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**DWP** Department for  
Work and Pensions

# Effective Stress Management



**A personal guide**

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

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# More on gaining personal perspective

**Effective Stress Management: A Personal Guide Part One** described **gaining perspective** as: ‘how to avoid thinking your way into stress’. This section expands on the ideas about perspective discussed in Part One and gives you more ‘thinking’ exercises to work through.

The basic idea behind this section is that **emotions are caused by the way you think** — *not* by an event or situation. This is quite a novel idea for some people because our use of language tends to reinforce the idea that it is the other way round, and that external events cause our emotions.

For examples of the way this works, look at the following commonly used expressions:

- “That man really makes me angry.”
- “It was a great film, but it made me sad.”
- “Speaking in public makes me really anxious.”
- “I feel depressed after I’ve had angry words with anyone.
- “I’m jealous of her because she’s got the best job in the office.”

Sound familiar?

Before we start discussing how people think their way into stress, let’s have a look at the way in which emotions can affect your physical and mental well-being.

## EMOTIONS

Uncomfortable and prolonged emotions are those which are bad for you. ‘Uncomfortable’ and ‘prolonged’ are emphasised here, as we’re not suggesting you should become emotionless automata.

Uncomfortable and prolonged emotional feelings may cause some of the following psychological and physiological symptoms:

- loss of confidence
- sleeplessness

- raised blood pressure
- heart disease
- digestive disorders
- irrational fears

## Why do prolonged and uncomfortable emotions cause these problems?

- 1 Because people generally believe that it is the situation or event which is the cause of their emotional distress, they start to make associations between certain situations and uncomfortable feelings. This often means that people generalise from one uncomfortable incident to all future similar incidents.

### Examples

- Because you received bad news in a letter once, you become fearful of opening letters for some time.
- You get very anxious at the prospect of making a presentation at work. Further invitations to give presentations bring on the same feelings.
- The sight of your packed in-tray makes you feel unable to cope.

People are very good at learning how to avoid uncomfortable feelings. To follow through the examples given already, they might:

- not open any letters;
- avoid situations where they may be asked to make presentations;
- avoid doing paper work and watch it pile up, making the problem worse.

The problem with this type of coping behaviour is that it can restrict the scope of your life and lead you to feel that you can't do certain things. This can severely affect your confidence and lead to phobias.

Can you identify any phobias that you have?

Use *Checklist 1* to write down any ways in which you are restricting the scope of your life because of the anxieties or fears you have.

### Checklist 1

- 
- I don't.....because I feel .....
  - I don't.....because I feel .....

- 2 When we get prolonged and uncomfortable emotional feelings, they are nearly always accompanied by some bodily responses. (A list of physical responses to stress is given in **Part One**). We get dry mouths, perspiration, our heart rate increases and so on. Just as we come to associate situations with emotions, we can also start to associate situations with physical symptoms.

This happens because we tend to make the following connections:

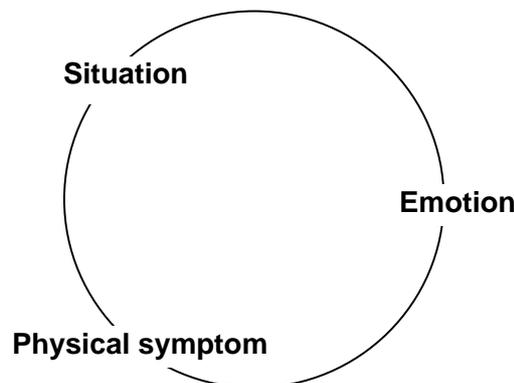
**Situation X = Emotion Y**

**Emotion Y = Physical symptom Z.**

As we come to learn this association, we eventually become so conditioned that we can miss out the emotional stage and find ourselves having unconsciously learned the following:

**Situation X = Physical symptom Z.**

Once this has happened, we may begin to suffer from various physical symptoms without being aware that we are feeling stressed. Unfortunately, these learned associations work in both directions, so that if the first thing you become aware of is a physical symptom, you usually go on to get an emotional feeling in response to it. The whole thing becomes a vicious circle.



## How does the way I think affect the way I feel?

If we examine closely the connections between external events and the way we feel, we soon see that it is not the *event* that causes the emotion at all — something occurs in between the event and the emotion that follows it. If events *did* cause emotions, then we would all react in the same way to the same events — which of course we don't.

Let's take an example to clarify this point:

Three people work in a DWP Jobcentre. During the course of one working day, each individual is confronted by a particularly aggressive client who behaves in a threatening manner and becomes verbally abusive. The behaviour of the client is identical in each of the three cases, yet the reaction of the three staff is very different.

The first becomes angry and tries to remonstrate with the client; the second tries to deal calmly with the situation but afterwards bursts into tears; the third deals calmly with the situation and afterwards has a good laugh about it with colleagues.

### **What does this example tell us?**

If we take the view that it is external events which cause emotions, then why didn't each member of staff feel the same after the incident with the aggressive person?

You might say that it is because different people react in different ways because of their 'make-up', or because some people are more sensitive than others. This reasoning is sound as far as it goes, but why should 'make-up' or sensitivity produce such radical differences between individual responses to stressful events? It is because of the way we **interpret or evaluate** the event. The reason that people react differently to the same type of event is due to differences in interpretation or evaluation.

### **To recap:**

People believe that situations cause emotions but this is not so. What really happens is that:

- events take place;
- our senses feed this information to our brain which makes an interpretation;
- our evaluation of events affects how we feel emotionally and physically.

Usually, prolonged emotional feelings cause physical symptoms such as: weak knees, sweating palms, pounding heart, or tense neck and shoulders.

Eventually, particular events can become associated with physical symptoms.

## **EVALUATIONS**

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### **The good, the bad and the ugly**

If our evaluation of an event consists of one or more *irrational* elements, then the chances are we'll suffer some sort of unpleasant emotional consequence.

In general, irrational thinking involves:

- making futile demands of ourselves or others;
- holding beliefs which are unsupported by fact;
- 'awfulising' about events.

On the page opposite are some examples. How many do you recognise?

- 1 **Filtering:** You take the negative details and magnify them, while filtering out all the positive aspects of a situation.
- 2 **Polarised thinking:** Things are black *or* white, good *or* bad. You have to be perfect *or* you're a failure. There is no middle ground.
- 3 **Over-generalisation:** You come to a general conclusion based on a single incident or piece of evidence. If something bad happens once, you expect it to happen over and over again.
- 4 **Mind-reading:** Without their saying so, you know what people are feeling and why they act the way they do. In particular, you are able to divine how people are feeling toward you.
- 5 **Catastrophising:** You expect disaster. You notice or hear about a problem and start "What ifs..." "What if tragedy strikes?" "What if it happens to me?"
- 6 **Personalisation:** Thinking that everything people do or say is some kind of reaction to *you*. You also compare yourself to others, trying to determine who's smarter, better looking, and so on.
- 7 **Control fallacies:** If you feel *externally* controlled, you see yourself as helpless, a victim of fate. The fallacy of *internal* control has you responsible for the pain and happiness of everyone around you.
- 8 **Fallacy of fairness:** You feel resentful because you think you know what's fair but other people won't agree with you.
- 9 **Blaming:** You hold other people responsible for your pain; or you take the other tack and blame yourself for every problem or reversal.
- 10 **Shoulds:** You have a list of iron-clad rules about how you and other people *should* act. People who break those rules anger you, and you feel guilty if you violate the rules.

Let's look at one of these in detail:

**Shoulds:** Futile demands generally involve the words 'should' or 'must'. To demonstrate the futility of these demands, take a break from reading this now and, on *Checklist 2* below, write down everything you must or should do.

## Checklist 2

---

- I must .....
- I must .....
- I must .....
- I must .....
- I should .....
- I should.....
- I should .....
- I should.....

If you had **anything** on your list, then you are thinking irrationally.

You can *choose* to do certain things, but you don't *have* to do them. Think about it. Beliefs unsupported by *fact* are frequent elements in irrational thinking.

Take another break to think about an embarrassing experience you have had. Write down a couple of adjectives which you feel describe your behaviour on that occasion.

**1:** ..... **2:** .....

The chances are, you've written down words like 'stupid' or 'disgusting'. These words may accurately describe your behaviour **at that time**, but they do not describe your behaviour **all of the time**.

When we use language like this in evaluating our **behaviour**, we tend to evaluate our whole **selves** in this way. This is irrational because one stupid mistake doesn't render you stupid *all* the time.

'Awfulising' is another frequent irrational way of thinking. Awfulising involves evaluating certain events or feelings as being 'terrible' or 'awful' when in fact they are not; for example: "If my colleagues at work don't like me, that will be awful." **Awful** and **terrible** are adjectives applicable only to life-threatening situations.

To make these points more explicit, we'll go through the possible thoughts which led to our first Jobcentre officer's anger.

<b>Event</b>	Customer is abusive.
<b>Evaluation</b>	Who does he think he is? He has no right to talk to me that way. Because he did, he is a hideous person and he ought to be punished.
<b>Emotion</b>	Anger.

The evaluation in this example contains three distinct irrational elements:

- 1 He has no right** — This is irrational because individuals cannot dictate who does and who doesn't have rights. People will quite happily do what they want despite rules or laws or permission (as the crime statistics show only too well) and we cannot control other people. This evaluation falls into the **futile demand** category.
- 2 He is a hideous person** — Where's the evidence for this claim? Often when we make statements like this about people we don't really know, we generalise from one piece of behaviour to make assumptions about the **person**. It's a bit like accusing someone of being a kangaroo because you once saw them hopping. This is a belief unsupported by **fact**.

Sometimes when we think someone is horrid, we may know that person fairly well and therefore feel quite justified in holding this type of belief.

However, the idea that:

- 3 He ought to be punished** is not a rational conclusion to that belief. This demand contains a 'must' element — always futile since nobody 'must' do anything.

In this example, therefore, the irrational thoughts contained both an **unrealistic demand** element and a **belief unsupported by fact**.

## Getting at our own irrational thoughts

To get at your own irrational thoughts or beliefs, you may find it useful to use the following sequence to help you analyse the elements of your thoughts:

**Step 1:** Try to think of an unpleasant emotion which you have recently experienced.

**Step 2:** Recall the event which appeared to cause the emotion.

**Step 3:** Write down the emotion and the event in the following sequence:

**A :**     **Event** (for example: *Too much work to do, not enough time*).

**B :**     .....

**C :**     **Emotion** (for example: *Anxiety*).

Leave **B** blank for the moment.

**Step 4:** Now close your eyes and recall the event. The minute you start to feel the **emotion**, turn your concentration to what you are **thinking** to yourself. Write these **thoughts and beliefs** down in the space you have left by **B**.

When you have written all the thoughts down, examine them for any **unrealistic demands** (shoulds, musts), for any **beliefs unsupported by fact** (such as: “He’s stupid/I’m worthless”), or any ‘awfulising’.

Label any elements of this nature ‘irrational’.

To help you get the hang of this technique, we’ll finish the example:

**A :**     **Event** *Too much work to do, not enough time.*

**B :**     *If I don’t get this finished, I may get into trouble from my manager.*  
This element of thought is completely rational as it may well be true.

*If I get into trouble, that will be terrible.*

This is irrational ‘awfulising’. *Terrible* would be death or the end of the world.

In this case, neither of those things is likely to be caused.

*My manager might think I’m a complete incompetent.*

Rational — this may well be true.

*If he does, I’ll feel stupid.*

Firstly, ‘stupid’ isn’t a feeling. Usually when you say: “I feel stupid,” you really mean: “I am stupid.” This is irrational. If you were stupid, you’d hardly be likely to have a job. This is another belief unsupported by fact.

**C :**     **Emotion** *Anxiety.*

## CHANGING IRRATIONAL THINKING

Changing irrational thinking is not an easy task. You have to work hard at it and keep practising.

- The **first** step to changing irrational thoughts and beliefs is to recognise that **thoughts** cause emotions, not **events**.
- The **second** step is to recognise the **irrational elements** in our thinking. A technique like the **A B C** method on page 75 is probably the easiest way to start this recognition process.
- The **third** step involves **actively changing** the way you think.

The next part of this section, therefore, will try to give you ideas and exercises which can help you to think more rationally and to recognise the irrational elements in your thinking.

### Setting emotional goals

As we discussed above, uncomfortable and prolonged emotions triggered by irrational thinking are those which are most harmful. The first step to take in reducing the intensity of the emotion we are feeling is to establish **an emotional goal** which will be more appropriate and less distressing.

Let's take an example to help expand on this idea:

Dave works in a Jobcentre. He finds it very difficult to get on with his line manager and often feels that his promotion prospects are deliberately being thwarted due to these relationship difficulties. Dave suffers from feelings of anger and sometimes depression and consequently finds it increasingly stressful to go to work.

First, let's set the dynamics of this into the **A B C** framework:

- A :**    **Event** *Relationship difficulties with manager.*
- B :**    .....
- C :**    **Emotion** *Anger, depression.*

Before going on to discuss the **thoughts and beliefs** which are causing Dave to feel these emotions, we will establish a less distressing **C** than the emotions Dave currently experiences. Setting emotional goals involves asking yourself how you would like to feel. If we asked Dave to tell us how he would rather feel about the situation he finds himself in, he would probably say 'happy' or 'calm'. These goals would not be realistic because Dave will still have to deal with his manager on a daily basis and it is unlikely that their relationship difficulties will be resolved totally. When setting emotional goals, we need to choose goals which are realistic, not necessarily the opposite of what we feel now.

In most cases, it is better to aim for **reducing the intensity** of the emotion rather than **removing it** altogether. Therefore, for Dave, more appropriate goals would be to reduce the **anger** to **irritation** and the **depression** to **concern**.

## Changing the thinking to match the goals

Let's look now at the irrational thinking which is causing Dave to experience his present levels of anger and depression.

### ANGER

Using the **A B C** method, we arrive at:

- A :** *Relationship difficulties with manager.*
- B :** To be experiencing a high level of anger, Dave's thinking probably contains a **futile demand**; for example: ***He shouldn't treat me this way; He's a horrible person and he shouldn't be in such a position of responsibility.***
- C :** *Anger.*

### DEPRESSION

- A :** *Relationship difficulties with manager.*
- B :** To feel depressed, Dave's evaluation of **A** probably contains some self-denigration; for example: ***What's wrong with me?*** When we ask ourselves questions like this, we are really saying: ***"There is something wrong with me."***
- He obviously thinks I'm a useless person. This is rational as it may well be true. He **mustn't** think I'm useless because if he does then*
- i) *that is **terrible**; or*
- ii) *if he thinks I'm useless, then **that means I am.***
- C :** *Depression.*

The irrational elements of Dave's thinking are all set in bold type. Remember that irrational thoughts usually involve **futile demands, beliefs unsupported by facts** or 'awfulising'.

## Disputing irrational beliefs

Changing irrational beliefs has to start with a change in the way that you think. Changing the way that you think can actually be fairly easy — the difficult part is actually **believing** in your new evaluations. Before we go on to discuss how we can learn to really believe in rational thought, however, we'll discuss how to **dispute irrational thinking** in such a way as to believe that irrational thoughts really *are* irrational.

### 1 Disputing futile demands

The first stage in disputing futile demands is to accept that the demands you are making *are* futile. The fundamental idea to grasp is that **you cannot control people** or things or events. Making demands is therefore pointless. You can, however, control your *own* thoughts and behaviour.

To reduce the emotional consequence of a futile demand, change the demand to a request; for example: “I’d prefer it if my manager would treat me better, but I accept that I can’t control his behaviour.”

## 2 Disputing beliefs unsupported by fact

Beliefs unsupported by fact tend to be either gross generalisations: “Because I failed that exam, I’m a complete failure”; or instances of black-and-white thinking: “Because my manager thinks I’m useless, that means I am.”

What you need to do when your thinking follows these lines is to write down the evidence that actually supports your assertions. For instance, in Dave’s case, he would need to write down all the evidence for and against the claim that he’s useless.

## 3 Disputing ‘awfuls’

‘Awfulising’ involves believing that something will be terrible. Generally, awfulising is nearly always followed by some sort of avoidance statement; for example: “If my manager thinks I’m useless, that will be awful **and I won’t be able to handle it.**”

The first step in disputing this type of thinking is to actually ‘de-catastrophise’ the thought. So, for instance, if someone thinks you’re stupid, hopeless or pathetic, that is not terrible. It’s not pleasant, perhaps, but it’s certainly not the end of the world.

The next step is to realise that, if the worst comes to the worst and people *do* think badly of you, or if you find yourself in a situation you hoped wouldn’t happen, then you **can handle it**. Think of other situations you’ve been in which were similarly unpleasant and remember that you survived to tell the tale. Also remember that if you could cope with unpleasantness once, then you can certainly do so again.

## STARTING TO BELIEVE IN RATIONAL THINKING

Everything we’ve discussed so far will perhaps have moved you to a stage where you can at least recognise the irrational elements of your own thinking, and may have taken you some way along the path of actually changing those thoughts. However, real change will only occur when you start **believing** in your more rational thinking. To achieve this involves **behaving** differently as well as **thinking** differently.

### Behaving: Seeing is believing

This stage in the journey towards rational thinking is by far the most difficult, yet the process involved is also the most effective method of changing the way you think in order to reduce unpleasant emotions.

Once you have disputed the irrational elements of your thinking, you then need to set yourself behavioural assignments which will reinforce the changes you have made in your **thinking**. Behavioural exercises are most effective when they confront situations which irrational thinking has hitherto caused you to avoid.

We’ll take another example to help clarify this:

Diana works in a busy Head Office section as an MPB1. She is finding increasingly that in order to keep up with deadlines, she has to take work home with her. One of the reasons for this is that Diana is not very keen on delegating work, especially if it is something important. She wants to make sure

it's done properly and feels it's her responsibility to ensure that it is. As a result, she is unwittingly demoralising her staff whilst simultaneously putting herself under enormous workload pressures. She is increasingly irritable in the office and very defensive if criticised by her line manager. She is starting to feel more and more stressed.

Try analysing the irrational elements in Diana's thinking using the **A B C** technique. (You may like to try this for yourself before looking at the completed example below.)

Using the **A B C** technique, Diana discovers the following irrational elements:

- A :** *I do not want to delegate.*
- B :** *If I do delegate, they might not do it properly and then it would create a bad impression of the section (rational).*  
*If people think I'm not very good, then that might mean they are right (irrational).*  
*If I'm not good, then I must be bad, therefore I must avoid putting myself in situations where I might be made to feel bad (irrational).*
- C :** **Emotion** *Anxiety.*  
**Behaviour** – *Avoid delegating.*

On a ten-point scale, Diana has rated her current level of anxiety as 8. She first sets an **emotional goal** of 'concern', hoping to reduce her anxiety to an acceptable level of 2 or 3.

She does some **disputation of her irrational thoughts** and changes her beliefs to: "People might not think I'm very good if anything goes wrong, but that doesn't mean I'm not."

She then sets herself a **behavioural assignment** of delegating important pieces of work to her staff.

Eventually, by confronting the situation she was avoiding, and by continually reinforcing this behaviour with more rational thoughts, the situation in the office improves considerably and Diana's anxiety is gradually reduced.

Over to you!

## SELF TALK

.....

### The Different Levels of Self Talk

The definition of Self Talk is, "A way to override our past negative programming by erasing or replacing it with conscious, positive new directions." Self Talk is a practical way to live your life by active intent rather than by passive acceptance. Self Talk provides a way for you to talk to yourself in different ways, consciously re-programming your internal control centres with words and statements which are more effective, in helping you to change what you would like to change. It offers you the chance to use personal choice to effect improvements in your life.

There are five different levels of Self Talk. Each level is specific and distinct from the others. Some levels work for you and some work against you. The more you know about each of them, the faster and more easily you will be able to master using the right kind of Self Talk for you.

### **Level 1 : The Level of Negative Acceptance (“I Can’t ...”)**

This is the lowest level and the most harmful you can use. This is the Self Talk by which you say something bad or negative about yourself, and you accept it. This level is easy to spot and is usually characterised by the words, “I can’t ...” or “If only I could, but I can’t” and so on. All Level 1 Self Talk works against you and it is the most frequently used Self Talk of all.

“I just don’t have the energy I used to” “Today is just not my day” and “I just can’t” are typical of the kinds of doubts, fears, misgivings and hesitations we programme ourselves with when we say these kinds of phrases to ourselves. Remember, the subconscious mind is listening and waiting for your instructions, and it doesn’t care what we tell it - it just does it. Ridding yourself of this type of negative Self Talk is one of the best things you can do for yourself.

### **Level 2 : The Level of Recognition and Need to Change (“I need to ... I should ...”)**

On the surface it looks as if this kind of Self Talk should work for us, but instead it works against us. This level is characterised by words such as, “I need to ...” or “I ought to ...” or “I should ...” It works against us because it recognises a problem but creates no solutions. When you say to yourself, or someone else “I really need to get more organised.” what you are really saying is “I really need to get more organised ... but I’m not” and so this is just another form of negative Self Talk.

Instead of giving birth to accomplishments, Level 2 Self Talk creates guilt, disappointment and acceptance of our own self imagined inadequacies. It is not good self programming and it will not help us succeed.

### **Level 3 : The Level of the Decision to Change (“I never ... I no longer ...”)**

This is the first level of Self Talk that works for you instead of against you. In this level you recognise the need to change and also make the decision to do something about it. You state the decision in the present tense as though the change has already taken place. Level 3 is characterised by the words, “I never ...” or “I no longer”. In this level you say, “I no longer have a problem dealing with people at work” or “I no longer put off doing anything I want to get done”

When you begin to practice the new Self Talk you will find that you will need to use it only on those occasions when you are working to effect a specific change e.g. being effective at work, responding well to pressure etc. There is, of course, more to Self Talk than just a few simple words. Many habits have been years in the making and require a solid programme of new Self Talk to break them down and replace them.

### **Level 4 : The Level of the Better You (“I am ...”)**

This is the most effective level of Self Talk you can ever use; it is used the least and is most needed. At this level you are painting a new picture of yourself, the way you really want to be, handing it to your subconscious and saying, “This is the me I want you to create. Forget all the bad programming I gave you in the past. This is the new programme. Now let’s get to work.”

Level 4 Self Talk is characterised by the words, “I am ...” “I am organised and in control of my life. I am a winner. I am healthy, energetic, enthusiastic and I’m going for it. Nothing can stop me now. I like who I am, I am in tune, on top, and in touch. I have determination, drive and self belief. I am living the life I choose, and I choose what’s right.” As a Level 4 Self Talker you deal with problems and opportunities in a whole new, productive, self activating way. If you were a procrastinator who

*had been programmed to put things off, you now say, "I do everything I need to do when I need to do it. I enjoy getting things done and I enjoy getting things done on time and in just the right way."*

Level 4 is the opposite of Level 1 Self Talk. It replaces helpless "*cannots*" with vibrant "*Yes I can's*" Level 4 Self Talk inspires, encourages, urges and implores. ; it excites, demands and pushes us forward. It strengthens the armour of our spirit and hardens the steel of our determination. This is the Self Talk that challenges us to do battle with our fears and end up the victor; it stirs us to action, fills us up with self belief and plants our feet firmly on the bedrock of success. For every word of negative Self Talk that you have ever uttered there is the right kind of Self Talk to counter it, reprogramme, fix the problem and make it right.

#### **Level 5 : The Level of Universal Affirmation** ("*It is ...*")

This is the Self Talk for people seeking a unity of spirit and anxious to find a greater reward in life. Level 5 is characterised by the words, "*It is ...*" It sounds like this, "*I am one with the universe and it is one with me. I am of it, within it, and exist as a shining spark in the firmament of divine goodness.*" Individuals who are at this level don't need to be told about it - they already know. It is better to start at levels 3 and 4. If its right level 5 will come in due time.

It is vital that you start learning Self Talk at levels 3 and 4 and to stop using Self Talk at levels 1 and 2. Begin by listening to anything that you may be saying to yourself that could be working against you, turn it around, and start using the Self Talk that works for you.

## SUMMARY

**If you are experiencing prolonged and uncomfortable emotions it may have a lot to do with how you think about events, people and situations.**

1. Write down the events these emotions seem to be attached to.
2. Remind yourself that thoughts cause emotions not events.
3. Analyse your thinking using the A B C technique i.e.

**A :**     **The Activating Event** or experience "causing" your emotions

**B :**     **Your Belief** or Evaluation of the event i.e. what you think about the event, what you're telling yourself as you remember the emotion you felt at the time.

**C :**     **The emotional or behavioural Consequence** i.e. the negative emotion of anxiety, fear, depression, guilt, drinking too much, rushing all the time etc.

#### **4. Check for any stress creating self talk :**

- **irrational elements** e.g. futile demand ("shoulds"; "musts")
- **beliefs unsupported by facts** (e.g. "he / she is a horrible person") and
- **'awfulising'** (e.g. "If I don't finish on time it will be awful").

### **To Change Your Irrational Thinking to More Positive Thinking:**

- 1 Establish an emotional goal** - less distressing than the emotion you currently experience in the situation - how you would like to feel. Make this realistic -to reduce frequency, duration or intensity of what you feel rather than eliminate it completely.
- 2 Dispute your irrational beliefs:**
  - Futile demands -continually remind yourself that "I can't control other people"
  - Beliefs unsupported by facts - write down the evidence - there will not be any!
  - "Awfulising" - Is it really as bad as you think? Tell yourself "I can handle it ".
- 3 Set yourself Behavioural Assignments** to reinforce your new way of thinking.
  - go and spend time with people without trying to control them
  - when you find yourself starting to get upset, stop and write down your responses to the question "Where is the evidence that what is happening should not happen !"
  - feel the fear, anger, anxiety etc. and do it anyway - get support from a friend if you need to.

## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

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Ellis, A. & Harper, R. A. *A New Guide to Rational Living*, Prentice Hall.

McMullin, R. E. & Gile, T. R. *Cognitive Behaviour Therapy: A Restructuring Approach*, Grune and Stratton.

Walen, S. R., DiGiuseppe, R. & Wessler, R. L. *A Practitioner's Guide to Rational Emotive Therapy*, Oxford University Press.

# More techniques for relaxing

*(Or: How to Avoid Driving Yourself Round The Bend)*

**Effective Stress Management: A Personal Guide Part One** described **stress** as ‘the grit in the engine’. Every machine needs to stop now and then for repair, renewal, to cool down. In the same way, the body needs to slow down, rest, and recuperate. The body is, of course, a much more sophisticated machine than any man-made one. This section gives you details about more relaxation techniques to try, as well as background information on the stress response. It also looks at difficulties people have in getting started.

## DIFFICULTIES GETTING STARTED

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People give different reasons for avoiding or discounting relaxation techniques. After all, they’ve been chugging along as they are all these years...

People leading bumper-to-bumper lives with absolutely no time to relax should consider what is driving them so hard that they’re missing out on something vital to their well-being. They could consider re-organising priorities or getting help — for example, with the children — to release time for themselves. The chances are they’re *already* stressed if time is such a problem. Slowing down and taking stock could help.

Many people don’t recognise that they are under stress; they’ve come to regard tension and discomfort as ‘normal’. Stress distorts our perception so that we don’t notice what is happening.

It’s true that some people seem to thrive on a highly demanding lifestyle; they *like* feeling hyped up. Everyone is different, with different amounts of energy and drive. However, the statistics on heart attack, breakdown, burnout and premature death demonstrate that the body can only take so much.

Even if you aren’t particularly stressed, relaxation techniques can give you added energy and bounce and give you opportunities for using your mind in new and creative ways.

Many people try things once or twice then give up — they don't get results or don't feel comfortable with the technique — and it all falls a bit flat. It's obvious but true that you don't get benefits from a technique unless you *practise* it. You can't reverse the bad habits of a lifetime in one session. Give it time. Arrange things so that you *will* keep with it; for example: with others. Also, make sure you fully understand exactly what to do. If not, seek advice.

Some people create barriers to beginning to manage stress without realising it. For example, they may feel guilt at doing something for themselves when they could be doing something 'productive'. Others are more attached to their stress symptoms than they would like to admit: such symptoms can be a convenient excuse at times, or people want to hang on to the old model of themselves. It is sometimes helpful to write down your personal obstacles to managing stress and plan how to overcome them; for example: if motivating yourself is a problem, you might plan to involve others, join a group, or make a public commitment (harder to break than a personal commitment).

## CHOOSE YOUR MODEL

.....

Stress causes wear and tear on bodywork... and replacement parts can be difficult to find, especially for older models. The risk of breakdown is significant and comprehensive insurance cover is recommended.

The 'new model' you is much more energy-efficient. It can achieve higher performance with lower running costs. The new models have many built-in extras as standard. They can get to places other models cannot reach.

## MECHANICS: THE STRESS RESPONSE

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It's useful to have some technical details at your fingertips so that you can avoid overheating your new model when you give it a trial run.

### 'Fight-or-flight' response

This is the nickname given to a set of physical changes in the body when we are challenged or react to danger:

**Brain** goes on 'red alert' and stimulates release of hormones such as adrenaline.

**Muscles** become tense, ready for action.

**Heart** beats faster to pump extra blood to muscles (raised blood pressure).

**Breathing** is faster to supply oxygen to muscles.

**Perspiration** increases to cool the body.

This **Stress response** provides the strength, energy and clarity of thought necessary for peak performance. Once the danger or challenge has passed, the body needs time to regain its balanced, more relaxed state.

Primitive man needed to be ready at short notice to fend off wild animals or human enemies, literally for 'fight or flight'. Today, the things that threaten us are very different — bosses, budgets, traffic jams, promotion panels — but our physiological reactions are the same as those of primitive man.

## HOW TO HAVE A BREAKDOWN

### (in seven easy lessons)

The stress response is appropriate for certain situations, such as physical danger or sports that require fast, rigorous muscle activity. Unfortunately, it can also be triggered by everyday events which *don't* merit it.

Many problems — real or imagined — can switch on the stress response. These brief periods of stress can add up throughout the day. We take this so much for granted that we hardly notice it. For example, in the office, stress can accumulate with every ring of the telephone, every raised voice or interruption. Frequent surges of stress chemicals put a strain on the body and can lead to serious illness. If you can't 'switch off' the stress response, you could be increasing your chances of stress-related illness.

### SEVEN POINT PLAN FOR HAVING A BREAKDOWN

- 1 **Forget everything but your job.** It comes first and your family understands why you have no time for them.
- 2 **Weekends and holidays** are excellent times for work at the office.
- 3 **Never turn down any request** that might even remotely further your career. Accept all invitations to meetings, dinners, and work assignments.
- 4 **Recreation is a waste of time.**
- 5 **Don't delegate responsibility.** You can do it best. Carry the whole load.
- 6 **Eat only when you are hungry.**
- 7 **Never mind doctors:** you're as strong as an ox; those height-weight charts do not apply to you.

**When are you having yours?**

# HOW TO AVOID A BREAKDOWN

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## Checking the bodywork

You need to be able to recognise rusty patches if you're going to take remedial action to stop the whole bodywork being affected. This section will help you recognise which parts of your body are tense. You can then use relaxation techniques to work on these.

### LOOKING FOR BUMPS

This is similar to looking in the mirror to check our appearance except that we are thinking about our body in our mind's eye. Turn your attention to your body for a moment.

- Is your body supported and resting?
- Are your back muscles tight?
- Are your jaw muscles tight?
- Is there any muscle tension in the stomach area?
- What about arms and hands?
- How are you holding this book as you read it?

You have just observed what your body was doing using **mental awareness**. That's all there is to it. The techniques below help you to use this awareness of your body in a systematic way.

#### Technique 1

Close your eyes... Start with your toes and move up your body... Ask yourself, "Where am I tense?" Whenever you discover a tense area, exaggerate it slightly so you can become aware of it... Be aware of the muscles in your body that are tense... Then, for example, say to yourself: "I am tensing my neck muscles... I am hurting myself... I am creating tension in my body." Note that all muscular tension is self-produced... At this point, be aware of any life situation that may be causing the tension in your body and think what you could do to change it.

#### Technique 2

Breathe in while **scanning** one area of your body for tension. As you breathe out, relax that area. Progress through each part of the body:

- Face and neck
- Shoulders and arms
- Chest and lungs
- Stomach area
- Hips, legs and feet.

Use scanning at any free moment: waiting in a queue, preparing for an interview; stopped at traffic lights. Try it in situations where you know you get tense, such as meetings or driving.

## Slowing down

Life in the fast lane can be exhilarating but we can't drive at high speeds *all* the time. Slowing down provides rest for overheated engines.

### BREATHING

The importance of correct breathing is much underestimated. Breathing exercises have been found to be effective in reducing anxiety, depression, irritability, muscular tension and fatigue. A breathing exercise can be learned in minutes and some immediate benefits experienced. For more profound effects, persistent practice is necessary.

### BREATHING AWARENESS

- 1 Lie down on a rug or blanket in a 'dead body' position — legs apart, palms upwards and eyes closed.
- 2 Bring your attention to your breathing and place your hand on the spot that seems to rise and fall the most as you inhale and exhale. If this spot is your chest, you are not making good use of the lower part of your lungs. People who are nervous tend to breathe many short, shallow breaths in their upper chest.
- 3 Place both hands on your abdomen and follow your breathing. Notice how your abdomen rises with each in-breath and falls with each out-breath. Breathe through your nose.
- 4 Is your chest moving in harmony with your abdomen or is it rigid? Spend a moment or two letting your chest follow the movement of your abdomen. Scan your body for tension, especially the throat, chest and abdomen.

### DEEP BREATHING

You can practise this exercise standing, sitting or lying down.

- 1 Place one hand on your abdomen and one hand on your chest.
- 2 Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose into your abdomen to push up your hand. Your chest should move only a little.
- 3 Exhale through your mouth making a quiet, relaxing, whooshing sound like the wind as you blow gently out.
- 4 Take long slow deep breaths for five or ten minutes once or twice a day.

When you have learned to relax yourself using deep breathing, practise it whenever you feel yourself getting tense.

Try associating **mental imagery** with deep breathing:

#### **Moving down...**

Imagine a slowly descending lift or escalator. Count backwards as it slowly moves down.

#### **The troubled world is shrinking...**

As you count down, imagine whatever is troubling you is shrinking — your worries, your in-tray, or whatever.

## The Service

A thorough service is needed to renew parts that are worn out and keep you roadworthy. Deep muscle relaxation, meditation and visualisation have all been extensively tested and are guaranteed not to damage internal workings.

### DEEP MUSCLE RELAXATION

This is a form of progressive relaxation but without the tensing of the muscles. It uses only the power of your mind to relax your muscles, relying on mental awareness, deep breathing and calming words or phrases. This can be more difficult than using a physical exercise to achieve relaxation so, if you experience difficulties, go back to progressive relaxation (in **Effective Stress Management: A Personal Guide Part One**) and master that first.

- Aim** To achieve deeper relaxation — automatically. The technique in Part One helped you to recognise the difference between **tense** and **relaxed** muscles. Practice builds up a clear memory of feeling relaxed which can be put to good effect with this technique.
- When?** Try to practise deep muscle relaxation twice a day if possible; for example: at work during a coffee break and at home. Use the technique to relax unneeded muscles while using needed muscles; for example: relaxing your jaw while driving.
- Where?** A quiet, private place free from distraction when relaxing the whole body. Practise in a comfortable chair or lying down.
- How long?** Five to fifteen minutes each time.
- TIP:** Assume a passive attitude i.e. a quiet, open, receptive approach — allowing things to happen rather than making them happen.

### Outline for deep muscle relaxation

- 1 Deep breathing**  
Breathe deeply and slowly. Silently say, “Relax and let go,” each time you breathe out.
- 2 Body scanning**  
Focus on relaxing each muscle.  
Feel the tension slip away each time you breathe out.  
Progress from your forehead and the top of your head to your feet and toes.
- 3 Examine the feelings of relaxation.**
- 4 Massaging relaxation.**  
Imagine a gently massaging relaxation flowing through your body. Feel the massaging relaxation move slowly from forehead to toes. Move to another muscle each time you breathe out.
- 5 Cue words**  
Silently say, “Peaceful and calm,” while continuing to relax. Silently say, “I am at peace,” while continuing to relax.
- 6 Return to activity**  
Count forward from one to three, bringing your awareness back to the environment or situation you are in.

## Meditation

This is a technique which has been used for many thousands of years. Originating in the East, meditation is often associated with Eastern religions and Buddhism, but it can be practised with or without a religious emphasis. Meditation is now used and found to be beneficial by many in the West as a form of stress management.

<b>Aim</b>	The purpose of meditation is to still the active mind and bring the individual into contact with deeper levels of awareness.
<b>The process</b>	The process is basically very simple. An idea or thought is used as a focus for the attention (a mantra, a visual image or a candle flame, for example). When the mind is still, it spontaneously experiences deeper levels of silence, relaxation and happiness. The process cannot be forced. It must be <i>allowed</i> to happen in an effortless way. Because so much of what we do requires effort and trying, we imagine the same must apply to meditation. On the contrary, any effort applied to meditation means that it will not work.
<b>Benefits</b>	Because meditation is so simple, natural and easy to do, benefits can be experienced almost immediately. People who meditate report feelings of greater relaxation; increased energy; fewer headaches; better sleep; and enhanced feelings of well-being. Research has demonstrated the beneficial effect that meditation can have on stress-related ailments and diseases, such as high blood pressure, heart disease, hypertension, depression, anxiety, insomnia, addiction to tranquillisers, and many more. The benefits of meditation increase with practice.

## HOW TO MEDITATE

<b>When?</b>	Meditation is most effective if practised for 15 to 20 minutes, morning and evening.
<b>Where?</b>	A quiet private place is best but meditation can be practised anywhere that you can sit quietly with eyes closed: a bus, train, or waiting room, even.
<b>Position?</b>	Sitting in a well-supported chair (not lounging); sitting cross-legged on the floor with or without support for the back; kneeling; sitting with legs outstretched. The key is to keep the back straight and to be comfortable.
<b>Which type?</b>	There are many different approaches: using the senses, breathing, the imagination. Meditation is best taught by a trained teacher for, although the process is very simple, it's also very subtle; guidance is needed initially to avoid straining.

## THE RELAXATION RESPONSE

A meditative technique called the Relaxation Response has been shown to be of significant value in the treatment of psychosomatic illnesses. The basic elements of the relaxation response and most meditation techniques include finding a quiet place which is free from distractions; assuming a passive attitude; getting into a comfortable position; and focusing attention on one work, sound, thought, feeling or symbol. The repetition of cue words in deep muscle relaxation training can also be considered a form of meditation.

An important principle related to relaxation and meditation is assuming a passive attitude. In this case it means to be open to new experiences. Assuming a passive attitude is a way of allowing things to happen and adopting a quiet and open mental orientation to help you become more receptive to the enjoyment of successful stress management.

Most of us have learned that we do not get anywhere without doing something. In deep muscle relaxation and meditation, the 'doing' is assuming a receptive attitude. This means allowing things to happen – *being* – rather than trying to make things happen – *doing*. It also means acknowledging unrelated thoughts that come into your mind and letting them slip away as soon as you can. Try to have a passive, receptive attitude whether you practise meditation or relaxation techniques. Meditation is a state of pure concentration of mind and involves cultivating keen awareness, vigilance and natural observation.

## **BREATHING MEDITATION**

Being aware of your breathing is a good way of focusing your attention and excluding other mental clutter.

Choose a comfortable posture, close your eyes, centre yourself, relax. (Ten minutes of yoga exercises is a good preparation for meditation). Become aware of your breathing which should be slower and more shallow than usual. Be aware of your stomach gently rising and falling. As you breathe in, imagine you are taking in energy. As you breathe out, imagine you are expelling tension.

When practising this meditation method just breathe in and out as usual without effort or strain. Count your breathing, but only when you breathe in but not when you breathe out. Each inhalation counts as one. Count your in-breaths until you reach ten and then repeat the process, starting from one. Try doing this continuously for 10 – 15 minutes every day and gradually extend the time if you wish. It is recommended that you sit with your body erect, but not stiffly and do not push out your chest. Put your hands comfortably on your lap, overlapped with thumbs touching each other. Don't lean on the back of your chair and it is OK to close your eyes.

At the beginning you may find it difficult to count continuously up to ten. Very often your mind will run away and you will lose your concentration on counting. Do not worry about it. Count from one again when you regain your awareness of counting. At some point, if you keep practising, you will have a vivid experience one day – full of serenity and joy! 'The clouds will begin to thin and disperse as the sun penetrates here and there for longer and longer periods'. As soon as you regain consciousness of yourself you will lose the experience.

If you find that thoughts are intruding, don't worry or resist them, just gently let them go and bring your attention back to your breathing. Thoughts are a natural part of meditation. If you find that thoughts of breathing and counting have 'disappeared' and you're feeling very relaxed — stay with that feeling. Again — don't force it. You will find that at times you feel very 'deep' and at others very much on the surface with lots of thoughts. This is the process of meditation. Don't force or strain or try.

At the end of your meditation, sit quietly with eyes closed (or lie down) for a few minutes before going back into activity.

## **MEDITATING ON AN OBJECT**

You may prefer to contemplate an object, such as a flower, candle flame or mandala (symbolic design).

Place your object at eye level about a foot or so away. Look at it carefully. Gaze rather than stare. Keep your eyes soft and relaxed without frowning. Notice the object's colour, texture, size and shape. Cover every inch. Become totally involved with the exploration as if you had never seen the object before. See if you can have the feeling of experiencing its qualities. If other thoughts come in, gently let them go and return to your object.

## MANTRA MEDITATION AND TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION

This is the most common form of meditation throughout the world. It involves using a word or syllable which is repeated silently. There are many mantras to choose from. The universal mantra 'om' is popular. If you go to a teacher, you will be provided with your own special mantra.

Find your posture, centre yourself and take a few deep breaths. Close your eyes. Think the mantra to yourself over and over again. The mantra shouldn't be crystal clear and dominating, just a subtle thought like any other. It may find its own rhythm. When other thoughts come, gently bring your attention back to the mantra.

## VISUALISATION

You can significantly reduce stress with something enormously powerful: your imagination. Imagination has no boundaries; you can visualise yourself in beautiful places feeling totally relaxed and at peace, even if the reality is different.

Thoughts are powerful. In a sense, you are what you think you are. If you think sad thoughts, you will feel unhappy. If you expect negative things to happen, it's quite likely that they will. Positive thoughts can create positive feelings and outcomes.

Visualisation is effective in treating many stress-related illnesses, including headaches and situation-specific anxiety.

There are three types of visualisation for change:

- **Receptive visualisation:** You sketch a vague scene and wait for an answer.
- **Programmed visualisation:** You create an image complete with the sight, taste, sound and smell of a goal you want to attain.
- **Guided visualisation:** You visualise a scene in detail but omit crucial elements and wait for your inner guide or subconscious to supply these.

**When?** Two or three times a day.

**Where?** A quiet place where you can sit or lie comfortably.

## BASIC TECHNIQUE FOR VISUALISATION

- 1 Sit or lie down in a comfortable place.
- 2 Scan your body seeking tension. Relax those muscles.
- 3 Form mental sense impressions. Involve all your senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. For instance, imagine a green forest with trees, blue sky, white clouds and pine needles

underneath. Add the sounds: the wind in the trees, water running, bird calls. Include the feel of the ground under your shoes, the smell of pine, the taste of spring water.

- 4 Use affirmations. Repeat short positive statements that affirm your ability to relax now. Use the present tense. Avoid negatives such as: “I am not tense,” in favour of positive versions such as: “I am letting go of tension.”

Other statements you could use are:

- Tension flows from my body.
- I can relax at will.
- I am in harmony with life.
- Peace is within me.

There are many things you can do with visualisation; for example:

- Creating your special place — a retreat for relaxation and guidance;
- Finding your inner guide — i.e. an imaginary person or animal linked to inner wisdom who instructs you.

## RUNNING REPAIRS

### (For when you don't have much time)

Always carry a repair kit — you never know when you may need it. You can decide which tools to carry. Here are some suggestions.

#### ROLLING

Roll on the floor, on top of several padded layers of rugs or blankets. Wrap your hands around your ankles, bend your head slightly, and roll back and forth leisurely. Roll the full length of your spine from your shoulders to your buttocks. Set up a smooth easy rhythm. Don't hurry. And roll as long as you want... This technique will remove stiffness and bring a sensation of ease to your back and spine.

#### REACHING

Touch your toes. Then stretch your hands way above your head. Continue bending for your toes and reaching for the sky. Set up a rhythm and allow it to get progressively slower. After a while, let your head stay down towards the ground longer and longer (but not long enough to make you dizzy). The upward motion should be done feeling the resistance of gravity... and it should be restful. Do this for just a short while, making every stretch count... relaxing more and more each time you reach for the sky.

#### MASSAGE

Close your eyes. Massage the point above the bridge of your nose, just slightly below the brow line. Use all of your fingers to soften the area. Then use your index finger to make circular patterns. Now, using both thumb and index finger, begin to squeeze and massage the bony prominences above both of your eyes. Press. Push hard. Don't be gentle. Really go at it. Hunt around the prominences of your eyes, and massage away any soreness and stiffness. This is especially relaxing for eyestrain — the kind caused by too much reading, too much 'office', or bad lighting.

**CALMING BREATHING**

Sit back comfortably in a chair, with your shoulders relaxed. Imagine there is a string on top of your head pulling you up gently. Take five deep steady breaths. Breathe in through your nose for a count of four. Pause. Breathe out through your nose for a count of four. Continue until you feel yourself calming down. This is a useful technique for steadying yourself — during a traffic jam or before an interview, for example.

**COUNTDOWN RELAXATION**

- 1 Count down from ten to zero while becoming progressively more relaxed.
- 2 Silently say each number as you breathe out and feel tension flowing out with each breath.
- 3 After you reach zero, briefly experience the relaxation.
- 4 After relaxing, count up from one to three to return to an alert but relaxed state. Silently say each number as you breathe in and feel mental alertness returning while you remain calm and relaxed.

**FURTHER INFORMATION**

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Health Education Authority, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1 9TX.

Relaxation For Living, 29 Burwood Park Road, Walton-on-Thames, Surrey KT12 5LH.

British Wheel of Yoga, Grafton Grange, Grafton, North Yorkshire YO5 9QQ.

Yoga for Health Foundation, Ickwell Park, Northill, Nr Biggleswade, Bedfordshire SG18 9EF

Centre for Stress Management, Chapman House, 10 Blackheath Village, London SE3 9L.

Transcendental Meditation Centres throughout the country offer introductory talks and courses. See local telephone directory.

Also available is a set of four booklets by HMSO for:

The Individual  
 The Line Manager  
 The Trainer  
 The Welfare Officer.

# More on exercise

**Effective Stress Management: A Personal Guide Part One** describes how exercise contributes to health and provides an outlet for tension and anxiety. This section expands on those ideas and tells you more about the range of opportunities available, as well as how to get started and how to keep at it.

Exercise offers not just recognised physical and mental benefits but also opportunities to master new skills and to meet and socialise with others. It's a varied menu of opportunities. If you haven't exercised for a long time or you lead a busy life, the hardest thing is getting started.

Here are some of the reasons people give for not exercising. Tick the ones you agree with. Add your own.

<input type="checkbox"/> I'm afraid of overdoing it.	<input type="checkbox"/> I hated sport at school.
<input type="checkbox"/> I couldn't do it on my own.	<input type="checkbox"/> I've got a family to look after.
<input type="checkbox"/> I haven't got the time.	<input type="checkbox"/> I need relaxation, not exercise.
<input type="checkbox"/> I'm past it.	<input type="checkbox"/> I'd look ridiculous.
<input type="checkbox"/> I'm too fat.	<input type="checkbox"/> .....

The reasons you give yourself for not exercising are powerful — they've been successful for a long time! Take a look at **Section One: More on Gaining Personal Perspective** to remind you that what you tell yourself is very powerful, even when it's not true.

## I'm afraid of overdoing it

Most people don't need a medical check-up before exercising. If you are over 35, though, and haven't exercised for a long time, have a physical examination first and start slowly under a doctor's supervision.

Exercise helps to *protect* the heart. When you exercise, your muscles need more oxygen than usual, so your heart has to beat faster to pump more oxygen-carrying blood to them. When you exercise regularly, your heart pumps more oxygen with each beat, so it doesn't need to beat so fast. As you get fitter, you can exercise harder without overtaxing your heart.

## **I couldn't do it on my own**

You don't have to. Joining clubs or classes is a good way of meeting people as well as exercising. Perhaps you can interest a friend in going along to a class with you.

## **I haven't got the time**

If you say things like: "I know I should exercise but my obligations just won't let me", or "I have more important things to do", clearly exercise is low on your priority list. Substitute all your 'I can't' statements with 'I choose not to...'. If exercise is important to you, you **will** create a space for it in your life. Remember that, for a busy person, exercise is an essential outlet for your daily pressures. Just 20–30 minutes two or three times a week will keep you fit and active.

## **I'm past it**

Even though you recognise the benefits of exercise, you may persist in a sedentary lifestyle because you believe that exercise is for the young and athletic. You couldn't be more wrong. Exercise is for everyone, at any age. Anyone can get fitter as long as they choose exercise that suits them.

## **I'm too fat**

You stand to benefit most from regular exercise. Exercise helps you to get slim and *stay* slim by burning up calories. If you burn up more calories than you eat, your body will start using up its own energy stores and fat will start to disappear.

## **I hated sport at school**

Don't let negative memories of school sports put you off trying something new. Exercise doesn't have to be competitive. Finding the right activity **for you** is the key. Look at pages 94–118 for some ideas.

## **I've got a family to look after**

It does take more organising, but it needn't stop you exercising. Some sports centres have childcare facilities. You could get together with others and share babysitting. Involve your family as far as possible in your exercise activities.

## **I need relaxation, not exercise**

Exercise relieves stress by taking your mind off your problems. After a session of vigorous exercise, you will feel warm, comfortable and relaxed. It will help you to sleep better, too.

## **I'd look ridiculous**

People of all shapes and sizes enjoy exercising. You won't feel uncomfortable or out of place if you choose an activity that's right for you.

## WHAT IS FITNESS?

### Stamina

Being able to keep going when running or walking briskly, without getting tired or puffed very quickly. Stamina is useful when you're in a hurry to get somewhere or when you need to keep up with your children! Exercising for stamina helps to protect you against heart disease. The best activities for stamina are fairly energetic (more than you are used to), make you slightly out of breath, and keep you moving for 20 minutes or more. This type of exercise is often called 'aerobic' because you breathe in enough oxygen to supply your working muscles.

### Suppleness

Being able to bend, stretch, twist and turn through a full range of movement. You need suppleness all the time — for awkward jobs around the house, getting in and out of cars, and even getting on buses and trains. If you're supple, you're less likely to get injured and you'll be able to stay more active as you get older.

### Strength

Being able to exert force — for pushing, pulling and lifting. You need strength all the time — to move around, carry shopping, climb upstairs, and take stubborn tops off bottles! Strength protects you from sprains and strains. A strong back and stomach will give you good posture, too.

## WHAT TYPE OF EXERCISE FOR YOU?

The following pages will help you to work out what type of exercise would suit you best. Tick the answers you agree with then check the *Activities Menu* on pages 99 to 105 and the *Activity Chart* on pages 106 and 107.

### Do you prefer to exercise alone or with others?

**Alone** Try the **Fitness Routines** in this Pack (see pages 112–115).  
See *Menu items 1 to 5* and **Yoga and Pilates (items 15 and 16)**.  
Buy a book on exercise with graded fitness routines.  
Follow TV items on fitness, such as those on breakfast TV.

**With others** Join a class or a team. See *Menu items 8 to 13*. Ask around.  
Exercise with friends and family.  
Organise a group to go swimming, hill walking, or whatever.

**Do you have (or think you have) a health problem that prevents you taking vigorous exercise?**

- Yes**
- 1 Consult your doctor.
  - 2 Take gentle exercise, such as walking or simple stretching.
  - 3 Tell instructors about your difficulty. They will help choose the best exercises for you.

- No** Good. But start slowly. Always warm-up before exercising.

**Are you competitive?**

- Yes** Join a team: see *Menu items 8 to 11*.

- No** Consider *Menu items 1 to 5 and 13*.

**How fit are you?**

There's no single way of telling, but answering the questions overleaf will give you some idea. Tick either the **Yes** or **No** box for each question. A tick in any of the **Yes** boxes means you would benefit from being more active.

Many health centres, clubs and gyms offer more elaborate fitness tests. These should combine several different tests of stamina, suppleness and strength to give you an overall fitness rating. Only very sophisticated testing can tell you any more than this. A good fitness-testing service should give you personal advice which is more important than your actual test score.

However, elaborate tests are not necessary if you want to take up exercise.

**Do you quickly get out of breath walking uphill or even on the flat?**

**Yes**            You need to improve your stamina. Walking more is the best way to start.

**No**              Good. If you want to build up even more stamina, try swimming or cycling.

**Do your legs ache or feel weak after you've climbed a couple of flights of stairs?**

**Yes**            You need more leg strength. You could try the leg exercises on page 115.

**No**              Good. Your legs are fairly strong. If you want them to get even stronger, you could cycle or jog.

**Do you find it difficult to bend down and tie your shoelaces, or put your socks or tights on?**

**Yes**            You need to improve your suppleness. This section gives ideas for exercises and activities that will help.

**No**              You're reasonably supple. It's worth making the effort to keep it that way as you get older.

**Do you find it difficult to comb the back of your hair or pull a jumper off?**

**Yes**            You need more flexibility in your shoulder joints.

**No**              Good. Keep moving.

**Is it difficult for you to get out of an armchair or the bath?**

**Yes**            You need to improve your suppleness, and the strength in your arms and legs.

**No**              Good. You'll find it a great advantage to work on your strength and suppleness, especially as you get older.

# ACTIVITIES MENU

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## 1 Walking

Walking is the most natural exercise of all. Brisk walking is great for **stamina**, but not quite so good for suppleness or strength, so for all-round fitness it's best to take some other form of exercise as well.

As you get older, walking regularly will help keep you active and mobile. You'll also enjoy getting out and about. Walking is excellent for **relieving stress and tension**.

Add a little walking to your journey to work, or to the shops. Explore the parks in your area. Get a local street map, or take a car or bus ride into the country where you'll find plenty of footpaths and bridleways. If you would like to walk in company and explore the country, there are groups and clubs you can join. If you go into the hills, make sure you are properly equipped. Wear strong comfortable shoes and thick, warm socks. Plenty of layers of thin clothes are better than one thick layer. A waterproof coat will protect you from wind and rain, and a hat is important for keeping warm. Take expert advice when necessary, and tell someone where and when you are going.

## 2 Swimming

If there's an ideal activity, it's swimming. It's excellent for **strength, stamina and suppleness**, especially if you use various strokes. It's a great way to get fit and stay fit.

Swimming is especially good if you're overweight or have any **backache, stiffness or disability**, because your body is supported by water.

Anyone of any age can learn — it's never too late. Ask about lessons for your age group at your local swimming pool. Many pools have special sessions, like over-50s, adults only, parents and babies, or parents and toddlers. You can swim alone, or with friends or family, and swimming is fun, especially in pools with chutes, slides and waves.

Most pools have season tickets and special rates for lunchtime or early-morning sessions. There are often special rates if you are unwaged or retired. Modern swimming pools are usually warm, have pleasant changing rooms and cafeterias, and notice boards where you can find out what's going on.

## 3 Cycling

Cycling is great for **stamina and leg strength**. It won't do much for your suppleness if you're young, but if you're older it will really help to keep you moving.

Once you've got a bike, cycling is a cheap and easy way to get about. You can cycle alone or with family or friends. There are lots of groups and clubs who organise day trips, weekends away and holidays. Although a new bike is quite expensive, you can shop around for a good second-hand one, or borrow or hire a bike for a couple of days.

Make sure you know your *Highway Code* and avoid busy roads. Use cycle tracks where you can. If you're cycling at night, make sure your lights work; wear light-coloured clothing and a reflective chest-band (which you can get from a sports or bike shop). Avoid cycling in fog or icy weather.

Children can take cycling proficiency tests. To find out where these are being run locally, contact the Public Safety or Road Safety Department of your council.

## 4 Jogging and running

Jogging, or running at an easy pace, is very popular. It's fun, free and a quick way to get fit. It's very good for **stamina**, but not so good for suppleness or upper-body strength.

There's some risk of over-use injury to feet, knees, ankles, and hips but, if you don't overdo it at first, and run on soft surfaces like grass when you can, you shouldn't have serious problems. If you have arthritis in your legs, hips or back, however, or if you are overweight, try cycling or swimming instead.

The only expense is a good pair of running shoes. Take care in traffic and avoid busy roads. Try not to jog at night if possible but, if you have no alternative, wear light-coloured clothes and a cyclist's reflective chest-band. You don't have to jog alone — there are lots of clubs you can join. Athletics clubs are always glad to have new members and don't just cater for high performers.

## 5 Golf

If you've never played golf before, you'll be surprised how energetic it can be. A round of golf is a walk of four or five miles in the open air, often up and down hills, carrying your clubs or pulling your trolley. Golf can be good for **stamina** and **leg strength**. You'll get the best benefits if you play regularly.

Private clubs are expensive and may be difficult to get into, especially near big cities. Many local authorities have public courses which are quite cheap and often very good. Hire a set of clubs if you want to try the game. If you get to like playing golf, you could buy second-hand clubs. A half-set shouldn't be too expensive. The only other things you need are comfortable shoes and an umbrella.

## 6 Bowling

Bowling is not too energetic and it improves **flexibility** in shoulders and arms, and **strength** in legs.

Bowling in all its forms is a fast-growing, sociable game for all ages. You can play indoors, or outside. Many towns and villages have bowling greens, and petanque or boules can be played on unsurfaced car parks, or a sandy beach. Short bowls is played in local centres and clubs.

You will need flat, smooth-soled shoes and comfortable clothes. Some clubs may be strict about dress. You can hire woods to start with at your local bowling green or nearest club.

## 7 Weight training

More and more people, especially women, are now using weights. Whether you train with free weights or machines, weight training will increase your **strength**. If you do a lot of repetitions using light weights, you will also build up **stamina**. You won't become 'muscle-bound'. Suitable training with weights can firm up your body and help you become slim and supple.

You need to learn the proper techniques for lifting, or you risk damaging your knees, shoulders and back, or straining yourself. If you want to take up weight training, learn how to do it safely. Join a class, contact your local sports centre, or call the Leisure and Recreation Department of your Local Authority for advice. Most sports centres, gyms and clubs have weight-training equipment. You can also buy weights cheaply for using at home. Mail-order catalogues and second-hand ads are good places to look.

You need a sturdy pair of shoes but won't need a special belt unless you lift heavy weights.

## 8 Badminton

Badminton is fun even if you're a beginner. It involves lots of bending, stretching and leaping for high shuttles, so it's good for **flexibility** and **strength**, especially leg strength. You're moving all the time, so it's also good for **stamina**. The better you get at the game, the more energetic it becomes. You'll get some benefit even as a beginner.

Badminton doesn't cost much and you can play all year round. You can hire courts at most local sports centres, or you can play in school gyms and village halls, or at evening classes. There are clubs in most towns and villages. Racquets are not expensive to buy or hire.

You'll need suitable shoes to support your feet when you are changing direction suddenly — *not* running shoes. Ask for advice at a sports shop.

## 9 Tennis

The exercise value of tennis gets better as your game improves. The bending stretching, leaping and running is good for **stamina**, pretty good for **suppleness**, and certainly good for **leg strength**.

You need a racquet of the correct weight and with the right size of grip. Ask for advice at a sports shop. Playing on public courts can be very cheap, and they are usually only crowded around Wimbledon time. Private clubs are more expensive and sometimes difficult to get into, but it may be worth it if you like the game. Tennis is an ideal family game and joining a club can be sociable for you all, if you can afford it.

It's getting easier to play tennis all year round because there are now more all-weather courts and indoor centres.

## 10 Squash

You have to be fit to play squash, so don't play squash to *get* fit — it can be a very hard, fast game. If you are fit, squash can be excellent for **stamina**, **leg strength** and **suppleness**.

If you're middle-aged, think very carefully before taking up squash. If you do start playing, take it gently at the beginning and always warm-up before you play.

Squash is played a lot in private clubs and may be expensive. There are public courts for hire at many sports centres, however, and the equipment should be within most people's budget. You can hire racquets and try the game without spending a fortune. You'll need a good pair of shoes — not running shoes. Ask for advice at a sports shop.

## 11 Team games

Team games aren't just for school kids. They're good fun and good exercise for anyone. There are so many — football, cricket, rugby, hockey, five-a-side football, netball, basketball, volleyball, rounders, to name but a few — that it's impossible to talk about them all in detail here. Most team games are very good for **stamina** and **strength**, and pretty good for **suppleness**, too.

You don't have to play seriously. You can play just for fun in the park or on the beach. If you do want to play seriously, it's a good idea to train, so that you can reach a good standard and not strain yourself. In all games which involve twisting and turning, and sudden stops and starts, there's bound to be some wear and tear, or even damage to ankles and knees. If there's body contact, like in rugby and basketball, you can also damage your fingers, hands and shoulders. If you just play for fun, though, there's much less risk.

Getting involved in a club or a team can be a great way of meeting new friends. Most teams cater for young players or for those who have played all their lives but, if you look around, you should be able to find one that plays at your level. Contact your local leisure centre or YMCA, or you could even start your own team.

Alternatively, you might prefer to learn to be a coach or a referee. Most team games don't take up much time. Cricket is an exception because a match can be very long. But cricket is a lot more strenuous than many people think. It's not a systematic way to keep fit, but an active pastime for people of all ages.

Footwear can be an expensive item for team games but, if you only play for fun, you won't need very expensive boots or shoes. And if you play for a football or hockey team, they may supply some of the kit.

Many team games are seasonal, so it's a good idea to try out more than one — like cricket in the summer and netball or football in winter. Or combine a team game with something different like tennis or swimming.

## 12 Martial arts

Judo is an Olympic combat sport. It is good exercise for **strength**, **suppleness** and **stamina**. It doesn't have to be competitive — many people enjoy judo in clubs without competing. There is some risk of injury because of the physical contact with other people, and because you have to take falls. But you'll be taught how. In a good club, people will be careful and injuries will be rare.

Beware of too strenuous warm-ups. Remember that all stretching should be slow and gentle and you should never *bounce* into a stretch. People of all ages can get fun and good exercise from the martial arts. There are clubs in most towns — in leisure centres, church halls, or school gyms — and subscriptions are usually cheap. Make sure that the club belongs to the national governing body. If you are not sure, contact your Local Authority Leisure and Recreation Department. Also make sure your club has a programme for beginners and doesn't just cater for the elite. It isn't much fun being thrown around all night! Of course, teachers will know how to look after older people and beginners, but be careful.

## 13 Exercise classes

Exercise and dance classes are very popular. There are lots of new centres and classes being set up, and some are better than others. It is important that your teacher is competent and knowledgeable. If in doubt, ask your local Adult Education or Leisure and Recreation Department for advice.

Exercise classes can include aerobics, circuit training, exercise to music, women's and men's keep fit, over-60s classes, Look-After-Yourself classes and many others. Whichever sort you choose, you'll be exercising with other people, so it'll be fun and a good chance to meet new friends.

You'll get an all-over workout which is good for **suppleness**, as are gentle bending and stretching. Some exercises will build up **strength** in your legs, arms, stomach and back. And aerobic exercises based on gentle jogging or jumping are great for **stamina**. There should always be a gentle warm-up at the beginning and a cool-down at the end. Don't let yourself get uncomfortably out of breath.

Teachers at adult-education classes will often let you try one class before you pay for the whole term. Look-After-Yourself classes include exercise, relaxation, coping with stress, sensible eating and watching your weight. To find out if a class is running in your area, contact the Look After Yourself Project Centre (address on page 118). They will put you in touch with someone locally.

## 14 Dance

Dancing gives you a chance to be creative. There's good music, and learning and practising new steps is very satisfying. Don't worry about looking silly — go to a beginners' class where everyone will be at the same level, and you can improve together. There's modern, jazz, tap, ballroom and old-time, ballet, folk, and many informal types of movement.

A good teacher will introduce the steps gradually and give you plenty of time to practise them. Whether you enjoy dancing in night clubs, at discos and parties, or prefer folk or ballroom dancing, you're getting really good exercise. The more energetically you dance, the better it is for your stamina.

Dancing is excellent for **strength**, especially leg strength, good for **stamina**, and keeps your joints **supple** and mobile. It's good for **balance**, too and that's really important as you get older.

Some forms of dance can be done quite cheaply at adult-education classes. Private classes may be fairly expensive. You may need special shoes or clothes, but ask your teacher for advice before you buy anything. Many kinds of dancing don't need any special knowledge or equipment.

## 15 Yoga

In yoga, you learn to control your movement and your breathing, and you can learn to meditate. Yoga is excellent for flexibility and **suppleness** and general **relaxation** because it is gentle and controlled. It's good for **strengthening** muscles, especially in the stomach, hips, thighs, and back. There's no real benefit for stamina. You can take up yoga at any age.

## 16 Pilates

The Pilates (pronounced puh-lah-tees) method is not just a series of exercises but a complete approach to developing body awareness, which aims to help bring the body back into balance. It requires commitment from both the teacher and the student as it takes time to improve and change the body's

postural and alignment habits. Over time there are subtle changes in the way you sit, stand and walk. Pilates is an exercise based system that aims to develop the body's 'centre' in order to create a stable core for all types of movement. Through the process of regular classes, the body's structure realigns and a balance is achieved within the musculo-skeletal system. The exercises have a strong focus on the abdominal muscles (referred to as 'the girdle of strength') to ensure that the spine is properly supported. Altogether, we have more than 460 muscles but most of us only use about 50 of them. Pilates training increase awareness of all muscle groups and starts to exercise the lesser used muscles, relieving strain on those that are overused. Eventually the body will move with maximum efficiency and minimum effort. Pilates is gentle but focused exercise, with the potential to become aerobic in more advanced classes. Pilates method is often used to rehabilitate injuries: It is considered particularly helpful for sports injuries, stroke patients, arthritis, rheumatism, whiplash and back problems. Pilates is an all-encompassing mind, body and spirit exercise – a whole approach philosophy that is often shared with other techniques such as yoga.

## 17 Aerobic exercise

The goal of aerobic exercise is to produce a 'training effect' that will gradually strengthen your heart. To produce this, you need to exercise three times a week. Each time, your heart rate should reach the aerobic range appropriate for your age and remain at that rate for 20 minutes. Exercising so that your heart remains *below* that rate will not produce the training effect. Exercising consistently *above* that heart rate could put too much strain on your heart. For more information on this, see page 115.

## 18 Exercising at home

Lots of people prefer to exercise at home. It's private and there's no need to get a babysitter or travel anywhere. You might get more out of it, however, if you go to a class first and learn how to do the exercises properly.

## 19 Low-intensity exercise

Low-intensity exercise is not vigorous or prolonged enough to produce the training effect. It is a good preparation for aerobic exercise if you have a very sedentary lifestyle or if you are in poor physical condition. You probably get more low-intensity exercise than you realise, as it includes activities such as house cleaning, shopping, office duties and light gardening as well as slow walking.

In addition to these everyday activities, there are three kinds of low-intensity exercise to choose from.

- 1 **Callisthenics** are stretching exercises that improve the flexibility of all your major muscle groups and help older people to maintain joint mobility. They also help to prevent injury if integrated into the warming-up and cooling-down phases of an aerobic exercise programme. The greatest attraction to these limbering-up exercises is their convenience. You need no special clothing or equipment, and the weather is irrelevant because you can do them indoors at any time. Typical callisthenics include: toe-touching, sit-ups and knee-bends.
- 2 **Isotonics** involve the contraction of muscles against a resistant object with movement. Weightlifting is the most popular form of isotonic exercise. For younger people, bigger muscles can mean more power, endurance, and speed. For older people, isotonic exercises help tone muscles which are important in protecting joints.

- 3 Isometrics** require the contraction of muscles against resistance, without movement. For example, you can push your two hands together at chest level, or push against a wall or door-jamb. Isometrics do not make muscles larger, but they do increase strength.

## ACTIVITY CHART

This is a list of activities that can help you towards achieving fitness. If an activity isn't on the chart (such as fishing or snooker), it's because it will have little or no effect on fitness or because it is similar to another activity.

### Star ratings

For columns 1 to 3 - i.e. **Stamina, Strength and Suppleness:**

- \* Little or no benefit
- \*\* Good for that purpose
- \*\*\* Excellent for that purpose.

For the **Cost** column:

- \* Costs very little
- \*\* Moderate cost
- \*\*\* Expensive.

For the **Fitness** column:

- \* Don't have to be very fit to begin this activity
- \*\* If you are unfit or over 40, unwise to take this up straight away
- \*\*\* Only for the very fit. If you are unfit, start with a \* activity.

Activity	Stamina	Strength/ Tone	Suppleness/ Mobility	Cost	Fitness
Aerobic class	***	**	***	**	**
Badminton	**	**	**	**	*
Callisthenics	*	**	***	*	*
Cricket	*	*	**	*	*
Cycling	***	**	*	**	*
Dancing (ballroom)	**	*	*	**	*
Dancing(disco)	**	**	**	**	*
Digging	*	**	*	*	*
Football	**	**	**	*	**
Golf	*	*	**	***	*

## ACTIVITY CHART/Continued

Activity	Stamina	Strength/ Tone	Suppleness/ Mobility	Cost	Fitness
Gymnastics	**	***	***	**	**
Hockey	**	**	**	*	**
Horse riding	*	**	**	***	*
Housework	*	**	**	*	*
Ice skating	**	**	**	***	**
Isometrics	*	***	*	*	*
Jogging	***	**	*	*	**
Judo	*	**	**	**	*
Mowing grass	*	**	*	*	*
Netball	**	**	**	*	**
Roller skating	**	**	**	*	**
Rowing	***	***	*	**	**
Rugby	**	**	**	*	***
Running	***	**	*	*	***
Skiing	**	***	**	***	**
Skipping	***	**	**	*	*
Squash	*	**	***	**	***
Swimming	***	***	***	*	*
Table tennis	*	*	**	*	*
Tennis	**	**	**	**	**
Walking briskly	**	**	*	*	*
Weight training	*	***	*	**	*
Yoga	*	**	***	*	*

## GETTING STARTED

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### Making a commitment

This is the most important thing of all — you have to *want* to do it. Remind yourself of all the reasons why you should exercise. (See page 96 .) Consider what is stopping you (pages 94–95) and try to solve this.

Remember that *you* create the priorities in your life. If you can't make a long-term commitment, try an exercise experiment for a few weeks; at the end of it, assess how you feel and decide what you will do. Many of us live our lives as if we had only one role: the one we perform at work. To get the most out of life, you need to remember you have many roles: worker, spouse, parent, swimmer, person who needs rest and exercise, and so on.

### Making time

This is the main difficulty for most people. You can't *create* more time but you may be able to make better *use* of it. Plan ahead. Delegate. Learn to say no. Create spaces for yourself. Block time in your diary for exercise — even for ten-minute walks between other activities.

### Making choices

Assess your preferences and your level of fitness (pages 96-98) and choose something you would enjoy. Use the:

- fitness routines for suppleness, strength (page 112-113) — for those who want to exercise at home;
- aerobic exercise programme (page 115) — for those who want to build stamina;
- Activities Menu — to see a selection of sports and activities;
- activity chart — a quick comparative guide to exercises;
- *Finding Out More* section on page 118— for contacts.

## FIRST STEPS

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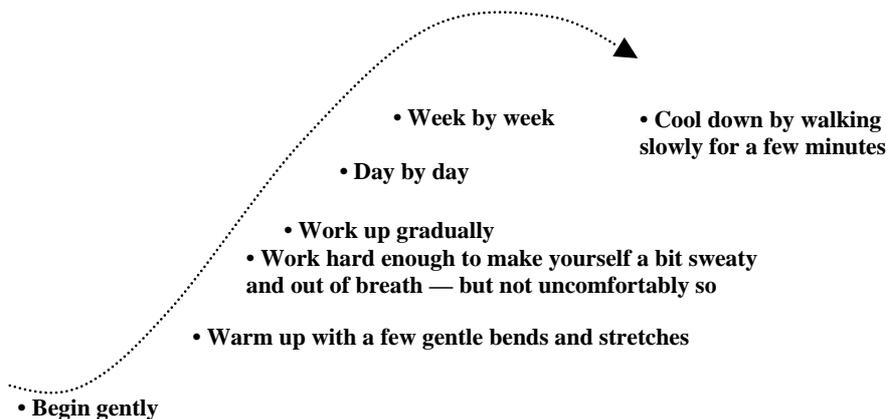
If you're not very active now, the first step to getting fitter is to *walk* more. If you walk less than two-and-a-half miles a day, you are considered an inactive person (but this includes in the home, at the office and so on). You can find out how far you walk by using a pedometer, a device you clip to your clothing which measures the distance you walk or run.

Use more effort than usual. Find a more active way to do the things you usually do. Use the stairs instead of a lift. Walk up escalators. This is a good way of strengthening leg muscles. Perhaps you can

walk or cycle part of the way to work. When you walk, **walk faster**. Brisk walking for 20–30 minutes two or three times a week builds stamina.

Get involved in **group activities** that offer scope for gentle exercise or organise them yourself; for example: family outings, a walk with friends, and so on.

## BUILD UP GRADUALLY



## Avoiding injury

Any human activity has some risk attached to it, and exercise is no exception. However, if you take sensible precautions and build up slowly as you begin to exercise, you should have no problems.

### Clothes and footwear

Wear loose, comfortable clothes. For activities involving running, you will need a *good* pair of running shoes to protect your feet, joints and back from damage. Make sure the shoes have a thick cushioned sole, especially at the heel, to prevent jarring of joints, and good arch-support to stop your foot tilting inwards while running.

### To avoid injury:

- 1 Use proper equipment and clothing, especially shoes.
- 2 Allow five to ten minutes to warm-up for aerobic exercises, and three to five minutes to cool down.
- 3 Do not exercise when ill.
- 4 Stop exercise if you have any unusual, unexplainable symptoms.
- 5 Don't exercise until at least two hours after a large meal and don't eat until one hour after exercising.
- 6 Avoid smoking, especially after exercising.
- 7 Avoid cold or very hot showers and baths before or after exercising.
- 8 Avoid any type of extreme temperature-change while perspiring after exercise.
- 9 Avoid all-out efforts in which you risk heart attack or other injury.

- 10 Use your common sense in deciding when and where to exercise. For example, don't jog in a sparsely populated park at dusk, or run on busy city streets.

## Establishing goals

Examine your daily diary to determine ways to increase the amount of low-intensity and aerobic exercise you get during your day. Express these opportunities in terms of two-week goals. Make your goals realistic, taking into account your current exercise level, available resources, time-limitations, and personal interests. Be conservative in setting goals; make sure that they are ones that you can comfortably accomplish.

## KEEPING AT IT

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There are two major obstacles to overcome in undertaking an exercise programme: getting started and **keeping at it**.

If you have followed the instructions on the previous pages for getting started, you have jumped the first hurdle. The second hurdle may be more difficult.

The following suggestions will help you **keep at** your exercise programme until it becomes as automatic as eating or sleeping.

- 1 **Gradualism** is the key. Start small. Never overdo. If you get sick, very sore, or exhausted, you have over-exerted yourself. Exercise should be fun, not torture.
- 2 **Keep records** of your daily and weekly progress. Check your weight and blood pressure monthly.
- 3 **Congratulate yourself** for accomplishing what you set as your two-week goals. Give yourself small rewards such as dinner out, an evening at the movies, or a new pair of running shoes.
- 4 Focus on the **rewards** of exercise. Notice how you feel relaxed, energised, refreshed, and how your concentration and sleep have improved.
- 5 Post your **goals** where you can see them around the house or office every day. Put up some pictures of yourself or others doing your favourite exercise. Put up mottoes or statements of encouragement.
- 6 **Visualise success**. See yourself as already having attained the benefits of exercise. See yourself as slender, dancing gracefully, or running down a country lane looking radiant and healthy.
- 7 **Get support** from your family and friends by telling them about your goals. Enlist members of your family or friends in your exercise programme. Join an exercise class, a running club, or fitness centre. Participate in group activities like races.

## CHECKING YOUR PROGRESS

### A simple stamina test

Once you've started exercising regularly, you may find it encouraging to 'test' your fitness to see how much you've improved. The best way is probably just to think about how you feel.

*For example:* Can you exercise longer now than when you first started?  
When you finish a session of exercise, do you feel you could easily do some more?

If you've been exercising regularly for at least two months and want to start keeping a record of your progress, try this test:

- 1 Find a safe, reasonably flat route about one mile long. It could be in a park, on a quiet stretch of road, on a running track, or between your home and a nearby landmark. You can measure the distance with a car mileometer or by using a map.
- 2 Put on comfortable clothes and a pair of running shoes, and take a watch.
- 3 Walking or running, or using a mixture of both, cover the mile as quickly as you can without getting uncomfortably breathless. It is likely to take between 10 and 20 minutes, so aim for a pace you can keep up. If you have any pain or discomfort, stop. If you are over 55 or have not exercised regularly and it's the first time you've taken the test, it's best to walk all the way.
- 4 Note down or remember the time it takes you to cover the mile and check your results against the table below.

Minutes taken to cover the mile	Stamina
20 or over	very unfit
15-20	unfit
12-15	fair
10-12	fit
10 or under	very fit

- 5 Repeat the test every month or so to see how you are getting on.

Don't forget that this test only gives you a rough guide as to how fit you are. Your age and many other factors will also affect your result. Some younger people may easily cover a mile in less than ten minutes. So if you are under 40 and your result is very fit, don't give up exercising. To stay fit, you need to keep it up.

Also, if swimming or cycling are your main activities and you are doing these regularly, you will certainly be getting fitter, but may not notice any improvement in your walking or running. Don't be discouraged. This is because each activity uses different sets of muscles. If you keep on exercising regularly, you'll find that you can swim or cycle further without getting tired.

It's not your test result that's important but the fact that you're feeling fitter as time goes on. If you have to have a break, you'll lose some of the stamina you've developed, but you can soon catch up, as long as you remember to start again gradually.

Don't forget that stamina is only *one* aspect of fitness. To get really fit, you need to develop your strength and suppleness as well.

## FITNESS ROUTINES

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### Exercising for suppleness

Here are six simple stretching exercises. Do them at least three times a week and you'll begin to feel your body becoming more supple and relaxed. You should also do them to warm-up before starting on anything more vigorous.

Do all stretching exercises slowly and smoothly.

Repeat each one eight to 12 times. Doing them more times or more quickly won't have any extra benefit. You don't need to do 12 on the first day, just do as many as feels comfortable and gradually build up.

If you have trouble with back pain, it might be advisable to see your doctor first. In any case, do these exercises very gently.

#### **1 Arm circling:** *to maintain suppleness in your shoulders.*

Stand tall and relaxed with your arms at your sides. Slowly circle your right shoulder backwards. Repeat with your left shoulder; continue on alternate sides.

Place your right hand on your right shoulder. Move your elbow forwards, up and back in a circle. Repeat with your left elbow; continue on alternate sides.

Start with your arms straight at your sides. Keep your hips facing forwards and move your right arm forward, up and back to form a large circle. Repeat this on the left; continue on alternate sides.

Any of these arm circles can be done with both arms together.

#### **2 Forward bending:** *to stretch the muscles in your shoulders, trunk and legs.*

Stand tall and relaxed. Stretching through your whole body, reach up towards the ceiling with your fingertips. Then, letting yourself bend at the hips and the knees, slowly bring your hands down towards the floor, as far as is comfortable. Straighten up and repeat.

**3 Side bending:** *to stretch the muscles in your sides and help keep your spine flexible.*

Stand tall and relaxed with your feet hip width apart and hands at your sides. Slowly bend to the left and right alternately, allowing your hands to slide down the sides of your legs. Stand tall in between each bend. Keep your legs straight. Make sure you are bending to the side and not letting your shoulders drop forwards. Move only as far as you can comfortably before returning to the upright position. Don't bounce into the movement but keep the movement smooth.

**4 Leg swinging:** *to keep your hips mobile and to stretch the thigh muscles.*

Stand tall and relaxed with your weight on your left leg. Rest your left hand on the back of a chair for support, if necessary. Now swing your right leg forwards and backwards in a relaxed pendulum action. Gradually take your leg as high as you comfortably can, keeping your body fairly upright and letting your right knee bend. Repeat with your left leg.

**5 Calf stretching:** *to stretch your calves and keep your ankles mobile.*

Stand facing a wall, at arm's length from it. Place your hands on the wall for support. Stretch your right leg out straight behind you, with the ball of your foot on the floor and your toes pointing towards the wall. Gently push your right heel towards the floor, allowing your left leg to bend as necessary.

**6 Ankle reaching:** *to stretch your lower back and the backs of your thighs.*

Sit on the floor with your legs straight in front of you and your knees as near to the floor as is comfortable. Place your hands on top of your thighs. Slowly and smoothly slide your hands down your legs as far as you can comfortably reach. Return to the upright position and repeat. Do not bounce into the movement but keep it smooth.

## Exercising for strength

Not necessarily for bulging biceps, but to keep your muscles toned up enough to meet the more strenuous demands of daily life. You need strong arms for pushing, pulling and lifting. Strong stomach muscles are important for good posture and avoiding back pain. And you need strong legs for many things, including getting out of armchairs and baths, climbing stairs and running.

It's especially important for older people to maintain their strength in order to keep active and independent.

Try to do these strength exercises every day, or at least twice a week. Don't push yourself too hard: five or six repeats will probably be plenty to start with. Build up gently and gradually to about 20 repeats.

## 1 ARMS

*These exercises strengthen upper arms, shoulders and chest.*

### **Standing press-ups**

Stand at arm's length from a wall. Place your hands shoulder-width apart on the wall. Now bend your arms until your forehead touches the wall. Then push yourself away again until your arms are straight.

### **Kneeling press-ups**

Kneel on all fours. Move your hands forwards slightly and take most of your weight onto them. Bend your arms and lower the top half of your body towards the floor. Only go as far as is comfortable, and be careful not to sag in the middle. Straighten your arms again and return to the starting position.

If you can do the kneeling press-up easily, you may be ready to attempt a **full press-up**. Follow the instructions above but alter the starting position by lifting your knees off the floor, so that your weight is supported on your hands and toes and your body is in a straight line.

## 2 STOMACH, BACK AND HIPS

Weak muscles in the stomach and back put extra strain on your spine. These exercises will help to strengthen your stomach muscles, flatten any bulges and improve your posture.

**Curl ups** strengthen your stomach muscles.

Lie on your back with your knees bent. Put your hands on the top of your thighs. Lifting just head and shoulders off the floor, slide your fingers along your thighs as far as is comfortable. Then uncurl slowly back to the lying position.

As an alternative, you can do this exercise lying on your back with your feet and lower legs on the seat of a chair.

**Chest raisers** *strengthen the muscles in your back.*

Lie on your stomach on the floor with your arms at your sides, your shoulders relaxed and your head turned to one side. Slowly lift your head, neck and shoulders away from the floor, turning your head so you are looking at the floor with your chin tucked in. Only go as far as is comfortable. Slowly relax down, turning your head to the other side, and repeat.

**Leg lifts** *strengthen your hips and back.*

Lie on your stomach on the floor. Slowly lift your right leg away from the floor, as far as is comfortable. Slowly relax down and repeat with the other leg.

As an alternative, start on all fours and slowly stretch one leg back. Repeat with the other leg.

### 3 LEGS

*These leg exercises will help you tone up and strengthen your thighs, calves and bottom, and are particularly important for older people.*

- Sit on a firm kitchen chair. Stand up without using your hands and without leaning forward too much, if you can. Make sure your legs straighten completely. Sit down again and repeat. Gradually progress to just **touching** the chair instead of sitting down each time.
- Stand at the bottom of a flight of stairs. Step up onto the first step, right leg first, making sure you straighten both legs. Step down again. Repeat using the left leg first. Continue the exercise, leading with alternate legs.
- Stand with your feet **together** and your knees slightly bent. Spring up, landing with your feet comfortably **apart** and your knees bent. Now spring up again, landing with your feet **together**. Repeat as a continuous movement: together — apart — together. Once you can do about 20 repeats, this exercise will also help to build up your stamina.

### Exercising for stamina

You can build up your stamina at home by skipping with a rope, running or jumping on the spot, or going up and down stairs. You could also try using a home exercise machine.

### Home Exercise Machines

Some people find these useful for building up strength and stamina but they can be very expensive and are not really necessary. Try one out at a sports centre and ask for advice before buying.

**Stationary bikes** are especially good if you're overweight because they take your weight. The exercise value is the same as cycling. Look for a bike with an adjustable saddle and handlebars, and adjustable resistance on the pedals so that you can choose how hard to push. Some cheaper models won't have these features, so be careful in your choice.

**Rowing machines** are good for stamina, and for leg, back and shoulder strength. They're *not* good if you have a bad back. Like stationary bikes, good rowing machines may be very expensive.

**Chest expanders** and other gadgets can increase your strength, if you use them regularly. Straining too much, however, could raise your blood pressure.

## AEROBIC EXERCISE

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The simplest, most readily available form of aerobic exercise is brisk walking, jogging or running. Therefore in this section, a walking and jogging programme will be used to illustrate the basic principles of aerobic exercise. You can apply these principles to other aerobic forms of exercise such as swimming, bicycling, cross-country skiing, rowing, or skipping.

## A walking/jogging programme

As you jog, your large skeletal muscles rhythmically tense and relax, stimulating the blood flow through your vascular system, heart, and lungs. In order to benefit from aerobic exercise, your heart must beat at 70% of its maximum rate for at least **20 minutes**. This places a moderate stress on your heart which will gradually improve its efficiency. The maximum heart rate is the fastest that your heart can beat when you exercise. The following table shows the estimated heart rates for different age groups:

<b>ESTIMATED HEART RATES PER MINUTE FOR AVERAGE MAN OR WOMEN BY AGE GROUP</b>					
<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Maximum Heart Rate</b>	<b>80% Maximum Heart Rate</b>	<b>70% Maximum Heart Rate</b>	<b>60% Maximum Heart Rate</b>	<b>50% Maximum Heart Rate</b>
18–29	203–191	162–153	142–134	122–115	101–95
30–39	190–181	152–145	133–127	113–108	95–90
40–49	180–171	144–137	126–120	107–102	90–85
50–59	170–161	136–129	119–113	101–96	85–80
60–69	160–151	128–121	112–106	95–90	80–75
70–79	150–141	120–113	105–99	89–84	75–70

To determine your heart rate for one minute, simply take your pulse for ten seconds and then multiply this number by six.

## Taking Your Pulse

Practise taking your pulse while sitting quietly. Wear a watch with a sweep-second hand on your left arm. Turn the palm of your right hand toward you. Put the tips of your left hand on your right wrist. Locate on your right wrist the bone down from the thumb. Move about 1/8 inch from that bone, and press firmly. You will feel your pulse. Your resting pulse may range from 40 to 100 beats per minute, and still be normal. Most healthy men have a resting pulse between 70 and 84 beats per minute. Most healthy women's resting pulses range between 75 and 85 beats per minute.

If you are out of shape, brisk walking may push your pulse over the 70% of the maximum heart rate for your age group. But, as your cardio-respiratory system becomes conditioned, you will have to exert more effort (walk or jog faster) to attain that 70%.

## The 70% Tests

Here are three simple tests that you can do to determine how fast you should walk or jog in order to achieve the 70%.

- 1 Walk five minutes at a comfortable pace. Take your pulse immediately, because the rate falls off rapidly.

If it is about 50% of the maximum heart rate for your age group (see the table on page 44), go on to the next test.

If it is already over the 70% level, continue to walk at this pace every other day until your heart rate falls below the 70% level. Then go on to **Test 2**. And, if you have not already had a recent physical examination, have one soon.

- 2 Walk five minutes at a vigorous pace. Again, take your pulse immediately.

If it is about 60% of maximum heart rate for your age group, go on to the next test.

If your pulse is over the 70% maximum, continue at this pace. Take five-minute walks every other day until your pulse falls below the 70% level. Then go on to **Test 3**.

- 3 Alternate one minute of slow jogging with one minute of brisk walking for five minutes, and then take your pulse.

If it is over the 70% of maximum heart rate for your age group, continue to alternate one minute of jogging with one minute of brisk walking every other day until it falls below that level. Then you are ready to proceed on your own.

If your pulse rate on this test was **below** 70% of maximum, you can begin a combination of brisk walking and slow jogging for a minimum of twenty minutes every other day. You will gradually spend more time jogging or even running in order to stay at the 70% of maximum rate.

A good rule of thumb is to continue to jog until you feel winded, and then slow to a brisk walk for a minute. You should be able to carry on a conversation while you are jogging. If you can't, you're going too fast!

You will have to check your pulse frequently until you find a pace that will keep your pulse at about 70% of maximum for at least twenty minutes — after that, you can let your mind wander.

The distance you run and the number of minutes it takes you to run a mile are irrelevant. However, you may enjoy measuring your progress occasionally by timing yourself.

## Cool Down

Cooling down properly is an essential part of any aerobic exercise in order to avoid painful cramps. Always end your exercise sessions with **five minutes** of slow walking. Take exaggerated, long steps, stretching your legs. Let your arms dangle loosely and shake your hands. Rotate your head around on your neck a few times in one direction and then in the other.

## FINDING OUT MORE

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### **You can find out more about the activities in your area from:**

Your local sports centre or swimming pool.

Your local library.

The Leisure or Recreation Department of your Local Authority who will know what facilities are available in your area. Their number is in the telephone book.

Your Local Education Authority Adult Education Department who run classes in a wide range of physical activities. Their number is in the telephone book.

Your *Look After Yourself* Regional Office. To find out their address and telephone number, contact: Look After Yourself Project Centre, Christ Church College, Canterbury, Kent CT1 1 QU Tel: (01227) 455564.

Your local social club or day centre.

Your local newspaper.

Your local Health Education Unit. Their number is listed under your district health authority in the telephone book.

### **Sports Council Regional Offices**

Try these first if you want more general information about a specific sport. Ring the Sports Council Regional Office that serves your county. They will be able to put you in touch with the right organisation.

# More on Food and Stress

## STRESS AND NUTRITION

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People who eat properly feel good about themselves. Such positive feelings are an important part of other coping strategies – if your self esteem is high, other parts of your life seem less stressful because you will view the world more positively. Food alone will not make a person healthy – but good eating habits, combined with regular exercise and stress management, can improve your health.

Research has shown that the body uses nutritional reserves when a person is under stress. The reserves most clearly depleted are:-

- Protein
- B vitamins
- Vitamin C
- Vitamin A

It is important to realise that supplements are seldom necessary, as these reserves can be replenished by consuming balanced meals. Eating a variety of foods ensures an adequate diet that will replace lost nutrients while you are under stress. To make sure that your diet is varied and balanced, select foods each day from each of the several major food groups:

- Fruits and vegetables – vitamins A and C
- Cereals, breads, grains – B vitamins and iron
- Poultry, fish, lean meats – protein, fat, iron, thiamine, B12
- Dried peas, beans, (pulses)
- Cheese, yoghurt, skimmed or low-fat milk – calcium.

Limit or avoid caffeine if you are under stress. Caffeine has been shown to affect the central nervous system, often making people feel nervous and putting them on edge. Coffee has been called ‘stress-packed beverage’ by some nutritionists, with up to 155mg of caffeine in each cup. Tea, cola and some other soft drinks also have up to 65mg caffeine per can. Try drinking decaffeinated coffee, decaffeinated tea or herbal teas.

Find foods that you enjoy eating, so that you will be more likely to keep to your 'diet' for a lifetime. Consider variety, texture, taste, smell and visual attractiveness.

## General Principles of a Healthy Diet

People under stress tend to over or under-eat, or slip into the habit of rushed, inadequate meals. Under stress, the body uses up energy more quickly than usual, and a healthy diet becomes doubly important. In addition, the extra strain placed upon the cardiovascular system means that your heart needs all the help it can get. Some general principles to follow are:-

- Cut down on the intake of fat. Adults should eat no more than 80gms per day. (Lots of fat in fried foods, pastries, ice-cream, cheese and many processed foods.)
- Take as much of this fat as possible in polyunsaturated rather than saturated form. Vegetable oils and some fish oils are mostly unsaturated, while red meat, hard cheese, cream, eggs, butter are mostly saturated. Frying converts polyunsaturates into saturates.
- Eat as much fresh fruit and vegetables as possible, raw if you can. When you cook vegetables, steam rather than boil.
- Cut down on sugar and salt. Use only sparingly in cooking and never add them to food at the table. Check labels and avoid products with added sugar and salt whenever you can.
- Cook your own food rather than eat out or buy convenience foods.
- Stress depletes vitamin B. Take a good supplement containing all the vitamins in the B range.

## FOOD AND BRAIN CHEMISTRY

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When individuals are stressed and under pressure, they may choose to seek help from the medical profession. One of the options doctors may choose is to prescribe drugs which will have an effect on the way the individual feels, by altering their brain chemistry. The brain chemicals to be considered in this context are:-

- **Serotonin** – enhances calmness, sleepiness, erases depression
- **Noradrenalin** – makes you feel energetic and focused
- **Endorphins** – have been called the 'natural high'; they create euphoria.

Brain chemicals, or neurotransmitters, are manufactured from foods in the diet. By eating certain foods, it is possible to bring about the same mood-altering effects as would be achieved by prescribed medication.

Keeping brain chemistry in mind when planning a snack or a meal can make a difference to the way we feel. For example, put protein at a time when you need an energy boost. A low fat, protein lunch would ward off the heavy eyelids and mental slump of 'post lunch dip'.

## Serotonin and Carbohydrates

It is possible to elevate **serotonin** levels in the brain by eating **carbohydrates**. The building material for serotonin, called tryptophan, is measurably elevated in the blood after eating carbohydrate foods. When a post-meal surge of tryptophan reaches the brain, it activates brain cells to produce greater quantities of serotonin for a few hours post-meal. The key to this process is the hormone insulin, which is solicited after eating starchy foods.

Carbohydrate rich foods include:-

- Fruit
- Vegetables
- Breads
- Cereals
- Pasta
- Rice
- Potato
- Beans
- Peas
- Noodles

## Noradrenalin and Protein

Unlike the calm, almost groggy feeling often experienced after eating carbohydrates, protein may energise the mind. **Noradrenalin** levels can be raised by eating **protein** foods. Following a protein meal or snack, the brain is flooded with an amino acid, tyrosine. From this, the brain chemical noradrenalin is constructed, and it triggers brain cells that enhance mental concentration and alertness.

The best food for 'wide eyes' include:-

- Very lean meat
- Skinless turkey or chicken
- Fish
- Non-fat/low fat cottage cheese
- Non-fat/low fat hard cheeses
- Non-fat/low fat milk or yoghurt
- Legumes (peas/beans)
- Tofu
- Soya bean products

## Endorphins and Favourite Foods

Eating favourite foods increases endorphin levels. The most desirable foods, as evaluated by your taste-buds, combine fat and sugar – such as ice-cream, frostings, and anything chocolate. The cocoa flavoured fat/sugar combination is the most popular throughout the world.

Chocolate has been called the ideal 'mood food' – after all, what do we eat when we are feeling:-

Depressed, stressed, anxious, angry, fatigued .....?

**CHOCOLATE!!**

# Eat your way to health

Anyone who is serious about improving their health soon realises that the food they put into their body significantly affects how they feel. It's not just a matter of avoiding or cutting down on foods that over-stimulate or overload the body, but also preparing foods, combining them and eating them in a way that maximises the value in the food. Some foods can leave you feeling heavy, dull and lethargic. Others can make you feel light and energetic. If you are aware of this, it's a good sign. Your body's natural intelligence is operating — you are becoming more discriminating.

## The moving target

It's very easy to get confused about what is good nutrition. This is partly because publicity and information about food is constantly bombarding us and much of it is conflicting. Also, research updates knowledge from time to time. It's important to remember that all this information is coming from the outside, not the inside — you. The best guide to what is good for you is you — but you have to give your body a chance to tell you. One of the problems we have is that if food tastes good and fills us up, we tend to believe the primary requirements are satisfied; the tendency is to trust our taste buds. But taste buds are not always our best guide as they may be addicted to sweet, salty or fatty foods which, over the long term, can be harmful.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

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- 1 The first step is to become aware of what you are eating, especially if you have a weight problem; for example: keep a food diary for a week. (Remember, it is always sensible to consult your doctor about **serious** weight problems.)
- 2 Compare your results with the guidelines for healthy eating in **Effective Stress Management: A Personal Guide Part One**.
- 3 Identify the changes you want to make. Decide on your goals and plan how you will achieve them. Take things slowly.

## TARGET WEIGHT

To find your target weight from the weight chart shown below, find your height in the left-hand column, then read across. For women a weight range is given; for men one figure is given: the maximum weight a man of that height should be. Heights are shown minus footwear, but the ideal average weights include an allowance of 2 to 3lbs (about 1kg) for light indoor clothing. Remember, do not weigh yourself more than once a week - your weight fluctuates on a day-to-day basis.

<b>TARGET WEIGHT CHART</b>					
<b>HEIGHT</b>		<b>WOMEN</b> (Weight Range)		<b>MEN</b> (Max. Weight)	
Feet: Inches	Metres	St : lb	Kg	St : lb	Kg
4: 10	1.47	7:2 - 7:12	45.5 - 50.0	-	-
4: 11	1.50	7:6 - 8:2	47.2 - 51.8	-	-
5: 0	1.52	7:9 - 8:6	48.6 - 53.6	-	-
5: 1	1.55	7:13 - 8:10	50.5 - 55.5	-	-
5: 2	1.57	8:3 - 9:0	52.3 - 57.3	9:10	61.8
5: 3	1.60	8:6 - 9:4	53.6 - 59.1	10:1	64.1
5: 4	1.63	8:10 - 9:8	55.5 - 60.9	10:5	65.9
5: 5	1.65	9:0 - 9:12	57.3 - 62.7	10:10	68.2
5: 6	1.68	9:4 - 10:2	59.1 - 64.5	11:1	70.5
5: 7	1.70	9:8 - 10:6	60.9 - 66.4	11:5	72.3
5: 8	1.73	9:12 - 10:11	62.7 - 68.2	11:10	74.5
5: 9	1.75	10:2 - 11:1	64.5 - 70.0	12:1	76.8
5: 10	1.78	10:6 - 11:6	66.4 - 72.7	12:6	79.1
5: 11	1.80	10:10 - 11:11	68.2 - 75.0	12:11	81.4
6: 0	1.83	11:0 - 12:1	70.0 - 76.8	13:2	83.6
6: 1	1.85	-	-	13:7	85.9
6: 2	1.88	-	-	13:12	88.2
6: 3	1.90	-	-	14:4	90.9
6: 4	1.93	-	-	14:9	93.2

### Are you about the right weight?

You're eating the right quantity of food but you need to be sure that you're getting a healthy balance in your diet.

### Are you overweight?

You should try to lose weight.

### Are you very overweight?

You need to lose weight. You would do well to see your doctor, who might refer you to a dietician.

## How to give up foods

This advice may seem counter-intuitive, but don't give up food you like *suddenly*. If you need many cups of coffee or sweet foods during a day, this is because your body has learned to need them. This is a form of addiction. Stopping suddenly will only make you crave them more. The best way to give up the foods you are addicted to is to *lose your taste for them*.

- Cut down slowly.
- Substitute other foods.
- Apply the principles of a balanced diet.
- If you use food as a reward or compensation, have a good look at your life and create **new** satisfactions for yourself.

## Food fingerprints

The guidelines on the following pages will help you to make choices. There is no single eating pattern that is right for everyone. People differ according to age, sex, body size, physical activity, heredity and conditions such as allergy or pregnancy. Everyone's nutritional needs are unique — just like their fingerprint.

Good eating habits can directly control or prevent high blood pressure, indigestion, ulcers, constipation, obesity, diabetes and tooth decay.

The following conditions can also be helped: depression, irritability, anxiety, headaches, fatigue and insomnia. It is not the intention of this section to deprive you of the fun of eating, or to restrict you, but to demonstrate that nutritious eating can be even more fun than your present diet. A binge every now and then will not harm you. It's what you eat *every day* that matters.

## PROTEIN

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The word **protein** is of Greek derivation, meaning 'primary' or 'holding first place'. This is an indication of the importance of protein in the diet. Protein helps to build new cells and repair damaged tissues. You also need it for vitality and vigour as well as healthy skin, hair and nails.

There are different types and qualities of protein. They are made up of amino acids but these have to be in the correct proportion or pattern to be fully utilised by the body. Some foods have an amino acid pattern close to the ideal and their protein is therefore almost fully used by the body.

This has led to the belief that eating meat two or even three times a day will provide all the protein necessary. But there are drawbacks with eating large amounts of meat. The protein in meat is very filling. The effect has been likened to setting a large bonfire in the body with high-energy foods which has to be stoked up whenever it begins to die. This is not to say that people shouldn't eat meat; only that it is preferable to have steady amounts of high-quality protein from a **variety** of foods.

Most plant proteins are incomplete, but, as long as foods are combined correctly, a very wide range of delicious and high quality proteins can be achieved, such as with rice and lentils, beans on toast, cereal with milk, pasta with bread and cheese, tortillas with refried beans and so on.

## GOOD SOURCES OF PROTEIN

*Recommended daily intake:  
65-67g (men); 58-63g (women)*

	grammes per 100g
Yeast extract	39.7
* Soya flour	36.8
* Parmesan	35.1
Wheatgerm	26.5
* Cheddar and similar cheeses	26.0
Peanuts	24.3
* Brie and similar cheeses	22.8
Black walnuts	20.5
Pistachio nuts	19.3
Almonds	16.9
Bran	14.1
* Cottage cheese	13.6
Wholewheat flour	13.2
Oatmeal	12.4
* Eggs	12.3
Brazil nuts	12.0
Rye flour	8.2
Chick peas (cooked)	8.0
Lentils (cooked)	7.6

\* Foods asterisked are complete proteins.

## Sources of natural protein

### NUTS

Almost all nuts are a fine source of protein. They are best eaten unroasted and unsalted. Almonds, pecans, cashews, Brazils, walnuts, coconuts and pistachios are extremely high in protein and combine well with all fruits. One or two tablespoonfuls with fruit or vegetables is adequate protein for a meal.

### SEEDS

Caraway, mustard, poppy, sunflower, pumpkin, and sesame seeds are highly nourishing. They can be sprinkled on many fruit and vegetable dishes. A handful will provide high-quality protein in a meal.

### LEGUMES

This includes peas, dried beans such as black-eye, lima, kidney, soy beans and lentils (several types). The soy bean and its by-products are exceptionally nourishing and high in protein; for example: soya milk.

### CHEESES

These are high in protein but many are also high in fat and seasoned with salt, so they should be eaten in small amounts. Low-calorie cottage cheese and other natural skimmed- or whole-milk cheeses are best.

## GRAINS

Whole grains are a good source of protein, as well as being rich in vitamins (especially the B-complex) and minerals. It is best to eat whole-grain cereals, brown rice and whole-grain breads, i.e. grains and flours that have not been denatured, refined or bleached. Rolls and pastries made with refined flour and sugar are undesirable. Wholewheat spaghettis and macaronis are more nourishing than those made with refined flour.

## FIBRE

Fibre is the name for a special group of carbohydrates. High-fibre foods include vegetables, beans, brown rice, wholemeal pasta and wholemeal bread. Fibre foods are important to health. They help prevent constipation and bowel problems (bowel cancer is one of the most common cancers in Britain). Fibre foods also help fill you up without too many calories.

## FAT

Where does fat in the British diet come from?

- Dairy products 33%
- Meat and meat products 25%
- Margarines, cooking fats and oils 25%
- Crisps, chocolates, biscuits and cakes 17%

There are basically two types of fat, **saturated** and **unsaturated** fats which include a special group called polyunsaturates. The difference is in their chemical make-up.

### Problems with eating too much fat

- 1 Fat is loaded with calories which lead to being overweight.
- 2 Too much saturated fat is linked to a higher risk of heart disease.
- 3 The more saturated fat you eat, the more cholesterol you get in your blood. This can build up on the inside of the arteries. The arteries can become completely blocked, causing a heart attack. Unsaturated fats may not raise cholesterol in the same way as saturates.

Our bodies do need a small amount of polyunsaturated fats to help repair body cells.

Try to cut down the amount of fats you eat and choose fats high in polyunsaturates.

### How to eat less fat

#### COOKING TIPS

- Avoid frying — grilled food tastes as good, and much of the hidden fat will drain off.
- Use as little oil as possible for cooking. Use one low in saturated fat and high in polyunsaturates, such as corn oil, sunflower oil or soya oil.
- Casserole or stew meat. The fat that comes to the surface can be skimmed off.
- Remove skin from chicken before casseroles.
- After browning mince, drain off fat.
- Grill, steam or bake fish rather than frying.

**TIPS**

Remember, you don't have to follow *all* the tips on the following pages. Tick the things you already do, and put a \* by the tips you think you could try.

Choose a low-fat spread or a margarine that's high in polyunsaturates rather than butter, hard margarine or ordinary soft margarine, or use less. Remember, polyunsaturated fats don't contain less fat — it is the type of fat which differs.

- I already do this  
 I'd like to try this

Try using low-fat yoghurt instead of cream, evaporated milk or condensed milk. If you do use cream, use single rather than double. And remember that some artificial creams have just as much fat as real cream.

- I already do this  
 I'd like to try this

If you like cheese, go for the ones with the least fat.

- I already do this  
 I'd like to try this

Use fish, chicken, and turkey more often. When you buy meat, buy the leanest of cuts you can find and afford. Cut off any fat.

- I already do this  
 I'd like to try this

Cut down on crisps, chocolate, cakes and biscuits.

- I already do this  
 I'd like to try this

Use skimmed or semi-skimmed milk rather than ordinary milk. Semi-skimmed milk tastes like silver top with the cream poured off. Skimmed milk has a 'thinner' taste and may take longer to get used to. Both have just as much calcium and protein as ordinary milk but much less fat.

- I already do this  
 I'd like to try this

**SUGAR**

- Each time you eat sugar, your blood-sugar level drops and you crave more.
- 30–40% of sugar is converted straight into fat.
- The body makes its own sugar from the foods we eat. We don't actually need to eat any added sugar at all.
- Sugar gives you empty calories, i.e. with no vitamins, no minerals, no fibre, no protein.

## Where does sugar come from?

In Britain, on average we buy almost a pound of sugar per person every week. In reality, we eat twice as much as this if you count all the sugar added to processed foods such as soft drinks, sweets or cakes. Even savoury foods such as soup sometimes have sugar. Check the label. Sucrose, glucose, dextrose and fructose are all forms of sugar.

## Why sugar can be a problem

Sugar contributes to obesity which in turn affects health. Our taste buds have been trained to crave sugary foods. Adding sugar to food makes it easier to eat too much.

Sugar also contributes to tooth decay, especially when you have sugary snacks throughout the day. Sugar starts off a chain reaction in the mouth. It feeds the bacteria on your teeth which produce acid. These eat away at the teeth. Although the teeth can cope with some acid, too much leads to tooth decay.

### TIPS

Here are some ways of cutting down on sugar. Don't worry about having the odd binge on sweet food. What matters is what you eat **every day**. Tick the things you already do. Then put a \* by the tips you could try.

Try drinking your tea or coffee without sugar. You might find it easier to cut down a little a time.

- I already do this  
 I'd like to try this

When buying soft drinks, choose low-calorie ones or unsweetened fruit juices, preferably diluted with water.

- I already do this  
 I'd like to try this

Buy tinned fruit in natural juice rather than in syrup.

- I already do this  
 I'd like to try this

Try halving the sugar you use in your recipes. It works for most things except jam and meringues.

- I already do this  
 I'd like to try this

Look at the ingredients on breakfast cereals and avoid cereals with added sugar. Some sugar-coated cereals are 50% sugar.

- I already do this  
 I'd like to try this

Use fresh fruit, crispy vegetables, natural yoghurt, popping corn with a little grated cheese, roasted chick peas or unsalted nuts as snacks.

- I already do this  
 I'd like to try this

Go easy on cakes and biscuits. They can add a lot of sugar to your diet. A glass of ordinary soft drink contains about five teaspoons of sugar!

- I already do this  
 I'd like to try this

# SALT

Salt is a naturally occurring compound made up of sodium and chloride. Our present consumption of salt in the UK is thought to be approximately 9 to 12 grams of salt a day. Most people don't need more than *one* gram a day. Most of the salt we eat is added by food manufacturers during processing. About a quarter is added in cooking and a quarter is present naturally in food.

## Foods with high levels of salt added

- Pizzas;
- Packet soups and sauces;
- Canned soups, spaghetti, baked beans;
- Meat products such as pies and sausages;
- Salted crisps and nuts, also salted savoury biscuits and snacks;
- Canned meat such as corned beef;
- Canned sausages such as frankfurters;
- Canned fish such as sardines;
- Canned vegetables with added salt;
- Sauces such as tomato, brown, spicy, soy;
- Chinese dishes rich in soy sauce;
- Smoked fish, such as kippers;
- Stock cubes;
- Some bran cereals;
- Salad dressing;
- Butter and margarine.

## Hazards of excess salt

- For some people, eating too much salt can lead to high blood pressure which in turn causes heart disease. As there is no way of telling in advance who will be affected, it is sensible to cut down the amount of salt you eat.
- Salt can increase water retention. If you notice that you collect water in your tissues, or you have tell-tale puckering of cellulite on your thighs or bottom, then it is very likely you are storing sodium. Sodium collects water.

## Try the following suggestions to reduce or replace salt:

- With beef:** try horseradish, ginger, tomato, bay leaf, beer, black pepper, mustard.
- With chicken:** try lemon juice, garlic, paprika, parsley, orange juice, almonds, coconut.
- With fish:** try freshly ground pepper, lemon juice, paprika, parsley, orange juice, almonds, coconut.

- With pork:** try ginger, garlic, thyme, sage, apple, pineapple, cider.
- With lamb:** try mint, rosemary, basil, redcurrant, apricot, kidney beans, chilli, chilli powder, onion, tomato, vinaigrette.
- With potatoes:** try mint, parsley, onion.
- With rice:** try turmeric, saffron, onion, green pepper, cucumber, mint, vinegar, yoghurt.
- With green beans:** try lemon juice, chilli.
- With peas:** try mint, parsley.
- With cabbage:** try thyme, nutmeg, apple, apple juice.
- With carrots:** try parsley, cloves, tarragon, lemon juice.
- With tomatoes:** try basil, oregano, marjoram, vinaigrette.

And remember not to overcook vegetables — both for health and for flavour.

### TIPS

Tick the things you already do and put a\* by the tips you could try.

Use less salt in cooking.

I already do this

I'd like to try this

Flavour your food with lemon juice, herbs, spices, or mustard instead of salt.

I already do this

I'd like to try this

Try to get out of the habit of adding salt to food at the table.

I already do this

I'd like to try this

If you buy tinned vegetables, buy the ones marked 'no added salt'. Cut down on salted meats and fish such as bacon, gammon, salt-beef and salt-mackerel.

I already do this

I'd like to try this

Use fewer tinned and packet soups. Try making your own home-made soups instead.

I already do this

I'd like to try this

Salt substitutes are better than ordinary salt, but most still contain some salt and they don't help you lose your taste for it.

## VITAMINS AND MINERALS

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- These are essential for growth, tissue repair and regulating the metabolism. Most vitamins cannot be made in the body so it is important to ensure we get them from our food.
- The best source of vitamins is a well-balanced diet.
- The vitamin and mineral content of food is highest in whole or raw foods, so eat fresh fruit and vegetables if possible. Cook vegetables lightly and save the liquid for soups, stews and casseroles.
- Try a wok. It's a good way of tenderising without overcooking.

### Vitamins and their uses

- Vitamin A** Essential for reducing the risk of infection, keeping skin healthy and protecting against eye-strain.
- Vitamin B** The B-complex controls the metabolism of fats, proteins and carbohydrates. No diet is complete unless it contains the B vitamins in adequate amounts.
- Vitamin C** Increases resistance to infection, and aids recovery after illness. Assists utilisation of other vitamins and minerals.
- Vitamin D** Helps the body to absorb calcium and phosphorus. Assists formation of bones and strong teeth.
- Vitamin E** Deficiency causes poor circulation (pins and needles, cold extremities, chilblains, cramp), hardened arteries, thrombosis, phlebitis, varicose veins.

### Minerals and their uses

- Calcium and phosphorus:** For adults during pregnancy and old age, for vegans, for all cases of calcium deficiency, and for protecting teeth and bones. In children, for building strong bones, nails and sound teeth. These minerals promote growth.
- Iron:** Common symptoms of iron deficiency are fatigue, rough skin and brittle hair, susceptibility to infections, palpitations, loss of appetite, breathlessness.
- Iodine:** Promotes physical and mental energy and alertness. Aids assimilation of Vitamin E.

## Symptoms of Deficiency

Symptom	Deficiency
Tiredness, anaemia.	Lack of iron, vitamin B12.
Colds, flu, infection.	Lack of vitamin C.
Cramps, irritability, PMT	Lack of B-complex vitamins, calcium, magnesium
Dry skin, eczema, skin sores, bleeding gums.	Lack of vitamin A, vitamin C, linoleic acid, polyunsaturated fat, zinc
Brittle weak bones, aches in joints	Lack of vitamin D, calcium
Fatigue, weight gain (i.e. thyroid imbalance)	Lack of iodine.
Fluid retention (oedema).	Lack of potassium, excess salt.
Migraine, dizziness, irritability, depression.	Low blood sugar, insufficient protein and 'complex carbohydrates', excess sugar and sweet foods.
Constipation, feverishness, irritable bowel syndrome.	Lack of fibre, excess of refined, processed foods.

### GOOD SOURCES OF VITAMIN A

*Recommended daily intake: 750mg*

	mg per 100g
Dandelion greens	2,333
Sorrel	2,150
Carrots	2,000
Parsley	1,166
Spinach (cooked)	1,000
Butter	985
Sweet potatoes (cooked)	667
Dried apricots	600
Watercress	500
Broccoli (cooked)	417
Cheddar and similar cheeses	410
Endive	334
Melon (cantaloupe)	334
Mango	200
Eggs	140
Milk	40

### GOOD SOURCES OF VITAMIN B1

*Recommended daily intake: 0.9–1.2 mg*

	mg per 100g
Yeast extract	3.10
Wheatgerm	1.45
Brazil nuts	1.00
Peanuts	0.90
Bran	0.89
Soya flour	0.75
Millet	0.73
Oatmeal	0.50
Wholewheat flour	0.46
Rye flour	0.40
Hazelnuts	0.30
English walnuts	0.30
Wholewheat bread	0.26
Peas (cooked)	0.25

**GOOD SOURCES OF VITAMIN B2***Recommended daily intake: 15–18 mg*

	mg per 100g
Yeast extract	58.0
Bran	29.6
Peanuts	16.0
Yeast	11.0
Wheatgerm	5.8
Wholewheat flour	5.6
Dried peaches	5.3
Mushrooms	4.0
Wholewheat bread	3.9
Dried apricots	3.0
Broad beans (cooked)	3.0
Millet	2.3
Soya flour	2.0
Dates	2.0

**GOOD SOURCES OF VITAMIN B12***Recommended daily intake: 1.2mg*

	mg per 100g
Egg yolk	4.9
Eggs	1.7
Cheddar and similar cheeses	1.5
Parmesan	1.5
Brie and similar cheeses	1.2
Yeast extract	0.5
Cottage cheese	0.5
Milk	0.3
Single cream	0.2
Double cream	0.1
Yoghurt	Trace
Butter	Trace
Sea vegetables	Trace

**GOOD SOURCES OF VITAMIN B3***Recommended daily intake: 1.3–1.7 mg*

	mg per 100g
Almonds	0.92
Wheatgerm	0.61
Brie and similar cheeses	0.60
Cheddar and similar cheeses	0.50
Parmesan	0.50
Eggs	0.47
Mushrooms	0.40
Millet	0.38
Bran	0.36
Soya flour	0.31
Parsley	0.30
Yoghurt	0.26
Dandelion greens	0.26
Rye flour	0.22
Milk	0.20
Broccoli (cooked)	0.20

**GOOD SOURCES OF VITAMIN B6***Recommended daily intake: 2.0 mg*

	mg per 100g
Bran	1.38
Yeast extract	1.30
Wheatgerm	0.93
English walnuts	0.73
Soya flour	0.57
Hazelnuts	0.55
Bananas	0.51
Wholewheat flour	0.50
Peanuts	0.50
Avocado pear	0.42
Rye flour	0.35
Currants, etc	0.30
Brussel sprouts (raw)	0.28
Prunes	0.24
Cauliflower (raw)	0.20
Brie and similar cheeses	0.20

**GOOD SOURCES OF FOLIC ACID***Recommended daily intake: 200mg*

	mg per 100g
Yeast	1,250
Yeast extract	1,010
Wheatgerm	330
Endive	330
Bran	260
Spinach (cooked)	140
Sweet potatoes (cooked)	140
Broccoli (cooked)	110
Peanuts	110
Brussels sprouts (raw)	110
Almonds	96
Cabbage (raw)	90
Rye flour	78
Peas (cooked)	78
Hazel nuts	72
Avocado pear	66

**GOOD SOURCES OF CALCIUM***Recommended daily intake: 500 mg*

	mg per 100g
Parmesan	1,220
Cheddar and similar cheeses	800
Spinach (cooked)	600
Brie and similar cheeses	380
Parsley	330
Dried figs	280
Almonds	250
Watercress	220
Soya flour	210
Brazil nuts	180
Yoghurt	180
Egg yolk	130
Skimmed milk	130
Goat's milk	130
Cow's milk	120
Lemons	110

**GOOD SOURCES OF POTASSIUM***Recommended daily intake: 3,000mg*

	mg per 100g
Blackcurrant molasses	2,927
Yeast extract	2,600
Dried apricots	1,580
Soya flour	1,440
Bran	1,140
Dried peaches	1,100
Parsley	1,000
Dried figs	1,000
Wheatgerm	1,000
Sultanas	800
Prunes	800
Almonds	800
Raisins	800
Brazil nuts	700

**GOOD SOURCES OF ZINC***Recommended daily intake: 15 mg*

	mg per 100g
Bran	16.2
Brazil nuts	4.2
Parmesan	4.0
Cheddar and similar cheeses	4.0
Almonds	3.1
Peanuts	3.0
English walnuts	3.0
Wholewheat flour	3.0
Oatmeal	3.0
Brie and similar cheeses	3.0
Rye flour	2.8
Hazelnuts	2.4
Wholewheat bread	2.0

**GOOD SOURCES OF IRON***Recommended daily intake: 10–12mg*

	mg per 100g
Blackstrap molasses	16.1
Bran	12.9
Wheatgerm	10.0
Parsley	8.0
Soya flour	6.9
Dried peaches	6.8
Millet	6.8
Egg yolk	6.1
Yeast	5.0
Dried figs	4.2
Oatmeal	4.1
Dried apricots	4.1
Spinach (cooked)	4.0
Wholewheat flour	4.0
Yeast extract	3.7

**GOOD SOURCES OF MAGNESIUM***Recommended daily intake: 10–12mg*

	mg per 100g
Bran	520
Brazil nuts	410
Wheatgerm	300
Almonds	260
Soya flour	240
Black walnuts	190
Peanuts	180
Millet	162
Wholewheat flour	140
English walnuts	130
Oatmeal	110
Wholewheat bread	93
Chickpeas (cooked)	67
Haricot beans (cooked)	65
Dried apricots	65
Spinach (cooked)	59

**GOOD SOURCES OF VITAMIN C***Recommended daily intake: 30 mg*

	mg per 100g
Red pepper	204
Blackcurrants	200
Parsley	150
Sorrel	119
Green pepper	100
Lemons	80
Watercress	60
Cabbage (raw)	60
Strawberries	60
Cauliflower (raw)	60
Oranges	50
Grapefruit	40
Lychees	40
Broccoli (cooked)	34
Mango	30
Radishes	25
Raspberries	25
Spinach (cooked)	25

# ALCOHOL

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In large quantities, alcohol can be damaging to the body — especially the liver. Although the effect of a few drinks is apparently to stimulate and exhilarate, alcohol is a *depressant* drug with effects similar to barbiturates. The lively feeling results from the fact that alcohol depresses the higher centres of the brain first, thus removing inhibition.

## How much do you drink?

These drinks all contain roughly the same amount of alcohol. Each corresponds to one standard unit:

- glass of wine;
- half pint of ordinary beer;
- single measure of spirits;
- small glass of sherry.

If you are drinking within recommended limits, your drinking should not be damaging your health. If you do not know how much you are drinking, keep a note during an average week and compare the results against the following guidelines.

**Men:** 0–28 units

**Women:** 0–21 units.

If this is an average week and you are not taking other drugs, you run no appreciable risk unless you take the whole amount in one day or you are pregnant.

**Men:** 28–50 units

**Women:** 21–35 units.

This may come as a surprise, but the amount you are drinking is enough to expose you to hazard. The risk of liver damage and stroke is increased at these levels and sexual potency and fertility can be impaired.

**Men:** more than 50 units

**Women:** more than 35 units.

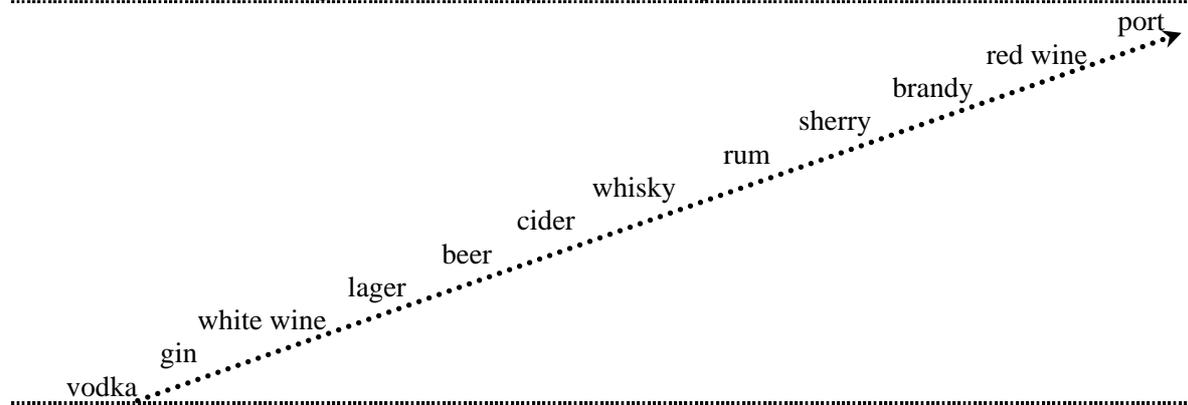
If you continue to drink this amount over a long period, you are very likely to become ill. Major risks are: cancer of the oesophagus, cirrhosis of the liver, strokes and high blood pressure.

Even for moderate drinkers, there are two problems with alcoholic drinks:

- they have a lot of calories, so drinking can easily lead you to becoming overweight;
- they have very little or none of the nutrients and vitamins we need. People who replace some of their meals with alcoholic drinks will be missing out on important nutrients. (See section on vitamins and minerals.)

The darker and sweeter the drink, the more likely it is to cause a hangover.

Twelve drinks in ascending order of morning-after suffering:



To keep within a safe limit men should not drink more than two or three pints (or their equivalent) two or three times a week. Women should not drink more than two or three units two or three times a week.

If you're thinking of changing your drink for the sake of your waistline, go for a drink that has fewer calories. But make sure you don't end up drinking more alcohol altogether, because that won't do your liver any good.

If you cut back on beer and find you start getting constipated, don't be discouraged. You can help prevent constipation by eating more fibre-rich foods.

If you are pregnant or planning to have a baby, the less alcohol you drink, the better your chances of a successful pregnancy and a healthy baby.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF BREAKFAST

### Breakfast

91% of the UK population agree that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Yet over one fifth of us still skip this meal daily, with the usual excuses being lack of time or an aversion to eating food early in the morning. By breaking this habit, you could make such a difference. You may also decide that breakfast is a good part of a healthy diet. That's really important because there is considerable evidence that diet can influence our risk of cancer, with estimates suggesting that one third of cancers could be prevented by changes in the diet.

## 10 Good Reasons To Enjoy A Healthy Breakfast

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- 1 **Energy:** Energy levels are maintained and sustained by eating carbohydrate foods, which release their energy (glucose) slowly. Eat porridge or wholemeal toast.
- 2 **Metabolism:** Missing breakfast tends to slow down metabolism and makes it harder for the body to burn fat.
- 3 **Weight:** Eating a low fat, high carbohydrate breakfast is the best way to begin the day – it will kick start your metabolism which in turn will keep body fat levels under control.
- 4 **Memory:** The most consistent findings to date suggest that eating breakfast influences the process involved in the formation and retrieval of memories and in managing complex or challenging information. Breakfast achieves this through its ability to raise blood glucose levels, which makes sure brain cells are in top form.
- 5 **Concentration and Alertness:** Missing breakfast is an occupational hazard; research has shown a much lower incidence of work related accidents for people who eat breakfast. To boost concentration and alleviate tiredness the brain needs feeding to keep it satisfied and alert.
- 6 **Hunger:** Slow release carbohydrates induce a feeling of satisfaction and fullness, which prevents bingeing on high fat and sugary foods.
- 7 **Mood:** The mood-food connection is often ignored: feeding your brain at the appropriate time such as first thing in the morning and with the appropriate nutrients i.e. a high carbohydrate low fat breakfast will cheer you up!
- 8 **Stress:** Breakfast is a stress-buster! To help you get through the anxieties and problems of the day, eat foods rich in serotonin-enhancing carbohydrates and also B complex vitamins such as granary bread and oats, but avoid too much caffeine (especially in the form of coffee), as this will only enhance nervousness and irritability.
- 9 **Hydration:** Load up on fluids by starting your day with water, fruit or vegetable juice and/or weak tea – it is important to keep your fluid intake high: drink at least 2 litres (8 glasses) of fluid per day.
- 10 **Immunity:** Begin the day with foods rich in vitamins A and C, B vitamins and zinc. Include some of the following in your breakfast: citrus fruits, berries, melon, eggs, oily fish, wholegrain cereals, wheat germ and oats.

## HOW TO SURVIVE THE NINE TO FIVE

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(Or: Eating your way through the office day)

### What's your poison?

It's 9 o'clock, time for the first hot drink of the day. Will it be tea or coffee? With sugar? How many will you have throughout the day? Remember that one cup of average brewed coffee contains between 100-150mg of caffeine and that 250mg is enough to produce symptoms of anxiety. Try decaffeinated coffee, decaffeinated tea or fruit teas (available in loose-leaf and tea-bag form). You could be opening your taste buds to a new world of taste.

### Elevenes

We all do it — the biscuits, sticky buns, cakes, crisps and chocolate bars. Giving up sweet foods is particularly difficult since sugar is addictive. Try some alternatives:

- fruits;
- low-sugar or sugar-free biscuits;
- dried fruits (still have sugar but this is naturally occurring and other nutrients are present; also very filling);
- seeds such as pumpkin or sunflower seeds.

You can cut down your craving for sugar but it takes time. Cut down gradually. Start today.

### Lunchtime

If you make *or* buy the same boring old sandwiches every day, or opt for a meal that includes fatty foods like chips and burgers, think again. Lunchtime should be the main meal of the day as digestion is best at that time, but for most of us this isn't possible. It can still be a nutritious meal, however.

- Try wholemeal bread or rolls.
- Buy or make imaginative fillings, such as cottage cheese and banana and nuts, or chicken and sweetcorn and cress.
- Supplement with a home-made salad.
- Experiment with fruits, nuts, vegetables, pulses and pasta.
- Try sprouting your own seeds and beans for sandwiches.

If you've had something tasty and interesting for lunch, the less you'll feel like snacks later. Having a celebration meal or business lunch is something to be enjoyed. However, heavy rich foods and alcohol will slow you down for the rest of the day. So go easy on these or choose lighter foods such as fish and salads, and non-alcoholic drinks to avoid spending the afternoon out to lunch.

Whatever you eat, try not to bolt it down whilst working. Take time. Relax. Enjoy.

## 4 o'clock droop

You need that pick-me-up, energy levels are low. Anticipate this — don't deny it or you'll end up in the first sweetshop you pass after leaving the office. Have something to hand. (See *Eleveneses*).

## Working late

Try not to miss meals too often. It upsets the balance of your body and eating very late is bad for digestion and may keep you awake.

## Summary

- Know the facts about food values.
- Take responsibility for healthy eating.
- Plan ahead.
- Don't settle for what's easiest.
- Taking eating more seriously **can be fun!**

# More on managing your time

## SELF MANAGEMENT: TIME AND TIDE

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**The purpose of this section** is to give you the chance to look at how you spend your time and also to learn and use of some practical self management techniques. The aim is to help you achieve the Feel Good Factor by analysing how you use your time; identifying good and bad practices in managing your time; assessing your priorities on urgency and importance; and planning your time more economically and efficiently.

### What is Time - Some Amazing Facts

- Alfred The Great introduced candles as clocks in 885 AD
- Up until the early 19th Century different locations in Britain had different local times e.g. if it was 9.00 am in London it was 8.46 in Torquay, 9.02 in Chelmsford and 8.48 in Blackpool. This changed in 1825 with the introduction of long distance rail travel!
- In 1884 GMT was adopted. 22 countries were in favour. San Domingo was against. France and Brazil abstained!!
- Today we can measure time far more accurately than ever before. But - there are still 60 seconds in each minute; 60 minutes in each hour; 24 hours in each day and 5 working days in a week. You have all the time there is. How well you spend your time is up to you!?

## **Quotes to consider about Time**

*"We have never got time to do it right, but we have always got time to do it twice"*

*"Next week there can't be any crisis, my schedule is already full"*

*"The future ain't what it used to be"*

*"Plan your work and work your plan"*

*"Work expands to fill the time available for its completion"*

*"Our costliest expenditure is time"*

## **Developing the Right Attitude Towards Time**

**It is important to recognise and accept that time pressures will always be with you but that you can spend your time more effectively to achieve set goals. You have more control than you think over your own life, both at work and at home. Sometimes it is necessary to change priorities and take more responsibility for our own life and well being. We are not helpless victims, we need to believe in ourselves and take on challenges.**

Spend 5 minutes thinking about your current time management and what you are doing well and what you are or have been having problems with over the past six months. In particular identify the benefits for you - your incentives for dealing with pressure and getting things done!

## BE A TIME EXPLORER

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1. Think of the word 'Time'. Write down the first ten words that come to mind when you think of this word.

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2. Examine these words. What kinds of attitudes do they reveal? Are they positive or negative; helpful or unhelpful; relaxing or stressful; proactive or reactive etc. ?

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Can you honestly say that you have never had any of these attitudes?

3. Think about people you know at work or in your life who are great time managers? What makes a good time manager - write down all the ideas you can come up with.

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### Time Management: Managing Yourself

Ask yourself 2 Questions – and write down your answers

i. What one thing could I do [that I am not doing now] that if I did on a regular basis would make a tremendous positive difference in my personal life ?

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ii. What one thing in my work life would bring similar results ?

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## THE DEVELOPMENT FROM TIME MANAGEMENT TO SELF MANAGEMENT

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Time management has evolved in a pattern similar to many other areas of human endeavour and has basically progressed through four main phases.

**The first phase:** emphasised notes and checklists and this gave recognition to the many demands placed on our time and energy.

**The second phase:** focused on calendars and appointment books to encourage us to look ahead, and to schedule events and activities in the future.

**The third phase:** added the important idea of prioritisation, of clarifying values and of comparing the relative worth of activities based on their relationship to those values. In addition it focuses on setting goals - specific, long, intermediate and short term targets toward which time and energy can be directed in harmony with values. It also includes the idea of daily planning, of making a specific plan to accomplish those goals and activities determined to be of greatest worth. The efficiency focus has turned many people off time management and planners and so there has been a tendency to throw the effectiveness baby out with the efficiency bath water.

**The fourth phase:** recognises that the challenge is not to manage time but to manage ourselves. Rather than focusing on things and time, fourth generation expectations focus on preserving and enhancing relationships and on accomplishing results. This means achieving the desired results whilst staying in good shape – preserving energy, skills and optimism.

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 desire to organise around these priorities or
- iii. the lack of discipline to execute around them, 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. For example, seek balance, have coherence between goals and desires, focus on the week, deal with people, be flexible.

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 that you can do the next day. This can have an enormous effect on your productivity. It is a system that works well and focuses your mind on tomorrow at a time when you have a moment to plan the next day.

The next few pages have been designed to help you complete a simple time log to record how you use or abuse all the time you have at your disposal. First complete your Time Log for a typical day in your life. Second, look at the results and identify the main conclusions. Third, plan how you can improve your self management to reduce the pressure in your life and make sure you achieve a better balance in the things that are most important to your health and well being.

## **SELF MANAGEMENT SKILLS: PREPARING A TIME LOG**

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### **Time Log Guidelines:**

Please complete the Time Log sheet set out on the next page for one [typical] day before you work through this section on enhancing your self management. This is the minimum preparation necessary for you to gain some useful insights into how you use or spend your time during a 'typical' day.

The Time Log sheet provided should help you to see more clearly the difference between what you think is happening and what is actually happening regarding how you spend your precious time.

Obviously the more accurately you complete your Time Log, the more useful it will be to you.

Time spent recording life or work related activities undertaken and any interruptions and distractions is time well spent but it would be unrealistic to pretend that this will not take up some time.

Completing your Time Log may slow you down or even seem like a bit of a chore. However, it is just for one (typical) day and you do not need to repeat this recording activity unless you want to!

## Time Log

Date .....

Time of Day	Activity Undertaken	Interruptions / Distractions Telephone	Person
8:30			
8:45			
9:00			
9:15			
9:30			
9:45			
10:00			
10:15			
10:30			
10:45			
11:00			
11:15			
11:30			
11:45			
12:00			
12:15			

## Time Log

Date .....

Time of Day	Activity Undertaken	Interruptions / Distractions	
		Telephone	Person
12:30			
12:45			
1:00			
1:15			
1:30			
1:45			
2:00			
2:15			
2:30			
2:45			
3:00			
3:15			
3:30			
3:45			
4:00			
4:15			

## Time Log

Date .....

Time of Day	Activity Undertaken	Interruptions / Distractions	
		Telephone	Person
4:30			
4:45			
5:00			
5:15			
5:30			
5:45			
6:00			
6:15			
6:30			
6:45			
7:00			
7:15			
7:30			

## ANALYSIS OF YOUR TIME LOG: EVALUATING THE RESULTS

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What conclusions you have drawn from analysing your Time Log e.g. surprises / confirms what already thought / time wasters / under your control or someone else's?

For example, ask yourself the following questions in the light of your time log results:

- Do I do everything I need to do?
- Was I often rushed?
- When was I most / Least productive?
- Where did most of my time go?
- How much time could have been used better?
- Did I accomplish the most important things?
- Did I have enough time to do the things I wanted?

**Identify Changes Needed: If you were not satisfied with the way you used time identify:**

- Activities that were of little benefit or value
- Specific problems that kept you from using your time well
- Personal behaviour on your part that made it difficult to use your time wisely!
- Any imbalances in your life e.g. work v leisure; time on own v time with others etc.
- Where you can make more time for yourself to do things you want to do

**Hint : Develop SELF management not just time management**

## HANDLING INTERRUPTIONS

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Your carefully planned day can often end in bits and pieces with you going home at the end of the day thinking "*Well I don't feel as if I actually achieved much today!*" One main reason for this may be that you are experiencing interruptions of one kind or another; these may be at certain times during the day or week. You may experience regular interruptions or only be affected now and then - and these may be the most critical times for your work effectiveness?

Don't assume that all interventions are interruptions of your time. It is usually best to look at so-called interruptions in perspective. What appears to be an interruption to you may well be a matter of high priority to the other person, customer, or supplier. When you have listened, it may prove to be so for you as well. In other words there are good and bad interruptions.

You can't eliminate interruptions. Many of them are requests for you to do whatever job you are being paid to do. Even so you should spend some time to find out what sort of interruptions you get over say a typical week; see if any patterns emerge and then make a simple plan in order to minimise the number of unwelcome interruptions. If you are going to manage your valuable time and achieve desired results then you can usually get some benefits from taking more control of interruptions - even if initially it is only taking a little more control of some of the bad interruptions. Learning to manage these negative interruptions takes determination, persistence and practice.

### **Here are some guidelines for keeping interruptions as short as possible:**

1. Set a time limit and stick to it. Say "*I have five minutes - will that do or would you rather fix a time later ?*"
2. With casual droppers-in, remain standing. If they sit down, perch on the edge of your desk.
3. Meet in the other person's office / area of work - you can then determine when to leave.
4. Avoid small talk when you are busy; it can double interruption time.
5. Get them to the point. Don't be afraid to interrupt the interrupter, asking them "*What is the problem / issue ?*" What is the purpose of their call?
6. Be gracious with people but ruthless with time. Give them your full attention and listen well. Be friendly but firm. Do not let them go away empty handed if you can avoid it.
7. Use a call back system for telephone calls, unless they are important enough to be put through at once.
8. Have a clock available where visitors can see it, and don't be afraid to glance at it a few times. Explain about your next appointment or pressing engagement.

**The person interrupting you most may be yourself! What are your favourite ways?**

## CHANGING TIME WASTERS INTO TIME SAVERS

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Below is a list of tried and tested time wasters with suggested ways that you can change these into new and more positive time savers. Please add any others that you feel may be relevant. Tick the 2 to 3 main time wasters that apply to you and then decide what to do differently.

**Lack of Planning; over ambitious, lack of clarity of what needs to be done**

Make a daily to do list and rank items in order of importance. Then schedule your day to day work on the most important tasks during prime time, the time when your energy level is at its highest. That way you give your best self to the most important jobs.

**Paper shuffling; too tedious e.g. junk mail**

Resolve to handle each piece of paper only once. Every time you pick up a piece of paper move it on its way, file it or bin it!

**Cluttered Desk; inadequate filing, too much paper**

Clear the top of your desk and put out of sight everything except the item you are currently working on; develop and use a filing system, prioritise work and complete in sequence.

**Too many interruptions**

Establish some 'quiet' time during which you can work undisturbed; be assertive; plan cover.

**Trying to do too much, no prioritising, can't finish tasks, try to please everyone**

Don't do anything unnecessary or that you can give to someone else. Practise saying no politely and rapidly. Slow down. The key to doing more is to do less better.

**Use and Abuse of the Telephone**

Have calls screened if possible. Establish a telephone time or times for placing and receiving calls. Use effective telephone techniques to take control. Use a three minute hour glass.

**Meetings, Meetings, Meetings**

Establish clear objectives, starting and ending times. Plan your schedule of meetings, including time to spare to prepare for each one. Plan, prepare and participate well.

**Procrastination, perfectionism, enjoy time pressure, postpone unpleasant work**

Break up that overwhelming job you are putting off into as many small tasks as you can. Give yourself a deadline for completing the whole piece of work and do a little bit every day - starting today. Do the less popular tasks first and reward yourself.

## SELF MANAGEMENT SKILLS: PRACTICAL DAILY CHECK LIST

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**For each statement please put a tick if you do and a cross if you don't?**

- At the start of each week I establish work priorities and agree them with my line manager
- At the end of each day I spend 5 minutes identifying and prioritising the 6 things I need to devote my time to the next day
- I help decide on the important tasks and the urgent tasks and allocate time accordingly
- I use the telephone effectively by establishing times for receiving and placing calls and use a three minute 'egg timer' on my desk to monitor the length of calls
- I manage delays by bringing work forward
- I say no ! Nicely when appropriate
- I keep a clear desk, handle paperwork once only and am not afraid to use the bin
- I Repeatedly ask myself "What is the best use of my time right now ?"
- I plan 'A' time - when I am most productive and allocate time ahead for 'B' priority work
- I invest my time in creating good, dependable working relationships
- I review my effectiveness by talking things over with a colleague or discussing them with my line manager
- I build in regular time for myself, relax often and enjoy some fun and humour at work
- I am organised at work because I am Efficient - I am doing the job right - the best way
- I am organised at work because I am Effective - I am doing the right job - to get results
- I assess the priorities of my job and spend my time achieving them
- I know the answer to the question "What am I here for ?" and know how to achieve it
- I get the balance right between my main duties and the daily round of routine tasks

**Use this Checklist regularly to review how you are doing, highlight and celebrate your strengths and to help identify any changes you need to make.**

# Benefits of groupwork

Many people are interested in the ideas behind stress prevention and stress management but lack the motivation to do anything about it on their own. Others feel that they are not suffering from stress but would welcome the opportunity to learn new ideas and techniques for maintaining a healthy and balanced life. Joining (or forming) a group to work together on stress prevention is a good way of fulfilling both these aims.

There are many positive reasons for working in a group. Some of these are discussed below.

## Pooling resources

You'll be surprised how much you have to offer others and how much they have to offer you; for example: a skill or special training that could benefit others, such as sports, relaxation skills, healthy eating or yoga.

Sharing books, articles, audiotapes or videos of relevant subjects is another possibility, and everyone has ideas, opinions and experiences to share. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

## Creating commitment

Learning and sharing with others is a good way to create the commitment that we sometimes lack as individuals. Undertaking to do something for the group is more binding than the obligations we put on ourselves. Also, making a public statement of our own self-development goals provides us with a greater impetus to carry them out than if we kept them to ourselves.

## Providing support

Support can be of various types:

**emotional** support when appropriate — to share and help solve difficult problems;

**'moral'** support — for example: a group of you may be trying out a relaxation technique, or a new eating pattern, or a new way of working together; you can swap successes and failures;

**social** support —for example: you know you have shared interests with a particular group and won't be put down for discussing self-development issues with them;

support in the form of **information** — for example: reference material the group can draw on, or different ways people have solved similar problems.

## Self-development

Learning needn't stop when school days are finished. Many people find that they enjoy learning new skills and being exposed to new ideas when they have more control over what, how and when they will learn.

Also, there is increasing interest generally in enhancing the quality of life by minimising the negative effects of stress and releasing more of the mind's potential.

## Fun!

An essential ingredient.

# SETTING UP A GROUP AND GETTING STRESS ON THE AGENDA



Key issues:

- How does the group fit into the office structure?
- Who should be involved?
- Size?
- What is the group for?
- What is the best structure?
- What is the best format for meetings?

## How does the group fit into the office structure?

- 1 The issue of stress prevention can be fitted into the **existing structure** of office communications; for example: once a fortnight or once a month the team meeting or office meeting is given over to discussion of topical issues, a presentation, or a practical session.

The **advantages** of this strategy are that everyone in the work group is automatically involved, including managers; stress is acknowledged and merits discussion time; and decisions can be taken about ongoing problems.

The **disadvantages** are that other priorities may edge the discussion of stress prevention off the agenda from time to time. Also, the success of this approach depends largely on the level of commitment from managers. When this is low, some staff may become demotivated.

- 2 Another option is to set up a **separate committee** solely concerned with stress prevention which reports to the larger forum at regular intervals. The brief for such a committee might include: identifying opportunities for improving work practices to minimise stress;

providing stimulating ideas, practical help and support for staff interested in managing stress; and keeping a watching brief on opportunities for training and development relevant to these aims.

Whilst potentially immensely valuable, the official terms of reference of such a committee might put off some people who would prefer a more informal, experiential approach to stress prevention.

- 3** An **informal group** is less constrained by office structure and politics. Such groups meet because of mutual shared interests and set their own agenda and terms of reference. There is likely to be a greater focus on personal involvement and practical strategies for change as a way of coping with stress.

A potential problem for participants is lack of connection between their stress-management goals and office practices. Creating a bridge between the two might become a group goal.

## Who should be involved?

The most obvious basis for group membership is sharing the same work or the same office. However, some people might prefer to organise a group with non-work friends or contacts.

## Size?

Research has demonstrated that groups of between eight and 12 participants are most effective. Groups that are smaller tend to be over-dependent on one or two members; with much larger groups, of 20 or more people, effective communication tends to be inhibited and it is less easy to create trust between members. Members can become involved through a general announcement, personal invitations or a small nucleus of participants bringing members to the first meeting.

## What is the group for?

The first meeting needs to establish:

- the nature of the group;
- the purpose of the group;
- what its goals are;
- how it should be structured.

Participants will need to express the area of interest they would like to develop and the objectives they envisage as worthwhile for the group.

## What is the best structure?

The structure of a group depends on its function and the individuals involved. If the group consists of friends who like to be together, there may not be a need for a leader. However, one of the members is likely to exemplify the values of the group more closely than others and will direct the group in an informal way.

Group members often take on roles that provide them with a purpose; for example: 'experts', facilitators, co-ordinators and so on.

Group structure varies:

### **HIGHLY STRUCTURED:**

- leader decides what tasks the group should perform;
- programme of events;
- specific roles for members.

### **INFORMAL:**

- group discuss a variety of possible tasks and choose one;
- content decided as it goes along;
- all participate equally.

The greater the participation of its members in defining and solving problems, the more effective a group is likely to be. This doesn't exclude having a strong leader.

## **What is the best format for meetings?**

Meetings provide opportunities for the following types of activities:

### **Unstructured communication**

#### **Discussion of business**

#### **Information exchange**

Presentations by participants.

Reading/research assignments.

Guest speakers.

Videos of relevant TV programmes.

Audio tapes of radio programmes and so on.

(Topics might include: The nature of stress, burnout, stress-management techniques, assertiveness, time management, nutrition, holistic health, effective management.)

### **Guided discussion**

This approach encourages communication among participants. It also encourages creative thinking and lets people share opinions and feelings in a 'safe' environment. Probable results are that members will increase their understanding of themselves and their own situation. The support of others decreases feelings of helplessness.

### **Skill development**

The function is to alleviate and prevent the negative effects of stress by teaching and practising relaxation skills, realistic goal planning, problem-solving skills and so on. Learning these in a group provides social reinforcement for members to learn more effective behaviours and eliminate

destructive, ineffective or non-productive behaviours. Having 'role' models in the group can be an effective way for some people to overcome difficult problems.

### **Sharing resources**

New books, articles, tapes, information and so on that others might like to read or try out.

### **Group projects**

Deciding to work on something together and reporting back on successes and failures.

## **More ideas for meetings**

### **SPECIAL PROJECTS**

Researching specific topics; for example: keeping a watching brief on the latest developments in issues of interest to the group. For example:

<b>Nutrition</b>	Are genetically modified foods helpful or harmful? What is the evidence? What does irradiating food mean?
<b>Exercise</b>	What is the most effective type of exercise? Can exercise be harmful?
<b>Stress at work</b>	What do other employers do about stress in the workplace? Are any of these ideas attractive to us? Could they realistically be implemented?
<b>Training</b>	What opportunities are available at different grades for relevant training in stress management? What recommendations can the group make to influence the scope and availability of training?

### **INVITING SPEAKERS/DEMONSTRATORS**

This may be desirable when the group wants to develop a practical skill or area of knowledge with which none of the participants is familiar. This could be anything from a session on relaxation skills or yoga, to assertiveness training or shiatsu.

### **GOING ON A COURSE/WORKSHOP**

This could be enormously beneficial for the group — an opportunity to build on existing skills and learn new approaches to stress prevention and self-development. Even if only one or two members attend a course, they can give feedback to the group on items relevant to the group aims.

### **CREATING A SMALL LIBRARY**

This needn't be large or expensive to set up — literally a few well chosen books and articles that encapsulate the aims of the group and are recommended reading for new group members. Newspaper and magazine articles are easy to get hold of and are a good way of keeping up-to-date with new developments. Cuttings can be kept in a scrapbook or file. It's sometimes useful to create a reading list of books that members have found inspiring.

### **USING EXISTING RESOURCES**

**Effective Stress Management: A Personal Guide** was designed so that individuals or groups could use it as a starting point for working on stress.

## OVERCOMING CONSTRAINTS

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### Lack of time

Finding time for group activities and relaxation sessions is the main difficulty for most people, especially if the group wants to operate within the work situation.

One strategy is to fit stress-prevention techniques into the office timetable as it exists and make the best use of the time available; for example: already scheduled meeting times such as Friday morning training sessions in local offices, coffee breaks, lunch breaks and section meetings.

A related approach is to see stress prevention as something that happens in small chunks *throughout* the day, i.e. in 10- to 20-minute sessions with different people taking it in turns to lead the session, or people working individually or in pairs as their timetable allows.

**Co-counselling** is one way of working on stress prevention which has this flexibility. It involves a set of techniques for working in pairs which can be easily learned. The emphasis is on feeling good. (It's also a useful way of beginning and ending meetings.)

Listening to a **relaxation tape** on a personal stereo can be an effective way of using 10-minute breaks for relaxation. Even piped music could be used in this way if a relaxation track was relayed to the whole office at an appropriate time.

### Sensitivity about admitting to stress

Not everyone will feel comfortable about working on stress prevention with people whom they know. The climate within DWP is changing, but stress is still a sensitive issue that requires delicate handling. The message of **Effective Stress Management: A Personal Guide** is that *everyone*, whatever their present situation, can benefit from knowing about the general principles of stress prevention.

Working on stress prevention or including it as part of a self-development or professional/ career development initiative does not presuppose that everyone is stressed. It acknowledges that pressures are all around us and that there is much we can all do to prevent that pressure becoming stress. The emphasis is on staying healthy and positive and keeping a balance in life. It is not being suggested here or elsewhere that only highly stressed people should get involved.

Networking with other local groups — possibly pooling names — might be one solution for involving people who feel sensitive about working on stress prevention with colleagues. Groups also need to create ground-rules for themselves that respect their members' rights to confidentiality and privacy. (See opposite.)

# CONTRACTS AND GROUND-RULES

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## Contracts

It is strongly recommended that groups spend some time clarifying the objectives of the group at an early stage. Often when people get together, there is an assumption that all will have roughly the same idea of why they are there. This is rarely true. Objectives need to be checked out by asking everyone what they are meeting in the group to do.

Having a contract or working/agreement (verbal or written) about what the group is *for* is a good way of clarifying aims and objectives. Of course, groups evolve and change over time, so it should also be made clear that the contract can be modified if there is group consensus.

## Ground-rules

This is a code of acceptable behaviour mutually agreed by the group. Ground-rules define the boundaries beyond which people should not go and within which the group wants to operate. A sample set of ground-rules is given below. These were devised by a sensitivity training group, but some of the rules have general applicability, notably those governing confidentiality and co-operation.

### GROUND-RULES FOR GROUP SESSIONS

- 1 Everyone who is here belongs here just because they are here and for no other reason.
- 2 For each person, what is true is determined by what is in them, what they directly feel and find making sense in themselves and the way they live inside themselves.
- 3 Our first purpose 'is to make' contact with each other. Everything else we might want or need comes second.
- 4 We try to be as honest as possible and to express ourselves as we really are and really feel — just as much as we can.
- 5 We listen for the person inside, living and feeling.
- 6 We listen to everyone.
- 7 Group leaders are responsible for two things only: they protect the belonging of every member, and they protect each member's being heard if this is getting lost.
- 8 Realism: if we know things are a certain way, we do not pretend they are not that way.
- 9 What we say here is confidential. Members of the group will not repeat anything said here outside the group, unless it concerns only themselves. This applies not just to obviously private things, but to everything. After all, if the individual concerned wants others to know something, he can always tell them himself.

- 10 Decisions made by the group need everyone taking part in some way.
- 11 New members become members because they walk in and remain. Whoever is here belongs.

From: E. T. Gendlin & J. Beebe: 'An experiential approach to group therapy', *Journal of Research & Development in Education*, Vol. 1, 1968.

## Sample structure for a group meeting

- 1 Start with a relaxation session — a relaxation tape, meditation or deep breathing; or a co-counselling session (*10-15 minutes*).
- 2 Each person gives a brief account of how they progressed with their individual goal that week, outlining successes and problems (*each person 3 minutes*).
- 3 Suggestions from the whole group on overcoming problem areas identified (*15 minutes*).
- 4 Discussion of the group project for the previous week, i.e. something that everyone was going to try to do (*15 minutes*).
- 5 Practical session (such as a demonstration of a relaxation technique) or presentation; video; discussion or something similar (*30 minutes*).
- 6 Setting individual and group goals for the coming week (*10 minutes*).

The time allocated to each part of the meeting and to the overall length of the meeting is a matter of choice for members. It is a good idea to have some structure, however loose, as this gives purpose and direction to the group. It is strongly recommended that the group sets goals for itself, both short-term and long-term. Suggestions on this are given below.

## SETTING GOALS

Setting goals is a way of helping the group to decide on objectives and fit these into a time-scale. It's especially helpful when people want to change aspects of their lives and don't know where to start. Groups can set goals for the whole group, or individuals for themselves.

When setting goals:

- Be specific.
- Plan how to achieve the goal (actions you need to take, information you need, any help you need and so on).
- Be realistic (break larger goals up into smaller ones; allow time for each step of your plan).

- Be persistent (It's often tempting to give up if new activities we're trying don't seem to work. Try to work out what the difficulty is:
  - Do you clearly understand what to do?
  - Are you giving it enough time?
  - Are you comfortable with this approach?
  - Could another approach be better for you?
  - Do you really want to change?)

### EXAMPLES OF GROUP MONTHLY GOALS:

- 1 Everyone to learn a relaxation technique.
- 2 Identify patterns of irrational thinking.
- 3 Continue work on improving nutrition.

### EXAMPLES OF WEEKLY GOALS:

**Week 1:** Listen to tape on relaxation; read *Section One: More on Gaining Personal Perspective*

**Week 2:** Try relaxing using the tape twice; list ways you are restricting the scope of your life.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

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### Books on groups

Tom. Douglas 1978: *Basic Groupwork*, Tavistock Publications.

Tom Douglas 1976: *Groupwork Practice*, Tavistock Publications.

Phillips, Pedersen & Wood 1979: *Group Discussion*, Houghton Mifflin.

### Books on stress

The following books are a good basis for groupwork on stress prevention.

Davis, M., Eshelman, E. & McKay, M. 1988: *The Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook*, New Harbinger Publications.

(Sections on progressive relaxation, breathing, visualisation, job stress management, refuting irrational ideas, recording your own relaxation tape.)

McKay, M., Davis, M. & Fanning, P. 1981: *Thoughts and Feelings: The Art of Cognitive Stress Intervention*. New Harbinger Publications.

(Sections on combating distorted thinking, problem solving, uncovering your automatic thoughts.)

# 8

# Stress and emotions

## EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

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### Emotional Intelligence: Deal With Feelings Through Self Expression.

We all sometimes experience unwanted negative emotions like anger, depression and anxiety and most of us have difficulties knowing how to deal with them effectively. A variety of techniques have been discovered for coping with unwanted, strong, powerful and persistent negative emotions. These are set out in this section so that you can try them out to see which are most suitable for your own needs, situations and purposes.

In this Section the main Stress Proofing Techniques dealt with are based on the view that expressing emotion is a natural part of being human. Think about how young children express emotion and you get closer to the most healthy and beneficial approach to adopt and cope better with the pressures and demands of life.

One of the most effective techniques available is outlined in this section - Co-listening. This is based on getting in touch with those distressing life experiences that continue to cause emotional difficulties. You can express them in a safe and mutually supportive special relationship - getting a 'good listening to' by co-listening with one other person.

**Hint:** You can also make regular use of the other main stress control techniques dealt with in the other Sections of this Guide. They deal with Relaxation, Exercise and Diet and Positive Thinking to help you get into a Feel Good State.

#### So how do you get into The Feel Good Factor State?

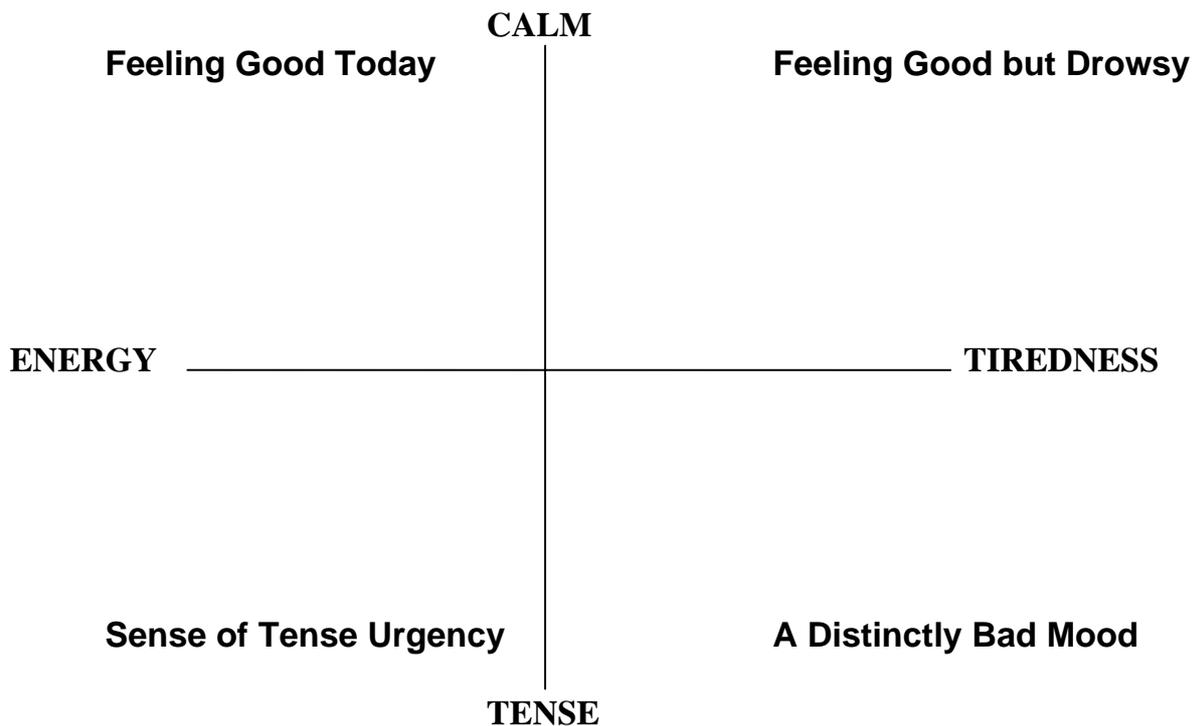
- Concentrate on positive feelings, thoughts and activities.
- Select and use techniques that help you experience and express negative emotions
- Reduce the chances of having powerful negative emotions in the first place.

**This Section shows you how to manage your moods, energy, pressure and stress** and explains powerful and effective techniques for helping you to get in touch with distressing experiences that are affecting you, express emotions appropriately and enable you to take a more positive approach to situations and people to enhance your health and well-being.

## MANAGING YOUR MOODS

**Think more clearly, be more productive and lead a more enjoyable life.**

Robert Thayer, Professor of Psychology at California State University, is a good guide to the latest research into moods and mood management and offers proven techniques to help you help yourself. He describes two general arousal systems that connect psychology and physiology: calmness - tension and energy - tiredness and shows us how to understand and apply these ideas to create what he says is the best state to be in most of the time:



The difference between these four moods is often not well understood. The difference between Calm - Energy and Tense - Energy is best described as when you were much younger and perhaps fitter, you felt alert, boundless with no 'edge': this is Calm-Energy.

Energy levels slowly rise to their highest level sometime in the first third of the day, around noon or 1:00 pm. Then they drop in the mid-to late afternoon, reach a sub-peak in the early evening and decline until sleep.

Generally, when we are in a bad mood, some variation of tense-tiredness is at the bottom of it. When you are in a bad mood, try to change it. The most common ways of changing a bad mood, raising energy and reducing tension are taking some exercise, doing relaxation, talking to a friend, listening to music, being alone, resting or sleeping, eating something, and watching a favourite TV programme.

## MANAGING ENERGY, TENSION AND STRESS

Two of the best things to do, for most people, when wanting to change a bad mood are:

**1. Taking some exercise** - the most effective and natural way to raise energy and reduce tension. Exercise produces rapid and reliable results. An anxious person can vigorously exercise and often feel completely relaxed afterwards. A short brisk 5 minute walk, can boost your energy level.

**2. Progressive deep muscle relaxation or some form of meditation.**

The best overall strategy for changing a bad mood is to control many aspects of bodily functioning by combining exercise, relaxation and positive thinking.

Other common but less effective strategies are eating, watching TV, a hot bath, a massage, Yoga and related activities. The poorest strategies are drinking alcohol and using drugs.

A key research finding is that tense - tiredness is the mood that most people try to escape.

**Active Mood Management:** So 'What are the best methods to use to help change mood?'  
Some are set out below

**To create calmness:** do relaxation / meditation / proper breathing / visualisation / have  
7 - 8 hours sleep each night.

**To create energy:** take regular exercise e.g. a brisk 5 - 10 minute walk; engage in  
positive thinking; eat healthy food; take part in enjoyable social  
activity; play more, enjoy an interesting hobby; use humour and  
smile.

**Avoid:** smoking; drinking alcohol; caffeine based drinks; eating sugary  
and junk foods; being bored; negative thoughts; bottling up  
emotions.

### SUMMARY :

An understanding of energy and tension in our lives gives us the chance to take more control of our undesirable moods. It is possible with some certainty to predict when we will become tense - tired. Most of us find that our energy wanes in the late afternoon and later in the evening. Increasing energy and reducing tension are the keys to creating in ourselves the desired state of Calm - Energy and avoiding Tense - Tiredness.

Take some time to do self observation and note your levels of energy and tension throughout a normal week. Try to develop an active mood management programme based on your particular experiences and use a combination of methods to increase energy and reduce tension e.g. sensible exercise, deep muscle relaxation, play and humour, healthy food, positive social activity and interesting hobbies.

## EXPERIENCE SAD AND BAD TIMES

**You can run but you cannot hide is the important theme in this section.**

**The reality is that we all have times in our lives when things do not go well**, and sometimes it may seem that the world is against us or that we experience a series of "bad times" that throws us off balance. We can get depressed and anxious and have great difficulty seeing the positive side of life at times like these. This is a natural part of life and a good time to accept the pain and the tears and listen to yourself, experience the upset and the hurt. Tell yourself it is OK to be sad or unhappy and let the feelings flow over you. Do not try to avoid or escape from the pain too quickly, remember the phrase "fight or flight" - it applies to the down side of your life and times in that both trying to fight the anxiety and depression or trying to flee from it may not always be your best or most effective strategy!

**"Life is difficult"** - M. Scott Peck points out that this is one of the greatest truths. It is a great truth because once we truly understand and accept it - then life is no longer difficult because it does not really matter. Life is a series of problems and so we are best advised to solve them. Pain - as well as joy is a natural part of life. You can often produce a higher level of stress for yourself if you try to escape, avoid or refuse to admit your difficulties - it may be best to confront, tackle and solve them.

**It is important to seek a balance between the sad and the happy times in your life.** One way to do this is to spend time allowing yourself to get in touch with what is distressing you, experience the feelings and then address yourself to the solutions that will make the difference. You can also trust in the benefits of positive thinking during times like these and it is important to practise repeating key phrases or affirmations when you wake in the morning, regularly during the day and for at least ten minutes last thing at night before falling asleep. You can select affirmations from a variety of sources and it is a good idea to try and produce our own e.g. "I now choose to make my life, light, easy and joyful, I love and approve of myself, I am in the process of positive changes, I have a happy, slender body, I appreciate everything that I do" - choose and use the affirmations that are best / work for you.

**What you put your attention on grows** so it is better to think about the good things in your life - to count your blessings. Remind yourself that you do have a choice - that happiness is a choice - choose to be happy - focus all your thoughts and actions on the brighter things in your daily life, the many and varied small things that are good, for example, you have woken up today, you have food for breakfast, the sun is shining, your favourite TV programme is on tonight, you have time to read the newspaper, you are looking forward to a happy or exciting event at the weekend and so on.

## HANDLING YOUR EMOTIONS

Forget about the traditional stiff upper lip - if you want a healthier life express your emotions. Forget about good behaviour and scream, pout, shout and moan. In his book 'Mastering Your Moods' Dr. Melvyn Kinder explodes 6 Myths that can do us a lot of harm.

### **MYTH 1 : All normal people feel and respond in the same ways.**

Most people keep powerful emotions to themselves. We rarely see other people sobbing their hearts out, but a good cry can be crucial to our grief. We get stuck into believing that there is a standard way to feel when we should celebrate the difference.

### **MYTH 2 : Unpleasant feelings are bad and should be eliminated.**

From early childhood we tell ourselves that if we don't feel good there is something wrong with us. Instead of pushing bad emotions away we should learn from them.

### **MYTH 3 : We can and should strive to control our emotions.**

The well lived life is not the one in the emotional middle ground, calm, poised and in control. Keeping ourselves too tightly in check can backfire. Emotions are like air in a balloon - if the pressure is too high the balloon bursts. Pent up emotions can leak out in physical illnesses or distorted expressions, such as sarcasm, numbness or aggressive behaviour.

### **MYTH 4 : We should strive for psychological perfection.**

The quest for self improvement is a frustrating treadmill that generates dissatisfaction and makes us live only for the future. It's much healthier to strive for self acceptance.

### **MYTH 5 : Emotional distress is a sign of mental illness.**

Anxiety is a normal state, not an illness: so too is sadness. Most of us experience a broad range of emotions that keep life interesting. Beware of self defeating labels.

### **MYTH 6 : You should be able to change your emotions with will power and positive thinking.**

The relationship between feelings and thoughts is complicated. Some people are helped by positive thinking, but not everyone.

**Hint:** Fighting your emotions is not the answer to handling unsettling questions and feelings. It is better to use your intelligence to understand your temperament, learn to express feelings and feel more relaxed and energised.

## STRESS AND ANGER

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Most of us have not been taught to handle our anger in ways that help us to express it and avoid the stress that comes with holding it in or the damage that follows going over the top! This section aims to help you understand more about anger and provides some well tried methods to deal with and control your anger rather than letting it control you. Old habits are hard to break sometimes and so we still find ourselves:

- taking out our frustrations on our family and friends or people who are least able to stick up for themselves
- becoming stuck in depression when experiencing loss rather than becoming angry and working through our grief
- 'going over the top' with rage at the least little frustration and at the worst time and in the least suitable situation
- making regular visits to the doctor with symptoms of headaches, depression, stomach pains and chronic tiredness

The management of anger is important in helping us to handle threat, hurt and frustration more effectively so that we can express our anger and reduce the impact of our anger on other people in different situations. We have already mentioned our 'flight or fight' mechanism which is part of our natural make up as human beings. The aim here is to deal with anger so that we are able to remain healthy and positive about ourselves and also avoid harming or threatening other people's rights and feelings. One of the best ways is to express anger assertively as explained by Gael Lindenfield in her book, 'Managing Anger'.

- Tackle it early - always aim to take control at the stage when you first notice mild irritation. Don't kid yourself that the minor feelings are 'not worth the trouble'. Most outbursts of rage are caused by a build up of minor irritations.
- Release your physical tension - beat the stuffing out of a cushion, shout and scream - for example in the car, to an empty chair at home or when out in remote countryside.
- Avoid self put downs or invitations to criticism or retaliatory anger - don't say, for example, "I know that I'm a nagger / I'm being over sensitive etc .... You could be putting ideas into their head and making it more difficult to be taken seriously
- Be direct - say "I'm feeling irritated/angry" rather than, "It can be annoying when ...." Be specific about the degree of anger - for example, "I've been getting slightly irritated " or "My fury is reaching boiling point".

When faced with anger from another person acknowledge their feelings, for example, "You are obviously very irritated". Share your own feelings and fears, show them you are listening, apologise if you are wrong and suggest how you can help them get what they need. Talk to someone else about it afterwards to help get things into perspective.

This section is also not about suppressing anger or putting a bigger lid on it. It's about **anger management**.

This is:

- preventing anger build-up in the first place;
- keeping anger to safe levels when it is aroused.

Anger management keeps you from being the victim of your anger. When and if the time comes that anger is called for or is justified, you can then feel more comfortable with being angry, since you will understand it and know what to do with it.

One other negative: anger management is not about becoming a wimp or a pushover! Managing anger properly enables people to be *more* effective, not less.

This section will help you to identify:

- your anger patterns;
- the anger management approach most likely to work for you.

## UNDERSTANDING ANGER

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To manage anger, it is first necessary to understand it.

- Anger is energy: it can strengthen people and give people drive and determination to cope with difficult circumstances and conflicts. It's fuel for the fight, if a 'fight' is unavoidable.
- Anger acts as a signal — telling us something about ourselves, other people and what is going on in the situation.
- Anger is a way of expressing and discharging tension — preventing things from getting bottled up. If anger is handled well, it can resolve conflict and improve relationships.
- Anger can give a rewarding **feeling** of control in a situation. Anger (often because of its effects on people around you) can make you feel in charge and powerful. Of course, it's important to note that such feelings don't necessarily mean you're doing anything to solve the problem!

On the other hand, anger can also:

- interfere with the ability to think clearly;
- prompt impulsive acts which cause regret later;
- put the whole problem 'out there', protecting pride when we are hurt or embarrassed, but blinding us to the complexities of the problem;
- lead to aggression and the hurt of others;
- build a social identity or reputation based on fear. People tend to keep away from people that have 'Beware-of-the-dog' reputations.

## Anger management starts here:

It is first important to know what triggers you. There are four basic causes of anger which usually work together:

- 1 external events;
- 2 thoughts and beliefs about these events;
- 3 bodily state of arousal (are you ready for a fight?);
- 4 behaviour patterns.

This means that you do not become angry simply because something 'happens' to you. External events may not be to your liking, but your thoughts, your prior arousal level and your own behaviour all play a part in whether or not you become angry.

What sort of external events tend to set **you** off?

Again, research (and common sense) suggests four main types:

<b>Frustration</b>	Being blocked or disappointed. <i>The photocopier breaking down again; traffic jams; being stood up.</i>
<b>Annoyances</b>	Things that get on your nerves. <i>Excessive noise, interruptions.</i>
<b>Abuse</b>	Verbal or physical; mostly different forms of unkind remarks directed against you. <i>Sarcasm, ridicule; being pushed and shoved.</i>
<b>Injustice or unfairness</b>	Not getting what you feel you deserve. <i>Someone is prejudiced against you; someone makes a snap judgement without seeing it from your side or giving you a chance to explain; injustice to someone else.</i>

Clearly, if you consider the list above, there are some things that are easier to control than others.

## Adjusting important anger-causing thoughts

### ATTENTION-FOCUS

- Where is your attention when you are angry? On the problem or on the hurt?
- Do you ever find yourself paying attention to some isolated aspect of the situation which *does* make you angry and ignoring all the other aspects which don't?
- Ever found it impossible to concentrate because your mind is fixed on something annoying?

To be angry about something, you must pay **attention** to it.

If paying attention to something that makes you angry doesn't solve the problem, then pay attention to something that *does*.

People talk about being **task-focused**. This simply means keeping your mind on the problem to be solved.

### EXPECTATIONS

- Do you get upset because things didn't go the way they were supposed to?
- Does a certain person get you going because you expect them to?

If your expectations are too high or unrealistic, then you set yourself up for disappointment, which may in your case lead to unhelpful anger.

Quite often there are 'shoulds' involved here. Note the difference between:

*"You shouldn't have done that."*

and

*"I didn't want you to do that."*

Have a look at your expectations and the way you tell other people about them. There's nothing wrong with having high expectations, but are you being flexible, suiting the goal of the moment to what can be done *now*? Don't confuse long-term ambitions with short-term realistic goals.

## APPRAISALS

It's a **truism** that you will respond to situations according to how you see them... but it's still **true**.

Each of us looks at the world through our own pair of glasses, and anger is often defused by seeing the problem from the other person's viewpoint. Regardless of whether you get angry, it is a good management and interpersonal skill to develop — to see the world and what's important from the perspective of the other person. Practising this can help to prevent anger build-up when tensions arise.

Having looked at the problem from the other person's perspective, it is possible to look at the problem itself, and become task-focused rather than fixed on the anger.

## DEALING WITH AGGRAVATION AND CONFLICT

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### And remaining in control of the energy of anger

Four stages are involved in the experience of anger. These are outlined below.

The *Coping Statements* that follow (see below) use the same letters — **A, B, C, D** — to suggest coping statements for each stage. These are only examples, your own will be more effective.

The four stages are:

- A** : Preparing for provocation
- B** : Impact and confrontation
- C** : Coping with arousal
- D** : Reflecting on the provocation.

### **A PREPARING FOR PROVOCATION**

It isn't always possible to anticipate and plan, because anger often happens spontaneously and without warning. When it is possible to plan, strategies can be worked out for coping.

### **B IMPACT AND CONFRONTATION**

The provocation itself, either gradual or sudden. You realise that the early warning signs are there, and these can be used to trigger coping rather than the 'inevitable' escalation.

### **C COPING WITH AROUSAL**

Tension and 'fight-and-flight' bodily responses start to build. At this stage, you might be thinking you have blown it, either because the attempts at anger management haven't worked, or because the provocation is too severe. Anger either escalates from this point as antagonism builds, or drains away as resolution is achieved.

## **D REFLECTING ON THE PROVOCATION**

Mulling over or even reliving the experience, you evaluate its effect on you and the other person. If you are still aware of feelings of antagonism, then continued use of coping strategies is required. If you did well and both of you went away with the conflict resolved, then it is time for self-praise.

## **Coping statements**

### **A PREPARING FOR PROVOCATION**

- “This is going to upset me but I can deal with it.”
- “Remember — stick to the issues and don’t take it personally.”
- “I can manage the situation, and remain in control of it and my anger.”
- “Easy does it — remember to keep your sense of humour.”
- “If I can handle this, I’m going to feel great afterwards.”

### **B IMPACT AND CONFRONTATION**

- “Stay calm, keep relaxed.”
- “I’m the one in control if I stay calm.”
- “What s/he says doesn’t matter: I’m on top of this situation, and I’m staying in control.”
- “He probably expects me to get angry — well not this time.”
- “What do I want out of this?”

### **C COPING WITH AROUSAL**

- “My muscles are starting to get tight — time to relax and slow the pace.”
- “I’ll let him make a fool of himself.”
- “I have a right to be annoyed but I’ll keep cool.”
- “I’ll take the issues point by point.”
- “Negatives lead to more negatives — work constructively.”
- “Maybe we both have a point — what’s the common ground?”

## D REFLECTING ON THE PROVOCATION

### When the conflict is not resolved.

- “I’ll get better at this as I get more practice.”
- “Is there a funny side to all this?”
- “What’s this going to look like in 20 years’ time?”
- “I’ll try to relax now — no sense in prolonging the feeling.”
- “What do I want to do now?”

### When the conflict is resolved or coping is successful.

- “It could have been a lot worse.”
- “I got through that with far more control than usual.”
- “I handled that pretty well — it worked.”
- “That wasn’t as hard as I thought.”

Learning to cope with anger involves simple cognitive skills which have been found to work (they have been used successfully with people whose anger gets them into conflict with the law). They require practice, like any other skill.

## Some final points

- Anger is a self-imposed handicap. What you want are results.
- Sometimes the wrong people bear the brunt of our anger. When things don’t go well at work, family members or friends can often get the flak. When this happens, relationships suffer, and that can take its toll on us. This section has been about dealing with anger at the right time with the right person and in a constructive way, but supportive *social* relationships have a big part to play in helping people deal with anger.
- If something really gets to you, try to find someone who can listen and perhaps help you get a better perspective on the problem. Friends and family who are not involved with the situation can provide helpful suggestions about how to deal with certain people or situations.
- Sometimes all you need is someone to listen, and not come up with suggestions. Teach people to give you space when you need it.

Much of this section was taken from the work of Raymond Novaco (*University of California, Irvine*); and Dr Ron Tulloch (*Stanley Royd Hospital*).





## HANDLING DEPRESSION

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**We all get depressed sometimes**, it's a normal human reaction to some of the not so good things that happen to us. The reality is that all of us experience periods of low mood or depression at some time in our lives. This includes rich and poor, men and women, old and young, fit and unfit, employed and unemployed, famous and unknown. Professor Martin Seligman [1990] has spent more than 20 years trying to learn what causes depression and concludes that the majority of depressions are not biological but psychological in origin. His view is that most depression starts with problems in living and with specific ways of thinking about these problems. Depression can be caused by defeat, failure, and loss and the consequent belief that any actions taken are futile.

**So how can You start to change a depressed mood?** There is a hopeful side to dealing with depression and it is much simpler and more 'curable' than it was once thought to be. Some of the most effective methods are outlined below:

1. **How you Think is how you Feel.** Depressives think awful things about themselves and their future. Negative thinking is the cause of depression. You are responsible for your own thoughts and so you can take responsibility for changing them. Use the ABC of stress control [as pioneered and developed by Dr Albert Ellis, an American psychologist] and included in this Practical Guide.
2. **Stop Holding on to your Feelings.** If you do not express emotions appropriately, for example anger and sadness, or don't allow your emotions to be released in response to hurtful and distressing experiences, then you may be storing up trouble for yourself.
3. **Manage your Moods by reducing tension and raising your energy level.** The most common ways of changing a bad mood are, to create calmness - do some relaxation exercises, listen to calming music, get 7 - 8 hours sleep each night. To create energy - take some exercise. The poorest strategies are too much alcohol and using drugs.
4. **Consider Changing your Lifestyle.** If you are socially isolated at the moment you are more likely to be depressed. Taking some time to explore the relationship between health, humour and happiness and spend time looking at the main areas of your life : relationships, family, health, leisure, work and spiritual matters.
5. **Try using the Behavioural Approach to feeling good.** The emphasis here is on first identifying the consequences of your stress related behaviour and changing the nature of the rewards or punishments that follow. For example, after identifying the new behaviour you want to maintain you should practice it and then immediately reinforce it by carrying out a pleasant activity or enjoy some pleasurable reward for having attempted and practised the behaviour.

## ANXIETY: FEAR SPREAD THIN

**We all have passing moods of depression.** This section has aimed to help you look at what may be behind your feelings and suggests how you can help yourself to handle this.

**Anxiety can build up when you are under constant stress** or your fear is spread thinly across the whole of your life. Anxiety may be a warning to you that all is not well in your life. It may be that you have real practical problems that need to be tackled rather than trying to worry them out of existence. Anxiety shows itself in many ways including, being worried and tense, being on edge or nervous, feeling nauseous or having stomach ache, difficulty concentrating or problems listening to what people are saying to you. As your anxiety level rises you find it more and more difficult to carry out even the simplest of tasks effectively and your confidence may fall sharply. Your mouth goes dry, your breathing becomes rapid and uneven, your heart starts to race and you blush, tremble or feel dizzy.

**Our anxiety response is part of our survival response** and can be triggered at any time. In this sense it is a natural bodily response to potential danger and starts up automatically to help you respond or deal with 'the dangers' or demands in our daily life. The trouble is the 'anxiety response' operates in a wide variety of different situations where there is no real 'danger' to you physically, psychologically or socially. Throughout our lives, and in many cases when we are in our early years, we can learn to be anxious about many things that are not objectively threatening but which we observe causes anxiety in others around us e.g. our mother may show anxiety when going into shops, meeting new people and you learn to be anxious too. So how can you go about reducing or eliminating unnecessary anxiety?

### Dealing With Anxiety

1. **Learn and Regularly Practise Relaxation Exercises.** You can reduce or eliminate anxiety by spending short periods of time, each day initially, learning one or more of the different types of relaxation technique described in this practical guide. The three main techniques explained in this guide are Deep Muscle Relaxation, Quick Relaxation and Differential Relaxation.
2. **Take Some Sensible Exercise.** As well as promoting physical fitness and increased energy, exercise can have an immediate effect on helping to reduce your anxieties and worries. It is very difficult to remain anxious when mind and body are engaged in physical activity of some kind. Take up a team sport and experience the benefits that attention shifting can have on your mind - it helps to develop a sense of well being, relaxation.
3. **Learn Basic Meditation.** Many anxieties are created by an over active mind which speeds up to such an extent that it is difficult to enjoy the here and now of everyday life, or still the mind. A key part of meditation is assuming a passive attitude and letting thoughts come and go from your mind. Meditation helps to relax your mind and at the same time allow you to become more aware of your senses - what you can hear, see, touch taste and smell.
4. **Stick to a Healthy Diet.** Some foods are stress inducing. Anxiety can be induced or increased by certain kinds of eating or drinking. It is known that two cups of medium strength coffee are enough to produce symptoms of anxiety.



# WORKSHOPS ON STRESS

## THE RANGE OF INTERVENTIONS

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Regional Psychologists deliver bespoke interventions on managing uncomfortable pressure and reducing stress. These are designed to fit in with the identified needs within individual regions and use a number of different approaches to delivery. Some of the interventions are aimed at reducing uncomfortable pressure at an organisational level while others are designed to help the individual cope more effectively with pressure and stress. The range of interventions is as follows:

### Strategic Management Programme

**Purpose** To improve performance and reduce work pressures by making the work 'workable'.

To remove major disruptions to work that result in performance loss or uncomfortable pressure.

To increase planning and management of work activities, to reduce the pressure that accompanies 'reactive firefighting' and 'last minute work demands'.

Designed and delivered by Phil Perry Regional Psychologist West Midlands 01214525212

## **Managing to Motivate**

**Purpose** To teach managers to manage in a motivational way and reduce behaviours within their style that cause pressure and stress for their staff.

Designed by Stuart Watkins Senior Psychologist for Scotland 0131 22214360. Also available in Wales, West Midlands, North East, North West and Yorkshire.

## **Sustaining Team Harmony**

**Purpose** An 'off the shelf' package that can be delivered at short notice as a remedy to the frictions and interpersonal conflicts that threaten team performance and place a drain on resources. The product is delivered as a one-hour seminar, which fits within the time span of a normal communications meeting.

Designed by Stuart Watkins Senior Psychologist for Scotland 0131 22214360

## **Recharging the Batteries**

**Purpose** Developed following an approach from a BM for a product that would help 'refresh and energise' advisers to sustain and enhance performance. This half-day workshop introduces advisers to the concept of topping up their psychological resources and presents them with a menu from which they can shape the workshop. Options include avoiding stress, positive thinking, developing self-belief and developing personal drive.

Designed by Stuart Watkins Senior Psychologist for Scotland 0131 22214360

## **Presenting a Professional Image under Pressure**

**Purpose** To help staff who find it difficult to cope with their emotional reaction to dealing with 'trying' customers. Based on a PowerPoint presentation to help people understand the relationship between perceptions, beliefs, emotions and behaviours. Partly drawing on some of the stress avoidance material, it includes an introduction to techniques that can help people to lower their personal tension and adopt constructive thinking styles.

Designed by Stuart Watkins Senior Psychologist for Scotland 0131 22214360

## **The Effective Worker: Skills and approaches for effective working**

**Purpose** To achieve your best performance (individually and within teams) while maintaining an appropriate work-life balance and managing uncomfortable pressures. This workshop introduces principles that provide new perspectives applicable to professional and personal life, while addressing current issues and challenges faces by teams, and uses these as a starting point. The intervention can be delivered via part or whole-day sessions or consultancy responding to your current team needs.

Designed and delivered by Janet Thomas, Regional Psychologist 0115 9895738 (East Midlands Region) and Joyce Henderson, Regional Psychologist 0207 2114116(London/South East).

## **Avoiding Stress: A seminar for dedicated people in high-pressure jobs**

**Purpose** To increase your understanding of stress, help you recognise stress, and help you avoid the hazards of stress. The seminar is delivered by the use of a PowerPoint presentation and involves some group discussion as well as the opportunity to practice the relaxation technique. It should last approximately two and a half hours. The first half of the workshop focuses on recognising the symptoms of stress, understanding why physiological changes occur and the resulting negative impact on performance and health. The second half of the workshop focuses upon a range of techniques to avoid stress deflecting us from our purpose. These include physical techniques to lower the threat response, techniques to control and vary our emotional response and ways to lessen the impact of external events.

Designed by Stuart Watkins Senior Psychologist for Scotland 0131 22214360, Alan Beresford Regional Psychologist North East Region 0191 2114331 and Fiona MacFarlane Regional Psychologist North West Region 0161 8731280.

## **Preventing Stress and Living with Uncertainty**

**Purpose** A one-day workshop, which aims to improve the ability of staff to cope with the perceived problem areas of pressure and stress. Covers issues around the symptoms of physiological and psychological stress, the biological basis of stress reactions, triggers of the stress response and techniques for preventing stress responses.

Designed by Alan Beresford Regional Psychologist North East Region 0191 2114331. Also delivered by Stuart Watkins Senior Psychologist for Scotland 0131 22214360.

## Stress Prevention Workshop

**Purpose** A one-day workshop, which includes discussions of typical responses to fear, anxiety and pressure. Recognising signs of stress in ourselves. Coping styles e.g. maladaptive and adaptive coping. Breaking habitual response patterns (reframing). Exercise, nutrition, recreation – stress inducers and stress reducers. Practical techniques/exercises for relieving typical ‘stress symptoms’ such as headaches, neck and shoulder tension, back pain etc. A guided deep relaxation session.

Designed by Lorraine Morgan Regional Psychologist London. 0207 2114047

## Other Resources - Reading and Listening

### Books:

Burns, D.D. (1989). *The Feeling Good Handbook*. A Plume Book. ISBN 0-452-26174-0

Beck, A.T. (1976). *Cognitive Therapy and the Emotional Disorders*. New York. International Universities Press.

Charlesworth, E.A and Nathan, R.G (1993) *Stress Management*. Souvenir Press.

Cooper, C and Straw, A (1993) *Successful Stress Management in a Week*. Hodder & Stoughton.

Davis, M, Eshelman, E. R. and McKay, M (1989) *The Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook*. New Harbinger Publications.

Ditzler, Jinny (1994) *Your Best Year Yet*. Thorsons : Harper Collins Publishers.

Ellis, A. and Harper, R. (1975). *A New Guide to Rational Living*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J. Prentice-Hall

Fontana, D (1989) *Managing Stress*. BPS

Frankl, Viktor (1991) *Man's Search for Meaning*. Hodder and Stoughton.

Goleman, D (1996) *Emotional Intelligence*. Bloomsbury.

Helmstetter, Shad (1986) *What To Say When You Talk to Yourself*. Thorsons

Holden, Robert (1998) *Happiness Now*. Hodder and Stoughton.

Holden, Robert (1993) *Laughter the Best Medicine*. Thorsons..

Lindenfield, Gael (1993) *Managing Anger*. Thorsons.

- Pawlak, Dr L (1995) *Appetite: The Brain Body Connection*.
- Robbins, Anthony (1994) *Giant Steps*. A Fireside Book : Simon and Schuster.
- Scott Peck, M (1978) *The Road Less Travelled*. Arrow New Age.
- Seligman, Martin (1990) *Learned Optimism*. Pocket Books.
- Schabracq. M et al (2001). *Occupational Health Psychology : the challenge of workplace stress*. BPS Books, Leicester.
- Thayer, R.E. (1996). *The Origin of Everyday Moods*. Oxford University Press.
- Treacy, D (1993) *Successful Time Management in a Week*. Hodder & Stoughton.
- Walen, S.R., DiGiuseppe and Wessler R.L. (1980). *A Practitioner's Guide to Rational Emotive Therapy*. Oxford University Press. ISBN 0-19-502668-3
- Warren, E and Toll, C (1994) *The Stress Workbook*. Nicholas Brealey Publishing.
- Williams, S (1994) *Managing Pressure for Peak Performance*. Kogan Page.

### **Audio Tapes:**

- Obtain them from retail outlets e.g. W.H. Smith and Motorway Shops
- Covey, Stephen (1989). *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. Simon and Schuster.
- Jeffers, Susan. (1993) *Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway*. Simon Schuster Audio Tape.
- Jeffers, Susan (1996) *End the Struggle and Dance With Life*. Hodder Audio Books
- Robbins, Anthony (1991) *Awaken the Giant Within*. Simon & Schuster Audio

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