills; being made redundant (several times); looking for jobs and the interview process etc. Do any of these sound familiar to you? Although I have never been really depressed I have had my downs where the world seems to weigh so heavily on my shoulders.

Through my training in martial arts I have been able to get to the position where I can happily say that I no longer get depressed, anxious or stressed (bad stress that is, good stress is OK, more on that later). At the time of writing this book (2018) I can honestly say that I have not been stressed in the past 10 years.

I now teach martial arts and this has given me the opportunity to train with and teach a wide range of people;

- from children and teenagers to those who are retired
- from the unemployed and employed to the self-employed and business owners
- and unfortunately those who have been through domestic abuse and sexual assault.

This means I am fortunate in seeing how depression, anxiety, panic attacks, stress and OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder) affect a range of generations and individuals, for example;

- the young can be affected by bullying or simply having to complete their homework
- as they grow and become teenagers it is hormones, passing exams, college/university, girls/boys, family and peer pressure
- as they hit their early adult years it can be finding work, starting a career, starting a family and rent/mortgage worries
- later we get the mid-life crisis and why are we here and suddenly the realisation that we did not really think about what we will do when we retire
- finally we get to retirement and the realisation of our mortality, the regrets of not really living the life we wanted or expected and what do we do now

and that is just for those of us who do not have to cope with domestic violence, being abused, assaulted (sexually or otherwise), have a disability or had some serious trauma in their life.

I would like to think I have been fortunate enough to have students who have come to me with these problems and more and that I have been able to improve their lives.

I have no medical or psychology background (other than that taught within martial arts), I would not even say I am well educated, certainly I am not a professor with PhD's and the like, I am just like you in most senses.

I am sure that what I have written down here will be picked full of holes by the experts but I have found that for myself and the majority of my students the words I am about to write down have helped them and I hope will well help you. I have tried to write this book as though a close friend offering advice and guidance. To that end I have not packed the book with complex terms and explanations but rather kept it simple. If you want more details you will find lots of experts on the internet or YouTube who will explain exactly what is happening at each stage. I have tried to explain things clearly and not be overly complicated, if I have complicated something then I apologise for that in advance, please feel free to get in touch with me and I will try and help. If I repeat anything then bear with it, the reason it is repeated is because it is important.

Japanese martial arts use the word "Sensei" for teacher, what this title really tries to convey is the idea of "one who has gone before", a bit like a guide on a path. This does not mean that the Sensei is always right or the most knowledgeable but rather just that they have trodden the path you now wish to follow. I hope that in reading this book I am able to help show you the path I have been able to take to free myself.

Finally you will find that you do not have to read the book in its entirety, each chapter (Depression, Anxiety, Panic Attacks, Stress and OCD) can be read separately. Although you do not need to read the other chapters they will give you some insight into why these disorders happen, so worth reading but is not essential. What is important is that you do not see each disorder as separate, they are all part of a single process and so the exercises to fix one disorder will also have a beneficial effect on others. For some reason we seem to break each down and so cannot fix the whole.

2. Some definitions

These are the definitions I will use during the book. I have also taken a very simplistic view of these conditions, this is more based in Zen or Buddhist philosophies where it is said that by placing a label on something we restrict our thinking. As you will see all these conditions are stages in the same process made to keep us alive through the ages. More on this later!

Depression is a condition characterised by feelings of severe despondency and dejection, typically with feelings of inadequacy and guilt, often accompanied by a lack of energy and disturbance of sleep and appetite.

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

Panic Attack is a sudden period of severe anxiety in which your heart beats faster, you have trouble breathing, and you feel as if something very bad is going to happen.

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

OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder) is a mental disorder in which people have unwanted and repeated thoughts, feelings, ideas, sensations (obsessions), and behaviours that drive them to do something over and over (compulsions).

Sometimes if you have one of these conditions you will likely find you have two or more, this is because they are all very closely connected as you will see and so we can treat them together with the same positive results.

3. Our three minds

“**An Ancient Mind in a Modern World**” or how our conscious, subconscious and unconscious survival instincts cause us pain and suffering in today’s modern society.

Conscious mind (Neo-Cortex), this is our objective or thinking mind. When someone says we only use 10% of our mind this is the part they are referring to. This is the part of our mind can hold one thought at a time and allows us to communicate ideas and feelings that are within our current awareness through the use of sensations, movement, speech etc.

Our conscious mind has 4 essential functions;

- identify information through our senses
- apply reason
- apply analysis
- make decisions.

Subconscious mind, this is the part of our mind that controls our instincts. Our senses take in information and our subconscious mind uses that to help us and keep us safe (unless we over ride it with our Neo Cortex).

The subconscious mind notices and remembers information even when we are not actively trying to do so and influences our behaviours even if we do not realise it.

The subconscious stores all of our lives previous experiences, beliefs, memories and skills as well as remembering the situations we have been through and all the images we have ever seen.

Unconscious mind, this is the part of our mind that stores all our experiences and memories including those that have been repressed through trauma or have just been forgotten and no longer of use to us.

It is from these memories that our beliefs, habits, behaviours and attitudes are formed as well as the source of our dreams or nightmares.

The unconscious mind is the information processing engine and the source of many of the modern day disorders we will talk about in this book.

Using the analogy of a computer our conscious mind is the keyboard, processor and screen, as we type something, it will appear on the screen and processed one thing at a time.

The subconscious is a bit like the RAM (Random Access Memory) data is moved into RAM and if the data is useful at that time we will use it, if not it is written to the hard drive. Unlike a computer all data is written to the hard drive not just what we want to store (do you start to see the problem here?).

The unconscious mind is like the hard drive, we can store vast amounts of data (all data) on it, the problem is we do not always realise exactly what data has been written to it. We also tend to forget what we have stored and without the right tools find it hard to find the data. It is like trying to find a file without knowing the name or file structure to reach it.

Monkey mind explained

The monkey mind (shin en in Japanese) is a Buddhist term for our mind meaning “unsettled; restless; capricious; whimsical; fanciful; inconstant; confused; indecisive; uncontrollable”. The money mind is really the subconscious (and unconscious) minds, and this is important to understand. To resolve a lot of our modern world problems we need to get familiar with our monkey mind, more on this later.

4. How our instincts and body work

Over the centuries our mind and body has developed to become an ultimate machine of survival, this has allowed us to progress from hunted to hunter gatherer to the king (or queen) of the modern world. However although relatively recently our world has moved forward at lightning speed our minds have not. If you are not sure about this you only need to look at the research done on third world tribes and you will see that they either do not have the disorders prevalent in the modern societies or the percentage that do are lower by a huge amount.

Yes we are certainly more intelligent through what we have learnt (and built upon) and with an eye to the future it seems we will continue to evolve for better or for worse. However our minds are still living in the past and the faster our world evolves the more problems our mind will create for us and so the more important the need to understand the root causes. Some simple basics you need to know are;

Our three minds: We have discussed these three minds in the previous chapter however what you need to understand is that a lot of our modern disorders are the result of our subconscious and unconscious minds doing what they think we need to do to survive a threat or confrontation whether real or perceived (this is what causes most problems in our lives).

When something happens, our Neo Cortex tries to identify the data that is being collected and analyses the information (also applying/overlying rules from our modern society) and based on that analysis it makes a decision on what actions we need to take.

The problem is that our subconscious and unconscious minds undermine the Neo Cortex, these other two minds collect and store far more data than we are aware of, these minds define a threat given the information available while the Neo Cortex tries to rationalise the data given modern rules. This causes the conflicts which ultimately lead to the disorders we are trying to cure here. This is why we sometimes find it difficult to change and will contribute to our depression, anxiety and/or panic.

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 (Intuition) and depending on your point of view could be either a combination of the other five senses or a new as yet undefined sense.

We use these senses at the conscious, subconscious and unconscious levels, at a conscious level we eat some food, say a pastry of some kind and say this tastes nice, our taste buds are helping us here. However if as we eat we push our tongue through the pastry we get a whole different experience as we feel the texture. We may also have smelt the pastry 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. A lot of what we take in will be at the subconscious and unconscious levels and so we may not even be aware that we have noted anything, in some cases we will like and want some foods without understanding why, sugar is a good example of this, but that is a different book entirely.

Another example might be when you were a child you might have gone to your room at night and felt scared, you ran downstairs 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 and unconscious minds have 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/unconscious 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/unconscious mind without trying to understand what actually happened. If you have a bad experience this will be stored in the subconscious and pulled out at a later date

maybe in the form of a phobia or Post-Traumatic Stress or PTSD. Some of these fears are pre-programmed in our genes such as a fear of snakes or spiders. Interestingly enough in the UK we have no spiders or snakes that are likely to kill us unless we are really unlucky so why would we (British) have a phobia of them?

Distance: Our senses are also set up to understand and respond to 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 intimate 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 fast enough unless specifically trained.

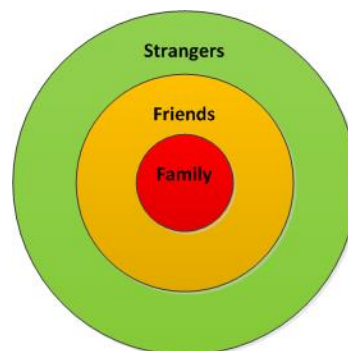
- **The middle circle:** Now expand this circle out to roughly three foot (if you kick your leg out straight then the circle would be about three to six inches beyond that point).

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 three foot circle?

This is reserved for strangers, this is because to harm you they would need to step into the three 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 three foot distance is based on the person being unarmed. If they had a spear this distance might be nine foot, if they had a pistol then the distance would be at least 15 foot.



These distances are programmed into our subconscious/unconscious mind. Have you 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.

5. Fear, Desire and our Emotions

So far we have talked about our three minds and our instincts. To make life more complex we have to throw into the mix our fears, desires and emotions. These three areas drive us more than we realise and gaining some control over them will help change things enormously for you.

Fear (and excitement) is our subconscious at work again helping us to survive; in an essence our subconscious has identified a threat (whether real or perceived). The problem tends to be that as previously discussed we are sometimes not even aware of why we fear what we fear. This is usually because the fear is rooted in our subconscious.

So that we can get over our fears there are a couple of things we need to do, the first thing is to recognise the root fear, although there are many fears people think they have there are only really five fears;

- Ego death, the fear of humiliation, shame or worthlessness
- Separation, the fear of abandonment or rejection
- Loss of autonomy, the fear of being immobilised
- Mutilation or bodily invasion, the fear of losing part of our bodily structure or the 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 (or two).

For example a fear of spiders or snakes might well be because a bite from a spider or snake could kill (Extinction) or paralyse (Loss of autonomy) or maybe invade the body through an opening or wound (Mutilation) or could be you might look silly in your reaction (Ego Death). Each of these will need a different solution but at least now you can start working out why you are scared of spiders or snakes. Prior to this it was just an “irrational fear”.

Secondly we need to consider if the fear is “Instinctive” or “Conditioned”. An instinctive fear is a fear that comes from our subconscious and is instinctive the example above around spiders and snakes is a good example of an instinctive fear as are fears such as heights or enclosed spaces. These tend to be harder to get over but can be through awareness and repeated exposure.

A conditioned fear on the other hand is one that was instilled in you over time, maybe from your parents, community, social peers, religion, marketers, government etc. A couple of good examples might be;

- You need to get married or when you are old you will have no one to look after you.
- You should always have money or you will not be able to live.
- You should get a good education or you will never get anywhere in life.
- You should never revolt against god.
- If you do not conform to this shape (to fat, to thin) no one will love you.
- If you do not consume this (make up, clothing, car etc.) you will not fit in.

With all these there is no need to fear them, for example;

- You do not need to be married to have friends in old age.
- You do not need money to live if you can build a shelter, hunt etc.
- How many multi-millionaires are there with little or no education? Generally the educated work for those with no education but who started a business because they could not be hired, think on that for a bit.
- God does not care, religion does.
- Someone will always love you for the way you are if you look hard enough.
- Do you want to be in a group where what you consume counts?

Conditioned fear is usually closely related to “wants and needs” and our (and others) desires.

Once recognised we can then rationally start to put strategies together to deal with this fear.

NO FEAR

This state of fear can be complicated by the fact that fears and excitement put the body into the same physical state. We see things as polar opposites so fear makes us want to run away while excitement makes us want to run towards something, this can be seen as negative/positive or pleasure/pain. The result is the same as the body now goes into a hyper aware state.

An example of this might be going on a roller coaster, two people could look and feel petrified, one because they fear what could go wrong, the other excited with how it will make them feel. The result for both is a chemical rush or what is called in the drugs world a “bad trip” or a “good trip”.

Wants and needs, at a subconscious/unconscious level we have some basic needs that we look to satisfy, this is better known as the “Hierarchy of Needs”, I do not want to cover this here as it is a whole topic on its own but basically at an subconscious/unconscious level we seek out;

- Shelter
- Security
- Food and water
- Reproduction

Add to this we are continually trying to better our position so we can overlay these needs with some basic wants. For example we can eat food raw but by heating it we make it safer and more edible, we can cook it over an open fire, build an oven in the ground, buy an oven from the store or buy a microwave as it is faster, finally we can just go to a restaurant and have someone cook the food for us. None of these additional levels are needs but each makes the process better in some way. These wants are at a conscious level.

Desires are really just wants but we consciously or subconsciously might see these as needs, there are 16 basic desires;

1. Acceptance, the need to be appreciated
2. Curiosity, the need to gain knowledge
3. Eating, the need for food
4. Family, the need to take care of one's offspring
5. Honour, the need to be faithful to the customary values of an individual's ethnic group, family or clan
6. Idealism, the need for social justice
7. Independence, the need to be distinct and self-reliant
8. Order, the need for prepared, established, and conventional environments
9. Physical activity, the need for work out of the body
10. Power, the need for control of will
11. Romance, the need for mating or sex
12. Saving, the need to accumulate something
13. Social contact, the need for relationship with others
14. Social status, the need for social significance
15. Tranquillity, the need to be secure and protected
16. Vengeance, the need to strike back against another person

Emotions and feelings (feelings are basically the physical manifestation of an emotion) can be thought of as our primitive communications system. Essentially emotions are the language of the subconscious/unconscious minds and bridge the gap between these two minds and our conscious mind. The conscious mind (Neo Cortex) processes and analyses information and based on this analysis makes a decision however our emotions can come along and totally side swipe the process.

Emotions are a bit like typing something into a computer in English (or other language) but really the computer only understands the binary language of 1s and 0s (on or off). Binary is much quicker for the processor to execute than English but a lot harder for us to understand than a string of 1s and 0s.

Emotions can make a two way bridge, they can create memories in our subconscious or can be attached to memories when we recall them this makes them immensely powerful.

Although there are lots of emotions (see plutchik's wheel of emotion) it is important to understand a couple of basics;

- Our emotions work on rewards and threats (we move towards pleasure and away from pain).
- You should generally trust your instincts (emotions/feelings) to “keep you alive” and “reproduce” which relate to our biological needs.
- Emotions can eventually be controlled (reaction reduced) through meditation.

For the purpose of this book and the disorders we are trying to fix we will focus more on the emotions aligned to reacting to threats as these are at the root of these disorders.

The way we use our emotions follows this process;

1. The subconscious and/or unconscious mind takes in information and performs analysis of the data.
2. From this analysis the mind might decide that there is a threat (real or potential).
3. These minds then create a thought.
4. This thought creates an emotion.
5. The Hypothalamus then creates chemicals (by combining amino acids to create peptides).
6. These chemicals are then injected into the blood stream.
7. The heart pumps chemicals around our body.
8. Our body then uses these chemicals to create an action.

You do not really need to know what the chemicals are rather that it just happens, the chemicals produced are;

for rewards - Dopamine, Oxytocin, Serotonin
for threats – Adrenaline, Cortisol

Depending on the amounts of chemicals injected into the body the emotional intensity will differ, for example someone spills your drink and makes you angry so rather than accepting their apology you start a fight or maybe stab them, this is because a large dose might create uncontrolled rage but if the level was reduced it might create the feelings of anger or apprehension.

You will notice this is almost the same process our conscious mind takes, but if untrained our subconscious and unconscious mind will override our conscious mind. Even thinking something threatening can trigger an emotional response, our emotions then hijack our brain.

Because emotions are immensely powerful and because they are tightly wired to our survival instincts It is important to be able to train ourselves to pause and rationalise what is happening before doing something based on our emotions, this is not easy to do because our emotions are stronger and react faster than the conscious thinking mind. Remember the old saying “take a deep breath”.

Ever wonder why martial artists train to fight but also meditate; well now you know.

Added to this we can have multiple emotions layered on each other and so need to find the underlying feeling, you might show the emotion anger because you feel hurt.

There are many emotions and some examples are below, however what we do need to be aware of is when we make a decision, if emotions are high we probably need to take a few breaths before we react.

The basic biological emotions are;

Joy, Anticipation, Anger, Disgust, Sadness, Surprise, Fear, Trust

As you will see later we can learn to control these chemical releases through meditation or use the chemicals through applying physical exercise which mimics the fight or flight process.

Some emotions will combine to create feelings in us;

Serenity and Interest creates Optimism

Anticipation and Anger creates Aggressiveness

Disgust and Anger creates Contempt

Sadness and Disgust create Remorse

Surprise and Sadness creates Disapproval

Fear and Surprise creates Awe

Trust and Fear creates Submission

Joy and Trust creates Love

If you have been through domestic violence you will notice that the last two are used heavily by the abuser, they create trust (you only trust what they say) and then uses the fear of separation (you are worthless and no one else will want you) combined with love (they are the only one who loves you) to stop you from leaving. More on how manipulation works later.

Finally it is worth saying that we also apply negative or positive filters to our emotions which is why when you fail it can either make you give up or try harder, become depressed or excited. Again with training this can be used to manage emotions but more on this later.

Some Positive (Reward) / Negative (Threat) pairs

Joy v Sadness, Anger v Fear, Trust v Disgust, Surprise v Anticipation

6. Overlay of disorders and survival instincts

Our subconscious and unconscious mind work hard in the background 24 hours a day 7 days a week to keep us alive. As I have said this survival process does not fit very well with the rules of modern society and so I have tried to simplify this in the chart below. Later I will show you strategies for each phase that will help you and hopefully the explanation will make you understand why some strategies that work for one person do not work for another.

The top line is a list of disorders, others could be added such as night mares/terrors, PTSD etc. but that would make this work to unwieldy and besides these tend to be extremes of the disorders listed, if you have these then by fixing the disorders in this book you may well fix these as well. Hopefully you will be able to see where these fit in after reading this book. Maybe if there are more specific problems I will look to cover these in a later book.

The important point is how the disorder aligns to our survival processes. Although I am aware this might not help everyone hopefully it will help make a difference to a large number of sufferers.

Depression	Anxiety	Panic Attacks	Stress	OCD
Negative view of the world	Threat Recognition and Analysis		Freeze, Flight or Fight	Loss of control of environment

Negative view of the world: We seem to see the world in a negative way, have you noticed this? Not all of us but the vast majority do anyway. As a species we are “risk adverse”, we try to avoid risk at all costs. The reason is because we (humans) tend to do a lot of stupid things and so over time our subconscious and unconscious minds have built a library of things that could hurt us and threaten our lives.

For example if you saw a bright yellow fruit for the first time you would be a little wary of it (you may not even know why), you might smell it, break it and maybe touch it with your finger, rub a bit on the back of your hand or arm and maybe only then the tip of your tongue. What you are trying to do is take in as much information through your senses as you can, analyse the data and then make a decision on whether it is safe or not to eat. The reason you might be cautious is because subconsciously over time we have found that eating strange fruit can cause us harm or even death. In nature yellow usually means danger. As a species if we just picked up a piece of food and ate it believing it to be good for us we would probably never have survived for more than a few years.

Jump forward a few millennia we walk into a supermarket, see a new yellow fruit we do not recognise on promotion, buy it and try it out with very little concern because it is in a supermarket so obviously is OK to eat! Your instincts are probably screaming out to you to be wary but your Neo Cortex (conscious mind) overrode the feeling because of course it is just a silly feeling.

Hope you enjoyed that Banana, Lemon or Grapefruit.

So every minute of the day our subconscious is busily trying to tell us all the things we do could be dangerous to us so be careful.

As we gather more information and repeat an action (form a habit) we will be able to replace some of that subconscious data so our mind can focus on other things, more on this later. If you want to understand this a bit more, look up “Pavlovian fear conditioning”. You probably no longer see a Banana, Lemon or Grapefruit as dangerous; to be honest you probably do not even give it a second thought.

If we have a bad experience we will suddenly have a change of view, you will see this if someone is assaulted (traumatised), suddenly all they used to see as safe is thrown into doubt and they can become too afraid (anxious) to even step outside.

Threat recognition and analysis: As I have explained in the three minds our subconscious and unconscious minds take in and process vast amounts of data, our conscious mind is not always aware of what that data is and so you end up with a disconnect and this is where anxiety and panic attacks rear their ugly head.

Through our senses (and thousands of years of evolution) we will unconsciously pick up that there is a threat (whether real or perceived) and our conscious mind will try and interpret the data. Usually our subconscious will process this data and have you reacting long before the conscious mind has had time to process the data. As we have said previously the conscious mind will;

- Try and identify the information.
- Apply reason based on our previous experiences.
- Analyse the data.
- Then make a decision based on the rules of the modern world.

There are a few big problems with this process;

1. The conscious mind is not always aware of all the data collected by the subconscious/unconscious minds.
2. We have suppressed or forgotten memories at the subconscious level.
3. Our subconscious is trying to talk to us through our emotions at the same time and thus confusing the thought process.
4. Our survival instincts are habits that are deeply rooted in our unconscious mind.
5. Our subconscious and unconscious are processing data at a far faster rate than our conscious.

So as you can see the conscious mind is trying to make a decision based on an incomplete set of data and a set of rules that are being overridden by a different set of rules that it is not even aware exist. It is a bit like trying to play a game (Individual not team based) where no one has given you a rulebook and you just have to figure it out as you go along.

For example by applying modern rules in an office environment it is ok for someone you have never met to stand closer to you than three feet. However this is what is actually happening;

- While sitting at our desk our conscious mind sees a man you have not seen before in a suit approach you and stand close to you and start to talk, your conscious mind says this is OK as you are in your office and he is wearing a suit.
- Your subconscious/unconscious mind is applying a different set of rules and saying they are a threat as you do not know them and they are invading your personal space.
- Our conscious mind is then trying to override these rules and saying to yourself don't be silly he is wearing a suit in the office so that is OK, stop being silly.
- However you might be feeling uncomfortable or anxious because at an unconscious/subconscious level your mind has started pumping you full of chemicals to allow you to deal with the threat, this might be because he is standing too close or unconsciously you have picked up a glint from a knife he is hiding behind his leg but not actively seen as yet.

It is important for us to understand that when we feel anxious or having a panic attack we have through our senses perceived a threat and at this point we do not know whether it is real or not. The conscious mind is at work trying to assess the level of threat however at this point it does not have enough information or may have too much information to reliably decide on a course of action and so do not know what the appropriate response should be. Not only are we not aware of or cannot process all the information but our conscious mind is trying to apply our modern rule set while the subconscious/unconscious is busy applying rules based on our survival instincts and at the same time (for good measure) pumping us full of chemicals to deal with the threat. Add to this that we might 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 i.e. PTSD.

Freeze, Flight and Fight: Once we have perceived that there is a threat (real or not) our subconscious mind floods the body with chemicals (including adrenaline) that allow us to take action (do something).

Depending on our training 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.

You only need to watch a nature program to see this in effect, you might be watching a deer in a wood, it senses something, its head goes up, it smells the wind, its ears move to pick up noise and its head and eyes move to pick up whatever is out there, after a short pause it will bound off in the opposite direction to where it believes the threat lies.

In the modern world we cannot always 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, instead you just stand there weak at the knees hoping nothing will happen (a deer in the car headlights). Neanderthal man welcome to the rules of the modern world.

Loss of control: Typically everyone is trying to control you whether you are aware of it or not. From when you were born to the day you die others are competing to control you, for example;

- Parents
- Friends
- Wife or husband
- The government (controls you through)
 - Benefits system
 - Education system
 - Health system
 - Legal system
 - Pensions
 - Propaganda
 - Taxes
 - Voting and democracy (or illusion there off)
- Corporations
 - Company rules (policies, procedures, processes)
 - Sales and marketing (advertising, PR)
 - Wages, overtime, hours worked

The list can go on and on.

The way you are controlled by others differs but can include;

- Bribes
- Laws
- Love
- Manipulation
- Media (and social media)
- Persuasion
- Propaganda (basically mass manipulation)
- Rules
- Threats
- and more

These all tie in to our fears, desires, wants and needs and emotions. Don't believe me? Then take some time to think through some scenarios in your life.

It should be noted that not all control is bad, for example in the UK it is very safe (contrary to news reports) and you are unlikely to come to any real harm if you are observant, unless you are unlucky or a bit reckless. Compare this to an African, Central/South American or Middle Eastern country where there are a lot more chances of coming to harm or death, just look at news of mutilations to innocent women in the Congo. Our minds like to feel like that we are in control and so if we feel we are not in control this will manifest itself as anxiety and OCD.

7. The modern world

Chapters 3 to 6 have basically covered how our three minds work and have evolved to ensure we survive this life. These instincts have worked well right up until the 1900's and pretty well up to the 1950's but seems to now be causing us real problems, in this chapter I will hopefully help you understand why. I have repeated some of the information in the previous chapters but where I have it is important so please bear with it. Our world has change massively over the last century and a half we have moved from an agricultural society to an industrial society and now to a corporate society.

This has now started to create big problems. If you think of our minds as a computer we are still using processing power that is thousands of years old (and with no upgrades). This is a problem as the modern corporate world is miles away from our past. Just imagine trying to run todays applications on a computer and operating system from the 1970's. It is no wonder we get stressed out and have all these disorders.

So here are some modern society conditions that subconsciously cause the disorders discussed previously, as you will see they directly conflict with thousands of years of evolution to create the disorders. This is not an exhaustive list as we are more interested in how to fix the problems but are here as a guide. These lists of controls given below are my personal views and may or may go against the norm and seem to be incorrect, the goal is not to create conspiracies but rather to start you asking "why is someone doing this for me, what is in it for them?" Whether you agree with my view or not, it is more important to understand that there are controls in place, some we might agree with and others we might not. As I have said not all controls are bad but we do need to be aware of them so that we can move forward.

As we have previously discussed everyone is trying to control you whether you are aware of it or not. Below are some groups that try to control you and some reasons why they might want that control.

Controls – Family and friends: These relationships can be very complex but essentially one of our desires is for belonging to a social group (even if it is only two of you) and so each member of that group will work hard to ensure they belong. The problem here is the larger the social group the more complex the relationships, the more conflicting the interactions and the harder it is to keep the balance.

- In healthy loving social group or family all will try to control you usually out of love to ensure you get the best from life, they will also try to control you to help keep you safe, some forms of control might be through influencing, discussions, good communication skills and acquiring knowledge.
- In a bad relationship this might be through manipulation, bullying, threats and sometimes even violence.

Controls - Religion, although a control most religions are (in my view) very good for society, and no I am not really a religious person. They give us a set of rules that let us live together and for us all to benefit through faith and co-existence. The only real problem with religion is that the powerful see it as a way to control the masses and so the words of the religious books are easily twisted and perverted to meet a materialistic goal.

Controls - Government: The government (and political parties) have conflicting reasons for controlling you. There may be more objectives but essentially in the modern world the government has a couple of key objectives;

- Create educated and more productive workers to help increase the nation's wealth (measured through GDP).
- Keep a balance of power within the social structure to ensure stability of the nation.
- Create the rules to effectively govern while giving a certain illusion of freedom to those being governed.
- For individuals in government it is about obtaining and maintaining power, whether within a department, region or within the country.
- Educate civilians to obey authority (usually at a subconscious level, for example in the UK we have policing through consent i.e. the police do not need to threaten us we will follow their direction, again not always a bad thing after all who really wants an armed police force?

This is done through various systems as we have discussed previously such as the education system, benefits system etc. These systems try to do a number of things to us to subconsciously control our ways of thinking and possible reactions but key amongst them is;

- Ensures a way of thinking aligned with the states objectives.
- Ensure that we follow the rule of law and obey authority.
- Provide basic levels of finance and support to help maintain a stable nation by giving those who would have little or nothing something to loose.

Again these are subjective and my personal view and can be argued a number of ways, you could also add other objectives, but hopefully this will help you to start asking some basic questions.



Controls - Corporations: This is a relatively new development although businesses are almost as old as man (or woman); generally a business was relatively small and not global like modern corporations. A business has one objective and only one objective, to make a profit. If a company does not make a profit then it makes a loss and this will result in bankruptcy.

Corporations need workers that do what is needed and are productive, these workers are controlled through wages, overtime, hours worked, company policies, intimidation, rules etc. As discussed previously much of the school system has been created so that workers can be provided to corporations, if you doubt this why are subjects such as time management,

communications skills, managing personal finances, negotiating and influencing etc. not mandatory skills taught in classes?

Corporations make their profits through sales and marketing (advertising), in other words manipulating (propaganda) or influencing you to buy their products. Again not all products are bad for you.

Modern economics is a complex area and often ignored as it can seem boring, however there are several levels that you need to be aware of that cause us problems, I have tried to simplify each level but it is important you are aware of them and in particular the last couple. These are;

1. **Division of labour** - If we specialise in a set of specific skills and trade our product we can produce far more than on our own. Division of labour is the foundation of our modern way of life. Division of labour allows us to create a surplus of goods.
2. **Supply and demand** - This is the key to the modern market, a business can only sell a product at a certain price as long as there is demand for it (and assuming there are no subsidies). If there is greater demand than can be supplied the price goes up, if there is greater supply than demand the price goes down.
3. **Selling to needs** - Once we can produce more than we need we can then sell excess goods to others, at this level we are supplying goods that others need to survive.
4. **Selling to wants** - Once we can meet others needs we can look to sell to their wants and desires, we do not need a TV but we want it. This stage and the last stage were probably where we were back in the 1890's to 1960's.
5. **Creation of wants** - This is where the manipulation of our subconscious/unconscious starts through the use of propaganda, PR (Public Relations) and through sales and marketing (just look up Edward Bernays the founder of PR back in the 1920's). This is probably going to upset a lot of people but we are looking to cure your disorders so who cares if they are upset 😊. Up to this point we have been sold to our needs and basic wants, these wants are more to do with improving our productivity and giving us more time to ourselves. Marketing is basically **"the manipulation of our subconscious to create wants we never really knew we had and make these wants feel like needs"**. Secondly they create a fear of scarcity and so make us react at a subconscious/unconscious level before engaging our conscious mind, sound familiar? How often have you bought something only later to say why did I buy that? This stage is around the 1960s and 70s.
6. **Debt, the financing of wants** - Once you have perfected marketing and sales you get a problem, you have artificially created wants in people who have a finite amount of resources (money) and so at the next level you need to create debt by either giving them money to buy your goods (loans) or delaying payment until a later date (credit). This stage is around the 1980's and 2000's
7. **Cheap debt** – Now we hit a real problem, if you owe so much money and are earning less than you buy how do you get additional money? The marketing processes are so efficient they have sold more than we can ever afford and so in steps cheap debt. Have you noticed how house prices have suddenly jumped? One day my house was worth around £250,000 and then for no real reason jumped to nearly £500,000. This was because consumers could not afford repayments on a 25 year mortgage and house prices were stagnating and so the cap was removed, now you have a 40 year mortgage as you are only interested in the monthly amount you can afford and not the total over time (and in doing this the value of my property doubled overnight). You can now get more debt for longer periods to reduce the monthly payments to buy things you do not really need or want. This is the debt trap.

You will not see this model flashed around as it is a really dangerous model, why would you tell someone we have manipulated your subconscious to make them a slave.

Modern society, in a modern society there is a need for close proximity to strangers, be it at work, on public transport, in shops, clubs or restaurant's. We have already said that distance is a key factor in ensuring we are safe, our instincts are finely honed to ensure we can react to potential threats, modern society ignores all those unwritten rules.

8. Depression

So we have said that depression are negative feelings of despondency, dejection, inadequacy or guilt and often accompanied by a lack of energy, disturbance of sleep and appetite. We also said that this is due to our survival instincts seeing the world in a negative way to help us survive. In an essence we humans are what are called “risk adverse”, this is why we can never fulfil our full potential. Learn to understand and beat this one and the world is at your feet.

To help you will need to get more familiar with your mind and in particular your monkey mind.

Monkey mind, your mind focuses on the negative to survive, if there are nine positive things and one negative your monkey mind will focus on the negative, you only see the one bad thing and ignore all the good. In fact if your monkey mind thinks the negative is too trivial it will exaggerate it for you.

Think of it like your monkey mind has a job, it is very busy and very active and it loves its job, in a way this is much like most of us, we do lots of work but achieve very little. If you do not have a problem the monkey mind thinks it is jobless and so it will look for a problem, when it finds one if it is too small then it will exaggerate it and make it a big problem. This can be a bit like us at work, if we have nothing to do with our time we will fill it with something else even if it is meaningless. This is just how the mind works.

The monkey mind will focus on this problem whether you want it to or not, for example if you think you are over-weight the monkey mind will gather information to back up this point until you feel like everyone is focusing on and agreeing that you are over-weight. Whether it is true or not.

If you consider a bee flying from flower to flower, the bee does not worry if the flower is beautiful or ugly it just is, and so realising this we can become “aware”. Once you are aware of the monkey mind and what it is doing you can train the monkey mind to look at the positive. But first you need to make friends with your monkey mind and give it a job. If you give it a job then you become the boss and your monkey mind is your employee, usually the monkey mind has no boss and so is the boss over you. If you give it a job to focus on then you are both happy and it is a “win-win” situation. Be careful not to give it a full time job though, only give it a part time job.

This is why meditation can work so well, focussing on your breath or on the chime of a bell is like giving your monkey mind a job, the job of listening to something and in doing this the mind will focus fully on this job, have you noticed how when depressed, anxious or in a panic that playing music can lift you out of that state? Well this is why music works so well.

When you learn how to give your mind a job then slowly it will become more calm and pliable and free. If you are angry then by giving the monkey mind a new job (a sound to listen to or a breathe to follow and feel) the mind will forget about the anger.

If we are looking at how we can fix our depression we need to look at integrating more than one solution to help us. Try the following exercises which, if you persist with, should sort the problem out. Don't forget keep repeating these exercises, if you tag them onto a habit you already have it will help make it easier to keep doing.

Exercise 1 – Positivity diary

Firstly we need to flip our view of the world and our emotional state from negative to positive, in an essence become “aware”. To do this make a “positivity diary”, each day write one positive thing that has happened to you today in the diary. This is an exercise in improving our awareness and observation skills. Currently your monkey mind is seeing all the negative things in life. This diary will start making you become more aware of the positive things in your life and around you.

For example if it is pouring with rain outside you might think it is dark and gloomy; however from another perspective water is needed as without water the plants around us would not be so lush green and healthy, water gives life to us and the world around us. If you look at

eastern philosophy you will come across this term “Ying / Yang” or “In / Yo” which is typically symbolised as below.



Everything in life can be seen from one of these two views. At a deeper level you will not find it being two views “Black or white” but an ever flowing cycle or “Shades of grey”. If you find the example above a bit confusing try and keep your observation simple, if you try hard enough you will always find one positive thing has happened during the day, if you cannot find one then you probably need to try a bit harder, no one said this would be easy.

Exercise 2 – Learn to relax

Next you need to learn to relax; this allows you time to think and rationalise your thoughts.

Firstly just go somewhere quiet, I usually suggest the “toilet” 😊. This is for a couple of very good reasons; firstly it is a natural act that everyone does, so if you are getting flustered, stressed or angry you can excuse yourself and go to the toilet and no one will think this strange; secondly, almost anywhere you go in today’s modern world has at least one toilet cubicle, finally it is usually a pretty quiet area, where you can be on your own.

Next either sit down (or while standing) focus on your breath;

- Breathe in and out through your nose in a slow rhythmic way, start by just being aware of your breathing, you should also touch the tip of your tongue to the soft palate (roof of your mouth), this is not essential but it does work better this way.
- Next focus on following the breath down your body, as you breathe in start feeling it flow down the back of your nose, the throat, down your spine and into your belly. If you have problems following it all the way down and back then focus on where you can feel it and then just feel it slightly above this point and below, again this is not essential but helps.
- Feel the belly fill up.
- As you breathe out feel the breathe flow up the front of the body and out of your nose.

Calm your minds, your mind is a thinking machine, it is always working so you need to slow it down so you can focus;

- While breathing as above if a thought comes into your mind acknowledge it (do not try and suppress it or it will just keep coming back).
- Imagine your mind as a lot of shelves with boxes on them.

- As the thought comes into your mind say to yourself “I know you are there but now I am focusing on my breath, I will get back to you when I am ready”.
- Now picture yourself lifting the lid of the box and putting the thought in there.
- If the thought reoccurs imagine the thought trying to climb out of the box like a naughty child and calmly but firmly put the thought back into the box saying “I will get back to you but not yet”.
- Then go back to focusing on your breath.
- This might happen a few times but each time go back to the breath.

Do not think meditation needs to be for a long time, a single breath is meditation if done correctly, remember the old saying everyone says to you when you are angry, “take a deep breath”. Now you start to understand why it works.

While you do this touch two fingers together (make it a small motion, I usually touch the pad of my thumb to the side of the middle knuckle of my index finger, this means I can do it anywhere with no one noticing what I am doing). This is called a “Mudra”, the idea of a “Mudra” is to teach you how to program your mind.

Think of this like learning to drive or ride, at first you have to focus on what you are doing, then as you get better and better you have to focus less until it comes automatic. This is what you are doing with your mind, you are learning to clear your mind and relax. A Mudra takes this a step further so the more you do this exercise the easier it becomes and your mind learns to relax, the mind recognises that when you touch the two fingers together you are trying to relax and so eventually to relax you just touch these two fingers together and the mind and body relaxes in response.

Exercise 3 – Thought rationalisation

Our emotions can take over from our thinking mind, remember that our emotions are the original way we communicate, when you feel a strong doubt or emotion rising and feel like it is trying to hijack the rational thought process of your conscious mind, using the relaxation exercise above, take a couple of breaths. This gives you time to engage your conscious mind to focus on what is happening so that you do not react too spontaneously.

Now engage your conscious mind so you get a better picture of what is going on. A lot of things we worry about do not come true so you need to rationalise what is happening;

- Look at what you are worrying about and ask yourself what is the worst thing that could happen?
- Halve the worst case and then halve it again and then once more for luck.
- This will then leave you with the most likely worst case scenario.

For example let’s say you have a fear of going outside, the outside world is unsafe and scary (there may be a variety of reasons and you should read the chapter on fear to help identify the root cause of your worry).

So if we use this exercise we might get;

- The worst thing that might happen is that I get attacked and killed.
- If we halve this we will get the worst thing that might happen is that we get attacked and seriously injured.
- If we halve this again we will get the worst thing that may happen is we get attacked.
- And if we do it one more time then the worst thing that might happen is we get into some kind of argument with someone.

Remember this is the worst case scenario.

Next we need to reduce the risk (likelihood) of this “worst case” happening.

The key here is small steps. Think of it like a woodcutter trying to cut down a tree, if he tries to chop it down with one swing of his axe he will fail, so what he does is takes a few chops here and a couple there and if he continues this way then the tree will eventually fall exactly where he wants it to. We call this “KiKiri Do” or “Way of the woodcutter”, so in the example above you might do the following (remember you might do each step a number of times

before moving to the next and so aim for this to happen over the course of a couple of weeks);

- If needed ask someone you trust to help you and be with you at each step.
- Firstly just go and stand outside the front door, do this regularly until this feels comfortable and you get no feeling of anxiety).
- Next maybe go and walk slowly to the end of your path/drive (again do this regularly until this feels comfortable and you get no feeling of anxiety).
- Next walk to the first lamp post in your street.
- Next walk to the second lamp post and over the week repeat until you can walk to the end of your street.
- Maybe next you go to the shop around the corner and slowly extend from there.
- If at any stage it feels bad go to the previous stage and just get used to that before re attempting the step you were worried about.
- After each journey when you get back home do the relaxation technique and just say to yourself “see that was not as bad as I thought”.

Exercise 4 – Socialise

This is quite a simple one, humans are social animals and we feel the need to seek out others, in other words we want to flock. Unless you have a fear of going outside or crowds look to do activities where you can meet other people. Usually you will say to yourself you cannot do this for a variety of reasons so here are a couple of thoughts;

- Join a club of some kind, some you have to pay for others are free. My bias and recommendation would be a traditional martial arts class such as Judo or Karate This is because in my 35 years of training and teaching martial arts I have never been to a club that is not friendly and open, where the teacher and senior students will not go out of their way to help you succeed, my caveat would be to avoid Boxing, Mixed Martial Arts (MMA), KravMaga and Muay Thai, not because I do not think they will be just as supportive and helpful but because at this stage in your healing they would appear too violent and aggressive and scare you away.
- Volunteer at a charity, they always need help and you can pick times that suit you. If you are a single mum and can only do between 10am and 2pm I am sure a charity will be grateful for that time.

Exercise 5 – Exercise

Again very straight forward and we go into this in more detail later, however at this stage you just need to know that some gentle exercise is all you need. You could join a gym or club but it can be as simple as doing some basic exercises at home.

- Start by picking one or two simple exercise and do not do too many repetitions start with either 5 minutes of exercise or 5 repetitions. The object here is just to start doing something to start forming the habit. Exercise will start putting chemicals into your body that will help you become more positive about yourself and life. Some simple exercises that will give you the maximum benefit are;
 - Walk briskly around the garden or house for 5 minutes and slowly build up to 20 minutes
 - Do 5 “press ups”, “sit ups”, “star jumps” or “squats” build up to 3 sets of 10
 - Do the “plank” for a count of 10 seconds and build up to 50 seconds
 - Walk up and down the stairs 5 times
 - You could watch YouTube to get other exercise ideas or how to do these exercises. For example most people cannot do press ups, so I tell them to start doing them standing up against a wall, then inclined against a work surface and then on the floor.

Do not pick exercises you feel you cannot do, the focus should be on building your confidence.

- The easiest way to form a habit is to tag it onto another habit so what I would do is every time you go to the toilet afterwards do 5 press ups, over the course of the day you will probably do 20 to 30 press ups. You could do this with making a cup of tea or come in from the outside. I do this every time I go to the garage which can be a lot of times in the course of the day as I cycle a lot and so keep my bike in there as well as my martial arts kit and the freezer.

Exercise 6 – Sleep

This can be easier said than done, there are two things I find are helpful;

- While lying in bed start by tensing then relaxing your toes, then your calves and move up your body to the shoulders and then down the arms. Tense and then relax each major muscle group.
- At the same time do the relaxation exercise but use a different two fingers to what you would use to relax, I use the pad of the thumb and little finger
- This in itself will probably get you to sleep but you could also try a sleeping aid such as a sleeping eye mask

This exercise was taught to pilots to help them get to sleep between operations and should get you to sleep within a few minutes with practice.

Exercise 7 – Daylight

Again pretty simple, at lunch times go and stand outside for 10 minutes, you could combine this with your exercise.

9. Anxiety and Panic Attack

Anxiety and panic attacks (and PTSD) are all closely related, and so have similar solutions that will work equally well on one as the other. Although there are a few names for these disorders it is easier to think of them as essentially the same, although the stimulus and intensity will differ greatly.

Some anxiety based disorders are;

- Panic disorder/panic attack
- A simple phobia
- Social phobia (agoraphobia)
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Panic attacks will happen in all of these anxiety disorders to a greater or lesser degree and can be recognised in that the heart is racing, chest is pounding, you can't catch your breath, sweating, just have to get away, feel like you are going to die. It feels like the fear comes out of the blue.

We have already said that anxiety is a feeling of worry, nervousness or unease about something with an uncertain outcome that is happening or might happen in the future, typically resulting in compulsive behaviour.

A panic attack is a sudden period of severe anxiety in which your heart beats faster, you have trouble breathing, and you feel as if something very bad is going to happen, a deep feeling of doom.

After the first panic attack which is often a time of high stress, depression or trauma you will associate the feeling of fear with the bodily reminders that occurred with the fear reaction so for example the next time your stomach is upset or heart is racing you will be afraid you will have another attack.

Some Fear/Panic symptoms are;

- Pounding heart
- Upset stomach
- Heavy breathing
- Appear startled or afraid
- Social avoidance and/or freezing

In essence it becomes a fear of the fear itself.

Both of these are hardwired into us at a subconscious level and often are just an innocent but over protective life saving mistake. Your subconscious is trying to keep you safe.

A good example of this is that while out walking you see a snake, you leap back out of the way only to realise it was a stick. Your body has activated this primitive flight or fight reflex before you can consciously become aware of what has happened or can analyse the data.

This is what is going on every day leading to a variety of fear and anxiety disorders.

We do not have to analyse these in further detail but rather just become aware that these are creating fear.

PTSD can be caused by a conditioned fear, what I mean by this is it is an over learning of "the fear", for example if you have had a lot of bad experiences such as say you were abused in childhood or abused by an abusive partner, you will be more likely to fear say adult men, on the other hand if you had kind grandparents then you will see old men as kind and not to be feared.

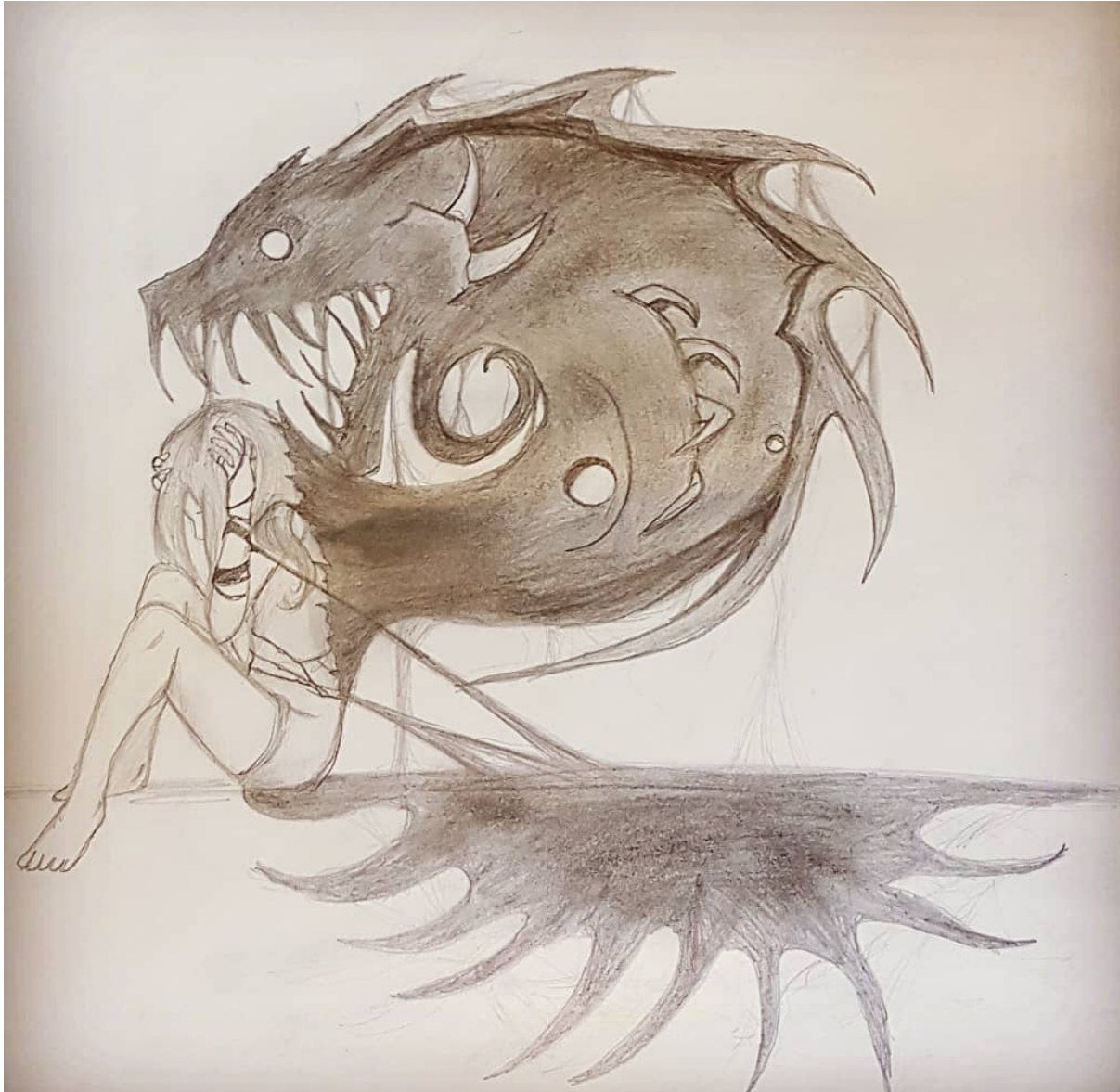
Pavlov experimented on "fear conditioning" on animals, in his experiments he would ring a bell and at the same time give the dog an electric shock. Over time the dog would start to fear the bell being rang even if no shock was given.

Interestingly the opposite was also found, if the bell was then rang and no reinforcing shock applied eventually the dog would learn to not be afraid of the bell.

Understanding this and with the help of someone you trust you can transcend the fear through repeated exposure without the original stimulation;

- Sensitization (PTSD) – Increase of fear with repeated exposure.
- Extinction (Recovery) – Diminished fear with repeated exposure.

This is a new learning process, you are not forgetting and not erasing the original memory just learning a new response to the stimulus.



Bearing in mind that all these disorders are anxiety disorders and understanding that at a basic level what is happening is that our subconscious, unconscious or conscious mind detects a threat (real, perceived or imagined). This can be shown as “Event / Threat/Stimuli” leads to “Anxiety Disorder” resulting in “Stress Response”.

This threat will have been triggered by something picked up by our senses and our mind then reacting in a conditioned way. Our mind is try to analyse what is happening based on the information gathered, given that a lot of the information could sit in the subconscious we are sometimes not even aware of the analysis taking place.

Next the bodies stress (fight and flight) processes are triggered and adrenaline (and other chemicals) are pumped into your body, this results in the body going into a highly alert state, and if we cannot process all the information it takes us into panic mode or what is commonly known as anxiety, anxiety attack or panic attack.

The body is now in a heightened state but the conscious mind does not fully understand why. For example you might get a panic attack when boarding a plane even though you know it is a very safe way to travel. Your conscious mind knows there is little or no threat but your subconscious/unconscious mind has hijacked the thought process and put your body into a high alert state.

In PTSD the same process is taking place however the mind in this case is basing the reaction on an actual past experience and fear of that experience happening again in the here and now and at this point in time.

Exercise 1 – Learn to relax

See this exercise in chapter 8, the key is to take some deep breaths to get you past the chemical rush and try to rationalise what is happening. When you have an attack, try counting down from 10 to 0 before doing anything. You could also create a Mudra so you program your mind to recognise that when you reach 0 you will be fully relaxed. Eventually just creating the Mudra will put you into a calm place.

Exercise 2 – Get up and do something

We will explain how this works in more detail later, however the result of an attack is that chemicals have been pumped into the body to make you do something. So do something that mimics what the body is expecting to happen.

- Flight can be mimicked by going for a walk, jog, cycle or swim, even climbing up the stairs.
- Fight can be mimicked by doing something energetic such as some exercises, or a sport or hitting something like a punch bag, even doing the housework.

You only need to do this for 5 minutes or so.

Exercise 3 – Thought rationalisation

See this exercise in chapter 8, and remember that our emotions can take over from our thinking mind making you react too spontaneously and usually in a way you do not want.

Where you have panic attacks, agoraphobia and PTSD this is a key exercise along with exercise 1. To be able to overcome these disorders you may well need to subject yourself repeatedly to similar stimulus that caused the initial fear.

If you have been in combat certain smells or noises may cause the panic or trauma. For example it could be from explosions, your fear is death or mutilation based on real experience. However in civilian life this outcome seldom occurs, so with someone you trust and in a controlled environment you might explode a firework in the air or shoot a paintball gun rapidly at a target to become used to the sound, if done enough times the unconscious will start to associate the new stimulus and response as the norm. Try and rationally talk through what is happening with the trusted person supporting you.

Exercise 4 - Positive thoughts

Try to think positive thoughts, as we explained fear and excitement put the body into the same hyper aware state (caused by adrenaline) so try to flip your state by feeling excited, in other words flip from fear (want to run away from) to excitement (want to run towards).

For example in the flying example we have said you have an irrational fear of flying, replace this by getting excited about all the positive things that will happen when you get to your destination. With this exercise we are giving the conscious mind an explanation for why the body is doing what it is doing but in a positive way. That way you will not feel scared.

Below are some states you might feel and what your body is getting you ready to do, this is not a complete list but will hopefully help with the exercises above.

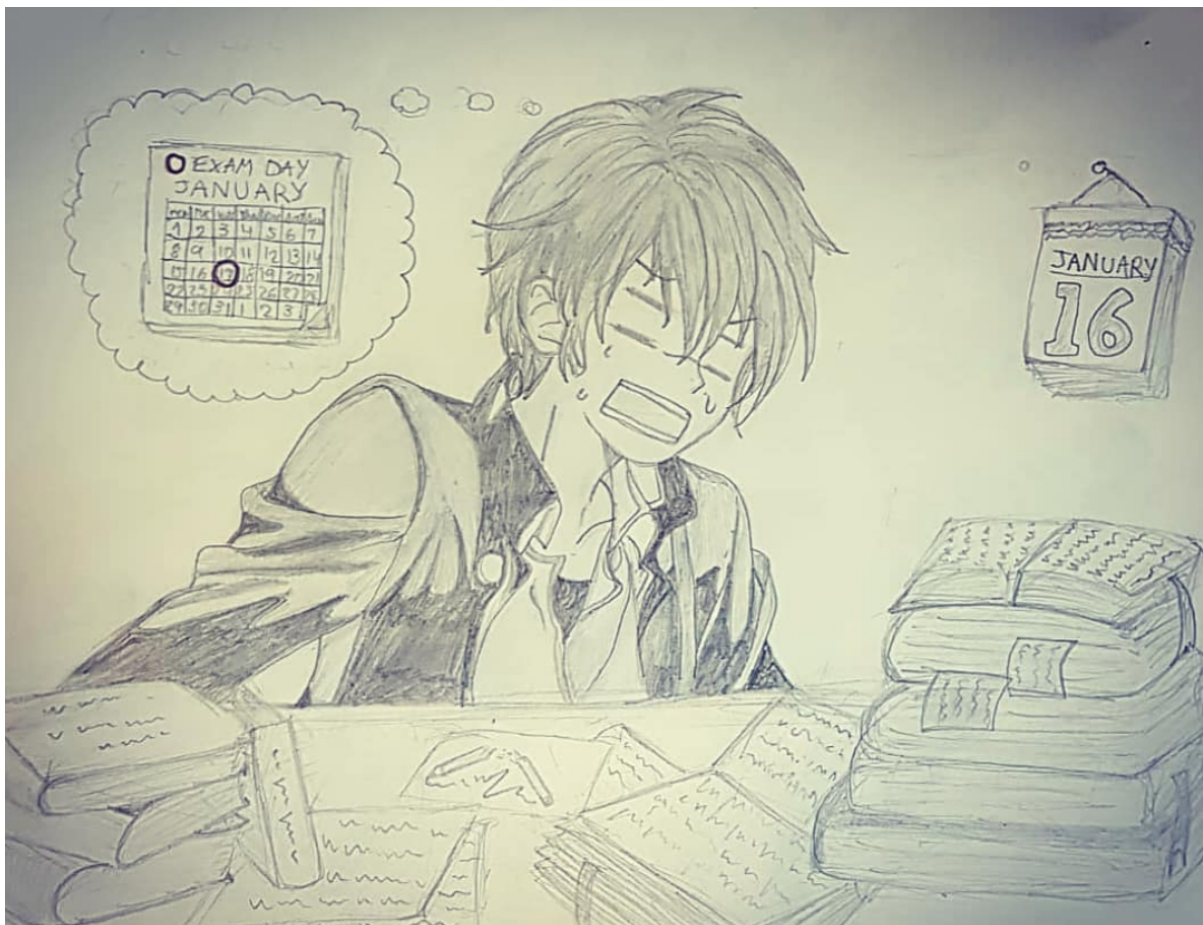
- Feel restless or fidgety, your body is getting ready for flight.
- Irritable bowels, nausea or other stomach ailments, your body is trying to rush digestion readying you for flight.
- Hyper ventilation or heart palpitations, you are trying to oxygenate your blood and pump it more rapidly to the muscles making them ready for action.
- Feel a lack of energy or rapid fatigue, your body is entering a freeze or dormant hide state.
- Trouble falling asleep or sleeping, your unconscious and subconscious is trying to analyse various threat scenarios.
- Holding your breath or clenching teeth or muscles, your body is readying itself for fight.
- Shaking hands or body, this is the result of the adrenalin in the body and the body expecting you to perform some fight or flight activity.
- Hot/cold sensations or sweat is your body trying to heat up or cooling down too fast.

10. Stress

We have said that stress is a state of physical, mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or demanding circumstances. In summary stress is;

- An integral part of our survival mechanism (Freeze, Flight and Fight)
- Works at an unconscious and subconscious level to protect us
- It is a dump of chemicals (including adrenaline) and hormones into the body that gives us the power to deal with the situation
- It automatically prepares our body for action by
 - Making the heart beat faster, 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.

Do these seem similar to some of the anxiety and panic attack symptoms in the previous chapter?



Recognising that you are stressed (or anxious)

One of the biggest problems we have with stress (and anxiety) is denial, denial is a huge factor in stress, if not managed early then stress can get to chronic levels and at times can result in depression and suicide.

In the modern world there seems to be a stigma around asking for help when you feel stressed (or anxious), 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 stress and anxiety 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, you try to tell yourself “I am good enough and can do it” but if you don't believe in what you're telling yourself this just 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 that is out there together so it makes sense to you and importantly why it will work or does not work for you.

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 unless trained to fight
- 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 them the worry turns you into the stressed and anxious nervous wreck. 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.

It is important to realise that there are two types of stress;

- **Type 1 stress** - this is “short term” stress, an event happens, we react to that event and then have enough downtime afterwards to relax, this relates to how we (and other animals) have evolved.
- **Type 2 stress** – this is a “continual stress”, so with the stress there is no downtime so ends up with you feeling continually exhausted,, living in fear and always worried, this is mainly caused by modern living.

The exercises found in this booklet can resolve both types, to get the best from them what might help is for you to work out if you have a type 1 or type 2 stress or maybe a bit of both. For Type 1 stresses the exercises that relate to physical activity will work best. For Type 2 stresses the exercises that relate to soft skills (Time management, negotiating etc.) and recognising how you are controlled will work better. For both breathing and meditation exercises can be used to give you a pause and work out a strategy.

Not all stress is bad stress

Believe it or not there is good stress and bad stress, contrary to what you might think not all stress is bad for us.

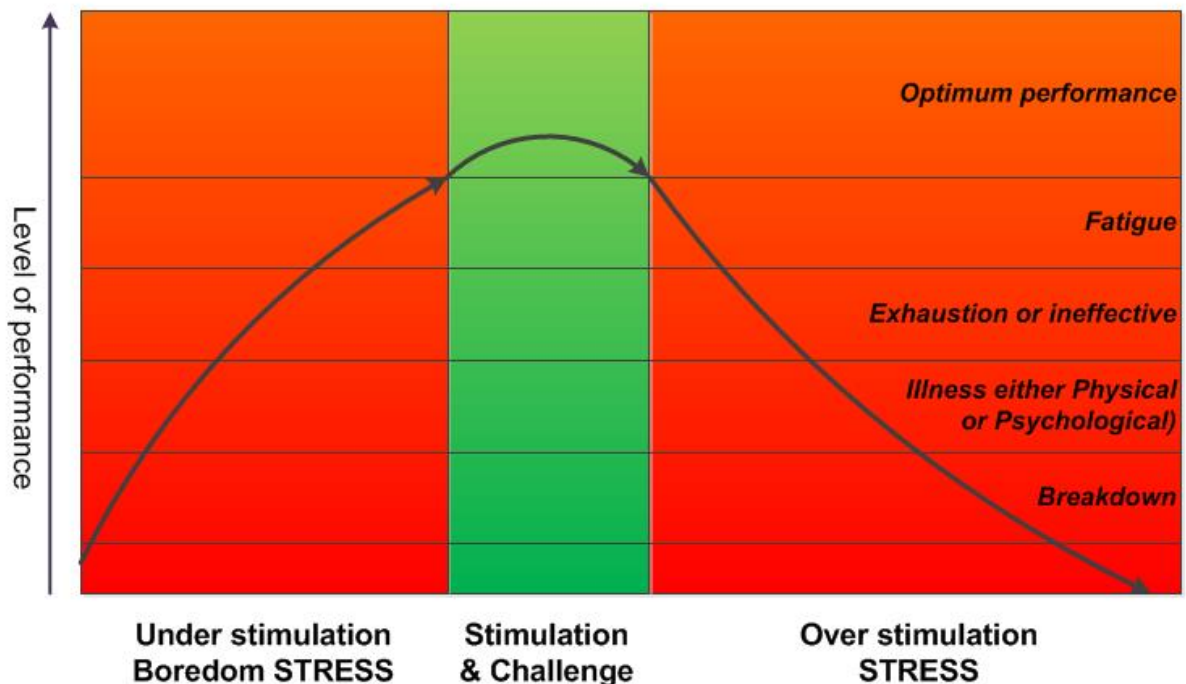
Good stress is where we have enough pressure in our lives to help stretch us, there is threat (or challenge) but we can manage it with suitable strategies. Some examples might be;

- 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.

Stress Performance Curve



There are also plenty of myths around stress which causes more confusion and makes healing harder, 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 - we all have different tolerance levels).
- No symptoms, no stress (stress is a hidden disease).
- Only major symptoms of stress are harmful (not all the time).

Recognising bad stress

It is important to recognise that stress is starting to build up, the 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. It has been reported that up to 80% of illnesses are the result of stress in the recent past and is theorised as being a cause for some cancers. Stress will certainly cause tension in the body which then affects the body's structure and will result in things like headaches, aching shoulders and back.

We make hundreds of decisions a day so we need understand when we start hitting the bad stress especially at work. So some questions I would ask myself are, 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.
- Feel 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 about who you feel 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, crying or wanting to cry
 - Apathy
 - Tiredness
 - 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

Managing stress

For type 1 stress you can use the exercises in the Anxiety section to help you to identify the worry and rationalise the fear, for type 2 stress then it is about rationalising the perceived threat level and then taking an action. The exercises below will help you deal with the stress no matter the type.

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. 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 here are some exercises you might want to try to help.

Exercise 1 – Take responsibility for our actions

This is the easiest thing to say and one of the hardest to do. We need to realise that we are responsible for everything that happens to us and it is no one else's fault. This is a hard truth. For example we say;

“We can't get a promotion because the company won't train me"! So what is stopping you from getting the training you need yourself? Not all training costs money but it will cost an investment in your time. If it will add value to you why would you not want to invest in your own education? With the rise of online training and YouTube there is no excuse. When I want to learn something the first place I visit is YouTube. You can have someone tell you all you need while on the train, in the toilet or at lunch. If I then need more detail I will then read a book. At one interview I had the Head of Risk and Assurance asked me how I got the roles and the knowledge I have with no formal training or qualifications, she was amazed how much I knew and understood given the lack of formal qualifications, I told her and got the job, if someone is willing to invest time in themselves then they are probably an asset to a company.

“I have never got enough money"! So learn how to manage your finances, too often we lump overtime in with our wages but your income is what you live on (money you get on a regular basis), overtime, inheritance etc. are profit, profit should be used to earn you more money.

“There are just not enough hours in the day"! Learn to manage your time better, do not know how, well maybe this will be another book I write in the future.

“I do not have the experience to get the job I am after"! Don't forget charities need help and as a volunteer you may have better opportunities to gain the skills and experience you need. How will this look to an employer?

When I am teaching children, we talk about who we can rely on, “mum and dad” is usually the first response but they are not with you all the time so learn to take responsibility for your own safety. No more excuses; take responsibility; don't let others control your life.

Exercise 2 – Make small changes

We almost always try to change everything at once, it is in our modern nature to want everything now, if you try to change too much or take on too much at once **YOU WILL FAIL**. We need to make lots of small changes or adjustments to our life. Make a small change, assess how that has worked, then make another and keep making those changes until you succeed.

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 way 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.

Exercise 3 – Learn to relax

Next you need to learn to relax; this allows you time to think and rationalise your thoughts.

Firstly just go somewhere quiet, I usually suggest the toilet for a couple of very good reasons; firstly relieving yourself is a natural act and so if you are getting flustered, stressed or angry you can excuse yourself and go to the toilet and no one will think this strange; secondly almost anywhere you go in today’s modern world has one and finally it is usually a pretty quiet area with few distractions, where you can sit (or stand) and be on your own.

Next either sit down (or while standing) just focus on your breath;

- Breathe in and out through your nose in a slow rhythmic way, start by just being aware of your breathing.
- Next focus on following the breath down your body, as you breathe in start feeling it flow down the back of your nose, the throat, down your spine and into your belly.
- Feel the belly fill up.
- As you breathe out feel the breathe flow up the front of the body and out of your nose.

When I talk about your belly in Eastern medicine we actually are talking about what is called the “Tan Tien” (Chinese) or “Hara” (Japanese). This is a point three finger widths below your belly button.

Calm your minds, your mind is a thinking machine, it is always working so you need to slow it down so you can focus;

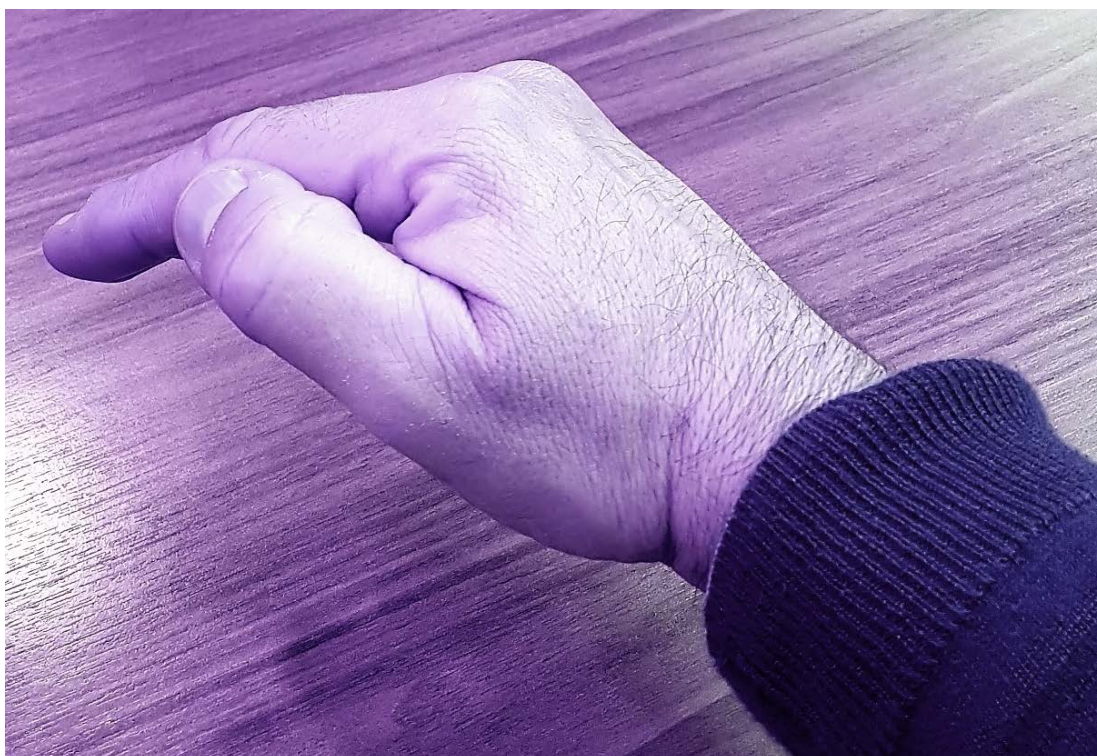
- While breathing as above if a thought comes into your mind acknowledge it (do not suppress it).
- Imagine your mind as a lot of shelves with boxes on them.
- As the thought comes into your mind say to yourself “I know you are there but now I am focusing on my breath, I will get back to you when ready”.
- Now picture yourself lifting the lid of the box and putting the thought in there.
- If the thought reoccurs, imagine the thought trying to climb out of the box like a naughty child and calmly but firmly put the thought back into the box saying “I am not quite ready for you now, I will get back to you but not just yet”.
- Then go back to focusing on your breath.
- This might happen a few times but each time go back to the breath.

Note: Never lock the box or ignore the thought.

While you do this touch two fingers together (make it a small motion, I usually touch the pad of my thumb to the side of the middle knuckle of my index finger, this means I can do it anywhere with no one noticing what I am doing). This is called a “Mudra”, the idea of a “Mudra” is to teach you how to program your mind.

Think of this as being similar to learning how to drive a car or ride a bike, at first you have to focus on what you are doing, then as you get better and better you have to focus less until it all comes automatically. This is what you are doing with your mind, you are learning to clear your mind and relax. A Mudra takes this a step further so the more you do this exercise the easier it becomes and your mind learns to relax, the mind recognises that when you touch the two fingers together you are relaxing and so eventually to relax you just touch the two fingers together and the mind and body relaxes in response.

You should be aware that at first if you can quiet your mind for just 3-5 seconds then that is really good progress. In fact if you consciously take that single breath and follow the breath down and back out then this is meditation and in doing this you will become more “aware”.



Exercise 4 – Learn to 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. Chapter 7 discusses some ways that you are controlled without you realising it.

“If you cannot move your enemy, move yourself”
Sun Tzu

What this means is that you cannot always force others to change but you can change yourself and in doing so eliminate the cause of the stress. Trying to change someone who will not change only creates more stress.

For example let's assume you hate your job or the people you work with, or even an individual, some options you have are;

- Try and avoid the situation that causes you the stress.
- Try and influence the people who can help bring about the changes that will de-stress you.
- Learn some skills to help you manage the situation that causes the stress.
- Look for another job.

Looking for another job may seem like you are letting the other person win but essentially you are removing the source of your stress and you will feel much better for it. The reason this will seem a bad option is because of our “fear of separation”, basically we are removing ourselves from that social unit.

Exercise 5 – Take up an activity or sport

Strangely enough when we get stressed we generally stop doing the very things that will help us manage the stress. It is important to either take up an activity or sport or if you already do something to continue doing it.

As we have explained when you assess a threat whether real or not then the body will produce chemicals to help you survive the encounter. Basically this means run or fight. If you have ever been in a fight or life threatening situation you will recall the encounter will only have lasted for no more than a minute or two (max) and in most situations were probably over

in less than 30 seconds. However at the time you may have felt like it had lasted for hours. So when we say do an activity or exercise we do not mean an hour down the gym but rather 5 to 10 minutes are probably more than enough.

Some examples of activities that replicate the flight response might be

- Walking, jogging or running, maybe a short sprint
- Swimming
- Cycling
- Maybe doing a motor sport
- Go camping or visit new places

The key here is to “run-away”

Some examples of activities that replicate the fight response might be

- Hitting things (boxercise type class)
 - A striking martial art like Kickboxing
 - A spiritual martial art like Aikido
 - A grappling art like Judo
 - A strategic art like Ninjutsu
- Buying a punch bag and learning how to hit or kick it
- Take up an impact sport such as rounder’s, football, cricket, rugby, basketball or netball

The key here is to “fight your fear”

I am sure that you could think of similar activities that might work for you. I am pretty biased and enjoy meditation and martial arts, these seem to sort out my stress, my son on the other hand just goes for a walk.

Exercise 6 – Learn new skills

In the modern world we will sometimes get stressed because we cannot do or understand why something is happening, in an essence we feel out of control. We have already said “take responsibility for yourself”. The problem is you do not always know how to look for solutions.

The first thing to understand is that you can only ask questions about a subject you already know exists. For example you can only ask someone about quantum physics if you already know quantum physics exists. So to get to the solution you may need to dig through various levels for example “Your boss is giving you too much work, you cannot do it in the time available”, after a bit of research on the internet you find a number of other people have similar problems. What you think is “just you” having this issue is in fact a common problem, there are a number of solutions you find, some that might be suitable others that might not be. The more you research the better your chance of finding a general trend of skills that might help you, these could include learning to;

- Negotiate
- Manage your time
- Communicate effectively
- Verbalise what you think and feel
- Break down processes
- Manage upwards

So armed with this information you can start to make a plan of action. There are plenty of ways to gain the skills you need at little or no cost.

One option could be to get yourself a coach or a mentor; this is someone who will help you get the skills you need by discussing options and potential solutions. A good coach or mentor is worth their weight in gold and there are plenty of resources on the internet, try Facebook, Instagram or LinkedIn.

Another could be to learn the skills you need online, you could look at YouTube, Expert Village or other how to video channel. This is what I tend to do and to give you an idea how well this works I went for a role in a heavily regulated market, the Director for the department was impressed with my responses and asked me how I had got all the skills and experience

without any formal qualification in the area, I explained what I did and I got the job over other candidates who were very well qualified with all the latest qualifications in the area. Don't underestimate self-education, the ability to learn for yourself can be very well prized in businesses.

Another option could be to look for someone who is already where you want to be and mimic them or ask them how they got there, what skills they needed or found useful, maybe would they be willing to coach or mentor you.

If you are going to do this exercise could I suggest the first new skill to learn is "learn how to learn", this will save you loads of work further down the line.

Exercise 7 – Learn to ask better questions

A way of reducing stress is to obtain more information, this is not the same as exercise 6 where you learn a new skill but rather when a situation occurs that makes you stressed sometimes asking the right questions will help you to reduce or even negate the stressful situation, use these 5 ideas to help you get the information you require.

- **A question leads to a conversation that leads to a question**
You can only really ask a question if you know the subject exists (as previously pointed out) so if you want more information ask a question (not a closed question) and see where the conversation takes you, then ask a question based on the new knowledge you have gained in the conversation. Ever been annoyed by a child who keeps asking why to each question you answer? This is the same but you should be more structured in your strategy.
- **5 bums on a rugby post (WWWWWH)**
Use "Who", "What", "When", "Where", "Why" and "How" to gain a general idea or understanding.
- **TED**
Use "Tell", "Explain" and "Describe" to gain a more detailed understanding, TED forces the person responding to be more specific, 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 response you can then ask them to explain exactly where it is located which might get "third road on the right".
- **Learn to 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, you see this used by the police when questioning a subject.
- **Closed questions (Yes, No)**
Only 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?"

Remember there is no such thing as a silly question, after all if you knew the answer then you would not need to ask the question. ☺

Exercise 8 – Learn to deal with difficult people and recognise office politics

Office politics is a whole subject in its own right and one we will not cover in detail here, however you just need to become aware of office politics and maybe do a bit of research.

In regards of difficult people you will sometimes find that there are a variety of possible reasons why they are difficult such as;

- They have been bitten once before and do not want it to happen again
- Office politics
- They are empire building
- Worried about their position
- Guarding their knowledge (knowledge is power)

In most of these cases the problem is likely to be a lack of confidence or trust on their part in which case you will want to show that you will not let them down, start with proving you can deliver on small tasks and work up to your objective.

Some tips here are;

- Learn to build rapport.
- Learn to negotiate and influence
- Try to listen, observe and understand why they are reluctant.
- If you ask them why they are reluctant and get no real answer try reframing the question.
- Change yourself. Sun Tzu said in his book “Art of war” that if you cannot move your enemy move yourself. Sometimes if someone is difficult or seen as an obstacle it is easier to change things that are under your control.
- Learn to escalate, people are scared of this but my rule of thumb is ask twice then escalate. Remember we are trained to follow authority so if they will not do it for you, maybe they will do it for their boss or a senior manager. They may not like you for doing it but they will be more compliant the next time you ask once they realise you will escalate.

Exercise 9 – Learn to delay or drop tasks

All too often we place unnecessary stress upon ourselves. We do this by creating unrealistic timelines to do things, procrastinate or build lists of tasks that are just not important to us. When we feel that we have too many things to do we can get a feeling of doom or that the load is just too heavy and there is no way out. In a sense we get anxious because we have created a threat ourselves and do not know how to manage it.

Although we can learn to prioritise all this really does in most cases is to just re order the workload. If you look closely you will in fact find that there are many tasks which just do not help you reach your objectives. In this case you should learn to drop, delay or reduce the frequency of those tasks especially if they really are not important. For example;

- You do not have enough time at the weekend as cutting the grass each week takes up the whole morning. Do you really need to cut the grass every week or have you just built a habit? What if you reduce the frequency to every other week saving you 2 or 3 hours?
- You cannot do something on a Wednesday as there is a program you really need to watch. What does this program do to fulfil your goals or is it a way to pass the time or maybe another habit that has just crept in. Do you really need to watch it? If not then you may have given yourself back an hour a week or 52 hours a year which is nearly 5 days a year (waking time). If you have to watch it could you do this on the train to work instead?
- If you have to do the task could it be broken into smaller chunks? A good example is this book. I had been meaning to write it for years but just could not find the time, one day I decided to follow my own advice and so I decided that each lunch time rather than going for a stroll I would write one sentence, this was easy and turned into one paragraph and finally into one section. Essentially I wrote the book in time that I previously wasted doing nothing of real use to me. However I did not do it every day, when there was something I wanted to do I did it and the following day went back to writing the book.

Work out what is important to you, what will help you get to where you want to go, if it does not contribute then learn to drop it or at least put it off until later.

One last thing is sometimes others create tasks for us, that we take on without realising it, especially if you are really nice and do not like saying no. In this case always feel free to drop the task or pass it back. A good example of this is a friend asking you to go somewhere (come to the cinema to watch a film because they do not want to go alone) or do something for them because they are busy (run down the shops and get some tea bags) and you saying yes then when doing it wondering why you said yes. Sometimes we do this because we need to keep that relationship but sometimes we just need to learn to say “no” and get on with what we need to do.

I had a friend who wasted their whole life looking after someone who was quite capable of taking care of themselves, if only at an early stage they had learnt to say “no”. They did not get their life back until in they were over 60. What a waste of a life, now they are a changed person, but at what cost?

Exercise 10 – Learn to delegate tasks

If you cannot drop or delay tasks you may well want to 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. This is very different to the example just given above. Do not get delegating mixed up with controlling others.

The objective of delegation is to get more things done quicker, it also allows others to “grow” so has benefits for all parties. Some thoughts on delegation are;

- Make sure you delegate to the right person.
- Delegate to reliable and dependable people.
- Clearly outline the tasks/steps they need to take (expectations and goals).
- Make sure you communicate what you need the other person to do and by when.
- Build their confidence, start with something easy or small, start by delegating simple things first.
- Monitor progress for problems but do not micro manage.
- Give them the resources they will need to succeed.
- You should coach them as they go through the process.
- Follow up and review at the end, ensure you give recognition and praise.

If you get this correct then going forward that will be one less task you need to do, Be aware that the first time you go through this it might take a bit longer for the person you have delegated to, to complete the task, so try and focus at first on tasks that are repetitive or likely to re-occur.

Exercise 11 – Change your lifestyle

In Buddhism there is what is called the 4 noble truths, these are;

- The realisation that life is difficult to bear or life has inevitable suffering.
- There is a cause to our suffering. This is our grasping and clinging or aversion to, our wants and desires, either through trying to control anything and everything by grabbing, or by pushing away from things.
- There is an end to suffering, we can remove the suffering by cleansing ourselves of desire.
- The path that ends suffering lies between the two and leads to awakening. This is commonly known as the eight fold path (I am not going into this here but it is worth looking into).

I am not going to try and make you a Buddhist (which simply means to be awakened or enlightened one), but basically what is being said here (and this is one of the most important and basic teachings) is that we create our own suffering by clinging like a drowning rat to a raft to our desires or wants.

Simply put we are driven by desire or wants, we are programmed through our life to want more (mainly through propaganda, PR, advertising, marketing and the government all of whom need us to keep buying more than we really need. By governments to help grow the country's GDP and by business marketing departments to grow profits. If you doubt this just look up “Edward Bernays”, he gave birth to the term “Public Relations” which was previously commonly known as “Propaganda” up until he opened a PR company in New York in the 1920s. He used the work of his uncle Sigmund Freud to change Americans from a country of workers who bought things they needed into a country of consumers. This has been adopted by western and other democracies to control the public through their emotions and desires. Once we are aware of this we can look at what we desire and decide if we really want it (or were subliminally programmed to desire it) and so reduce the stress upon us.

Do you really need that new dress, new car, luxury kitchen or bigger house? Each time we desire one of these we need more money either through a loan, mortgage or credit agreement/card. This in turn means we need to earn more money. If we become satisfied with what we have then all these things become immaterial. This also means we are able to change the direction of our life.

3 simple steps to changing your life;

1. Do not buy it now; leave it to the following day (or week or month).
2. Ask yourself if you really need it or is it my ego that wants it (see wants and needs earlier in the book)?
3. Can I afford it (do not say yes and then borrow the money)?

The exceptions to these steps would be your home (shelter is a need) or if buying an asset that will go up in value over time (if you borrow money to buy this asset in the banking world this is called gearing and really is the only reason you borrow money). By reducing the money you spend in this way it will allow you to make bigger changes such as your job.



11. Stress in the workplace

I have purposely made this a separate chapter, although chapter 10 applies here, there is no more a dangerous (stressful) an environment for us than the workplace. This is an environment you need to learn to navigate and effectively manage. In today's modern world most of what we do at work has little or no impact on our basic needs of survival. In most cases if you do not do your job (or do it well) you will not die or be physically injured. In fact in most cases the very worst thing that will happen is you lose your job, this might result in a period of hardship but if you have managed your finances and life well you will have put enough aside (your plan B) to help you through this period. This of course will not apply to some high risk jobs.

The key here is to understand that our modern society applies rules which conflict with our survival instinct. For example we know that if you stand too close to a stranger then your subconscious will see this as a threat. Yet in a lift or an office a strange man in a suit can stand close to you and in most cases your subconscious mind will see this as acceptable and not a threat. However in some cases our subconscious is screaming out that this is a potential threat, your neo-cortex says this is a stupid thought, your subconscious says run away or hit them but your neo-cortex is arguing back saying that you cannot run away or hit the person.

Likewise if your boss calls you into the office unexpectedly we firstly put a negative connotation on it as we see things negatively, we may feel there is a potential threat and our mind creates chemicals so that our body is prepared to run or fight, but in the modern environment we cannot run and we cannot hit our boss (even if we really want to and they deserve it) and so we get anxious and stressed.

You can apply all the exercises in Chapter 10 at work but additionally here are a couple of exercises you can also do.

Exercise 1 – Learn to relax

In most cases this is the same as in previous chapters, the important points to note when in the office are;

- Remember to use the toilet as a place to relax and meditate, even in a stress full meeting it is almost always OK to say “can we stop here a minute for a toilet break”
- When making mudras make them small so they are not really noticed by anyone. The one I said I use is to touch the pad of my right thumb to the outside edge of the first knuckle on my index finger. As a martial artist this is beneficial as when I make a fist my thumb goes here and my strike is more effective because I am relaxed when I make it
- You have holidays for a reason so take those days off and when you do forget about work, if you have a phone or laptop put them somewhere out of the way (maybe even leave them in your desk draw. It is a harsh fact that if you take a day off then your work should be able to cover, if they cannot then really that is their problem not yours.
- When you get home or even on the train home change out of work clothes into something casual to mark the distinction between home and work. I will never work on the train going home (it helps that the type of work I do should not be done in public anyway).
- Get a massage, these are great to help you to relax, I used to do this once a week as the place around the corner had a deal on that meant it was cheaper to book a few sessions at a time. You could also look at Tai Chi/Qigong, Reiki and Yoga, these will all do the same and have the added benefit of letting you do it whenever you fancy it.
- A good easy massage to help you relax and rest tired eyes is to run your finger tip around the ridge of the eyes you will find slight indentations at the top and bottom of the eye about midway and in the inside and outside corners of the eyes. Gently massage these areas in small circular movements. Then clap the palms of the hands together and rub them vigorously to create some heat, then lightly close your eyes and place the palms over them and allow the warmth to seep into the eyes. You could also warm a hand towel and place this over your eyes.

Remember it is really important for you to learn to relax, this is one of the best ways to relieve stress.

Exercise 2 – 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 positive thing daily. This exercise is essentially the same as in Chapter 8 (Keep a positive diary). The more you notice the positive the better your life will become. Even a negative can be a positive.

Exercise 3 – 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. A couple of easy exercises are to;

- Breathe in and out through your nose in a slow rhythmic way, start by just being aware of your breathing, next focus on following the breath down your body, as you breathe in start feeling it flow down the back of your nose, the throat, down your spine and into your belly, feel the belly fill up as you breathe out feel the breathe flow up the front of the body and out of your nose. This is essentially meditation at a basic level.
- You can also do reverse breathing which is as above but this time as you breathe in pull the stomach in and as you breathe out expand the stomach. This basically lets you breathe from different parts of your lungs. Try not to do too many of these breaths at first, do maybe four or five.
- There are lots of other ways of breathing that give you different benefits, have a look on the internet, most are based in Yoga although again some forms of meditation and Tai Chi will have the same or similar techniques. However the first one is all you really need to help relieve the stress.

Exercise 4 – Learn to use Mudras

These are covered in the chapter for Depression (Exercise 2 – Learn to Relax). Mudras allow you to train the brain, in the exercise they allow you to focus your mind and to relax through meditation. However you can use mudras to help you remember things you need to do or must not forget, if you learn how to do this you have no idea how it will change your world.

Exercise 5 – Learn visualisation techniques

This is a whole subject in its own right and I will not cover it here in this book however it is worth looking into this and learning how to do it, there are lots of videos on YouTube.

Exercise 6 – Learn to say “no”

This is pretty easy to say, but a lot harder to do. What you need to realise is that you do yourself, your staff and those asking you to do something no favours by saying “yes” if you cannot deliver. If you use this in conjunction with negotiation kills it becomes easier to do. For example if asked to do something you could reply “No, however I can get it done by ...” or “No I cannot do that as you also gave me this to do, which is your priority?”

You need to remember that in most cases saying “No” will actually do you very little harm. Start by just saying “No” to something small, for example if you are asked to go and do something that the other person could just as easily do, for example you are sitting on the sofa with your friends and asked “can you run out to the fridge and grab me a beer?” If there is no reason the other person could do it then just say “No” and see what happens, in all likelihood you will get a funny look or some kind of retort and the other person may well get the hump but will then get up and get their own drink.

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.

Exercise 7 – Learn to negotiate

As in exercise 6 maybe “no” is not an option, however that does not mean you cannot negotiate, although I am not going to cover this lengthy topic here. However you might consider using;

- Do you really need it by then?
- If I do this for you can I drop or delay this other task?

Exercise 8 – Learn to manage your time

Be more productive with your time and don't waste it. Time is the most precious commodity we have, you can never buy more of it no matter how rich you are, so 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 are retired, believe me I feel like I retired at 38 even though I still work like you do.

Time Management is a complete subject in its own right so have a look on the Internet or YouTube and see what advice is out there. Most of it is good advice so learn from it and remember do not try and change too much in one go.

Some of the best advice I can give you is to manage time using the acronym EAR, usually you are told to create to do lists to help you manage time but what you really need to do is;

- Eliminate any tasks that make no sense or you really do not have to do.
- Automate tasks where possible for example paying bills by Standing Order or Direct Debit.
- Re-assign or delegate tasks to others where possible, for example get an accountant to do your tax return.
- What you are left with should be the tasks you need to do now, if you do not need to do them now and can leave until later (procrastinate on) you should move them back to the top of your list and repeat EAR until eventually you do it or it is removed.

Exercise 9 – Learn to manage your appraisals

HR teams, performance management kills staff, stop it. I speak to so many senior managers and HR people and they just do not get it.

An appraisal is perceived as a potential threat by your subconscious, no matter how you think you will do. As an HR professional or senior manager can you really hand on heart say you do not worry about your own appraisal?

If being appraised, be clear at the appraisal, 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, companies need people that just do their work and have no ambition, don't believe me well there is a reason there are not that many directors in a company.

If you are being appraised then collect as much evidence as you can to support your position. This is key in showing you are doing your job and argue your case.

Remember to do the work you are being paid for. I once had a lady who worked with me at a company say to me that she had a bad appraisal and could not work out why as she organised events, socials and a host of other things. She was doing these well as they were things she enjoyed, however she was neglecting what she was being paid for. In hind sight this has happened to me in the past and at the time I did not understand why I was marked as partially effective.

If your appraisal does not go as well as you think use it as an opportunity to get more training. I did this at one company I worked for, I told them it was because of poor communication skills and they sent me on a number of courses to help. I then promptly left and the skills they gave me meant I have doubled my salary.

Exercise 10 – 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. A coach or mentor will spend time with you on a regular basis to look at what you have done and offer insight on how you might have done it better. They will offer you an objective and supportive opinion. A good mentor is worth their weight in gold.

I have had a few coaches and mentors over the years and it is important to remember that no one person has all the answers. Most of what I have been given has really helped, some made no sense at the time but at a later point I have found it useful. Don't forget your parents, they can be great coaches and have a vested interest in ensuring that you do well.

I have also often found that martial arts teachers surprisingly have some really good insights on how to take control of and manage your life. Much of what is in this book is from the many martial arts teachers I have trained with or under.

Exercise 11 – Don't kill your dreams

Your fears will kill more dreams than you realise (just read the chapter on Depression). Learn to trust your instincts, if you want to do something you can do it, the only person that says you can't is YOU.

As I said in exercise 10 above there are very few things that you want to do that someone else has not done before you, copy them and don't give up. Remember coming first is not always the objective. Want inspiration just watch the films "Eddie the Eagle" and "Cool Running". Enjoy the films and remember "**You can do it if you believe, break it into small chunks and do not give up**".

Management: A lot of stress in the workplace is down to poor management, come on guys you should know better and if you don't then why on earth are you managing others! Managers, help to deal with stress in the workplace and learn more about it and what you can do, I guess if you are reading this then you are. :-)

Directors: Please take time to look after your managers and staff and they will look after you and your company, less sick days, less legal action etc.

That being said here are some additional exercises to help you;

Exercise 12 – 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.

If you cannot drop or delay tasks you may well want to 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.

The objective of delegation is to get more things done quicker, it also allows others to grow so has benefits to all. Some thoughts on delegation are;

- Make sure you delegate to the right person
- Delegate to reliable and dependable people
- Clearly outline the tasks/steps they need to take (expectations and goals)
- Make sure you communicate what you need the other person to do and by when
- Build their confidence, start with easy or small, start by delegating simple things first
- Monitor progress for problems but do not micro manage
- Give them the resources they will need to succeed
- You should coach them as they go through the process
- Follow up and review at the end, ensure you give recognition and praise

If you get this correct then going forward that will be one less task you need to do, Be aware that the first time you go through this it might take a bit longer for the person you have delegated to, too complete the task.

A wise man (my father who at the time was a sales Director) once told me that a good director hires better staff and in doing so make themselves better. Do not fear those below you being more clever or skilled than you.

Exercise 13 – 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 managers, only your staff can elevate you to the level of a Leadership Team otherwise stick with SMT (Senior Management Team) or Executive Teams this is far better and more accurate.

If you want to be a leader remember that people follow leaders, to be a leader 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 (and to be honest I did plenty of free hours for them).

12. OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder)

OCD is a mental disorder in which people have unwanted and repeated thoughts, feelings, ideas, sensations (obsessions), and behaviours that drive them to do something over and over again (compulsions). OCD can be very distressing and can interfere or literally take over your life.

Definition

- An obsession is an unwanted and unpleasant thought, image or urge that repeatedly enters your mind, causing feelings of anxiety, disgust or unease.
- A compulsion is a repetitive behaviour or mental act that you feel you need to carry out to try to temporarily relieve the unpleasant feelings brought on by the obsessive thought.

There are two types of OCD, one is “fear based” and the other “lack of control based”, for example;

- Firstly (fear based) is the feeling of anxiety, we might fear being the victim of a crime such as burglary or someone stealing your car and so when we leave the house or car we check all the windows and doors several times before we can leave.
- The second (control based) is that we like to feel that we have some semblance of control over our life and environment, for example we might not be able to control things when we are out (work, shopping etc.) and so we focus on what we can control which might be cleaning the house or arranging things in a particular way.

OCD can occur because someone you know has it, you have been bullied, abused or neglected, or after a major change in your life such as redundancy, childbirth or bereavement.

As you can see OCD is similar to a lot of other conditions we have discussed in the book and you will not be surprised to find that a lot of the exercises we have discussed previously will work here as well.

Some exercises that you can do to help you are;

Exercise 1 - Facing your fears

Have a read through “Chapter 5 – Fear, Desire and our Emotions” especially the section on our 5 Fears and “Chapter 9 – Anxiety and Panic Attack”, you should also look at Exercise 6 below in facing our fear by immersing ourselves in the very thing that scares us. Our fears can be based on two different scenarios, either;

- We believe a fear could occur in which case we need to rationalise our fear. We believe the house could be burgled because one has been reported locally in the paper. In this case we need to rationalise the fear and take any appropriate action. A good example of this was we had some assaults happen near us and I was asked to run some self-defence classes. I asked my friend who was the Surrey Police Training Officer for some figures for me to present on the course. What I found out was that Salfords where I was running the course was at the time the safest area in Surrey and that Surrey was the safest county in the UK. The local newspapers had made it out that the safest place in the country was a crime hotspot.
- We have been the victim of an act and we need to overcome the fear. In this case the techniques in Chapter 9 relating to PTSD will be of help.

Exercise 2 - Realise we are in control

If you read “Chapter 7 – The Modern World” you will find that there are many ways that others seek to control us, once we are aware of that we can then start to look at how we want to take back control.

In martial arts you learn to control the environment around you, for example if you look at some of the stances you can see obvious weaknesses, these are there to lure in your attacker and then let you counter effectively. As the attacker, if you do not realise this you will be beaten easily. Life is much like this, it is not what we obviously see that is important rather this is what traps us. For example you may be on benefits and complain bitterly about how much you get, however if you started your own business you could easily surpass what you get in benefits, after all you are probably time rich and cash poor, interestingly you could be working for others and equally complain about how little you get but in this case you would be time poor and cash rich. Both the benefit system and working for others has tied you into a low risk but poor pay lifestyle.

To start taking back control do the following steps;

- Realise that others seek to control you (Government, Work, School, Friends and Family etc.).
- Write down how you feel others control your life.
- Not all control is bad so decide which controls you are happy with and which you need or would like to change.
- Create a plan to help you remove that control, for example If you are unhappy at work because of your boss then there may be three options for you;
 - Change the underlying issue (remember it is sometimes easier for you to change than to change someone else) by maybe learning to negotiate
 - Change your job, you may still work for another employer in this example
 - Work for yourself, if you do this I would start by doing this part time while at work and then when you make enough move to working for yourself

Be aware that removing a control because you are stressed may create different stresses.

I often 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.

Life is much like this, learn to play by your rules or live within the rules of the modern world, if you play by your rules you should win and lead to a more contented life. Play by someone else's and who knows how that will turn out.

Exercise 3 – Make small changes

We have said this before but it is just so important, MAKE SMALL CHANGES do not try to change the world or you will fail, if you try to change too much or take on too much at once YOU WILL FAIL. We need to make lots of small changes or adjustments to our life. Make a small change, assess how that has worked, then make another and keep making those changes until you succeed.

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.

If you have to keep checking that door, do it one less time and see how that goes, let's say you check the door 3 or 4 times, try doing it no more than 3, keep doing this until you have created a habit and when you have then do it twice. To form a habit you need to do it around 21 times. This is hard so read the chapter on habits to understand what is happening to us.

Exercise 4 – Learn to manage your time

Be more productive with your time and don't waste it. We have said this before that time is the most precious commodity we have, you can never buy more of it no matter how rich you are, so learn to manage your time. This is a complete subject in its own right so have a look on the Internet or YouTube and see what advice is out there. Most of it is good advice so learn from it and remember do not change too much in one go.

Exercise 5 – Learn to say “No”

Again we have said this before, 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.

Exercise 6 – Rationalisation techniques

If we use the example of checking and rechecking the house or car doors or windows we can see that really we only need to do it once (if we make a methodical and thorough check. The reason we keep checking is irrational really (unless you live in a high crime area or doubt your own ability to check properly the first time). We have said previously that our emotions can hijack our thinking mind. So after you have done your initial check and that strong feeling of doubt starts to rise, using the relaxation exercises previously discussed;

- Take a couple of slow deep breaths. This gives you time to engage your conscious mind to focus on what is happening so that you do not react spontaneously.
- Try to calm the monkey mind, the thought will come along as it is natural so do not try to get rid of the thought just acknowledge it and then put it on a shelf and say I will get back to you when I am ready.
- Now engage your conscious mind, to rationalise what is happening (not the action but rather the need to repeat the action, do you really need to repeat the check?

You can also look at this exercise as previously discussed, i.e. what is the worst that can happen. So for example if you feel you are compelled to wash your hands thoroughly again stop and take some breaths to slow things down, ask yourself, if I do not wash my hands thoroughly what is the worst that can happen? Once you have your answer halve it and then halve it again. So for example if you are worried that you will catch a disease that may kill you, if halved becomes may seriously harm you, if halved again will be that you catch something basic like a cold. Remember this is the worst case and probably even then unlikely to happen, after all, has it happened to those around you? You might find it useful to say it out aloud.

If you feel really brave you can try doing the things you fear to demonstrate that your fear will not happen. For example in the cleaning habit, once you have halved the outcome two or three times you might then touch the item or rub the item to show that it does not cause you any harm.

One final thought is if you have done each of these steps, halved the outcome, touched the item and you still feel anxiety you can always say to yourself once I have done the above steps I will allow myself to wash my hands but only after x minutes have passed. You can then increase this time slowly. You can also say I will only wash my hands for x minutes and slowly reduce the time.

I manage risk and when we look at risks we always consider likelihood and impact. The problem most people have is that they look at the impact and forget to ask how likely it is to happen, this is what this exercise is doing essentially.

13. Managing Habits

We have over the past few chapters talked a lot about creating a habit, or removing a habit as well as positive and negative habits, so I thought it worth doing a short chapter to help manage habits.

Whether it is a positive or negative habit what is happening is within the brain the performance of an activity will create some chemicals. Depending on the habit (Positive / Negative) different chemicals are produced, however the outcome is the same, that is we get addicted to the chemical, and so we repeat the act to get the chemical hit.

It takes around 21 repetitions of the activity to form the habit. For the bad habits you have probably built these over time without even realising it before it got to the point where it starts to impinge on your quality of life. So with all the exercises keep repeating them until the negative habit is beaten.

One of the easiest ways to build a new habit is to tag it on to an old one. Again we have said this previously especially in regards to exercising. The habit you tag the new habit to could be for example while the kettle is boiling you do the new habit, when you go to the toilet just after you do the new habit etc.

14 Simple ideas that help

You need to take time out for yourself. You will also notice that exercise or meditation is generally the best medicine. These two tend to be the most successful resolution for most of these problems.

Here are some simple ideas to round up with, some of these I have spoken about and some may be new and you will need to research further, however all these things will help you and have a positive impact on your life.

- Relaxation
 - Breathing: practice deep breathing
 - Learn progressive muscle relaxation techniques
 - Guided Imagery
 - Meditation, this can be learnt through Tai Chi, Yoga or similar meditation arts
 - 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 positive 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.

One final word on the subject

**“What fits your busy schedule better, exercising 1 hour a day or
being dead 24 hours a day?”**

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The PEMS project is a project aimed to help you live a better and more fulfilled life by giving you a framework to help you through life's ups and downs.