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Work and Pensions

Effective Stress Management



A personal guide

Taking more control of your stress level
and making it work to your advantage

EFFECTIVE

Stress

Management

A Personal Guide

*Taking more control
Of your stress level
And making it work
To your advantage*

An Occupational Psychology Division Product
2002 Revised & Edited by H L Card

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Finding your way around this Guide

MAKING THE BEST USE OF THIS GUIDE

This **Personal Guide to Effective Stress Management** has been designed for easy use and covers five key topic areas:

- 1 Finding Your Way Around this Guide
- 2 Stress and You
- 3 Analysing Your Own Response to Stress
- 4 Using Stress Management Techniques
- 5 Personal Stress Management Planning

There is no one best way to make use of this Guide. Please feel free to use it in a flexible way that suits your particular set of circumstances at the moment. For example, you may want to:

- Work through it all in one go.
- Work through one section at a time.
- Work through to the stage of analysing your own response to stress and then take time out to produce a **Personal Stress Management Plan**.
- Go straight to one or more of the stress management sections and think about how to apply them now.

This Guide is for you personally to use in whatever way is most helpful to you.

Part 2 of this Guide contains more information on the techniques covered in Part 1.

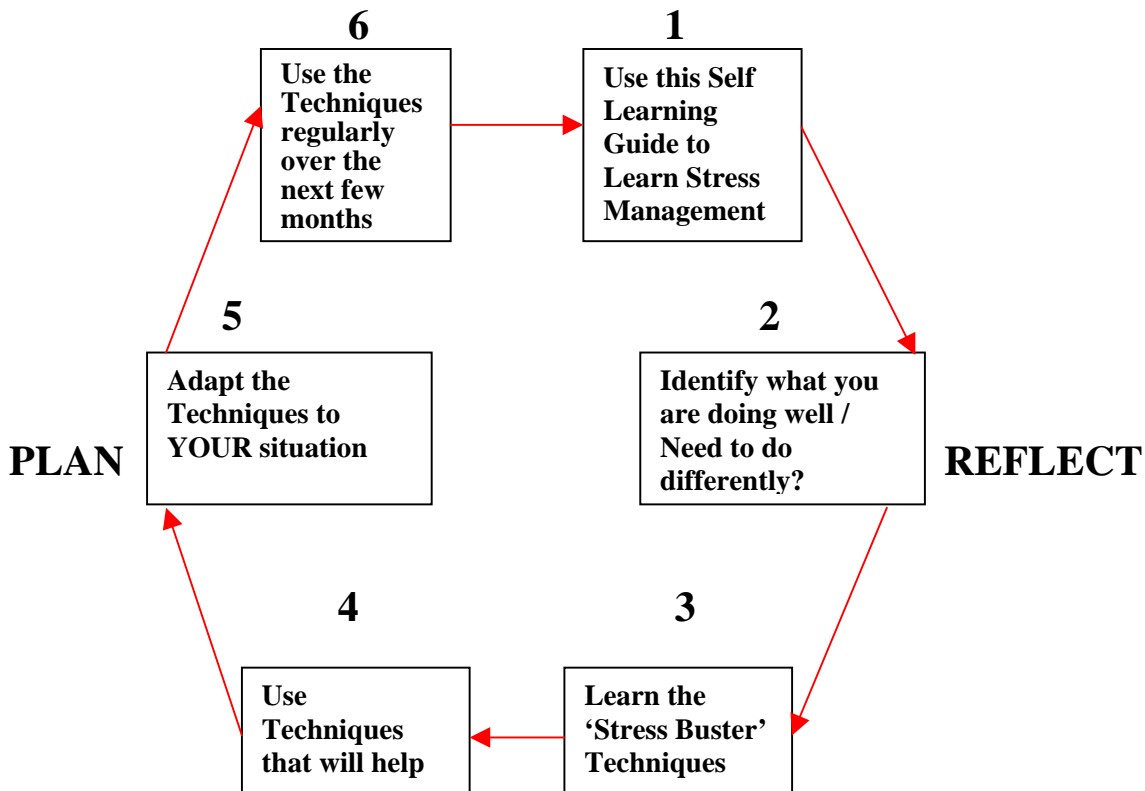
EFFECTIVE STRESS MANAGEMENT

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A 6 Stage Cycle

At the heart of effective stress management is a simple but effective 'Stress Buster' cycle. All you have to do is to use this personal guide, identify what you are doing well and what you need to do differently, learn and use the best 'Stress Buster' Techniques to meet your current needs and situations and then use them regularly to get the maximum benefits.

EXPERIENCE



DRAW CONCLUSIONS

Hint: Initially it is best to 'go round the cycle' from 1 to 6 but when you revisit this 6 Stage Cycle you can enter at any point - depending upon your needs at the time.

MAXIMISE YOUR LEARNING POWER

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Get the most out of this Practical Guide by treating it as a self help manual to progress through at your own pace. Then you can dip into it to help you deal with the demands and pressures in your life and work whenever you need to. Make sure you fully understand and apply the Power Learning Steps when using the Guide and you will learn effective stress management more quickly and easily.

The Power Learning Steps

1. **First, do some simple relaxation and breathing exercises** to get into a calm, relaxed frame of mind and take frequent short breaks to remain fresh and alert.
2. **Second, identify the benefits you will get from handling stress better** in your every day life and see yourself successfully dealing with stress - positively.
3. **Third, get an overview by flicking through the pages** and getting a feel for the range of topics and techniques that interest you. Get a handle on the big picture and see what you can do to achieve results quickly.
4. **Fourth, think about what you already know about coping with stress** and enjoying life and what you need to do to achieve effective stress management. Decide to tackle things a bit at a time, choose and use the parts that are important now and meet your present needs.
5. **Fifth, become an active learner by asking questions** like "*What will this part do to help me ?*" or "*How can I use this to handle my stress ?*" Do something active as you progress through the Guide to help you learn more easily e.g. write notes in margins, make lists, draw pictures, talk to someone about taking action.
6. **Six, spend time reviewing what you have learned** by regularly asking yourself questions like "*What am I doing well ?*" "*What do I need to do differently ?*" and "*What kind of support do I need to help me succeed ?*"

Hint: Remember - learning is the most natural thing in the world. You will learn best when you are relaxed, do a variety of things, have some fun, see that you are not starting from scratch and have your own valuable experiences, knowledge and skills to bring to the task of creating effective stress management.

WHAT IS THIS GUIDE ALL ABOUT?

This Guide is about helping you to deal with pressure that may cause you problems at work or in life.

We have approached stress management from a particular point of view and so a number of key messages and themes run through this Guide

- Stress may be holding you back from your best performances.
- You need to be aware of your individual responses to stress.
- Pressure and stress are a normal part of our work and life.
- Pressure you cannot cope with is harmful and, like grit in machines, causes wear and tear.
- You need to control your stress so that it does not control you.
- It is important for you to produce a **Personal Action Plan** and do it.

This Guide to Practical Stress Management:

- Was developed with the help of people working in Jobcentres, Benefit Offices, Regional Offices and Head Office. Their ideas and suggestions have been included.
- Has the support of Senior Management, who know that everybody suffers from negative stress at some time or other no matter what their job or grade. Senior managers have also sent in ideas for the Guide.
- It has been produced for those who want to learn more about stress, its effects on them and how to manage it; it is also for line managers interested in decreasing their own stress and that of their staff.

HOW THIS GUIDE HELPS YOU

The Guide consists of various ways of helping you to deal with pressure that may cause stress and unwanted problems. It aims to help you:

- Become more aware of the facts about stress
- Identify the pressures and stress *you* experience in *your* work and life
- Recognise when pressures and stress are created by you and by others
- Provide you with some techniques which others have found helpful
- Help you plan and cope better day to day and prevent pressure turning into stress by:
 - **Learning to Relax**
 - **Developing Personal Perspective**

- **Managing Your Feelings**
- **Communicating Assertively**
- **Effective Self Management**
- **Sensible Exercise**
- **Healthy Eating**

Please note that although this Guide addresses the individual's response to stress, this does not imply that the organisation has no responsibility for helping to control pressure at work or to provide stress management services and relevant training courses.

At the end of this Guide you will find a list of relevant workshops and training courses that are available through the Department for Work and Pensions.

Stress and You

WHY YOU SHOULD NOT IGNORE STRESS

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Stress Takes Its Toll : The Hidden Epidemic ?

It is fast becoming Britain's hidden health crisis and no one is immune !

Stress has been linked to heart disease, depression, impaired sexual performance, nervous breakdown, alcohol and drug abuse, sickness absence, family break-ups and job dissatisfaction. Millions of working days are lost every year as a result of *stress*.

Pressure, stress, burnout and tension have all been inherited from the 1990's but are we dealing with them any better at the beginning of the new millennium? It seems that every time we open a newspaper, watch the TV or listen to the radio there is a story about the dangerous effects of stress on every aspect of our lives. Can we take much more – probably not! If anything the pace of life and work is increasing, with fewer people being expected to do more and more with less and less. New technology which was expected to lighten our load and allow us to enjoy the fruits of our labours has in many cases made things worse! The arrival of the desk top computer, email, internet, video conferencing, the mobile 'phone – all mean that people expect us to react and respond faster than ever before. Life and work may overwhelm us so that it feels like we cannot cope and this may push us into a downward spiral of helplessness and hopelessness!

Comments made by people who feel bad but who want to feel good include :

- * *"I feel trapped without control in my life."*
- * *"I get depressed and have no energy."*
- * *The quality of my work suffers."*
- * *"I don't have time for myself anymore."*
- * *"I have difficulty sleeping or resting these days and I get regular headaches and other pains."*

How many of us have similar experiences? The sad fact is that most of us do not admit or accept that we suffer from stress – recent research shows that we would rather be told that we have a serious physical illness than be told that we have something wrong with our 'head' ! Notice how when the next time you ask someone how they are they automatically answer "*I'm fine*" – but what they often mean is that they are **Frustrated Inadequate Neurotic and Exhausted !!!**

Commonsense About Stress

There is no such thing as a 'pressure free' job. Some pressures can, in fact be a good thing, but people's ability to deal with pressure is not limitless. Excessive workplace pressure and the stress to which it may lead can be harmful; they can damage your performance and undermine health and well being. The aim of our approach in this guide is to help you understand how this can happen and what you can do to prevent it. Eliminating pressure from work may not be possible or desirable but

controlling harmful and unnecessary levels of stress will help keep you fit and healthy and enable the organisation to achieve its goals.

This practical guide has been designed to help you quickly get to grips with unwanted physical, emotional and psychological reactions and begin to take charge of how you want your work and life to be. It aims to encourage and support you to get involved in learning and using the best and most suitable ideas and techniques to help you deal with pressure, stress, causes, effects and remedies, to enjoy practical activities, complete short self assessment checklists, set up support partnerships, discover and use 'stress buster' solutions and produce your own workstyle and / or lifestyle improvement plans.

You will be able to assess where you are now, where you want to be and how to get there. The approach we advocate is to make learning participative, make use of accelerated learning methods, and at the same time involve, challenge and suggest support.

We can make good use of the idea that laughter is the best medicine and encourage you to ask yourself "What do I really want?" and "Do I work to live or live to work?" or "Working to earn a living or failing to enjoy your life?"

Work related stress has reached a new peak and is estimated to cost the British economy £7bn a year. But what about the costs to the workers and employers? The Institute of Management has estimated that everyday more than a quarter of a million people take time off work because of work-related stress.

We are all being forced to compete on a changing playing field and to produce better results with less, so the pressure increases and falls on the battered and weary shoulders of those still left in the organisations who are under mounting pressure to manage costs more stringently, with staff kept to a minimum, and so staff are expected to produce at super human rates.

According to a recent survey released by the Institute of Personnel and Development 69% of us work when we feel ill, and 42% of us claim that we have "*So much work, we don't have time to fetch a drink or a sandwich.*" The evidence is that the British put in more hours a week than any other workforce in Europe !!!

American organisations are beginning to take greater care of their workers, not necessarily out of a wave of 'empathy, warmth and genuineness' but because of the costs of people falling ill due to overwork. British organisations, ever conscious of what their American counterparts are doing, are becoming more aware of the issues as employers' liability rises and employees become less reticent about suing.

Staying in good all round 'shape' to consistently perform well at work is now critical for everyone involved in organisational success. A critical issue is how to find the right balance between the level of challenge and the level of support in life and work – that optimal level of stress which enables us to create the maximum personal and work effectiveness.

Stress is not to be confused with hard work, pressure, high levels of effort and activity. Stress is not the same because it usually involves a loss or perceived lack of control. In this sense there is no such thing as positive stress because stress is an unwanted and unpleasant state where lack of control is a main cause.

A healthy organisation can be defined as, "*Having financial success – cost effectiveness, and a healthy workforce able to maintain performance over time, particularly through periods of change and 'market' turbulence.*" It is now time for organisations to take the initiative and put more attention and resource into the development and implementation of stress management strategies.

A main aim of this practical guide is to enable you to understand, choose and use the most effective 'stress buster' approaches - body in balance, emotional intelligence, the ABC of stress management and positive action planning.

As someone said to me recently "I don't want to be the richest man in the graveyard !"

Remember "Success is getting what you want – happiness is enjoying it !"

THE PHYSIOLOGY OF STRESS

.....

Fight, Flight, Freeze or Manage

In prehistoric times, when we were cave-dwellers or lived in the wild, it was important to deal with the physical threats all around in our environment. For example, if a wounded hairy mammoth or sabre-toothed tiger turned on us we needed to pursue the attack effectively, run flat out in the opposite direction, or hide behind a rock and remain motionless but ready for instant action if necessary.

This automatic reaction may still be life-saving: If there is a fire in the building we can jump a flight of stairs that we would not be able to manage at another time. In simple terms, when the brain registers that a demand is being made and that an effort is needed, it triggers reactions in the body that include a release of various hormones.

Physiology of the Stress Response

It can be useful to know the exact nature of the stress response, as this can allay fears.

When an individual perceives that they are in a threatening situation or that they are unable to cope, then messages are carried along neurons from the cerebral cortex and the limbic system to the hypothalamus (areas of the brain). The anterior hypothalamus produces sympathetic arousal of the autonomic nervous system (ANS). The ANS controls the heart, lungs, stomach, blood vessels and glands. Due to its automatic action, we do not need to make any conscious effort to regulate our breathing or heart beat. The ANS consists of a sympathetic nervous system and a parasympathetic nervous system. Essentially, the parasympathetic nervous system conserves energy levels, and increases bodily secretions such as tears, gastric acids, mucus and saliva – which help to defend the body and aid digestion. The parasympathetic nervous system also aids relaxation.

The sympathetic nervous system, however, prepares the body for action. In a stressful situation, it does the following:

- Increases strength of skeletal muscles
- Releases clotting agents into blood to decrease bleeding from wounds
- Heart beats faster to pump blood more quickly to relevant body parts
- Increases sugar and fat levels

- Reduces intestinal movement
- Relaxes the bladder (bladder and bowels may empty)
- Dilates the pupils
- Increases perspiration
- Senses become more alert to warn of danger
- Inhibits erection, vaginal lubrication by restricting blood flow
- Constricts most blood vessels but dilates those in heart, leg, arm muscles
- Increases rate of breathing to keep oxygen levels
- Dulls pain reactions to protect initially if there is physical harm
- The immune system is often affected

The main sympathetic neurotransmitter is noradrenalin, which is released at the nerve endings.

The stress response also includes the activity of the adrenal, pituitary and thyroid glands. There are two adrenal glands, located one on top of each kidney. Connected to the sympathetic nervous system, it is the **adrenal** glands which release adrenalin and noradrenalin into the blood supply. Adrenalin prepares the body for flight; noradrenalin prepares the body for fight. They increase the heart rate and the pressure at which blood leaves the heart; they dilate bronchial passages and coronary arteries; they constrict skin blood vessels and increase metabolic rate. Also, they reduce gastrointestinal activity which leads to the sensation of 'butterflies in the stomach'.

Close to the hypothalamus in the brain, the **pituitary** gland (endocrine system) releases adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH) into the blood, which activates the outer part of the adrenal gland – the adrenal cortex. This then synthesises cortisol, increasing arterial blood pressure; mobilising fats and glucose from adipose tissues; reducing allergic reactions; reducing inflammation, and can also decrease lymphocytes that deal with invading particles or bacteria. Consequently, increased cortisol levels over a prolonged period of time can lower the efficiency of the immune system.

The pituitary also releases a hormone which stimulates the **thyroid** gland, located in the neck, to secrete thyroxin. Thyroxin increases the metabolic rate, raises blood sugar levels, increases respiration, heart rate, blood pressure and intestinal motility. (This can cause diarrhoea.)

If the individual perceives that the threatening situation has passed, the parasympathetic nervous system helps to restore the body to a state of equilibrium. Prolonged effects of the stress response include the lowering of the immune system and raised blood pressure, which may cause hypertension and headaches. The adrenal gland can malfunction, resulting in tiredness, muscles feeling weak, digestive problems (craving sweet starchy foods), dizziness, and sleep disturbance.

In a stressful situation, then, all of the above physiological reactions may occur. If the individual is involved in physical action, using the extra energy etc created, then no harm is done. However, if no physical activity takes place, or there is no resolution of the pressure, the fats can attach themselves to artery walls, leading to high blood pressure. One way of preventing this is to take exercise, so that the fats can be used up. If the stressful situation is prolonged, the body's energy stores become exhausted if there is no respite to re-stock. This is when the harmful effects of stress are likely to be felt. At this point, the only remedy is complete rest and a gradual return to health.

Hans Selye put forward the **general adaptation syndrome** model of stress, which recognised three phases in the stress response:

- The **alarm** reaction
- The stage of **resistance**
- The stage of **exhaustion**

These three phases illustrate the physiological response to stress. The body is alerted – the alarm reaction; autonomic activity is triggered – resistance; and if this activity goes on too long, damage is done and collapse occurs – exhaustion.

Consequences of Too Much Stress

Many illnesses have been shown to be stress-related and research has shown that stressful times lower our resistance, making us more vulnerable to ill-health. Physical symptoms of stress include:

- Palpitations
- Breathlessness
- Headaches
- Skin trouble
- Increased sweating
- Indigestion
- Frequent colds
- Raised blood pressure
- Feeling too hot
- Over-sensitivity to noise or smell
- Muscle cramps or twitching
- Loss of libido
- Disturbed sleep

WHAT IS STRESS?

.....

These days it seems that “stress” is something we are all either suffering from, have suffered from or know a lot of people who have or expect to feel it any minute. It is important to realise that in-trays piled high, constantly ringing telephones, demanding jobs and tight deadlines do not automatically mean you are under stress. We all vary a great deal in our susceptibility to stress. Demands that have some of us experiencing bad stress and making for the exit signs have some of us rubbing our hands and excitedly getting stuck in!!!

The following definitions are suggested:

PRESSURE: we all have some sort of pressure in our lives – deadlines, performance targets, difficult people, responsibility for others etc. These are the sorts of forces that can act on us more or less continuously, or which may come in a rush from time to time. For most of us pressure is a normal part of our work and life.

STRESS: under some types of pressure we may feel stressed.

Four types of stress have been identified to show the importance of achieving a healthy balance between ourselves and our environment:

- **Overstress** (too much stress)
- **Understress** (too little stress)
- **Eustress** (good stress, balance right)
- **Distress** (bad stress)

This **Guide** concentrates on helping you to identify and deal with bad stress, the kind that is like the grit in an engine – the machine may be working but at a greater cost in wear and tear. Another way of looking at it is that bad stress holds you back from your best performance and in the long term may do you a lot of damage. One useful definition of stress is:

“A stressful situation is one you cannot cope successfully with, or believe you cannot cope with successfully, resulting in unwanted physical, mental or emotional reactions.”

WHAT ABOUT THE BENEFITS OF STRESS?

.....

We all have our own ‘optimum pressure level’ [OPL] and are well advised to recognise when we are in balance and when our mind, body or emotions tell us enough is enough and are being triggered into becoming stressed and feeling bad. We need to find out what our OPL level is so that we do not exceed it on a regular basis – the trick is to create a balance that ensures you do not push yourself too far. It is important to ensure that you control the pressures and stress in your life and your stress does not control you. Learn to control and use pressure and stress and you can lead a healthier, happier and more successful life.

Under some types of pressure you may feel *stressed* but you will react in different ways to different levels of pressure. Another way of looking at it is that too much pressure, bad pressure and too little pressure can hold you back from your best performances, and living every moment well. Your body responds to pressure, people and situations whether positive or negative by ‘*flight, fight or freeze*’ – instantly you have a high level of arousal to help deal with a threat or opportunity. Some of the benefits of stress are :

- ➔ Pressure and stress help to motivate us e.g. to learn, to achieve, be more productive, achieve our goals, to study for exams, pass our driving test, be more successful etc.
- ➔ Pressure and arousal stimulate us to get things done
- ➔ Pressure and demands from situations and people challenge us to achieve more than we might otherwise attain
- ➔ Stress and tension can be used in creative ways to make use of energy that would otherwise be lost through distress
- ➔ Pressure, stress and arousal can be the vital ingredient that stimulates personal growth
- ➔ Stress has a positive function in that it can act as a warning signal, rather like the red light on your car dashboard, which encourages you to be alert, prepared and ready to act

Benefits of Working Through 'Effective Stress Management'

- ➔ Get a clearer picture of how stress affects you and those around you, deal with unwanted pressures and upsets in your life and take firm action to move towards a brighter future.
- ➔ Analyse your own reactions to pressure and choose and use the best 'Stress Buster' techniques for your needs.
- ➔ You will be able to relax with techniques to harness your energies, deal with your emotions through self expression, think yourself into a positive mental attitude and take effective actions and build a support network to achieve success.

In today's world the person who succeeds is not always the one who lives at break neck speed. You don't need to get dragged down by pressure and stress. You can learn to take some pressure off, slow the pace down and get more in touch with what you really want.

STRESS SYMPTOMS AND CAUSES

.....

How you react to a given situation depends on your personality, your skills, your knowledge, your attitudes, your experience, your motivation... in other words on *you*.

It is not just negative things that cause stress; positive things can cause stress too.

Consider the following situations:

- Getting married
- The birth of a child
- Christmas time
- A holiday abroad

These are generally regarded as *positive events* or *experiences*.

Now consider the following situations:

- First day in a new job
- Stuck in a traffic jam on way to the office
- Being given several tight task deadlines
- Having a disagreement with your boss

These are generally regarded as potentially *negative situations* or *experiences*.

The point is that some people perceive the situations set out above as challenging and full of opportunity and potential for enjoyment or relaxation: other people will see them all as very stressful and have feelings of being unable to cope. It is this seemingly intangible nature of stress that can sometimes make it so difficult to recognise and deal with. So it is important for you to find out more about your own stress symptoms and causes and then take positive action to establish an optimal personal stress level for better health and well being.

STRESS SYMPTOMS CHECKLIST: EARLY WARNING SIGNS

The following are lists of the common physical, mental, emotional and behavioural symptoms of stress. As personal stress increases, more of these symptoms are likely to become apparent. By noticing how many of these symptoms you or your colleagues are currently experiencing, either continuously or from time to time, you can get early warning of an increase in stress. To help you get an overall picture or profile, put a tick against each symptom you have had more often than you would like during the last three to six months:

STRESS SYMPTOMS CHECKLIST: Early Warning Signs

Physical Signs

- Headaches
- Throbbing heart
- Tiredness
- Vague aches or pains
- Skin irritations or rashes
- Excessive sweating
- Frequent colds, 'flu or other infections

Mental Signs

- Indecision
- Loss of concentration
- Making mistakes
- Worrying
- Muddled thinking
- Less sensitive
- Persistent negative thoughts

Emotional Signs

- Irritability
- More gloomy, depressed
- Feeling tense
- Drained, no enthusiasm
- Cynical, inappropriate humour
- Feeling nervous, apprehensive, anxious
- Loss of confidence
- De-motivated
- Reduced self-esteem
- Job dissatisfaction

Behavioural Signs

- Unsociability
- Restlessness
- Loss of appetite or overeating
- Disturbed sleep or insomnia
- Drinking more alcohol
- Taking work home more
- Too busy to relax
- Low productivity
- Voice tremor
- Poor time management

Even though some of the symptoms have a clear physical cause, count them nevertheless, for their occurrence is still likely to be an indirect consequence of stress.

See whether you have a few ticks under one or two headings or if you have many ticks under all the main headings. Also note if you have been experiencing, say, mostly physical or emotional signs. If you think you are suffering from a selection of the signs listed above it is vital that you try to think seriously about what might be causing them so you can take action quickly. You will be able to make use of this information to develop a **Personal Stress Management Plan**.

STRESS AT WORK CHECKLIST: Common Causes

There are many different causes of stress at work; the lists below are of the most common ones identified by research. Take some time to read through and tick those that have caused you some stress during the past six months. Add any others that are affecting you at present.

Intrinsic to Job

- Too much work
- Too little work
- Time pressure/deadlines
- Poor working conditions
- Mistakes
- Too many decisions

Career Development

- Under-promotion
- Lack of job security
- Fear of retirement/redundancy
- Thwarted ambition
- Sense of being trapped
- Over-promotion

Role in Organisation

- Role ambiguity
- Role conflict
- Too little responsibility
- No participation in decision-making
- Responsibility for people/things
- Lack of managerial support

Organisational Climate

- Restrictions on behaviour, e.g. budgets
- Lack of effective communication
- Uncertainty about what is happening
- No sense of belonging
- Loss of identity
- Office politics

Relations within Organisation

- Poor relations with boss
- Poor relations with colleagues/staff
- Difficulties delegating
- Personality conflicts

Intrinsic to Individual

- Inability to cope with change
- Lack of insight into own stressors
- Interpersonal problems
- Fear of moving out of area of expertise

This exercise has been designed to help you produce an overview of your common causes of stress at work. Take a look at the big picture that has emerged for you and consider which are causing you the most difficulties at present. Now see if you can identify your 5 most bothersome stressors and place them in order of severity.

This priority list of stressors is then available for you to use when drawing up your **Personal Stress Management Plan**.

BEING A STRESS CONSCIOUS MANAGER

Managers and supervisors have a crucial role in preventing pressure turning into stress. An important first step would be to:

Take the lead in discussing stress openly

- Many people are concerned about admitting to stress-related problems because of the possible effect on their Annual Report.
- Managers who are sensitive and supportive seem to get the best out of people.
- Acknowledging and talking about problem issues can go a long way towards dealing with them and improving the work “climate”.

The following are some useful suggestions for stress conscious managers.

- **Recognise that management style may contribute significantly to others’ stress**
- **Talk to your staff about stress**
- **Recognise your own and others’ stress symptoms**
- **Take appropriate action to deal with stress**

Analysing Your Own Response to Stress

GENERAL QUESTIONS

.....

In order to help reduce work-related stress and select and use the most effective stress management techniques, it is important to take some time out to establish what, for you, are the main sources of stress at work.

To this end a series of general questions are set out below. The aim is to help you identify what, for you, are the main stressors these days that need to be focused on and dealt with.

- 1 What are the main sources of stress for you at work these days?**
(Please base your answers on the last six months)

.....
.....
.....

- 2 What do you think are the best ways of dealing with these sources of stress?**

.....
.....
.....

- 3 How do you usually deal with stress at work?**

.....
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4 What helps and hinders you when seeking to manage your stress at work?

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5 What could you do differently to help manage your work stress these days?

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6 Generally, what are the most effective ways of reducing stress at work in your view?

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You may find it useful to spend time with at least one other person who is a good listener to talk through your replies to these questions. This kind of general analysis will also help to prepare you for the self-assessment and personal stress management included later in the Guide.

ARE YOU STRESSED?



Assessing your own levels and sources of stress is an important step in doing something about the problem. Before reading this section, complete the questionnaire on page 20

Your Current Approach: Type As versus Type Bs

Are you a Type A personality (active, energetic, impatient to wait in a queue, conscientious; high standards, never enough time, often intolerant of others slower. Feel guilty when relaxing)?

Alternatively are you a Type B personality (quiet, very few things worry you, often uncompetitive, put your energies into things you can alter, and leave others to worry about the rest)? The concept of Type A and type B personality was developed by cardiologists Meyer Friedman and Ray Rosenman during their studies of individuals with coronary heart disease in America in the mid 1950's.

Successive test based interviews suggested that people with Type A behaviour tend to present physical signs i.e. facial tension, rapid speech, interrupting others' speech, tongue and teeth clicking and the audible forced inspiration of air. Type A behaviour patterns, which may place individuals at risk of coronary heart disease, have now been studied for some 40 years. Subsequent studies offered enough evidence for the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute in 1981 to conclude that Type A behaviour was associated with increased risk of coronary heart disease in middle aged United States citizens in industrialised geographical areas. However, since then, further research has produced both contrary and inconsistent findings.

Type A behaviour and job stress are linked in that individuals seem to find themselves in various high pressure scenarios which tends to increase their behaviours. For example, individuals with Type A behaviour may find themselves in high demand / low achievement work settings, which tends to increase their impatient and agitated behaviour. Machine paced work has been linked to anxiety, anger and depression but only for Type A workers. The wives of men who had suffered heart attacks interviewed by Friedman and Rosenman in the 1980's were more definite about what was causing heart attacks, "If you really want to know what is giving our husbands heart attacks I'll tell you; it's the stress they receive in their work, that's what's doing it."

In the course of struggling against time and other people, the fight or flight response is triggered repeatedly and chronically. As a result of the abnormal discharges of adrenaline and cortisol, most Type A people have an increase in the cholesterol and fat in their bloodstream, have a more difficult time getting the cholesterol out of their bloodstream, and have an increased clotting within the arteries. However, there are uncertainties concerning the possible causal associations of Type A behaviour to coronary heart disease arising from the large body of inconsistent findings. This is due in part to the complexity of measuring the behaviours and physiological disease together. Emotional and behavioural reaction patterns are not mutually exclusive, and due to the complexity of the human body it is likely that a variety of influences affect the relationship between personality and health.

In seeking to reconcile contradictory positive and negative results researchers have broken down the Type A behaviour into many sub-components e.g. anger / hostility and time urgency or 'hurry sickness'. The organisational stress literature suggests that in order to reduce Type A behaviour, hostility factors such as job demands, time urgency, hostility, job insecurity and a punitive climate in the workplace, will need to be controlled.

Changes in Type A behaviours are possible according to Dr Friedman but it is not an easy task to accomplish and he has described the need for a change in belief systems, a series of drills, specific group support and most importantly of all a group leader, preferably a psychologist who is also sufficiently knowledgeable about coronary heart disease and Type A behaviours.

It is important to realise that these are descriptions of extremes, nevertheless if you tend to be a Type A personality there are other ways of behaving that could decrease your risk of coronary heart disease. Research is beginning to suggest that there many of the behaviours that Friedman and Rosenman described can be engaged in without triggering the stress response. These people may be called Type C personalities. The major characteristics for Type C are what are called the three C's: Commitment, Control and Confidence. Type C's do not feel they have to be everything to everybody, but have a great sense of self esteem about who they are and what they can do. This approach suggests that we can strive for and become achievement oriented, successful, busy, and hard working without the increased risk of premature death.

What follows overleaf is taken from "*Understanding Stress*" published by HMSO (although the checklist and scoring have been developed outside the Civil Service). Treat them as a guide. You may find that, in the process of learning more about yourself and what stress actually is for you, it may be helpful for you to refer to **Effective Stress Management: Part 2.**

YOUR CURRENT APPROACH

Use the checklist below to get some idea of your behaviours and approach to work and life.
Please circle the number that you feel most closely describes your own behaviour.

Never late	5 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 5	Casual about appointments
Very competitive	5 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 5	Not competitive
Anticipates what others are going to say — interrupts/finishes	5 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 5	Good listener
Always rushed	5 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 5	Never feel rushed or even under pressure
Impatient while waiting	5 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 5	Can wait patiently
Goes all out	5 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 5	Casual
Tries to do too many things at once	5 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 5	Takes one thing at a time
Emphatic in speech (may pound desk)	5 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 5	Slow deliberate talker
Wants good job recognised by others	5 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 5	Cares about satisfying themselves no matter what others think
Fast (walking, eating etc.)	5 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 5	Slow in doing things
Hard driving	5 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 5	Easy going
Hides feelings	5 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 5	Expresses feelings
Few interests outside work	5 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 5	Many outside interests

Scoring the Checklist

Each line can score a maximum of 11 points, the points being allocated as shown below.

You score the points listed against the number you circled on the questionnaire. There are 13 lines, so the maximum score is 143 and the minimum is 13.

Number circled	5	4	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	4	5
Points	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

Once you have added up your total score you can find your behaviour tendency by comparing it with the table below:

12-64 Extreme Type B 65-90 Type B 91-103 Type A 104-143 Extreme Type A

Type 'A' – Ambitious

Active and energetic. Impatient to wait in a queue. Conscientious. High standards. Time is a problem – never have enough. Often intolerant of others slower. Feel guilty when relaxing. Focused on own interests to the exclusion of other people and the surroundings.

Type 'B'-Placid

Quiet, very little worries them. Often uncompetitive. Put their energies into things they can alter, and leave others to worry about the rest.

Research has shown that there is a link between what has come to be known as a Type 'A' personality and coronary heart disease. The danger occurs when Type 'A's are subjected to high levels of demand and stress. Research into stress, like other areas of research, is always moving on and refining existing theories. The Type A/B distinction is no exception. There is now the suggestion that the really dangerous (i.e. related to ill-health) aspects of the Type A personality are to do with aggression and anger. Being energetic, involved in and committed to your job and other activities is not necessarily directly linked to stress-related problems. If frustration results in a build up of anger and aggression that you cannot shake off or let go, you may like to read the section on Dealing with Anger in **Part 2**.

A word of warning

As with all self-assessment questionnaires, it is well to take results with a pinch of salt – that is to see them as indicating a tendency in your behaviour rather than an unchangeable fact. This questionnaire should never be used as the sole basis for determining likely reactions to stress. Bearing this in mind you may find it helpful for someone who knows you well at work to complete the checklist on your behalf. Compare not only the total result but also the individual answers. You may find it very revealing.

MANAGING TYPE 'A' BEHAVIOUR

Since many managers are Type 'A's it would perhaps be unfair to leave them without some specific suggestions as to how to "manage" their behaviour style so that they do not set themselves up for a stress-related illness. These steps can include relaxation exercises but often what is needed is to refrain from those behaviours that characterise Type 'A's. A number of "drills" against "hurry sickness" have been found to work:

- Stop trying to be the centre of attention by constantly talking. Force yourself to listen to others and don't keep finishing their sentences for them.
- If you do continue to talk a lot ask yourself a number of key questions: Do I really have anything important to say? Does anyone want to hear it? Is this the time to say it? If the answer to any of these is 'No', then keep quiet, even if you have to bite your lip!
- Put your Type A behaviour into perspective by asking yourself the following questions: Will this matter have importance five years from now? Must it be done right away or do I have the time to think about the best way to do it?
- Put yourself in situations that force you to slow down, or penalise yourself for hurrying.
- Try not to make unnecessary appointments or deadlines. Remember, the more deadlines you make for yourself, the worse your "hurry sickness" will become.
- Learn to say No and protect your time. If you don't protect it no one else will!
- Take stress-free breathing spaces during the course of the day. They need not be long but they should be frequent. This helps reduce stress and also improves efficiency.
- Try to create opportunities during the day or evening when you can totally relax. Don't try to work and relax in the same situation.
- Take up some outside activities that require not only attention, but patience, like reading, the cinema or gardening.

It is also important for Type 'A's to realise the effects they have on other people. One of the characteristics of Type 'A's is that they are perceived by others as being overly "hostile". Type 'A's should continually remind themselves of this fact, One way of countering this is to spend time in relaxed social interchange, which is time well spent not wasted time!

SELF-ASSESSMENT: THE EFFECTS OF STRESS (Emotional, Physical, Work)

You have looked at the different signs, which can give you clues that you may or may not be heading for a dangerous level of stress in your work and life. Now you have the chance to do some self-assessment to help you find out about your health in relation to stress. It is important to realise that showing symptoms of stress does not necessarily mean that you are heading for health problems. There are other factors such as age, diet and exercise, which play a part. Nevertheless these are signs, which our bodies exhibit to act as a warning to us. It is only sensible to heed these warnings.

QUESTIONNAIRE:

Am I suffering from the *emotional* effects of stress?

<i>Tick the answers that most apply to you</i>	Often	Sometimes	Rarely
Do I ever feel unable to cope?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do I find it difficult to relax?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do I ever feel anxious for no reason?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do I find it hard to show my true feelings?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Am I finding it hard to make decisions?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Am I often irritable for no real reason?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do I worry about the future?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do I feel isolated and misunderstood?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do I dislike myself?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Am I finding it hard to concentrate?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Am I worried about my health?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do I find that life has lost its sparkle?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Scoring

Score 1 for every answer you have ticked in the 'Often' box.

A score of 0–3 indicates slight stress.

A score of 4–6 indicates moderate stress.

A score of 7–11 indicates severe stress.

A score of 12 indicates very severe stress – you should seek medical help.

If you scored more than 3 then it indicates that your body is trying to adapt to stress. See these signs as a warning and take some action to reduce those things in your life which are causing you stress. Other parts of this Guide will give you some ideas of how to do this.

**Try this questionnaire again in a few months
and see if there is any improvement.**

QUESTIONNAIRE:

Am I suffering from the *physical* effects of stress?

<i>Tick the answers that most apply to you</i>	Often	Sometimes	Rarely
Do I ever have aching shoulders or neck muscles?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do I ever have trouble sleeping?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do I have persistent indigestion?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Am I feeling unusually tired?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do I have frequent headaches?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is my blood pressure too high?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do I have unexplained dizzy spells?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do I smoke to calm my nerves?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do I eat erratically?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do I have a drink to unwind?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Am I experiencing sexual difficulties?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do I have unexplained skin rashes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Scoring

Score 1 for every answer you have ticked in the 'Often' box.

A score of 0–3 indicates slight stress.

A score of 4–6 indicates moderate stress.

A score of 7–11 indicates severe stress.

A score of 12 indicates very severe stress – you should seek medical help.

If you scored more than 3 then it indicates that your body is trying to adapt to stress. See these signs as a warning and take some action to reduce those things in your life which are causing you stress. Other parts of this Guide will give you some ideas of how to do this.

**Try this questionnaire again in a few months
and see if there is any improvement.**

QUESTIONNAIRE: Work Performance

You may find it useful to complete the following questionnaire. If it is used together with the questionnaires about the emotional effects and physical effects of stress you will have a very clear idea of where trouble is likely to occur.

If you find that either you or the people, with whom you work, are showing signs of unacceptable stress levels, then it will be worthwhile talking about why, and looking for solutions to reduce stress levels.

Do this questionnaire and find out your stress score. The situations listed are fairly typical and should be taken in one's stride. However, if they occur frequently, you will have to take active steps to reduce their number or improve your overall balance of health and develop support groups outside your work to enable you to cope with them. Please rate how often they occur: **Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often** and **Always**:

Read each sentence, ring the score that applies to you and then add up your total score.

Never = 1 Rarely = 2 Sometimes = 3 Often = 4 Always = 5

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| 1 2 3 4 5 | I cannot get my work finished on time |
| 1 2 3 4 5 | I haven't the time to do things as I would like them to be done |
| 1 2 3 4 5 | I'm not clear exactly what my responsibilities are |
| 1 2 3 4 5 | I haven't enough to occupy my mind or time |
| 1 2 3 4 5 | I don't get on with my boss |
| 1 2 3 4 5 | I lack confidence in dealing with people |
| 1 2 3 4 5 | I have unsettled conflicts with other staff |
| 1 2 3 4 5 | I get very little support from my colleagues or my superiors |
| 1 2 3 4 5 | I never know how I'm getting on in my job: there's no feedback |
| 1 2 3 4 5 | No one understands the needs of my department |
| 1 2 3 4 5 | Our targets/budgets are unrealistic and unworkable |
| 1 2 3 4 5 | I have to take work home to get it done |
| 1 2 3 4 5 | I can never take all my leave |
| 1 2 3 4 5 | I avoid any difficult situations |
| 1 2 3 4 5 | I feel frustrated |

TOTAL SCORE

- 0–20** The stressors are about average for most people who enjoy their work but inevitably find things frustrating from time to time.
- 21–45** The stressors are such that you get tense and uptight from time to time and you will need to make use of, for example, relaxation techniques.
- 45+** The stressors are too high. Are you perhaps a **Type 'A'** personality, a worrier or a perfectionist? See *Managing Type A Behaviour* (page 22) and *Gaining Personal Perspective* (page 35) in this Guide.

Using Stress Management Techniques

This section aims to help you select the most relevant stress management techniques so that you can get started today — to start to DO IT! Don't forget, if you carry on doing what you've always done, you will get what you always got — STRESS!!!

To help you decide, it is useful to think of stress as affecting us in one of four main ways: the way our bodies react; the way we think; the way we feel; the way we behave. Through the self-assessment sections in this Guide you will have been able to diagnose the main ways that stress is affecting you these days. Look at the checklist below and you will be able to find the main ways that stress affects you and then make the link to one or more of the most effective stress management techniques. For example, if you have identified a higher level of physical tension than you would like, select, learn and use the Deep Muscle Relaxation Technique.

Stress Affects Me This Way

Stress Management Techniques to Consider

1 Physical/Bodily Reactions

e.g. headaches, tension in neck and shoulders; excessive sweating; tiredness; vague aches or pains; losing sleep etc.

2 Thinking/Psychological

e.g. loss of concentration; indecision; worrying; telling yourself things are awful or terrible; persistent negative thoughts; thinking things are hopeless and can't be bothered to do anything about it.

3 Emotions/Feelings

e.g. irritability; more gloomy or depressed; drained, no enthusiasm; cynical, inappropriate humour; feeling nervous and apprehensive; loss of confidence; reduced self esteem;

Learn and Use Relaxation Techniques

Deep Muscle Relaxation
Sensible Exercise
Healthy Diet

Find out What You are Telling Yourself

The ABC of Stress Management
Assertion Training Techniques
Sensible Exercise

Get in Touch With and Express Your Feelings

Co-Counselling
Personal Counselling
Sensible Exercise
Communicating Assertively

4 Behaviour

e.g. unsociability; poor time management; taking work home more; drinking more alcohol; too busy to relax; low productivity; not doing it

Decide, Plan and Act Differently

Behavioural Approach
Time/Self Management
Communicating Assertively at Work

LEARNING TO RELAX

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Deep Muscle Relaxation

Preparation

- Practise in a quiet and comfortable environment for the first few times. Close your eyes to reduce distractions and try to concentrate on the set of muscles you are dealing with.
- Don't force yourself to relax, adopt an attitude of passive concentration. After relaxing a muscle group, mentally repeat the word "relax".
- During the last few minutes, concentrate on the word "relax" or on pleasant images. At the end of the session, move around slowly and maintain the feeling of relaxation.

Hands and lower arms: Clench both fists as tightly as you can for about five seconds and feel the tension. Now relax them completely and note the difference between the tension and the relaxation in your hands and lower arms.

Front upper arms: Bend your arms at the elbows, trying to touch your wrists to your shoulders to tighten the muscles at the front of the upper arms, the biceps muscles. Hold this position for about five seconds, then relax and let your arms straighten by your sides. Continue to let the muscles unwind and concentrate on the feeling of letting go.

Back upper arms: Straighten your arms as rigidly as you can. Feel the tension in the back of your upper arms, your triceps muscles, for about five seconds and then let go. Let your arms relax completely.

Neck: Press your head back hard against the chair, so as to tense your neck muscles and hold that position for about five seconds. Feel the tension and then relax your neck and simply let your head rest back gently. Concentrate on the feeling of letting go.

Shoulders: Shrug your shoulders, drawing them up into your neck as tightly as you can. Notice the tension in your shoulders, hold the position for about five seconds and then relax. Let your shoulders flop and unwind and enjoy the feeling of letting go.

Eyes and eyebrows: Frown as hard as you can and squeeze your eyes tightly shut in order to tense the area around your eyes. Hold that position for about five seconds and then relax. Feel the relief of letting go.

Forehead and scalp: Raise your eyebrows as high as you can as though enquiring. Feel the tension in your forehead and scalp and hold that position. Feel the tension then relax. Notice the difference between tension and relaxation and continue the feeling of letting go. Keep your eyes still and look straight ahead.

Mouth: Press your lips tightly together and tense the muscles in your lips and face. Hold this position for about five seconds and then relax. Let your lips rest lightly together and continue the feeling of letting go.

Jaw: Bite your teeth together for about five seconds and feel the tension in your jaw. Then relax the muscles in your jaw by parting your teeth slightly so there is no tension in your jaw. Concentrate on the feeling of letting go.

Throat: Press the tip of your tongue against the roof of your mouth and press upwards as hard as you can. Feel the tension in your tongue and throat and hold that position for about five seconds. Then let go and allow your tongue to flop down to the bottom of your mouth. Feel the relief of letting go and continue to relax your tongue and throat.

Chest: Take a deep breath and feel the tension in your chest. Hold your breath for about five seconds. Now breathe out and concentrate on the feeling of relaxation. Take another deep breath and feel the tension again. Hold it for five seconds, then breathe out and relax. Now keep your breathing shallow and relaxed. Every time you breathe out feel the relief of letting go.

Stomach: Tighten the muscles around your stomach area as though you were preparing to receive a blow. Feel the tension and hold this position for about five seconds. Now relax and let your stomach muscles loosen and unwind. Continue the feeling of letting go and relaxing.

Legs and hips: squeeze your thighs and buttocks together, straighten your legs and point your toes downwards. Hold that position for about five seconds and note the tension in your legs and hips, then relax completely and feel the tension ease away from your legs and hips. For the next two or three minutes concentrate on relaxing all the major muscle groups: legs, buttocks, stomach, chest, mouth, throat, eyes, forehead, neck, shoulders, arms and hands.

Feel yourself sinking deeper into your chair as your body becomes heavier and heavier, more and more deeply relaxed. Now count backwards from ten and then open your eyes and then look around, move slowly and, in your own time, get back to what you were doing and maintain the feeling of relaxation.

Try to practise **Deep Relaxation** at least once a day for about twenty minutes.

It will do you a great deal of good if you can manage to practise for two such periods, perhaps one during the middle of the day and one during the evening. After about five days you should find that you are able to relax quickly and easily.

Then you may be able to move on to **Quick Relaxation**. You can do this by sitting or lying in a comfortable position and tensing and relaxing all your muscle groups at the same time. First tense and hold for about five seconds and then let everything go and relax. Do this for about ten minutes whilst concentrating on a relaxing image and the word “relax”.

If you found this section helpful, more information about relaxation can be found in Part 2 page 83.

THE BEHAVIOURAL APPROACH TO FEELING GOOD

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This approach to helping you feel good is based on learning principles that have emerged this century through the systematic observation of human behaviour. The emphasis is put on what you do or say, *your behaviour*, not what you think or feel. It helps you to come up with practical solutions to your individual problems by setting personal goals that enable you to feel good. Attaining our objectives may involve changes in our environment so that we are able to perform behaviours that you can not perform at present. This may involve us learning new skills, removing obstacles or ensuring that a behaviour has a positive consequence for us.

Putting a Behavioural Approach into practice typically involves several main steps and in effect helps you to produce your own goal planning system :

- 1. Specifying the Goals :** make them specific, refer to particular times and places relevant to the behaviour e.g. "At work when discussing a problem with a colleague I would like to present myself more forcefully"
- 2. Make the Goal Positive :** phrase your goal in a positive way " For example I would like to talk to strangers in a more relaxed way at parties" rather than "I wish I did not become so tense and inhibited when talking to new people at parties."
- 3. Create a range of Sub-Goals :** to enable you to reach your specific goal in the most rapid, effective way. Write down the desired goal (e.g. make effective presentations) at the bottom right hand side of a piece of A4 paper and the current situation at the top left hand corner. The sheet can then be filled with possible goals taken from your knowledge of what must be done to develop the final skill.
- 4. Practice Constantly :** the development of any skill is directly related to the consistency with which it is practised. It is better to practice little and often than go for days without doing anything and then guiltily engage in a long period of practice.
- 5. Use Reinforcement Principles :** the important principle of reinforcement can be used to help establish the desired behaviours. After each practice period it is very important to spend a few minutes doing two things in this order :
 - Carry out some pleasant activity or enjoy some pleasurable reward for having attempted and practised the behaviour.
 - Go over what you have done and see why things went well, when they did and how you can improve on the patches which were not so good.

At first you may find the Behavioural Approach rather mechanical and demanding of your time. Once you start to use the skill, however, it will become a natural and easy part of your new behaviours. This in turn will help to increase your confidence and enable you to assert yourself more and develop better relationships with others. Make sure you spend enough time creating positive consequences or rewards for yourself immediately after you have done what you said you would do in particular situations and with specific people.

HOW THOUGHTS INFLUENCE FEELINGS

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Many people believe that feelings such as stress, worry, frustration, despondency, etc result from factors which are beyond their control, such as the state of the economy, family concerns, a personal disappointment, a traumatic childhood event, their body chemistry, health, etc.

Certainly many of our feelings are caused by external factors. But much of what we feel is the result of the way we think about a situation, rather than the situation itself. It is our thoughts and attitudes that primarily create our feelings.

People react differently to the same event based on what they say to themselves about it and how they interpret it.

Most of our thinking is accurate and helpful, producing appropriate feelings and behaviours. For instance, if someone close to you is very ill, it is appropriate to feel anxious; or if you have suffered a major setback, it is natural to feel disappointed. But some of our thinking is exaggerated and unhelpful, which leaves us feeling pessimistic, and demotivated. Thinking can influence how we feel even when our thoughts are inaccurate.

But we do not need to be victims of our thinking. With effort and practice we can change our thinking patterns and experience less unpleasant feelings. This does not mean fooling ourselves or being unrealistic. It means learning to check whether our thoughts are accurate, and if not, changing to a more helpful view.

Thinking Your Way To Minimising Stress

Research in psychology indicates that the way we view or explain our successes and failures determines how persistent and motivated we are, which in turn affects successful performance and satisfaction. Attributional or thinking style is the way in which we attribute causes to events that happen in our lives. Research has shown that positive attributional style is strongly associated with high performance and success. Individuals make up to four attributions per minute, so it is easy to see what a catastrophic effect it can have on an individual's behaviour and performance if these attributions are consistently negative.

Impaired performance, poor persistence and vulnerability to depression are associated with a pattern of thought in which individuals characteristically attribute failure to **Permanent, Internal** and **General** causes. They attribute success, in contrast, to **Specific, External** and **Temporary** causes. Three different types of belief are important in our thoughts about success and failures; beliefs about *ourselves, our experiences and our future*.

1. Thinking style is the way in which we explain the causes of events that happen in our lives. Research has shown that individuals make up to four attributions per minute and that a positive thinking style is strongly associated with an ability to bounce back after adversity, rejection and stress. Consistently negative explanation of events will clearly impact significantly on our behaviour and performance.

2. Three dimensions of thinking or attributional style are important when looking at how we explain good and bad events in our lives :

- i. **Internal** : An internal cause points to something about the self (“It was due to me”) whereas an external cause points to other people or circumstances (“It’s the manager’s style”).
- ii. **Permanent** : A permanent cause invokes a long-lasting factor (“It’s never going to go away”) whereas a temporary cause is transient (“It was just this time”).
- iii. **General** : A general cause is one that affects a wide domain of activities (“It’s going to ruin everything I do”), whereas a specific cause is circumscribed (“It is only this interaction”).

3. A person who habitually explains negative events as permanent, internal and general shows more severe helplessness and hopelessness than a person who explains them as specific, external and temporary. The results can include passivity, demotivation, poor problem solving, low self esteem, depression, poor immune function and higher morbidity. The person who habitually explains good events as specific, external and temporary (SET thinking) is more at risk of demotivation, burn out etc. than a person who explains successes as permanent, internal, and global (PIG thinking).

4. Extensive research over many years has shown that the style we learn in childhood, or subsequently, which becomes automatic and habitual can, if necessary and with the right psychological techniques, be re-learned. Dr Judy Proudfoot has undertaken several years of successful research, building on previous work by Professor Martin Seligman, from the University of Pennsylvania. From her research, Dr Proudfoot has developed a comprehensive coaching and development programme, which is based on tried and proven psychological principles, to help individuals improve their resilience and enhance their success.

In addition, cognitive-behavioural techniques are taught to help people to first identify and then to change the types of thinking patterns that lead to negative and pessimistic behaviours, thereby obstructing the path to well-being and success. The focus is on developing positive and helpful thinking and behaviour, leading individuals to enhanced resilience and success.

Cognitive-Behavioural techniques help individuals to apply critical reasoning and rational thinking when faced with setbacks or successes. These techniques teach people to focus on the reality of situations, positive or negative, and to apply the appropriate strategies to deal with them effectively - turning any situation to their best advantage.

COMMON THINKING ERRORS

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A basic factor in how we respond to a situation is the way in which we interpret the situation. By changing our thoughts about an event, by having a different perspective we can change our feelings, energy level and ability to take the most helpful action. Typically, when we are stressed or feeling low, our thoughts contain a number of distortions or errors. These Thinking Errors are common – everyone has them to some degree – but they do make us feel worse. The ABC Model shows how Thinking Errors (B) lead to Negative Feelings (C). It is very important, therefore, to be aware of our thinking errors, so that we can gain some control over them. Normally, we each have our ‘favourite’ Thinking Errors - that is, one or two that we tend to use. Review the ones described below to identify yours:

1. All or Nothing Thinking: You see things in black and white categories e.g. “I’m right and he is wrong about this” If your performance falls short of perfect, you see yourself as a total failure. All or nothing thinking forms the basis of perfectionism.

2. Jumping to Conclusions : You make a negative interpretation even though there are no definite facts that convincingly support your conclusion. **Mind Reading** - You assume you know what other people are thinking, or that they are reacting negatively to you, without checking your hunches e.g. “My boss / partner / colleague is mad at me”. **Fortune Telling** - You predict that things will turn out badly. Before a very important interview you may tell yourself, “*I’m really going to blow it. What if I fail?*” If you are depressed you may tell yourself, “*I’ll never get better.*”

3. Magnification (Catastrophising) or Minimisation: You exaggerate your own problems, imperfections etc. For example, “*This is awful! Just think of everything I have to do! I just have too much work.*” Conversely you shrink your strengths, resources and good points.

4. Emotional Reasoning: You take your emotions as evidence for the truth, “*I feel, therefore it must be true*” e.g. “*I feel guilty, therefore I must have done something bad*” or “*I feel overwhelmed, therefore my problems must be impossible to solve.*”

5. Should Statements: You try to motivate yourself with shoulds and shouldn’ts as if you had to be whipped and punished before you could be expected to do anything. ‘Musts’ and ‘Oughts’ are also offenders e.g. “*I should do this*” or “*I must do that*” The emotional consequence is guilt. When you direct ‘should’ statements towards others, you *feel anger, frustration and resentment* e.g. “*He shouldn’t be so self-centred and thoughtless*” or “*She ought to be prompt*”

6. Labelling and Mislabelling: Instead of describing your effort, you attach a negative label to yourself “*I’m a failure*” instead of “*I made a mistake*” When other people’s behaviour rubs you the wrong way, you attach a negative label to him “*He’s an unco-operative egotist.*” Mislabelling involves describing an event with language that is highly coloured and emotionally loaded.

7. Personalisation and Blame: Personalisation occurs when you hold yourself personally responsible for an event that is not entirely under your control and can lead to guilt, shame and feelings of inadequacy. Some people do the opposite and blame other people or circumstances for their problems, and they overlook ways that they might be contributing to the problem.

8. Discounting the Positive: You reject positive experiences by insisting they don't count. If you do a good job, you may tell yourself that it wasn't good enough or that anyone could have done as well. You will feel inadequate and unrewarded.

- Burns DD (1989) *The Feeling Good Handbook*. A Plume / Penguin Book

CHALLENGING AND DISPUTING COMMON THINKING ERRORS

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Albert Ellis, a famous New York psychologist, made a major contribution to 'stress busting' when he asserted that it is simply bad thinking that causes us trouble. Emotion comes directly from what we think: Think "*I am in danger!*" and you will feel anxiety. Think "*Loss*" and you will feel sad. Think "*I am being trespassed against*" and you will feel anger. Millions of pounds have been spent testing whether this approach works - and it does.

A Personal Experience: think about a recent experience where you have experienced a strong negative emotion like anger / fear / anxiety / depression etc. and describe it in the A B C sequence as set out below :

A - Activating Experience – describe briefly what actually happened (and then the)

C - Consequence – what were they in terms of strong, negative emotion and / or behaviour.

Then ask what you were saying to yourself about this situation to try and establish your 'automatic' self talk and especially your irrational beliefs.

B - Beliefs - what are you saying to yourself e.g. musts, oughts, shoulds, I must perform perfectly; I should be comfortable all the time; I ought to be liked by everyone or else it will be terrible!!! etc.

Summary: What we say to ourselves, 'self talk', is an important source of well being or ill health - what you think affects how you feel. Stress can be reduced just by changing thoughts about the event, by taking a different perspective. This will not eliminate stress completely, but will help reduce it to a manageable level.

Now think of a situation about which you are currently stressed. Jot down some stress producing thoughts about the situation and rate out of 10 the amount of stress you would feel with these thoughts. Then jot down some stress-reducing thoughts and rate out of 10 how you would feel with these thoughts.

Review: Were you able to change the level of stress by changing your thoughts about the situation? So what is your recipe for doing it - write down your thoughts.

Years of psychological research have shown that there are 4 key strategies to making your thinking more powerful and successful. You ask yourself 4 Disputing questions. Psychologists have now produced the 4 most powerful challenging questions to help deal with stress created by our own thinking.

The Four Challenging Questions:

1. Am I making any thinking errors ?

(refer to your List of Common Thinking Errors)

2. What is the evidence ?

Ask yourself “Is there 100% evidence to support my thoughts / Is there any evidence against my thoughts ?”

3. What alternative views are there ?

Ask yourself “What other ways are there of looking at the situation ?”

4. What action can I take ?

Now ask yourself “What can I do about it ?”

You need to decide to what extent asking these questions of yourself or in a co-listening partnership will make a difference to how you feel about the ‘current’ stress situation you have just been thinking about ?

GAINING PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

(Or how to avoid thinking your way into stress)

The aims of this section are to:

- 1 Assess how you see situations at work that may be linked to stress
- 2 Take steps to make yourself less vulnerable in such situations by applying the ideas presented here, or seeking training or other types of help.

Incidentally, personal change usually requires some effort. We hope that the self-assessment Inventory provided below results in a few “*Oh yes — that’s me!*” thoughts, but that will not be enough. If this approach appeals to you, we strongly recommend that you build some of the ideas into your **Personal Stress Management Plan**.

This approach is about the way we judge the meaning of events. Something happens and we make sense of it based on our knowledge of ourselves and others. The trouble is that our interpretations can be based on faulty thinking and this can lead to stress. We’ll look at this idea in more detail later.

But first, you can explore your own thinking by completing the inventory that follows. This will help you to recognise what you tell yourself about the things that happen to you.

The Inventory consists of a series of statements. You have to tick a column according to how much you agree/disagree. Read each statement carefully and decide how much you agree or disagree with the statement. Then place a tick under the column that best describes how you think. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers to these questions.

Your answers should show your typical way of looking at things, keep in mind what you are like most of the time. Lastly, be honest. After all no-one will see the result apart from you. (If you prefer, you can ask one or more colleagues to assess you.)

Example:

	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree
Most people are OK once YOU get to know them	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Remember that your answers should describe the way you think most of the time.

PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE INVENTORY

Tick the answers that most apply to you

	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	
People will probably think less of me if I make a mistake	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A
I soon stop trying if work doesn't show early returns	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	C
I soon become impatient if things don't go the way I intend	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	C
People won't like me if I'm not successful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	B
I hate making mistakes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A
People should have a reasonable likelihood of success before undertaking anything	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	C
Personal planning is hardly worth it: something always turns up to mess up plans	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	C
I find that other people's opinions of me are more important than my opinions of myself	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	B
I can't reach important goals without slave-driving myself	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A
Finding the time for planning is virtually impossible	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	C
I need the approval of other people in order to be happy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	B
What other people think about me is very important	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	B
A person can't change their emotional reactions even if he/she knows they are harmful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A
You can't be a happy person without pleasing other people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	B
If I put other people's needs before my own, they should help me when I want them to do something for me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	B
Getting quick results is important to me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	C
A person should do well at everything he/she undertakes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A
I ought to be able to solve my problems quickly and without a great deal of effort	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	C
It is inevitable that criticism upsets people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	B
I must be a useful, productive, creative person or life has no purpose	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A
It's not worth over-exertion to achieve objectives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	C
My feeling of value as a person depends greatly on what others think of me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	B
A person should be able to control what happens to him/her	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A
One should always strive for the best solution	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A

Now tot up the number of A, B and C statements you tend to agree with, write them below and then read on overleaf:

 A: B: C:

WARNING: Take these results as a guide and not a definitive description of you.

Interpretation

If you ticked mostly ‘A’ you may be putting yourself under stress by insisting that you are good at anything you try. Put the other way around, it may be that you don’t just dislike mistakes, you *condemn yourself* (and sometimes others) for committing them.

Instead of simply regretting mistakes or trying to learn from them, you may catch yourself thinking: “I shouldn’t have done that” or “They shouldn’t have done this”. This is one of the easiest and commonest ways of putting yourself under a lot of stress because making mistakes is a universal experience of human beings: *people are fallible!*

Try telling yourself the following.

- Making mistakes is human; it’s a waste of my time and energy to dwell on it.
- I will try to avoid mistakes and errors, but when they happen, I will learn from them.
- No skill or area of knowledge has ever been mastered without mistakes.

Write down the one that feels right for you or invent your own statement and think of it when you’re in danger of lapsing.

If you ticked mostly ‘B’ you may think that other people must like/approve of you if you are to feel OK about yourself. Since it is never possible to please everyone, you could be putting yourself under a lot of needless stress by trying. Of course most people enjoy being popular and like to be liked — but there’s a world of difference between such preferences and the *demand* that others like and approve of you and your actions.

Try telling yourself the following:

- I like people to like me but there is no law that says everyone must like me.
- People are different — some I’ll get along with, some I won’t.
- I don’t need other people’s permission to feel good about myself.

If you scored mostly ‘C’ then you may be suffering from the stress produced by putting off difficult tasks — avoiding awkward issues — planning but not delivering (or doing it all at the last minute in a rush). You may even tell yourself that in doing this you are actually avoiding stress. The trouble is, they have a habit of coming back (as you know). And if you do put off that difficult task, avoid the awkward customer, neglect to really address your problems, then the problems back up until you wish you’d faced them earlier — not when you’re feeling really stressed!

Try the following:

- Getting on with it — using self-discipline is only a means to an end and the end will benefit me.
- I won’t get the things I want if I avoid facing issues and problems that are in the way.
- Much better to sort things out now when there’s plenty of time, rather than being forced to rush later on.

Perhaps there are other blocks that you can identify — demands you make of yourself that are irrational and unhelpful. Write down any you can think of. Now write down some statements that take a more balanced view. Pick the ones that feel right. Think of these often. Pin them up where you can see them.

Like anything that is new or unfamiliar this needs **practice... practice... practice!**

If you found the information in this section helpful, there is more about Gaining Personal Perspective in **Part Two**, page 67.

COMMUNICATING ASSERTIVELY AT WORK

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Prevention is Better than Cure

This Section covers the main elements of assertive behaviour and aims to enable you to develop the core skills of assertiveness and effective communication, which in turn will help enhance the quality of the relationships in your life and at work. Most of the stress experienced in life can be traced back to the nature and quality of our relationships and interactions with other people. One critical skill for us all to develop and which will reduce stress and enhance your enjoyment and happiness in life - is the skill of assertion.

It is increasingly important to be able to maintain and develop dependable relationships in life and at work in the face of change, pressure, responsibility, pressure to achieve and demands from others. There is now a greater need for us all to ensure our people skills match our other qualities and skills. We need to be able to communicate clearly and effectively and in ways that mean everyone concerned feels involved and remains positive. Assertiveness does not mean getting your own way all the time or winning some battle of wits against someone else. It is about interacting with friends, family, colleagues, neighbours and situations in ways that are mutually acceptable and lead to the achievement of personal, family and life goals. **You can learn how to deal with people more effectively in line with your actual needs, including:**

- Understand and use the basic skills of assertiveness in your life
- Identify and deal effectively with real life problem situations
- Deal with family and friends more effectively to enhance satisfaction
- Improve self esteem, self confidence and personal effectiveness
- Learn how to handle difficult situations and people to get a positive result
- Give and receive feedback about personal and career performance
- Produce a realistic Assertiveness Development Action Plan

This part of **Effective Stress Management** gives you an overview of assertiveness and its importance in helping you to control stress in your life; asks you to complete an Assertion Skills Questionnaire so that you can get some feedback on how assertive you are and to what extent you need to enhance your assertion skills; provides a Practical Checklist to help you communicate more assertively at work; takes you through three simple steps to assertiveness and emphasises the importance of setting written goals.

ASSERTION SKILLS QUESTIONNAIRE



Indicate how comfortable you feel in the following situation by putting a :

- 1 - if you feel very uncomfortable**
- 2 - if you feel reasonably comfortable**
- 3 - if you feel very comfortable.**

- 1. Speaking up and asking questions in meetings _____
- 2. Commenting about being interrupted at the time it happens _____
- 3. Stating your views to authority figures _____
- 4. Entering and leaving a room full of people _____
- 5. Speaking in front of a group _____
- 6. Maintaining eye contact when in conversation _____
- 7. Being competent and using your authority without labelling yourself impolite, bossy, aggressive etc. _____
- 8. Asking for the service you expect when you have not received it _____
- 9. Being expected to apologise for something and not doing so since you feel you are right _____
- 10. Requesting the return of borrowed items without apology _____
- 11. Receiving a compliment and saying something to acknowledge that you agree with it _____
- 12. Accepting a rejection _____
- 13. Not getting approval from a significant person _____
- 14. Discussing another person's criticism of you openly with them _____
- 15. Telling someone that they are doing something that is bothering you _____
- 16. Refusing to do a favour you don't want to do _____
- 17. Turning down a request for a meeting _____
- 18. Telling a person when you think they are trying to manipulate you _____
- 19. Expressing anger when you are angry _____
- 20. Arguing with another person _____
- 21. Responding with humour when someone tries to put you down _____
- 22. Talking with humour about mistakes you have made _____

Scoring :

- Over 55 : You are very assertive
- 46 - 55 : You are reasonably assertive. Work on those items with the lowest score
- 36 - 45 : You are about average on assertion
- 26 - 35 : You need to improve your assertion skills
- Below 26 : Your lack of assertion may be causing you stress

PRACTICAL CHECKLIST

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A practical checklist to help you communicate more assertively at work :

- I am Succinct and Specific** : your message may get lost in a lengthy "speech"; talk about what has actually happened or has been decided or proposed.
- I make clear and Honest Statements** : use the first person "I" when expressing your own thoughts and feelings and experiences. Check to be sure that people have accurately understood your meaning.
- I paraphrase what I am hearing** : this ensures that you accurately understand what people say. Listen with concentration. Seek first to understand and then be understood.
- I take time out** : if I am not sure what you want to say in the situation.
- I ask only for opinions I really want** : if you ask for an opinion show respect for it.
- I ask questions that begin with "what" or "how"** : when you wish to obtain more information about something these are generally more helpful.
- I focus criticism on solutions rather than mistakes** : balance criticism with praise.
- I respond to criticism with questions** : ask for clarification, examples and suggestions if appropriate. Be calm and matter-of-fact. If you are unsure whether criticism is valid ask for their observations.
- I focus praise or compliments on specific strengths** : focus on the specific strength of the. Give examples if appropriate. Praise assertive behaviour.
- I deal with aggressive individuals** : make ground rules clear and identify and discuss any unacceptable behaviours. Selectively agree with those parts of the individual's statements you wish to discuss and ignore any attempts to distract you with other topics.
- I deal with non-assertive individuals** : check for accurate understanding and exert extra effort to gather information or opinions. Promote strengths and assets where relevant.
- I use assertive body language** : direct but not staring eye contact, arms and hands loosely at your sides, a relaxed upright posture and a strong steady tone of voice.

ASSERTIVENESS: HOW TO DO IT

There are three simple steps to assertiveness. It is important when you are learning and practicing assertiveness that you understand and practice all three steps in order.

At first it may seem rather stilted and 'false' but with preparation, thought and practice it will become natural and comfortable.

STEP 1

Actively listen to what is being said then show the other person that you both hear and understand them.

STEP 2

Say what you think or what you feel.

STEP 3

Say what you want to happen.

Step 1 forces you to focus on the other person and not use the time they are talking to build up a defence or attack. By really listening you are able to show some understanding and empathy for their situation or point of view even if you do not wholly agree with it.

Step 2 enables you to directly state your thoughts or feelings without insistence or apology. If you disagree the word "however" is a good linking word between Step 1 and Step 2. On the other hand, it tends to contradict your first statement and can be unhelpful. The word "however" can become routine and so it is worth thinking of a number of reasonable alternatives like :

- on the other hand
- in addition
- even so
- nevertheless
- alternatively etc.

Step 3 is essential so that you can indicate in a clear and straightforward way what action or outcome you want without hesitancy or insistence.

ASSERTIVE ACTION PLAN

Spend a few minutes thinking about what you are already doing well assertively, what you are having difficulty with and what you need to do differently.

1. In what ways could you benefit from being more assertive in your dealings with people in your life / at work? (try to be as specific as possible)

2. What do you need to do to bring about such a situation? (be as specific as possible)

3. What support do you need to help you achieve your assertiveness goals ?

MANAGING YOUR EMOTIONS

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Emotions

Uncomfortable and prolonged emotions are those which are bad for you. These kinds of emotions may cause a variety of psychological and physiological symptoms, for example, irrational fears, sleeplessness, loss of confidence, heart disease and digestive disorders.

Most people keep powerful emotions to themselves, but pent up emotions can leak out in the form of physical illnesses, sarcasm, numbness or aggressive behaviour. Many of us think that unpleasant feelings are bad and should be eliminated. From early childhood we may get the message that, if we do not feel good then there is something wrong with us. Instead of pushing bad emotions away, we should get rid of them by expressing them in a way that is helpful to us and does not adversely affect others. Rather than being a sign of mental illness, emotions, like anxiety and depression, may be a normal and temporary reaction to a situation.

Co-counselling

The co-counselling approach is based on the fact that releasing emotions is a natural healing process, helping us to free ourselves from rigid patterns of irrational behaviour and hurtful experiences and enables our flexible intelligence to work better. The best way to help release tension or stress is to set up a co-counselling pair with a person who will give you a “good listening to”. The idea is that you meet with one other person and agree to take equal time to listen and pay attention to each other. If you have 30 minutes then take 15 minutes each. This will help you to free each other from patterns of behaviour which cause trouble and prevent success.

Listening and asking questions

The first thing you must do — *and do very well* — is to listen... listen with interest and with full attention. If you listen in this manner, your co-counselling partner will be encouraged and enabled to talk about their pattern of distress. They may relate this to you in terms of difficulties or as experiences that occurred at work or elsewhere. The second thing you can do to help is ask questions. These questions are not designed to obtain information for you as a counsellor, they are there to reassure your partner of your interest and to steer and guide thinking, attention and release of emotion.

Permit and encourage emotions

Much of the time you will be seeking an opportunity for them to discharge emotional or physical tension. You need to direct attention to where emotional discharge is likely to occur and encourage this if it shows signs of starting. The aim of your co-counselling session is to enable your partner to experience any emotions that come up, so that this will lead to them spontaneously re-evaluating their rigid patterns of behaviour. Don't interrupt the process, tell them what you think, what they should do or react emotionally yourself. Do persist in helping your partner concentrate on what is bothering them and be sensitive and courteous at all times. Being listened to will have profound effects if you both take turns.

SELF AND TIME MANAGEMENT

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Time management checklist

Time — or the lack of it — can be a big stressor. Often we seem to be controlled by time rather than being able to control it. One real way to reduce stress is to learn to manage your own time and decrease the number of distractions and time wasters. Taking control of time is about finding out how you use your time now and using the lessons learned to organise yourself more productively.

Using a time log is the key to finding out how you really use your time, not how you think you use it. Keep a time log for a working week by recording what you do, the specific times and any interruptions. Then analyse it by asking of each task:

- Did I need that task at all?
- Do I avoid major tasks in favour of more important ones?

Some other important questions for you to answer to help your time management are:

- 1 What are you in your job for/what is your main purpose?
- 2 How do you spend your day and what control have you really got?
- 3 What do you do that really gets results?
- 4 What are your activities and key results areas?
- 5 How do you deal with interruptions?
- 6 How often do you say NO and how do you say it?
- 7 How else could you do some of the things you do?
- 8 What is the difference between effectiveness and efficiency?
- 9 What is the difference between urgent and important?
- 10 What changes do you need to ensure the best use of your time?

Forward Planning

One simple method to manage your time more effectively is to sit down at the end of each day and write down the six most important things you can do the next day. This can have an enormous effect on your productivity. It is a system that works well, makes you think and focuses your mind on tomorrow, at a time when you have a moment to plan the next day.

First take a few minutes to write down short answers to two questions: (i) what **one** thing could you do (that you are not doing now) that if you did on a regular basis would make a huge difference in your personal life? and (ii) in your work, what would produce similar results?

The essence of best thinking in the area of time management can be captured in a single phrase: **Organise and execute around priorities**. This phrase represents the evolution of three generations of time management theory and how best to do it. Time management has gone through three previous generations, each building on the one before.

- The first generation emphasised notes and checklists to give recognition to the many demands placed on us.
- The second generation was characterised by diaries and appointment books. This generation reflects an attempt to look ahead, to schedule events activities in the future.
- The third generation adds the important idea of prioritisation and focuses on setting goals: specific, long-term, intermediate and short-term targets toward which time and energy is directed in line with our values. It also includes the idea of daily planning, of making a specific plan to achieve goals deemed of greatest worth.

Many people have been turned off by time management programmes and planners that make them feel too controlled and restricted and have reverted to first or second generation techniques to preserve relationships, spontaneity and quality of life.

The emerging fourth generation approach is different in kind. It recognises that “Time management” is not really the best description — the challenge is not to manage time but to manage ourselves. Rather than focusing on things and time, the fourth generation focuses on preserving and enhancing relationships and on accomplishing results. This means maintaining a balance between the production of desired results and your own production capacity — your assets and abilities — in order to maximise long-term beneficial results for you and your work.

The essence of fourth generation time management is captured in the matrix below:

	URGENT	NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT	I: Activities Crises, pressing problems, deadline driven projects	II: Activities Prevention, relationships, planning, recreation
NOT IMPORTANT	III: Activities Interruptions, some calls, some post, some reports	IV: Activities Trivia, some post, time-wasters

Basically we spend our time in one of four ways. The two factors that define an activity are **urgent** and **important**. Urgent means it requires immediate attention. Importance is about getting results and contributing to your high priority goals. To be more effective you should stay out of **Quadrants III** and **IV** because, urgent or not, they are not important. Also you need to shrink **Quadrant I** down to size by spending more time in **Quadrant II**.

Quadrant II is the heart of effective personal management. It deals with things that are not **urgent**, but are **important**. It deals with things like building relationships, long range planning, preparation, preventive maintenance — all of those things that we know we need to do but somehow seldom get around to doing, because they are not urgent.

With the time management matrix in mind, take a moment now and consider how you answered the questions at the beginning of this section. What quadrant did they fit in? Are they **important** or are they **urgent**? It is likely that they probably fit into Quadrant **II**. They are obviously important, but not urgent and because they are not urgent you do not do them. By focusing on relationships and results rather than time and methods you can achieve dramatic results.

The only place to get time for Quadrant **II** in the beginning is from Quadrants **III** and **IV**. You can't ignore the urgent and important activities of Quadrant **I**, although it will shrink in size as you spend more time with prevention and preparation in Quadrant **II**. You have to take the initiative and work on Quadrant **II** because Quadrants **I** and **III** work on you. You have to learn to say no to other activities, sometimes apparently urgent things. You have to decide what your highest priorities are and have the determination to say no — pleasantly and with a smile!

The essence of effective time and life management is to organise and execute around balanced priorities. If you were to fault yourself in one of three areas, which would it be: i) the inability to prioritise; ii) the inability or lack of desire to organise around these priorities; or iii) the lack of discipline to execute around them, to stay with your priorities and organisation? Most people say their main fault is a lack of discipline. So you need an approach that helps you make a big impact on your personal effectiveness and meets five important criteria:

- 1 **Balance:** don't neglect important areas in life like health, your family, personal development and professional or work preparation.
- 2 **Coherence:** try to ensure you have more harmony between your roles and goals, your priorities and plans and your desires and disciplines.
- 3 **Focus:** you need something to motivate you and the best way to do this is to organise your life on a weekly basis. You can still adapt and prioritise on a daily basis but the fundamental thrust is organising the week.
- 4 **People:** you need to deal with people not just schedules. While you can think in terms of *efficiency* in dealing with time, you need to think in terms of *effectiveness* when dealing with people.
- 5 **Flexibility:** your planning should be your servant not your master. Since it has to work for you it should be tailored to your style and your needs in various ways.

ANXIETY MANAGEMENT

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Anxieties — When Working to a Close Deadline

Working to a close deadline can produce anxiety from a number of causes, including having to clear a backlog of other work, the stress from people outside who keep demanding to know when and if the deadline will be met, mistake making because of the pressure and having to arrive at decisions and conclusions at a faster than usual pace. All of these anxieties can considerably impair performance and lead to a generally higher level of stress than is normally encountered. The effects of such stress at work can often take a considerable time to disappear and may disrupt other work, social and family activities.

It is important to distinguish between habitually working to a tight deadline, and occasionally being called on to drastically alter your normal pace or output when a special crisis arises.

In the first case, you will certainly have learned specific procedures and developed practical personal strategies to help you to cope, so far as is possible, with the special demands of work. However, while you may be able to deal effectively on a day-to-day basis with the ever-changing demands made by deadlines, longer-term anxieties can develop. Typically it will be at times when the pressure is no longer on, such as during holidays or at weekends, that anxiety problems are likely to arise. You may often be unable to wind down from time-constrained working existence and become irritable because you find it hard to structure your free time.

In the second case you are much less likely to have created systems which enable you to deal with the unexpected deadline in the most effective and least traumatic way possible. Most probably you will have to rapidly adapt your routine methods of working to handle the crisis. This can lead to performance anxiety, especially if you normally expect to work at a methodical and even pace.

Strategies

In the case of people who consistently work to deadlines, it is probably true to say that while at work the level of stress that is produced by working to deadlines satisfies a need which could not be met in other ways. In order to function efficiently and remain mentally and physically healthy, it is important that we operate at our *optimum* stress level. People such as journalists, television personnel, racing drivers, and others who work best against the clock and under stress are usually found to have a *high* optimum stress level.

The problem here is learning how to change gear, because it is important for the mind and body to experience alterations in pace in order to remain in peak condition. If this is your own problem, we suggest that you learn how to set aside time during both your working and leisure periods so that there is a clearly defined boundary between each. This demarcation line should be made as formal as possible so that there is an actual switching on and off between leisure and work.

The time to mark out this boundary may conveniently be the journey between home and work, a shower or bath on return home or a brief period of relaxation during the day to define the boundaries of lunch and coffee breaks. This type of strict compartmentalisation is essential if you are to derive the maximum benefit from either your work or your leisure periods. The boundary setting will have to be a determined and initially quite strictly established activity on your part, since there will always be a tendency for one to encroach on the other. The business telephone call that comes when you are in the middle of your meal or the quick trip to the travel agents to fix up the family holiday when you are rushing to a meeting; the business papers which you try to read while the family are watching TV and the crossword at which you keep glancing while preparing a report are common examples of this.

It may seem efficient to work flat out and to take work home but this is a short-sighted and short-term view. The long-term damage in terms of mental and physical illness can be considerable. As the strains on the body become too great, mistakes are likely to be made, leading to further difficulties and a loss of confidence. People who continually work at high pressure and never learn how to use demarcation and relaxation to break the pace are treading a precarious tightrope. If you are faced with irregular and unpredictable deadlines and have to pace yourself upwards from a methodical routine, you face somewhat different problems, although here, too, the ability to encapsulate time into specific periods of work and leisure will be beneficial. If you are used to being very methodical you will often have to forego some of the perfectionistic aspects for having much more time to spare to complete a job.

It is best to write out a critical path for yourself with the different sub-goals, which will have to be completed in order to finish the task, noted down against the time each will require to complete. You should set aside additional time to cope with any emergencies, errors and setbacks, which are likely to occur. You may find that this additional time is unnecessary but it is much better to plan for it in advance than discover that your well -organised programme has to be abandoned.

When, and if, things do go wrong, the essential rule is not to panic and abandon your structured programme. This is much less likely to happen if you have predicted such difficulties and allowed for them. If you are really stuck and find it impossible to concentrate on resolving the unexpected, then walk away from your work for five or ten minutes. Take the time out in order to allow your brain to solve the problem away from the work area.

When working to a deadline keep distractions to a minimum. Make it clear that you cannot take unnecessary phone calls, see visitors or answer queries not directly related to the task in hand. If you try to take on work which is not important, or for which there is no such tight deadline, you will merely be squandering your resources inefficiently.

The same applies to backlogs of routine work, which may have built up while working to the particular deadline. You must decide whether or not they form a part of the deadline — in other words, do you have to finish those tasks before you can tackle the time-limited work? If this is the case, then the tasks must be included in the deadline sub-goal setting. If not, then plan to work them into your daily routine when the immediate and more urgent work has been done.

SENSIBLE EXERCISE

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As well as promoting physical fitness and increased energy, exercise can really have an immediate effect on helping to reduce your anxieties and worries. When mind and body are engaged in physical activity it's difficult to remain anxious.

A great deal of research has been done on the effects of exercise in recent years. Many studies have shown that individuals whose work or leisure activities involve exercise are less likely than non-exercisers to develop, or die from, heart disease. Fitter people had better lung function, lower blood pressure and a better ratio of lean to body fat.

People who exercise regularly report some of the following benefits:

- **Improved sleep**
- **Fewer headaches**
- **Fewer stress-related aches and pains**
- **A greater sense of inner calm**
- **Improved mental clarity and concentration**

Regular exercise also helps us use up the excess energy created by the body's emergency "fight or flight" response. This is the nickname given to a set of physical changes that take place when the body goes on full alert, ready to respond to threatening or challenging situations. It involves the production of chemicals such as adrenaline that maintain tension. This is a healthy reaction when the situation merits it. When it is inappropriate or kept up too long, it may cause harmful stress and tension.

The Best Exercise

You don't have to spend hours jogging, risk injury or a heart attack on the squash court or go for the burn of an aerobics class to be fit. Recent research suggests that the best kind of exercise is gentle and it uses the whole body e.g. brisk walking, swimming, cycling, etc.

True fitness requires a balance of three aspects:

Stamina Flexibility Strength

Exercise works on our body in these three ways:

- 1 Exercise for developing **Stamina**, which increases consumption of oxygen; raises heart rate and expands lungs. Examples of this type of exercise are jogging, keep fit, aerobic dance etc.
- 2 Exercises for developing **Flexibility** by stretching and toning muscles and internal organs. Examples of this type of exercise are warm up routines and yoga.
- 3 Exercises for developing **Strength** by building and toning our muscles. An example of this type of exercise is weight training.

Type of Exercise

This depends on you:

- On your existing level of fitness
- The time you have available
- Your personal preferences

Before beginning any programme of exercise, you must ask yourself:

- **Do you have high blood pressure?**
- **Do you have a weak heart?**
- **Do you have serious varicose veins?**
- **Are you pregnant?**

If the answer is 'yes' to any of these, or if you haven't exercised for a long time, it is sensible to check with your doctor what is a safe level of exercise for you.

Fitting Exercise into a Busy Schedule

Brisk walking: Try to fit in a walk each day e.g. get off the bus a few stops earlier or go out at lunch time. (A research study found that an extra two miles — 30 minutes of brisk walking a day — significantly increased the fitness of participants and increased lipoprotein in the blood, which protects against heart disease). Try using the stairs instead of the lift. This kind of incidental exercise can add up in a surprising way. If you can walk — do so. Leave the car at home.

New Things to Try

- **Join a class** e.g. Keep Fit, Aerobics, Yoga, Martial Arts, Dance, Pilates etc
- **Start Jogging** Keep it gentle. Warm up first. Build up slowly.
- **Try a new sport or activity** e.g. Tennis, Swimming, Badminton, Squash, Cycling, Golf, etc. (Remember sport is relaxing as well as energising).
- **Join a fitness club** This isn't as taxing as it sounds. Your fitness will be tested and a programme of exercise designed especially for you, which you follow at your own rate.

The vital, nourishing role of a regular exercise routine is an essential requirement for a healthy stress control policy. This is especially true if you occupy a stationary and sedentary position as office-dweller or desk-worker. While we may appear to get away without exercise in the short term, a lack of exercise can certainly lower our stamina, vitality, good health and general performance in the long term.

Apart from keeping us fit and healthy, a regular exercise routine offers the chance to socialise, to play, to relax, and to enjoy ourselves and to be happy. Exercise plays an essential part in the formula: work, rest and play. Our health and our balance can be seriously disturbed and upset if we persist with putting exercise and relaxation on a par with 'doing nothing' and with 'wasting time'.

There tend to be two main obstacles to making a regular exercise routine a standard part of our lifestyle. The first is a lack of appreciation and respect for the importance of exercise. The second is a lack of the discipline necessary to keep it going. That is why it is very important to choose an exercise, sport or keep-fit routine that you genuinely enjoy, which makes you feel good, and which you also find easy to slot into your existing daily routine.

The time to start a regular exercise routine is *now*. Begin gently, allowing your strength, suppleness and stamina to build up naturally over the course of a few days, weeks or months. If you ever feel breathless, experience aches and pains, become dizzy, or feel any form of nausea or physical discomfort, you should rest immediately. It is always a good idea to visit your GP for his or her advice before you start (or restart) a regular exercise programme.

Exercise need not be a heavy workout with weights in a body-beautiful, trendy gym. House work, gardening, mowing the lawn, DIY pursuits, simple stretching, walking the dog, a brisk stroll to the shops and a day in the countryside or at the seaside, for instance, all constitute physical exercise.

THE TEN ESSENTIAL BENEFITS OF EXERCISE

- 1 Physically relaxing:** Regular physical exercise can help to disperse muscle tension, to improve circulation, to develop deep and healthy breathing, to tone the nervous system and to keep your whole body poised and relaxed.
- 2 Enhances mental relaxation:** Exercise can help you to wind down and to loosen up. Regular exercise is refreshing and refuelling. Regular exercise creates distance and distraction from the stresses and strains of your day. Also, because sensible exercise relaxes your body, your mind will also be favourably influenced.
- 3 Increases vitality:** Sensible, regular exercise can help to boost your body's energy by increasing your metabolic rate, by activating your thyroid and adrenal glands, by supporting digestion, and by stimulating your nerves and your muscles.
- 4 Promotes excellent mental fitness:** Increased vitality and magnetism from a regular exercise and fitness policy can certainly help you to develop and to sustain cool, calm and clear thought for all occasions.
- 5 Supports strength, stamina and suppleness:** Strength, stamina and suppleness, known collectively as the S-factor, are the essential cornerstones of a healthy physical, mental and emotional disposition.
- 6 Protects from heart disease:** Efficient exercise can strengthen, relax and balance every muscle of your body, including your heart. The Health Education Authority's *Look After Your Heart* campaign advocates regular exercise as an essential requirement for a healthy heart.
- 7 Fosters confidence:** A strong, supple and healthy body can help you to look and feel good. Positive outward appearance often changes the way you relate to yourself and often changes the way other people relate to you.
- 8 Supports a healthy posture:** A good posture can support relaxation, promote pain relief, enhance positive mental outlook, facilitate relaxed breathing and maintain a healthy heart.
- 9 Aids the lungs:** A good pair of well-exercised lungs is absolutely essential for a strong, poised and healthy mind and body. Let your lungs live well and the whole of you will live well.
- 10 Reduces high cholesterol:** High cholesterol can constrain energy, stamina and suppleness, and is also a major cause of heart disease and circulatory disorders. Exercise can be excellent for maintaining correct levels of cholesterol.

TEN 'PORTABLE RECHARGERS'

The following 'portable rechargers' are temporary measures designed to help recharge and uplift a tiring mind and body during moments of stress and strain. Their beneficial effects are only temporary, and they tend to work best when used sparingly. To rely on these energisers on a continual basis or as a sole stress solution will not give you the benefits you are looking for. At times, however, one of these techniques will give you the lift you need to get through.

- 1 **The arousal breath:** Three rounds of quick, deep breathing, pushing your chest out as you breathe in and pulling your chest in as you breathe out can help to activate and to rejuvenate your mind and your body.
- 2 **Splash!:** Taking a minute to splash your face with water, and then to rub your face vigorously with a towel, is a very good method for taking a break and then starting again. It helps especially to clear and to stimulate a tired and jaded mind.
- 3 **Thought power:** A single thought can energise and activate the whole of your being. When your energy levels are running low, prescribe mental affirmations to yourself such as, 'I am now energising my mind and my body', 'I enjoy energy in abundance', 'I am energised', 'I am vitalised'. Think energy!
- 4 **Stretch:** Take a moment to stand upright with hands resting gently by your sides. Then breathe in and stretch the whole of your body up, taking your hands up over your head. Hold the stretch as you hold your breath, and then, as you breathe out, let go of all the tension, allowing your hands to fall by your sides
- 5 **A brisk walk:** Walking stimulates and exercises your whole body. Furthermore, it can create physical distance between you and your stress, as well as a mental distance, in that it can help you to detach, forget and let go for a while.
- 6 **A long, cool glass of water:** Taking a moment to drink a glass of water can really help to cleanse and to refresh. In general, we do not drink enough water, which is an added stress for the body, anyway. Empowering this moment with positive thought can enhance the benefits of this simple activity.
- 7 **Smile!:** Smiling is a natural energiser. It can work particularly well for you when you least feel like it. Take a moment to laugh and to smile to yourself, in front of a mirror if possible, and also with other people. If we can smile, a rich supply of energy, tolerance and relaxation can always be available to us.
- 8 **Singing:** Singing boosts the thyroid gland, which is very influential in controlling your energy levels. Pick a song and start singing. You may find it a reliable battery of strength and energy. If singing is a bit uncomfortable, you can always begin with humming or even whistling! Music can inspire energy or rest.
- 9 **A quick breath of fresh air:** A good pair of well-exercised lungs is absolutely essential for a strong, poised and healthy mind and body. Let your lungs live well and the whole of you will live well.
- 10 **Relax:** The aim of relaxation is not to send you off into a sleeping, sluggish state of mind. Quick relaxation can be very good for re-energising and recharging your physical and mental system.

If you find exercise useful, you will find more information on this technique in **Part 2**, page 94.

HEALTHY EATING

No Star or 4-Star?

A varied, well balanced diet is basic to healthy living. Without the proper “fuel” your body and mind won’t function at peak level. Low grade fuel gives a low grade performance! What level of performance do you get from your food? Could you do better?

Nutrition is related to stress

- Some foods are stress-inducing
- A poor diet weakens the body’s defence against stress
- Vitamin depletion occurs when the body is under stress

Mood Foods

Recent research has linked some foods with stress symptoms, notably those that act as powerful stimulants. Two cups of average brewed coffee are enough to produce symptoms of anxiety. Cut down gradually on these foods. Alternatives are decaffeinated coffee, fruit teas and low-calorie drinks. Look at food labels to check sugar and salt content. Use less salt and sugar in cooking/baking.

MOOD FOODS		
Food	Physical Effects	Adverse Reactions
Caffeine (in coffee, tea, aspirin, cola drinks)	Mimics stress arousal: stimulates heart, kidneys; dilates blood vessels; alertness	irritates kidneys; lethargy; headaches; muscular fatigue
Sugar	floods bloodstream, giving instant energy - high for a short time, temporarily relieves physical tiredness	overworks adrenal glands making them less effective at regulating blood sugar levels; increased tiredness, irritability
Salt	works well with potassium to regulate the body’s fluid balance	high blood pressure; stimulates stress arousal; nervousness
Alcohol	dilates blood vessels, raises blood sugar levels; relaxes body and mind; stimulates appetite	(in excess) liver damage, blood sugar problems, impaired judgement and brain function

Stress-Aggravating Foods

You need to cut out or cut down on the following foods if you want to allow your mind and your body to function more closely to their optimum levels and peak capacities.

Sugar

Sugar is a rich source of 'empty calories'. In other words, sugar contains none of the essential nutrients such as protein, fibre, minerals or vitamins. On average, each person in Great Britain purchases a one-pound bag of sugar each week, and eats almost the equivalent of a two-pound bag of sugar during the course of the week.

Sugar is perhaps the most common food additive there is. Types of sugar include glucose, dextrose, fructose, sucrose and maltose. These are found in many sweet foods such as honey, syrup and molasses, and in many savoury foods such as sauces, pickles, pastries and soups. It would be wrong to say sugar is bad; rather, it is our use and consumption of sugar, which is very often bad.

The action of sugar promotes an instant, short-term surge of energy throughout your body. When you eat too much sugar, however, your adrenal glands can become overworked and exhausted, thereby depleting your body of its natural strength and ability to relax. Too much sugar can also encourage you to be poorly focused, irritable, lacking in concentration and generally depressed. High sugar intake can also put stress on the insulin-producing glands of the body, thereby precipitating 'burn out' and possibly bringing on diabetes. Other common problems linked with high sugar intake include tooth decay, obesity, a possible link with hyperglycaemia, and mood swings from hyperactivity to lethargy.

Poor weight control is often a source of stress in that it may promote a lack of self-confidence, low self-esteem and little or no self-respect. Excess weight and obesity are certainly an extra pressure and potential stress on your body, which needs to work extra hard to perform its natural daily functions.

TEN TIPS FOR CUTTING DOWN SUGAR INTAKE

- 1 **Replace sugary desserts with fresh fruits**
- 2 **Substitute sugary snacks with fresh fruits or fresh vegetables**
- 3 **Try unsweetened natural juices**
- 4 **Develop discretion in the supermarkets between sugar-rich, sugar-coated and sugar-free foods**
- 5 **Leave out sugar in coffees and teas**
- 6 **Try mixed fruit herbal tea for natural sweetness**
- 7 **Look for the 'sugar-free' labels on cereals**
- 8 **Halve the sugar content in homemade recipes**
- 9 **Drop junk foods**
- 10 **Read tin labels — tinned foods are often packed with sugars**

Salt

Salt is a natural preservative, found in many, many foods. The body needs salt. The precise amount necessary is somewhere between 1 gram and 3 grams per day. Unfortunately, though, the average person in Great Britain is a salt over-doser to the tune of more than 10 grams per day. This excess salt intake may have a number of harmful side effects, which in many ways mimic the stress response. Too much salt can promote high blood pressure, aggravate premenstrual syndrome, stimulate and deplete your adrenal glands, stimulate and drain your nervous system, and tense and strain your muscular system. Too much salt may also promote emotional irritability, feelings of being on edge or uptight, and general instability.

TEN TIPS TO REDUCE SALT INTAKE

- 1 Leave the salt pot in the cupboard when you're cooking**
- 2 Don't put the salt pot on the dinner table.**
- 3 Remember, it's the first salted peanut, popcorn or crisps that starts an avalanche of salt craving**
- 4 Replace salty snacks with fresh fruit and vegetable snacks**
- 5 Look out for the 'no added salt' labels on the tins in supermarkets**
- 6 Replace normal salt with low-sodium-salts or Bio-Salt**
- 7 Halve the salt content in cookery recipes**
- 8 Reduce your intake of 'high salt content' condiments, such as pickles, sauces, stock cubes, etc**
- 9 Rinse meats, fish and tinned vegetables to wash away their excess preservative salt**
- 10 Use alternative herbs and spices to flavour your food**

Fats

Fats in diet must be carefully controlled. Eating too many fats can lead to excess weight and obesity. It can also create extra stress and pressure for the heart, which can in turn lead to many types of heart disease, including strokes and heart attacks. There are essentially two groups of fats; saturated fats and unsaturated fats. Saturated fats can be found in milk, cheese, butter, animal fat, vegetable fats, hard margarine, biscuits, cakes, desserts, sauces.

The group of unsaturated fats includes a special type of fat called polyunsaturated fats, found in sunflower oil, corn oil, soya oil, some soft margarines, nuts, and certain fish oils - such as those found in trout, mackerel and herring. These polyunsaturated fats do not raise cholesterol levels in the same way as saturated fats. They are also thought to help to restore and repair body cells.

TEN GUIDELINES FOR HEALTHY FAT INTAKE

- 1 Always discriminate between the saturated and the polyunsaturated fats
- 2 Replace full-fat milk with semi-skimmed or skimmed milk
- 3 Look out for the 'low fat' and 'polyunsaturated' labels on dairy products, margarine, etc.
- 4 Buy lean cuts of meat, cut the fat off before you cook, and beware of supermarket mince!
- 5 Try natural unprocessed yoghurts instead of salad creams or mayonnaise
- 6 Put away the frying pan — grill, oven bake or steam
- 7 The marvellous baked potato! — the healthy alternative to chips, crisps and french fries.
- 8 Go vegetarian — try pulses, beans and vegetables
- 9 Substitute poultry for red meat
- 10 Replace meats with fish — particularly white fish, which has only a minimal fat content

Caffeine

Research has found that caffeine intake may be partly to blame for office workers' poor performance. Drinking 350mg of caffeine can cause lapses in concentration and increased stress. The average cup of coffee contains about 100 - 150mg of caffeine. A high caffeine intake (more than 350mg during the working day) acts as a powerful diuretic and causes people to visit the toilet more frequently, which can lead to performance – zapping dehydration. Coupled with the powerful stimulating effects of caffeine, this can increase stress and cause failures in concentration. If you drink three or four (or more) cups of coffee a day it is a good idea to also drink water or other de-caffeinated drinks to compensate, as only drinking caffeinated drinks leads to mild dehydration.

Caffeine is the most widely ingested drug in the world. In Britain alone we spend £850 million a year on coffee and £600 million a year on tea, but is this healthy? Opposite are some other facts about caffeine:

FACTS ABOUT CAFFEINE

- 1 Memory loss:** drinking 8 or more caffeinated drinks a day can adversely affect your memory. Research in Israel has shown that long term coffee drinkers have unusually shaped cells in the hippocampus area of the brain, which controls memory
- 2 Stiffens arteries:** recent Greek research revealed that drinking coffee on waking can damage your arteries. Just one cup of coffee can have a stiffening effect on your arteries, which can last between 3 and 4 hours
- 3 Brings on ‘the shakes’:** Dr David Kerr of the Royal Bournemouth Hospital says that within half an hour of drinking coffee, the flow of blood to the brain is reduced by between 10% and 20%. Combine that with low blood sugar –either in diabetics or those who haven’t eaten for a while – and you can start to feel shaky, have palpitations, feel anxious or suffer blurred vision
- 4 Bad for bones:** several studies have shown that, although caffeine may mobilise calcium intake, it can interfere with its absorption, raising the risk of osteoporosis or brittle bone disease
- 5 Increases risk of heart disease:** it has recently been reported that more than 4 cups of coffee a day can increase the risk of coronary heart disease by 15%. In a study of healthy men and women it was found that those who drank no coffee for 6 weeks had lower levels of cholesterol and homocysteine in their blood than those who drank 4 or more cups a day. Raised levels of these compounds are known to increase the risk of coronary heart disease
- 6 May cause cancer:** very high levels of caffeine – 9 or more drinks a day – have been linked with a range of cancers, including those of the pancreas, kidneys, and urinary tract. However, in many studies linking heavy intake of coffee with cancer, sufferers had also been smokers

More information on healthy eating can be found in **Part 2**, page 122.

STOP SMOKING GUIDELINES

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- 1 **Identify a bounty of benefits:** Write down at least 20 benefits of not smoking. The more benefits you can identify, the better positioned you will be to believe that you really can quit. Keep this 'benefits sheet' about you wherever you go. It will help you, emotionally and psychologically, to say, 'No butts!' It is estimated that for every cigarette you smoke, you lose approximately 15 minutes of your life. One obvious benefit of not smoking is a longer life; others are a healthier life, less worry, reduced tension, more energy, and smelling fresher and cleaner.

- 2 **Are there any benefits to smoking?:** Identify the benefits of smoking, and then identify alternative avenues that can offer enjoyable, health-giving, positive support. Cigarette substitutes, nicotine chewing gum, herbal remedies and dummy cigarettes are available if you really feel you need them. Confidence, relaxation and pleasure need not be confined to cigarette packets only. Try confidence training, practice regular relaxation techniques, pursue recreation and exercise, and enjoy a varied, creative diet.

- 3 **Plan a day to begin your positive no-smoking policy — and stick to it:** Preparation will help you to prosper. Be kind to yourself — choose a good time in your life to quit; don't do it the day after your dog has died! Prepare yourself physically and psychologically for the changes you will control. Your four cornerstones will be a nourishing, interesting diet, positive recreation, enjoyable exercise, and regular relaxation. The organisation QUIT advises that, '*Thinking about stopping smoking frightens. Doing it encourages.*'

- 4 **Identify supporters:** To be successful you may wish to surround yourself with supporters. Enrol the help of your friends, family and partner. Let your loved ones know what you are trying to do, and why, and show them how they can help you. An enthusiastic and interested friend can also be a crucial support to you in your campaign to cut out cigarettes. Your doctor can provide you with all the medical advice, leaflets, addresses and telephone numbers you may need to terminate your tobacco trips.

- 5 **Rearrange your routines:** To save your life, you may need to rearrange your routines. In particular, you must identify the people, the places and the times you associate with smoking. After mealtimes, at pubs, meetings, breaks, evenings out and time with certain friends may all need to be planned for. Identify your friends and 'foes'. Convert the foes who mean most to you, and leave the rest well alone. Create no smoking zones, such as in your car, bedroom, bathroom, lavatory, kitchen, etc. Schedule no smoking times, such as mealtimes, meetings, breaks, evenings, etc.

- 6 **Call in the professionals:** Engage the support of a specialist organisation, which offers telephone counselling, referral to stop-smoking groups and free 'Quit Packs'. Or engage the support of a recommended professional therapist, such as a hypnotherapist, acupuncturist or counsellor.

- 7 **Stop:** You may decide to pick a quit-day for stopping altogether. Alternatively, a positive step-by-step, one-by-one approach may help to minimise the stress and strain of stopping. It is

possible to distinguish between cigarettes that are ‘habit’, ‘enjoyable’ and ‘needy’. The ‘habit’ cigarettes go first, then the ‘enjoyable’ and ‘needy’. Create a pace and stick to it, even if it means only giving up one a day. Having reduced your cigarettes at a sensible pace, it will now be easier than ever to quit smoking safely. Your body, your emotions and your mind will be able to cope with a minimum need for readjustment. Choose a day to stop smoking — and stop. Take a look at your benefits sheet again — from today, the benefits are all yours.

- 8 Give up each day — and stay a non-smoker:** Look for all the friends you can find to fuel your courage and conviction. Giving up smoking is only painful if you forget to look at your benefits sheet. Each day, give yourself three clear moments to affirm and to visualise the benefits you believe in. ‘I choose not to smoke’ — ‘I have no desire to smoke’ — ‘I am a non-smoker’. To stay as a non-smoker you should think as a non-smoker. Reward yourself again and again, and remind yourself, every day, of your personal positive gains.
- 9 Reward yourself for being a non-smoker:** A longer life, no smoker’s cough, fewer colds, fewer infections, more money, fresher breath, better stamina and health — you’ve made one of the best decisions of your life and you deserve to reward yourself. Celebrate in style. Each day, each week, each month and each year, plan to commemorate your stopping smoking anniversary. Affirm how good it is to be a non-smoker. Let long-term benefits take away short-term pain.
- 10 Non-Smoker shares - watch your financial dividends grow!:** Smokers watch their money go up in smoke, every single day. Keep your new found savings in an account where you can watch the interest accumulate. Invest it so as to enrich your life. Profit from the savings you make as a permanent non-smoker.

Giving up smoking is one of the best contributions you can make to your overall effort to control stress. All of the guidelines. written in this section are supported by QUIT and the Health Education Authority.

YOUR HAPPINESS CHARTER

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Happiness is an attitude

Happiness happens inside-out, not outside-in. There is no magical formula that states that x percent of status or wealth will guarantee happiness. To be happy, you must think yourself happy. Happiness is a product of mind, of attitude and of thought: it comes *from* you, not *to* you.

Happiness is a perception

If you look for happiness, happiness will find you. Many people make themselves unhappy in life because they look for all the things in life they either haven’t got or cannot have; they rarely take the time to look at, acknowledge and appreciate all that they *have* got. If you want to look for happiness, look no further than the end of your nose!

Happiness is a talent

Happiness is not a gift given to ‘the chosen few’. Happiness is a talent and a skill. Happiness is like a muscle — it needs to be flexed and exercised. Happiness happens if you let it. Happiness is only ever a thought/feeling away.

Happiness now

Are you waiting to be happy ‘if’, ‘after’, ‘only’, ‘when’ or ‘soon’? How long are you prepared to wait? Would you like to be happy, but feel you can’t right now? We can look forward with optimism and joy to the future and we can look back with gratitude — but happiness can only ever happen in the now.

Happiness is a way of travelling

Happiness is not so much a final destination as a way of journeying through life. There is no need to ‘save up’ all your happiness for an event or goal somewhere into the distant future; look for happiness today, along the way as you go.

Happiness is a little

If you cannot be happy with a little, it is very unlikely you will be happy with a lot. Practise happiness first on a small scale and work your way up from there.

Happiness is a dare

Life is a risk! So too is happiness. Occasionally you have to take a gamble. There will be times, almost inevitably, when the gamble won’t pay off; this is what makes happiness all the sweeter when you experience it.

Happiness is a time for fun

Fun, laughter, play, recreation and generally jollyng around adds to the happiness of life. Life is a balancing act between duties, responsibilities, work, rest and play — each has its place in the grand scheme of your affairs. Rewarding yourself with time for fun fills you with all of the ‘happiness fuel’ you need to keep going.

Happiness is loyalty

To be happy it helps to be loyal — to your family, to your friends, to your values and, above all, to yourself. Be true to your own vision and the people who genuinely love you will be thrilled for you. Trying to find happiness by following other people’s ideas of it is rarely fruitful. Be true to your own vision.

Happiness is shared

One of the most important lessons of life is the lesson that states, quite simply, that what you give is what you get. If personal happiness is one of your ultimate goals in life, then giving a portion of this happiness back to others has to be very high on your list if you are to succeed. Happiness is a gift for others.

Happiness Games

The key to any exercise is to dress appropriately — in other words, be ready to have fun! The more fun you have, the more you will want to play these happy creative growth games; and the more you play, the better they — and you — get!

Happiness is...

Approximately 40,000 people were once asked, ‘What are your main goals in life?’ Over 38,000 listed ‘happiness’ or ‘contentment’ as one of their goals. The next question was, ‘Can you define happiness?’ Research discovered that only 1 per cent had ever sat down to work out what happiness meant for them!

Take time out to create your own **Happiness Charter**. Remember, the more you focus on happiness, the easier it is to find.

Strike it happy!

To get the right answers in life it is important to ask the right questions! We recommend that you ask yourself this question once a month (or more frequently, if you can handle it!): ‘What can I be doing, right now, to enhance my happiness?’ Take 20 minutes or so to answer this question afresh each time. Look at every area of your life — work, family, love, education, leisure and spiritual growth. Make all your new beginnings *today* — tomorrows never come!

Happy Hour

If you were to give yourself one hour of happiness, what would you do? Be realistic — no jetting off to Bermuda (you wouldn’t even get there in an hour)! The joy of the happy hour game is that it makes you stop putting happiness on hold. You can experience ‘now’ — not ‘after’, ‘if’, ‘when’ or ‘then’. Happy hour also reinforces the notion that if you cannot be happy with a little you will find it difficult to be happy with a lot. **One word of warning:** You will never ‘find’ the time for a happy hour; you must *make* the time.

Happy Days

Be wise, give yourself a **Personal Happy Day** (PHD) from time to time! Think back over the last month — how many days would you describe as personal happy days? Personal happy days are for putting everything you cherish and value first. Planning a personal happy day can be almost as much fun as the day itself. What will you do, this month, for your first personal happy day?

TEN SOLUTIONS FOR A SOUND SLEEP

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Common causes of sleeping difficulties include exhaustion, over tiredness, asthma and various drug side effects. The most common causes are a recent or impending stressful event such as a death in the family, a crisis at work, the need to make a decision, moving house or financial worries or hardship.

1. Relax well before you sleep well. Take time to wind down and let go. Have a relaxing bath, a warm drink, a light walk, some gentle exercise or maybe listen to some soothing music before you sleep.

2. Only go to bed when you are sleepy. Listen to your body clock; not to the clock on your wall. Sleep cannot be forced; it can only be allowed to happen naturally. Save your pyjamas until tiredness persists.

3. Sleep only in your bed. Don't be tempted to doze in the bath, snooze on the sofa, to slump over the dinner table, to become tired eyed in front of the TV, or to curl up on the rug in front of the fire. Associate sleep with one place only - your bed.

4. Save the bed for sleep. No more midnight snacks, crossword puzzles, absorbing psychological thrillers, TV films, or any other entertainment that may serve to stimulate, to activate or awaken you.

5. Save your sleep for night-time. If night time sleep is hard to come by, make sure you cut out the early morning lie in, the afternoon siesta and the evening doze.

6. Does your bedroom do enough? How good for sleeping are the lighting, the noise levels, the atmosphere and the bedsprings? Are you warm enough? Do you make sure you leave the bedroom window open for fresh air?

7. Establish a night time routine. Prepare for sleep and expect sleep. Folding your clothes, locking the doors, a warm bath, light exercise may all play a part in your night time routine.

8. Let it happen. Sleep very often happens in spite of your efforts and attempts. Allow yourself to sleep. Don't try and don't force it. Be physically still; follow your breath; use a gentle phrase to say to yourself; perform some relaxation exercises and allow yourself to drift off.

9. Get up and try again. If you are too anxious about not getting to sleep, the best thing you can do is to get up and occupy yourself with some light mental or physical activity. Return to bed again when you are ready to allow yourself to sleep.

10. Rest assured. Sleep research proves that the insomniac always gets much more sleep in the night than they imagine. Also, there is no strict amount of hours you must sleep to be healthy and well. For some, 8 hours is fine, for others, 6 hours or even 4 hours might all be enough. The key is the quality of your sleep, not its quantity.

Personal Stress Management Planning

SETTING REALISTIC WRITTEN GOALS

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This **Personal Guide to Stress Management** will not be of maximum use to you or make an impact on your work or life if you do not take action — you have to do some work!! This section is therefore designed specifically to provide practical ideas that will help you produce a realistic and workable **Action Plan** or **Personal Stress Management Plan**. It turns out that you not only need to understand stress and stress management techniques, you also need to start putting them into practice. It is essential that you now make good use of the relevant parts of this Guide for self-analysis and personal planning purposes. For example, *Section 2: Stress and You* and *Section 3: Analysing Your Own Response to Stress* are particularly important as they aim to help you identify your main stressors. Refer to Section 4 of this Guide to help you select the most suitable stress management techniques for your needs, and don't forget about the additional information on these techniques in **Part 2**.

One of the most important findings about achieving what you want is that you need to set written goals and here are some proven goal-setting tips for you to consider and apply.

There are at least five conditions that must be worked into your goals. All are essential. If you miss one out then that goal will not be reached.

- 1 Your goals must be believable — and who needs to believe them? — YOU!!
- 2 Your goals must be clearly defined — wishes and hopes are not enough and they are not goals — you have to be specific and clear. For example, “I will learn and practise deep muscle relaxation at least three times a week for the next two weeks”.
- 3 Your goals must be strongly desired — it is no good just saying to yourself “I might or I will think about relaxation or time management.” You must really want improvement.
- 4 Your goals must be vividly imagined — form the habit of vividly imagining yourself having the goal, do this several times a day. Imagine the benefits and how you will be enjoying what they bring to your work or life.
- 5 Your goals must be in writing — this is such a vital requirement that it needs repeating — put your goals in writing!!!

Below is a framework to help you produce a **Personal Stress Management Plan**. First you need to identify current stressors and then select the most pressing ones to work on. Spend some time identifying possible solutions and select the ones that will be the most effective for you. Draft out your **Personal Stress Management Plan** to help you deal with the stressors and then think about any potential difficulties and also people who will help you.

SIX STEPS TO MANAGING YOUR STRESS

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This is a useful problem-solving approach to enable you to produce your **Personal Stress Management Plan**. Basically it asks you to identify current stressors, select the most pressing ones, identify possible solutions and then draft out a simple action plan to help deal with them.

1 Identify up to three of the most bothersome work stressors for you at present:

(e.g. external demands/ internal attitudes and thoughts, etc.)

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2 Select one to do something about and then think about and identify the main causes:

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3 Check that you or your section/team can directly change or influence things: is it...

- i) a problem that can be solved by you or your team? Yes / No
- ii) a problem that you or your team cannot completely control? Yes / No
- iii) a problem over which you or your team have no control? Yes / No

Concentrate on those problems that can be solved or influenced by you or your team.

4 Brainstorm a set of possible solutions and evaluate them: check that you can directly change/influence the situation or whether you need to change the way that you view it

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5 Draft your *Personal Stress Management Plan*, including a timetable and reviews.

A	B	C
The Current Situation (The Problem)	Your Plan (Series of Activities)	Where You Want to Be (Goal)

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6 Investigate the potential difficulties or unintended consequences (additional stress) your Action Plan may create. Identify people who will help and support your plan

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LEARNING REVIEW

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Take a few minutes to think about what you have learned or has been reinforced so far and jot down some thoughts.

1. What have I liked, learned and found useful so far ?

2. How can I make the best use of what I have learned / been reinforced so far ?

3. What personal stress management objectives do I need to do something about now ?

4. How will I go about doing things differently now to achieve effective stress management ?

(include who can help / hinder / overcome any difficulties etc.)

Hint : Identify the things that most irritate you and try to remove them from your life as far as possible or reduce their impact and use this Guide

Now : If necessary modify your positive stress management plan to suit any changing needs. This involves deciding what to do about unwanted reactions and how to actually go about changing them to achieve your personal objectives.