

# HOW TO HANDLE STRESS BY MANAGING YOUR LEVELS (PART ONE)?

By Craig Lock

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"We share what we know, so that others may grow".

\* bad writing - enough "outs, out of it, Craig"

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Stress is a natural and unavoidable feature of modern life. When the pressures of life become too much and we can't cope, stress operates like a screw gradually turning tighter and tighter. Often we don't realise that we are under stress - until the pressure becomes too much and the lid starts lifting... then we crack. Humans are vulnerable and live under an optimum level of stress every day - they often don't know how to cope, when the pressure builds up too much...but what can we do about it to make our lives easier?

### HOW TO COPE WITH STRESS?

Listen to your own alarm system. There are abundant challenges, demands and opportunities in modern living; but these often cause frustration and exasperation. Your first step is to be aware that you are under stress. Make a list

of all of all the major stress areas in your everyday life. (My what a big list!). Then armed with this knowledge, make an honest commitment to changes in your life. By identifying the causes and being open to change, you can at least hope for improvement.

#### FIND THE CAUSE.

CALL IT BY NAME, THEN YOU CAN ELIMINATE IT.

The key, I believe, is ACCEPTANCE.

People suffering from severe stress should seek help from a doctor or therapist. Therapists help the patient to feel differently about things. In other words, they get them to have a different perspective. Persons suffering from stress might do small tasks to give them a feeling of accomplishment before returning to the work-force. All these techniques can make people grow; just like plants don't grow, unless they are watered and cared for.

#### WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT STRESS?

Look at your life and try to find the main cause(es) of your stress. What external event or situation is causing the problem? Or is it just your perception? Is it physical, emotional or professional? Self knowledge means self help; so that once you can identify the cause of your distress, you can eliminate it. Remember that for you to be happy, all three areas of your life (ie. emotional, spiritual and intellectual) need to be satisfied. You need BALANCE in your life. The first step is ACCEPTANCE: admit that you are under stress and not coping with life, as well as you should. Once you accept this, the next step is committing yourself to take ACTION to relieve the problem. Making that decision to take action is probably the hardest for you. It is best to use a combination of strategies to combat moderate stress (the result of daily wear and tear on the body).

Possible action plans are as follows:

1. EXERCISE regularly. A healthy, flexible body makes for a healthy, alert mind. Being physically active stimulates energy levels in the brain (through the chemical serotonin, or something like that) and allows an outlet for your frustrations.
2. Keep BUSY; this takes your mind off the problem. It is the best antidote to deal with the problem, instead of worrying about it.
3. Take time for yourself to RELAX, MEDITATE and VISUALISE. Don't let trivial problems build up and get the better of you. A quiet body is more prone to recovery and health than an

angry one.

4. Keep a positive mental attitude (P.M.A), that you will overcome your stress. Your attitude will determine your thoughts and how well you cope with life: "As I think I am." Your attitude beats facts every time. Haven't I said that phrase before?

5. Watch your DIET carefully. Eat plenty of healthy foods: fruit, fresh 'veggies' and vitamins (especially B and C). Cut down on stimulants, like caffeine and nicotine; both these are drugs that build up your resistance. Also cut down on sugar, fats and your salt intake.

6. COMMUNICATE with a person close to you. Open your heart to those nearest and dearest to you. Don't suffer in silence. John Donne said "No man is an island unto himself." (And a few women too!). Set aside specific times to communicate and talk honestly. Share your thoughts, worries, feelings, dreams, disappointments and problems... and doesn't life have enough of them!

7. Let go of your EMOTIONS. Cry if you want to. It's natural and will help the healing process. This applies to "macho" men also, who are socialised to keep their emotions inside.

8. Pray to God for the answers to your stress problem, if you are religious, or "a spiritual" person . You WILL get the answers via your subconscious mind, your intuition - our connecting link with our Creator, a Supreme Being, Spirit.

Finally,

9. Keep your sense of HUMOUR and be HAPPY.

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This extract is from Craig's first published book HANDBOOK TO SURVIVE - a collection of writings on various subjects to help every man or woman survive in a rapidly changing, uncertain world. To order HANDBOOK, click on:

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