

THE
PROFESSIONAL'S
**STRESS
RELIEF**
HANDBOOK

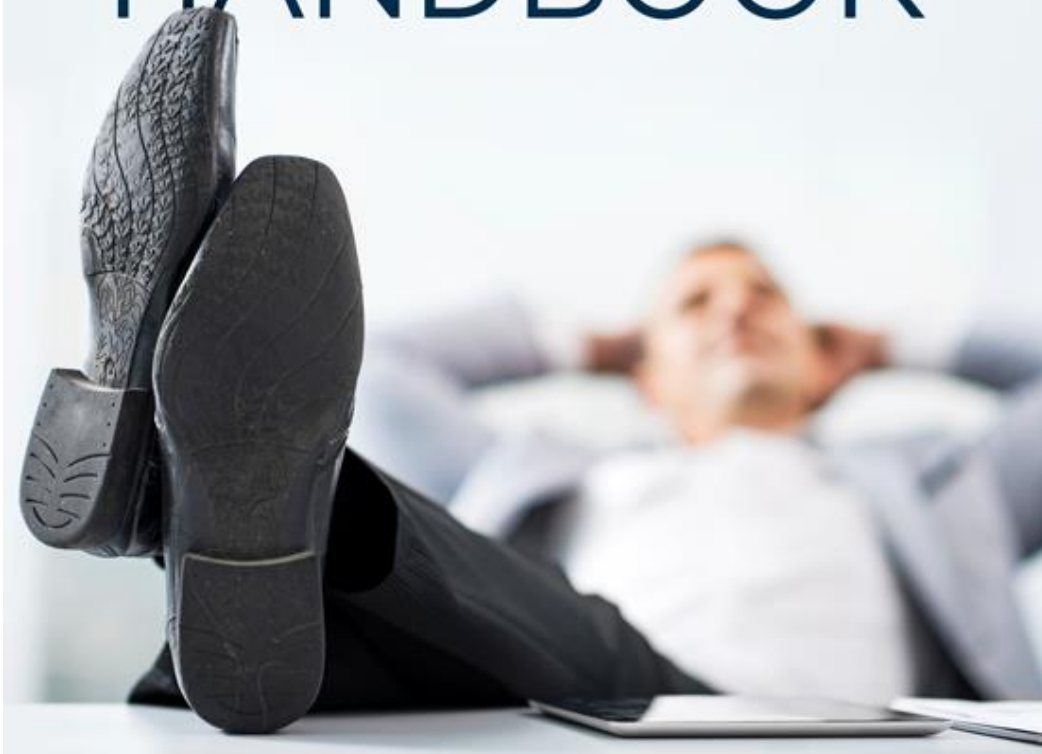


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Chapter 1: Introduction

The Professional's Stress Relief Handbook

How have you been managing your stress lately?

Every professional knows one thing is for certain: when extreme stress strikes, productivity, family life and even one's social life can all suffer terribly.

Severe stress can render even the most diligent career person angry and unproductive. This change in a person's mental state and behavior can last for days or even weeks, depending on the nature of the stress and how it is being managed.

What is stress management?

Stress management is considered one of the most useful tools that a professional can use to improve his overall health and emotional wellbeing.

Individuals who are constantly exposed to numerous stressors often experience acute migraines, elevated blood pressure, stomach problems and even anger issues. These are actually clear manifestations of excessive stress.

Can a person actually beat stress?

The good news is that stress isn't actually that powerful. Stress is a natural response to a perceived problem, threat or danger. It's your body's way of ensuring that you can run away or fight in case you were in actual, physical danger.

The problem with our body's natural stress response is that it cannot differentiate between real, physical danger and situations that are simply negatively interpreted by the mind.

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So even if you're just stuck in heavy traffic, your body can continually send chemical signals to prolong the psychological and physical stress.

Over a long period of time, all the stress that you have been experiencing can take a toll on your physical wellbeing and mental health. Your personality and behavior patterns can also change because you feel frustrated, trapped or angry all the time.

Are you ready to beat down stress for good?

If you're tired of being stressed all the time, then this volume may have reached you just in time. As professionals, we need to remain strong, healthy and happy in order to progress in our chosen fields.

You can't do any of these things if your stress level is always out of control. You can't have a productive day at work and a happy evening with the family if you feel like your mind has been pummeled endlessly by nameless pressures, anxieties and worries.

If you want to regain the older, happier you, then another thing is for certain: you need to start reining in the stress that has been ruling over your life.

You have to regain control of your life so you can begin enjoying it without the shadow of stress. There are effective and long-term solutions that you can begin applying today so that stress will no longer rule your life.

If you have managed this long with toxic levels of stress, you can definitely start applying methods that will remove that stress from your life – perhaps for good! It is my genuine desire to help anyone who wishes to conquer their stress permanently.

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What's the first step in successful stress management?

The first step is to acknowledge that you are having problems with excessive stress in your life and you now recognize that you have to start managing it because your health may already be suffering from it.

The next step is to learn about effective stress management techniques so you can finally get organized and more importantly, commit to this new endeavor.

Stress management requires a bit of effort in order to work, but the rewards are endless and truly worth your time and effort.

The third and final step is to plan and take action. You need to set goals for yourself and reward yourself when you attain those stress management goals. Rewarding yourself will help keep you motivated and can also help you forget your old stress-related habits.

Getting stressed is a harmful habit, but it's a habit, nonetheless!

Many people will find this unbelievable or even impossible, but being stressed is actually a conscious choice. Our stress response is actually triggered by our thoughts and emotions. If you are a relatively normal and healthy individual with no mental illness, then there's no reason not to be able to control your conscious response to stressful situations.

I know that a lot of you are thinking that I'm "off my rocker" for thinking that stress is a choice or even a habit. However, modern studies of stress and its origins and effects on the human body show that the actual stress response that you experience is the final chain in a long process that starts when you perceive something as stressful.

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When a person perceives something as stressful, negative emotions begin to surface and he begins to suffer from psychological stress.

When you are psychologically stressed and your negative emotions are running high, that is the time when your body responds to your mental and emotional states by releasing chemicals that trigger the **physiological stress response**.

The book that you are reading now will help you prevent stress and managing it if you're already experiencing it. Read the techniques, take note of the strategies but most importantly, start applying the things that you learn as soon as you can!

Assumptions:

This eBook assumes the following:

1. That you are looking for ways to combat stress so you can feel happier and more relaxed at home, at work or even at school.
2. That you will not be using this book as a medical reference or as a substitute for any medical advice from a healthcare professional.
3. That you are open to new ideas and are willing to try new techniques that will help you beat stress for good.

Chapter 2: Relaxation Techniques

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How does prolonged stress manifest in the human body?

As you may already know, stress isn't just a state of mind that can be cast aside or ignored. Stress is an actual *physiological emergency state* that is influenced by hormones and chemical messengers in the body. When a person is stressed, both his mind and body are in an emergency state.

If you were in physical danger, stress would be useful as the adrenaline in your bloodstream will help you escape or fight. However, if you are constantly stressed about things that are not really dangers or threats to your physical wellbeing, then the stress can eventually erode both your physical and mental health.

What are the signs of excessive stress?

If you experience physical symptoms such as cluster headaches, migraines, nervous tremors, shoulder pain and bruxism (teeth grinding), these may be indicative of your present level of physiological stress.

Of course, these symptoms may also be a sign that you are sick so to be on the safe side, consult with your doctor if these symptoms don't go away even after you've successfully managed your stress levels.

What is body scanning?

Before trying any physical or mental relaxation technique, it would be good to know the individual manifestations of stress in your body. A "body scan" is a simple process of observing and identifying stress signs on your body.

You can ask a friend or family member to perform a body scan for you. If no one is available you can also perform a body scan on yourself, by using the following guide questions:

Body Scan Guide Questions

1. Do you have a headache at the moment?
2. Are your forehead and eyebrows relaxed or tense?
3. Are your nostrils flared or normal?
4. Are your lips relaxed or pursed tightly together?
5. Are you grinding your teeth or is your mouth closed tightly together?
6. Is your lower jaw relaxed or is it tense and clenched?
7. Are your shoulders held straight with muscles loose or are your shoulder muscles tense and clenched?
8. Are your leg muscles relaxed right now or does it seem like they're about to run?
9. Are your feet at a normal angle in relation to the floor or are they somewhat at a skewed angle, with your toes curling inward?
10. Do you feel any tension or pain on your back or any other point in your body?

Assessment: If you answered yes to more than two body scan guide questions, you are suffering from moderate to severe stress.

What are simple yet effective ways to become more relaxed?

Physical relaxation is one of the easiest and most effective ways of countering physiological stress. I'm going to share with you some methods that have been most efficient in draining stress away:

Deep Breathing Method

What is deep breathing?

Deep breathing is actually our natural breathing rhythm. You can see it clearly in babies and small children. They breathe with their bellies, not with their chests. You used to deep-breathe when you were young, too!

Deep breathing is an excellent relaxation method because it frees the chest muscles from excessive and unnecessary movement and also introduces a higher concentration of oxygen to the bloodstream. With more oxygen, you can think faster and work more efficiently, too.

It's time that we all gave up on shallow chest breathing in favor of the more natural method of deep breathing. Here are the steps:

1. Find a quiet place to lie down. If you don't want to go to the bedroom, you can lie down on the living room. Just place a small blanket on the floor and use a small pillow to support your head.
2. Place one hand on top of your belly so you can feel your breath going in and out of your body. Your hand will also detect if you are breathing through your belly or through your chest.
3. Take a deep breath and allow your hand to rise 2-3 inches. Hold your breath for three counts. 1... 2... 3... Exhale slowly through your nostrils. Breathe in again through your nostrils. Your mouth is for food, not for breathing so keep it closed for now.

4. Repeat the exercise for 5 to 10 minutes or until you feel completely refreshed. It is common for people to feel sleepy when they try this technique because it is truly very relaxing.

Progressive Relaxation

What is progressive relaxation?

Progressive relaxation is another easy and powerful way to relax your body anywhere, anytime.

This method can be used alongside deep breathing. If you can perform conscious deep breathing while accomplishing progressive relaxation, your mind will be clearer, sharper and definitely more relaxed by the time your relaxation session is done.

1. **You can perform progressive relaxation while seated or lying on your bed or on the floor.** You're free to choose either of these two positions. However, I highly recommend that you stay away from well-lit places or areas in your house where there is a lot "traffic" or people walking about.

2. Begin this technique by closing your eyes and focusing on your head. Clench your forehead as hard as you can and hold the clenched position for three to five counts. 5... 4... 3... 2... 1... Release. Repeat the process three more times and with each repetition, try to prolong the clenching. Your forehead will feel very relaxed afterward.

3. Let's move on to your eyes. Clench your eyes as hard as you can and count backward from 5 before releasing. 5... 4... 3... 2... 1... Release. The purpose of progressive relaxation is to experience muscular relaxation in the most common stress points.

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4. Repeat the process on your biceps, forearms, hands, thighs, calves and toes. Make sure that you try to clench the muscles for as long as you can to magnify the feeling of relaxation when you release.
5. Feel free to sleep after you've performed progressive relaxation. You will wake up refreshed and relaxed after this session.

Self-Massage

Massage is one of the oldest relaxation techniques in the world. In Eastern medicine, massage is one of the best ways to access the natural "chi" or energy flow in the body. It is believed that through massage, "chi" flow can be restored or balanced once again.

1. Find a quiet place to relax. Sit down and begin massaging your forehead. Close your eyes and gently knead your forehead with your two fingers. Use circular motions to get the blood flowing in this region. Move down gently to the furrow of the eyebrows and massage this area with smooth, gliding strokes.
2. Place both hands on your cheeks and massage your cheeks using light, circular strokes. Keep your eyes closed and let your hands relax your stressed facial muscles.
3. Place one hand on your nape and very gently rub this area until any tense muscles begin to relax. Do not apply too much pressure in this area as you may accidentally hit sensitive nerves.
4. Place your right hand on your left shoulder and massage from the topmost point and all the way down to your elbow. You can also massage your forearm if you wish.
5. You can perform light stretching after your personal massage to ease any tension or pain on your legs and back.

Chapter 3: Time Management Demystified

How can you become more mindful of your use of time?

Many people struggle with making all their activities fit into a 12 or 18 hour timeframe. I've met my fair share of professionals who say that they would be much happier if there were 5 to 10 extra hours per day so they can finish everything they have to do.

I completely understand these sentiments because there was a time that I too suffered from poor time management.

I was working for a publishing company then and always felt like my hair was on fire. I felt like I was working more and more each day but I also noticed that I was falling behind on my tasks daily.

Finally I had enough with the missed deadlines and the endless stress brought by my lack of time management and I sat down and finally devised ways that I could fit everything within my actual schedule. I'm going to share those nuggets of wisdom with you in this chapter.

Time Management Tips

1. Assess Your Current Time Management Skills

How can you begin remedying your use of time?

The first step in fixing or improving your handling of time is by making a full assessment of your activities each day. List down everything that you do from the moment that you wake up and note how much time you spend with each activity.

Be sure to include even the small activities such as checking your email or eating breakfast.

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Also note what else you're doing while performing certain activities and what you feel at that time. Make a full assessment for a whole week before sitting down and reviewing what you've written.

When seven days are up, read the activity logs that you've created and note how much time you were actually spending on important activities and how much time you spent on non-essential activities.

Were you spending a sufficient amount of time on urgent obligations and important activities?

How much time were you spending "hanging out" or doing mundane things when you were supposed to be working on something else?

Mark the activities that you think deserve less time and set a fixed time for each. For example, if it takes you more than 1 hour each morning to read and respond to your emails, try to halve that time.

If you spend about 40 minutes just walking around the house instead of doing your chores, reduce that "rest time" to 15 minutes. Continue reducing the time spent on non-essential activities and create a new schedule based on your modifications.

2. Maximize Productivity Time

How can you be more productive in the office?

You don't have to bring home work if you are able to maximize your time in the office. Make a commitment to spend 95% of your office hours on work alone, with only a small fraction of rest time to keep your mind fresh.

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Avoid “time stagnation” or pausing work for long periods of time. You will only feel frustrated after these long pauses because you will fall behind your work.

By finishing everything that needs to be done in a timely manner, you can be sure that you will have sufficient time for rest and relaxation when you go home.

Your mind will also be relaxed because you won't be worrying endlessly about the work that you left unfinished in the office. Also, make it a habit to “leave the office in the office”. Don't bring home your work persona as this will only cause conflict at home, especially if you already have a family to take care of.

3. Plan Your Day Before Starting It

Why should you write a day plan?

Planning your day can help eliminate distractions and can also help you focus on the most important and most urgent obligations. If you suffer from chronic forgetfulness, creating a day schedule is just what the doctor ordered.

To make your day plan more effective, be sure to put high priority items at the very top with important details included. This will ensure that you won't forget to accomplish chores or tasks that require your utmost attention.

4. Assert Your Right to Work

Why should you be more assertive at work?

If you don't have 5 minutes to spare, don't be afraid to inform people that you have to finish something and you must not be disturbed. You must be assertive so that people will be more respectful of your time and schedule.

If you allow everyone to call or disturb you, you will only become frustrated at all the work that isn't being done because people keep disturbing you with their own concerns. Unless something is extremely urgent, emphasize that you have a schedule to follow and that you are avoiding negative consequences of falling behind on what you're presently doing.

5. Don't Procrastinate

How harmful is procrastination?

Procrastination is the modern man's temporary balm for stressful work situations.

Procrastination may give you a temporary reprieve from stress, but the "payback" will be double: you may end up having too little time to complete what you have to do and you will feel guilty or frustrated that you didn't start sooner.

Instead of procrastinating, sit down and think why you don't want to start the task at hand. Be honest with yourself so you can identify the problem. Once you have identified the problem, proceed to finding a solution for it. For example, if you feel overwhelmed at a certain task, try to find someone who can help you with it.

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If you are exhausted, don't procrastinate indefinitely – relax and start on the task as soon as you've recovered from fatigue. There should always be a plan of action in place to ensure that none of your time is wasted on non-essential or unproductive pursuits.

Chapter 4: The Hole of Negativity

How can you conquer negative thinking?

Negative thinking is one of the leading causes of stress both in the workplace and at home. It's important that you change the way you think about situations and circumstances to avoid falling into trap of stressing out over minor issues.

By being mindful of how you think and respond to different situations, you can begin to modify your psychological stress profile, which has a direct impact on the frequency and intensity of your physiological stress response.

Negative thinking can easily drain your energy and cause you to worry endlessly about things that can either solve or just ignore for the sake managing your stress levels.

I collectively call these mistakes in a person's thought process as the "Hole of Negativity" because once you start thinking using any of these patterns, you automatically fall into a seemingly endless tunnel of negative thinking.

What are common negative thinking patterns?

Here are the most common thinking patterns that must be avoided if you want to give yourself relief from mindless worrying, anxiety and anger:

1. Magnifying Small Inconveniences

I often see this pattern in professionals who seem to be allergic to every little inconvenience in life. Examples of these small inconveniences are: waiting a few minutes for a parking spot to open, being put on hold by an operator, dropping a pen somewhere and

not being able to find it, missing a game on TV, running out of ink while printing, etc.

When a person irrationally magnifies the scope and importance of a hassle or inconvenience, he automatically opens himself up for severe levels of stress. The solution to this bad thinking pattern is easy:

- I. *Ask yourself: is this really that urgent or important?*
- II. *If the answer is no, then stop magnifying its importance and accept that it's just a minor problem and you don't have to be stressed anymore.*

2. Exaggerating Negative Situations

When a person says "I cannot tolerate/stand _____", that person's stress level is probably shooting up like a geyser. This thought pattern is another form of distortion or magnification where a person overemphasizes the negative aspects of a situation for the sake of being angry or frustrated.

This type of behavior is actually rooted in a person's beliefs or values. For example, if a person is used to working in a fast-paced environment, he may feel continually frustrated in situations where he has to wait or stand in line. Sure, standing in line is not fun at all. But should it trigger your stress response?

To help you evaluate yourself (assuming that you have this thought pattern), here are some guide questions:

- I. *Do you really find the situation intolerable or do you simply mean that you dislike what you're experiencing at the moment?*
- II. *Is your response to the situation an overreaction? If so, what has your behavior contributed to the situation? Has it contributed anything positive or useful?*

3. The Doomsday Effect

The “Doomsday Effect” is a hybrid of fantasizing and worrying at the same time. When a person resorts to this type of thought pattern, he begins simulating horrible things in his mind and he begins to worry about them, too!

For example, a man who is just relaxing at home may begin to worry about rising gas prices or suddenly being in the middle of a gang fight while walking home. He may also think of really unusual problems such as a mega-tsunami or a magnetic pulse disabling the city's power grid.

This form of daydreaming can be extremely harmful because the effects will probably linger until late in the day or may even spill onto the next day. To quell this habit, you can use the following rationalizations:

I. *Am I really going to experience _____ any time soon?*

II. *How likely is it for this scenario to actually play out?*

III. *What are the chances that I will encounter this misfortune at all?*

IV. *If I only had 1 day left on this Earth, would this still matter to me?*

4. Unreasonable Generalizations

Often when we pass negative judgments on other people, we don't feel relieved - we feel even more frustrated because the negative judgment makes us feel that we have been wronged even more.

For example, say a man was cut off by a teenager on a large motorcycle. The driver in car felt afraid for a second because he thought there was going to be a collision. When the motorcycle disappears, he begins fuming at the motorcycle driver's "ineptness". Statements like "this town is full of drunk bozos!" can be heard from the driver's side of the car.

If you find yourself making generalizations that only make you even more stressed than usual, examine your judgments and try to reconcile your judgments with reality.

Reality has definite limits; for example, it's highly unlikely that a whole town full of thousands of people would be driving the same way as the motorcycle driver in the scenario.

Once you begin examining your own thoughts and judgments, you will immediately see that passing over-generalized judgments only harm you because they make you angry and frustrated.

5. Wild Emotions

Our emotions represent our raw mental states - but they should never be used as the sole basis for decisions and actions. If you do, you will only be stressed with any negative consequences that come from substituting your good judgment for your emotions.

For example, a husband may feel jealous that his wife is hanging out with old friends and he may decide that he's no longer important in the family and a divorce is the only logical recourse. This extreme example shows how arbitrary and emotional reasoning can cause gigantic negative problems where there should be none.

When stress turns to panic...

For many people, stress is the trigger for an ever bigger health problem; panic and anxiety attacks.

If you're currently suffering from anxiety and panic attacks, along with stress, then it can often feel like there's no real hope of a solution.

Many self-help advice will tell you to "think positive thoughts" and "breathe through your nose" or "think rationally about the situation" but seldom do these things actually work.

Luckily, there is one glimmer of hope.

From doctors to soldiers, teachers to stay at home parents, police officers to CEOs, Barry McDonagh has been working with thousands of people to banish anxiety and panic attacks once and for all.

His unique approach is purely holistic, and designed for instant fixes, as well as long term resolution from anxiety and panic.

[Get his free audio program today, and start your path to a panic free life, starting tonight...](#)