

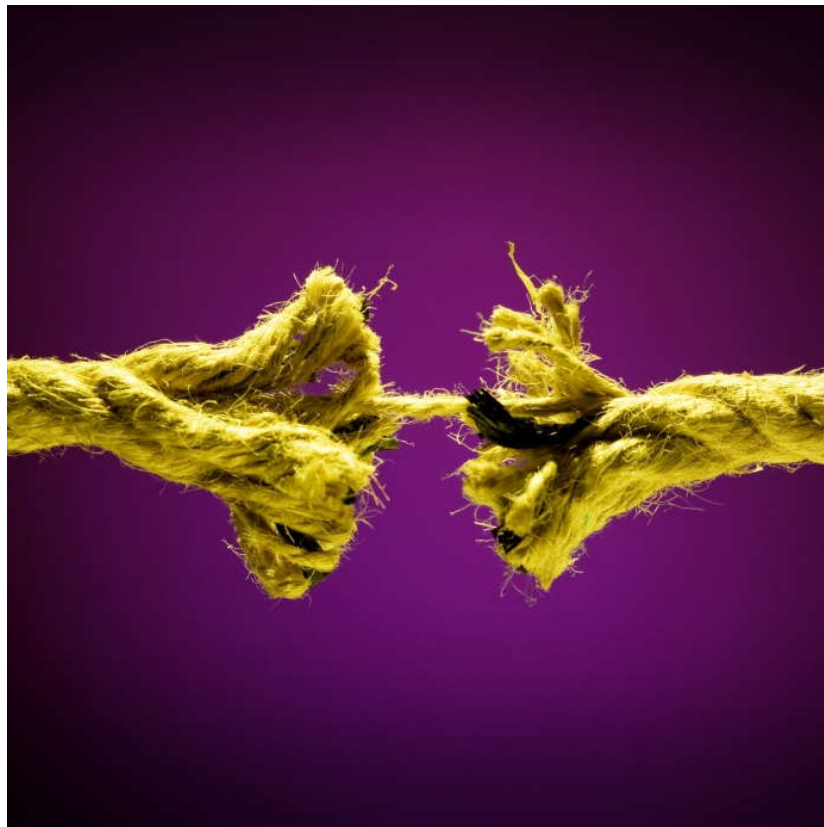


Stress Management Society
...from distress to de-stress

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Combating Stress with a Balanced Nutritional Diet

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About the Book and Stress

Stress is a common problem that we all have to deal with in our lives, some more than others. There are many factors that bring stress upon the body, such as the job of the person and certain events that happen in their life. A common talking point discussed on the subject of stress is the food a person consumes as part of their daily lifestyle. Unhealthy eating patterns will only result in an increased level in stress, followed by further problems in the future if not resolved.

We assume that if you have found this book, you are after some form of help in reducing the level of stress in your body. This book discusses how incorporating the right foods into your lifestyle can reduce the amount of stress you currently suffer from. With a healthy eating plan in your lifestyle accompanied with a good stress management program, you can prolong your life span and reduce the likelihood of stress-related illnesses damaging your body. The book also emphasises on having a strong psychological mentality. A positive mental attitude and a strong will is paramount in reducing the strain on your body that stress causes.

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1. Introduction to Stress

Before we begin to cover the topic of reducing stress, we must first look over the illness in detail so you are fully aware of the problems that stress can cause in the future.

1.1 What is Stress?

Stress is a common term used by people when they encounter a problem in their life. This problem could be anything from the work environment to the death of a family member. However, when you hear someone mention that they are 'stressed out', the likelihood is that this person does not know the full extent of what stress actually is.

Stress, in biological terms refers to the after effects of a person failing to respond properly to an event that has occurred in their life, whether physical or emotional. Imagine a person encountering a problem and bottling up these emotions inside without releasing them. This behaviour brings stress upon the body and gets worse with time.

Stress is shown to happen in three stages. The first is an initial state of alarm which produces a rush of adrenaline in the persons' body. The second stage is a short term 'resistance' mechanism that your body sets up to cope with the problem. The final stage is a state of exhaustion in the body.

1.2 The Three Stages of Stress





As mentioned previous, there are three stages of stress that the body will come across. These stages are the initial alarm, then resistance, followed by exhaustion.

1.2.1 The Initial Alarm

Alarm is the first stage of stress. When an event occurs, the body's initial response is to set itself into an alarm state. In this state, the body will produce adrenaline and give the person a chance to either respond to the event, or hold back (otherwise known as the fight or flight response)

1.2.2 The Resistance Stage

The second stage of stress is when the body goes into a state of **Resistance**. This happens if there is no response to the event causing the stress. If there is no response, the body forms a mechanism that learns to cope with the event, rather than resolve the situation. Even if it seems like the body is coping with the stressful event, its resources are gradually being drained and there will eventually come a time where the body's resistance will fade away.

1.2.3 The Exhaustion Stage

The **Exhaustion** stage occurs when the body has used up all its resources (from coping with the stress) and can no longer behave in the manner that it normally does. This is where you will start to see the first symptoms of stress. If the situation is not taken care of, stress can deal long term damage to the body and the immune system.



1.3 Symptoms of Stress

You will know you are suffering from stress when you start to notice changes in your body. These changes/symptoms indicate that you are in the exhaustion stage of stress.

The following are some of the symptoms that you may encounter when you suffer from stress.

- Muscle tension
- Loss of focus/concentration
- Headaches
- Increased heart rate
- Having a short temper
- An edgy personality
- Irritations (Rashes, Eczema etc.)
- Loss of appetite

The above are symptoms that occur when the body is in the initial period of the exhaustion stage. If the stress is not treated, it is possible for further damage to be inflicted on the body, resulting in degeneration. External features such as ulcers and sores can appear. Stress can also inflict long term illnesses to the body. Examples of these illnesses include

- Diabetes
- Depression
- Mental health problems
- Heart/Cardiovascular problems
- Bowel/Digestive Problems

1.4 Summary

The information shown in this chapter should be enough to persuade you to take stress seriously as an illness. Stress really is a silent killer as most people don't realise, or even think that stress can be harmful when actually, it is quite the opposite. It is very unwise to disregard stress on your body. If not treated properly, further down the line you will encounter severe, long term illnesses.

This chapter has provided only a basic overview of stress. To hear more about stress, visit the Stress Management Society at <http://www.stress.org.uk/>.



Important points learned from this chapter

- Stress is caused by the after effects of a person failing to respond properly to an event that has occurred in their life.
- Stress is shown to happen in three stages.
 1. **Alarm** (Fight or Flight)
 2. **Resistance** (Body learning to cope with the situation)
 3. **Exhaustion** (Body has used all its resources, degeneration)
- If your body is in the exhaustion stage of stress, you will start to develop symptoms such as muscle tension and an increased heart rate.
- If you leave stress untreated, it can cause long term illnesses such as cardiovascular problems and diabetes.

Now that you have a reasonable understanding of what stress is, the next chapter discusses the link between stress and nutrition deficiencies. Incorporating a balanced, healthy, nutritional eating plan is a vital component when preventing/reducing stress on the body.

2. The Link between Stress and Nutritional Insufficiency

One of the main issues with stress is that it can cause unhealthy eating habits. This applies mainly to people who are always on the go and lead a busy lifestyle. People that fall into this category often endure large amounts of stress and have no time to fit a balanced nutrition around their busy schedule. Additionally, stress makes the body crave foods that are high in fats and sugars. This flaw in eating, in time will inflict a greater stress on the body, plus other problems that pose a threat to your physical and mental health.



2.1 Poor Eating Habits



When a person becomes overwhelmed with stress, a common reaction is a sudden urge to eat food. The majority of the time, foods consumed in this situation will be 'convenience foods' that are considered a quick fix to nullify stress. The theory of a quick fix is entirely false however, as these foods/drinks only worsen the problem. Consuming foods that are of a 'junk' nature actually increase the volume of stress on your body. The following are common examples of how people react with food when they become overwhelmed with stress.

2.1.1 Fast Food Intake

It is common in this day and age for people to eat out rather than stay home and cook meals, generally because people don't want to cook after a hard day at work. Work is normally the biggest cause of this, but there can be countless reasons for why people do not want to cook, for example family problems.

The problem with this convenience is that the foods consumed from a fast food shop/restaurant play a hindrance on your overall health. It is also an expensive habit that can cost you money in the long haul. Money problems also increase stress levels.

2.1.2 Forgetting/Skipping Meals

It is important to eat three meals a day and most people know this, but stress can have the effect of making people skip, or forget to eat their meals. People who are overly stressed tend to pick up this habit and find out that later on in the day they will become hungry, and more than likely resort to eating junk food to sort their hunger.



2.1.3 Coffee Intake

When under a lot of stress, people often burn the candle at both ends to try make ends meet. When they attempt this, they normally use coffee or other stimulants to assist them. The problem with coffee is that it contains caffeine which, if taken in large quantities can have negative side effects on the body. One of the main problems is that the person is using coffee to stay awake when rest is obviously required.

Drinking lots of coffee will eventually lead to a pattern of all day caffeine consumption. This pattern/addiction damages the body because it is working when it should be resting. Caffeine also has negative side effects on the brain and nervous system if taken in vast quantities.

2.1.4 Eating the Wrong Food Types

The problem people have when under stress is that they crave foods that are high in the nutrients which should be limited. This is down to the hormone called cortisol that is produced when under stress. A person that is stressed will generally go for foods that have high contents of fats and sugars.

2.1.5 Fad Dieting

When people become stressed, they tend to put on weight. This is due to the amount of cortisol produced which in turn, leads to a high amount of fatty foods consumed. Due to this problem, people try to lose weight quick by either going on fad diets, or cutting out food entirely. This can be a very dangerous choice to make as you are not getting all the vital nutrients you need for your body to function properly. The results may look good for you in the short run, but in the long term your body will suffer because of this.

2.1.6 Constantly Picking at Foods

When people become stressed, they notice that they begin to eat much more than they normally would. When a person is not stressed, they only tend to eat food when they are hungry (ideally this should only be three times a day). The situation is very different under stress; in fact it is quite the opposite. Under stress, a person will eat when they are not even hungry and constantly pick at fatty snacks.



2.2 How These Imbalances Affect the Body

The examples mentioned above are all bad eating habits that are influenced by stress. The most important issue to grasp is the harm that stress can inflict from bad nutrition. If you employ bad practices in your nutrition management while under stress, you invite the risk of seriously damaging your body. Even if your body does not feel any strain in the short term, it will defiantly catch up with you in the long run.

The following are of some of the effects of poor stress management.

2.2.1 Negative Hormonal Side Effects from Caffeine Intake

Too much caffeine can have a massive negative impact on your body when under stress. Although it can give you a quick boost when required, the fatigue will catch up once the caffeine has worn off. You should not need caffeine to focus, and if you do, this lack of focus is your body's way of telling you it needs rest. An over excess of caffeine can lead to negative effects such as restlessness, lapses of concentration and a decrease in your ability to be fully effective.

Caffeine also has a massive impact on the hormones in your body. The following hormones are increased under the influence of caffeine.

- **Adenosine** - Alerts you but causes sleep problems in the future.
- **Adrenaline** - Gives you an extra boost but will make you feel fatigued once the adrenaline has worn off.
- **Cortisol** - The Stress hormone. Makes you crave fatty foods.
- **Dopamine** - Initially makes the person feel good but once worn off, generates a low and possible dependence/addiction

2.2.2 Weight Issues

As mentioned, the amount of cortisol produced by stress gives the person a strong urge to divulge in foods that are high in carbohydrates, sugars and fats. This pattern of eating will result in excess fat being stored around the upper half of your body (mainly the abdomen). This type of fat around the abdomen can lead to serious health problems, mainly concerning the heart. Continued stress will only make this problem worse.

2.2.3 Poor Health and Immune System

Under stress, the body's natural defences can be severely affected and leave the person with a weaker immune system. This leaves the person more prone to contracting illnesses. If the stressed person falls ill, then this will only lead to an increased amount of stress inflicted on the body.



2.2.4 Imbalances in the Blood Sugar

When someone stressed does not eat the right amount of food or the correct amount of nutrients, they will start to encounter inconsistencies in their blood sugars. These inconsistencies lead to the person not behaving as they normally would. Examples include

- Tiredness
- Lapses of concentration
- Mood swings

If stress is not dealt with properly in the short term, the body will suffer in the long haul with blood sugar problems that are much more serious, such as diabetes.

2.3 Summary

It cannot be emphasised enough how important the link between stress and nutrition is. One of the key ingredients to good health, and probably most important is having a well balanced nutritional eating plan.

A balanced nutrition plays an important role when we are under stress. When stress occurs, a well balanced nutrition will boost our resistance against the effects that stress brings upon the body. It is important to recognise that when under stress, the nutrients that we have consumed will be drained at a much quicker rate than they are normally. Therefore it is important to constantly top up on vital nutrients.

The first thing a body tries to do after the initial (alarm) stage of stress is respond to the situation. Under the influence of stress, the body craves foods/drinks that maintain stress levels in the body. Such examples include sweets, caffeine and smoking.

The question is why does the body behave in such a manner? Referring to the first chapter, it states that the body goes into a resistance stage once the initial alarm period has not been responded to or resolved. What we can assume is the body believes these foods will increase, or bolster its resistance to stress so it does not go into the exhaustion stage. These foods do stimulate the body for a short period, but exhaustion will still occur and this short 'high' period will be followed by a longer lasting spell of fatigue.



Important points learned from this chapter

- Lack of nutrition will inflict a greater stress on the body, plus other problems that pose a threat to your physical and mental health.
- When a person becomes overwhelmed with stress, a common reaction is a sudden urge to eat food. The foods craved are 'junk' food (fats and sugars) that the body believes will bolster its resistance to stress.
- Stress causes unhealthy eating habits. The following are examples of such habits.
 1. Fast food intake.
 2. Forgetting/Skipping meals
 3. Coffee (caffeine) intake
 4. Eating the wrong food types
 5. Taking up quick fix (fad) diets
 6. Constantly picking at foods
- Bad practices in your nutrition management will invite the risk of seriously damaging your body. These are the following.
 1. Negative Hormonal Side Effects
 2. Weight Issues
 3. Poor Health and Immune System
 4. Imbalances in the Blood Sugar

When under stress, the body uses more essential nutrients than it normally would. After these resources are drained, the body starts to degenerate. Therefore it is vitally important that these nutrients are constantly 'topped' up to ensure the body is well protected to cope with stress and other areas of illness.

Now you have read this far, it must be clear to you that a well balanced nutrition will bolster your body's defences against stress and illness. A well balanced, nutritional management program is one of the best ways to combat the effects of stress.



3. Combating Stress with a Nutritional Management Program

The impact that stress can have on your health is very serious and can cause problems to every major system in your body. We have mentioned previous that improper means of dealing with stress can result in conditions such as heart disease, headaches, weight gain and cancer.

With the right nutrition, you can reduce the impact that stress has on your body and effectively repair any damage that has been done prior to this. What a balanced nutrition also does is prepare your body for stress that may be thrust upon your body in the future.

The following rules will assist you in keeping your body's natural defences up and make your body more resistant to stress.

- Good nutrition
- Good diet plan
- Avoiding certain foods
- Increasing 'immune system enhancing' nutrients
- Psychologically counteracting stress (Chapter 4)

Stress is going to happen at some point in a person's life and will most defiantly happen more than the once. However, as unavoidable as stress can sometimes be, it is always a choice. You can either let your body suffer from the effects of stress, or you can choose to do something about it. When stress occurs, incorporating a well balanced nutritional plan into your lifestyle will help you pull through any challenging times that you may come across.

3.1 Good Nutrition

We know that essential to an overall, healthy body is a good nutrition plan. Another effective feature of a healthy nutrition is the benefits that it can provide when coping with stress. It is imperative you provide your body with all necessary nutrients when going through a stressful period. If this task is not accomplished, your body will suffer because of this and will not be able to handle stress in an effective manner.



A wide variety of foods need to be consumed in order to remain healthy. This is because there is not one food available that contains all the necessary nutrients that you require. Therefore you need a selection of foods.



Nutrients that you need include minerals, vitamins, proteins, good fatty acids and energy that comes from foods containing carbohydrates, protein and fats. Consuming your required nutrients (typically between 40 and 60 nutrients) per day is essential to a healthy, well protected body.

There are many foods that you need to stay away from. Sugar is one of the main foods you need to disregard. The food itself contains no goodness or vital nutrients that we require. Sugar also gives the person a large burst of energy for a short period of time only. When this 'high' runs out, the person will suffer a giant comedown from this and suffer a lengthy 'low' period.

Moving on to alcohol and coffee, we must now discuss the B vitamins in your body. B vitamins are essential for coping with stress as they are used in building up your metabolism. Substances like alcohol and caffeine will drain these resources and affect the functionality of your brain.

Caffeine can be responsible for inducing the first stage of stress (Alarm Stage). When consumed under stress, the body uses reserve B vitamins so you have no resources for coping with the problem. Caffeine is also responsible for making people hyperactive and nervous. Because of this, the person's sleeping pattern is affected significantly.

If you have trouble controlling your stress and always feel tired, it is recommended that you look at your diet to see if you have any nutrient deficiencies. If the problem arises that you are lacking in a nutritional area, then you need to resolve this

problem. This can be easily rectified by changing your eating plan to compensate for the nutrients that you are lacking in. Another option is to take nutrient supplements.

When the body is under stress, it has been proven that the body uses up its resources until they are bare. The following are the main nutrients that the body will use up.

- **B vitamins:** These help the body cope with stress (build your metabolism) and control the whole nervous system
- **Proteins:** Assist in growth and tissue repair
- **A vitamins:** Essential for normal vision
- **C vitamins:** Protection of the immune system (antioxidants, diabetes protection etc.). Lowers the amount of cortisol in your body.
- **Magnesium:** Needed for a variety of tasks such as muscle relaxation, fatty acid formation, making new cells and heartbeat regulation.

In order to consume the following nutrients, a person needs to adopt some sort of eating plan or diet. Following a strict plan will strengthen the body against stress and other illnesses that are thrust upon the body.

3.2 Good Diet

One of the most important factors in reducing stress is having a well balanced diet. With a balanced diet and a correct nutritional management, your body will be well prepared for scenarios where stress is inflicted on the body.



Foods and drinks considered 'junk' or 'quick fix' inflict stress on the body. Their nature is to stimulate your body, even when your body does not have the resources



available for additional stimulation. Therefore, these foods and drinks are a direct cause of stress.

Although initially you will feel rejuvenated after consuming the following products, they will only last for a short while and in the long term, can actually do damage to your body.

- 1. Caffeine:** Caffeine is found in drinks such as coffee, tea and carbonated drinks. The problem with caffeine is that it forces the body to release adrenalin into the system, which causes stress. If caffeine is taken in small doses periodically, it can prove effective as it makes the body alert (think about the alarm stage of stress). If too much caffeine is consumed, then this can cause a high level of stress, high blood pressure and nervousness (think about the resistance and exhaustion stages of stress).
- 2. Sugar:** Sugar contains no vital nutrients whatsoever. It should therefore be totally disregarded if you are focusing on a diet. Too much sugar can force the body to use reserved resources. This will result in short term problems such as lack of concentration and fatigue. Sugar also forces the pancreas to over work. This can lead to problems in the long term, such as diabetes.
- 3. Fats:** In moderation, fats are essential to the body. However, you should avoid any foods that contain high volumes of saturated fats. These are the 'bad' fats that can lead to obesity, heart conditions and cancer.
- 4. Alcohol:** Alcohol has proven to be a worthwhile drug to consume if taken in moderation. People always say one small glass of wine a day can benefit areas in your body such as the heart. This statement is only true however when you are not under any stress. The trouble is that many people drink alcohol under stress, which in turn has the reverse effect on the body.

Alcohol will make the body release large amounts of adrenaline that result in nervousness, lack of sleep, anxiety and skin irritation. Alcohol will also increase the amount of fatty deposits around the heart when consumed under stress.

- 5. Smoking:** Cigarettes contain nicotine, which people take as a sedative. It would appear that smoking removes the presence of stress in the short term. However, the damage done is hidden initially and will appear again in the long



term, where the damage done will be more significant. Smoking is very harmful to the body and the benefits in the short term are completely eclipsed by the number of long term problems that a person can suffer from. Smoking is responsible for a number of cancers, tension, breathing illnesses and heart disease.

These are the elements that need to be discontinued from your lifestyle if you want a healthy diet. The foods/drinks/other mentioned will not remove stress and will only hide the initial problem for the short term. In the long run, these problems will become more apparent to the person and will be more serious.

***While on the subject**, we understand that it can be a struggle to meet these nutritional demands if you lead a hectic lifestyle. If this is the case, there are still many ways to meet your nutritional requirements. One option is to try a delivery diet company like the [Bodychef](#) for example, who will create for you a bespoke diet in relation to your nutrition requirements, saving you the extra stress of worrying about your diet.*

Removing these products and adopting a healthy, nutritionally balance diet will bolster your body's defences. A stronger body defence will provide a sterner protection against stress. As long as you know the better foods to eat, you are half way there to a healthy, well protected body. All the rest is down to attitude.

3.3 What we should eat more of

Now that the bad elements have been displayed, we will now cover the foods and drinks that should be consumed.

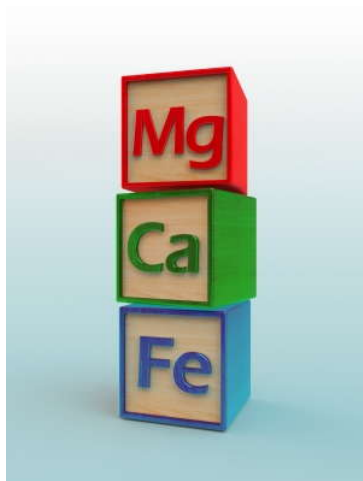
Although these foods are recommended, every person is different in taste. Therefore it is also important that you choose healthy foods you are going to enjoy. In doing this, you will find the task of dieting a lot easier to handle. After the stress has gone and your diet is finished, do not break off the healthy eating. It is fine to treat yourself now and then, but a prolonged period of healthy, nutritional eating will prepare your body for any future stressful events. The next time this occurs, your body will be more equipped to handle the situation.

When under stress, it is important to consume all important nutrients in order for your body to cope and function effectively. You can find these nutrients in a wide variety of foods.



- **B vitamins:** There are many B vitamin types, each as important as its counterpart. B vitamins can be found in foods such as seaweed and raw foods.
- **Proteins and Iron:** Meats, eggs, seeds, nuts etc.
- **A vitamins:** Cheese, eggs, fish with oil, milk etc.
- **C vitamins:** Fruits (apple, banana, orange etc.)
- **Magnesium:** Green leaved vegetables (e.g. cabbage), fish, meat and dairy products

Magnesium is a very important element that needs to be consumed regularly. Aside from the above, magnesium deficiencies are also linked to stress personality faults such as uneasiness and anxiety.



If you are under a lot of stress for a long period of time, then it is recommended that you intake plenty of foods that are a good source of calcium. This can be found in foods such as milk and cheese.

The problem with a balanced diet is that it becomes less of a priority to someone when their life becomes busy. There is always a temptation to eat something quick or skip meals when in a rush. The problem comes when you have been drained of one or more of your nutrients. You will find you are doing large amounts of work with less energy to do it with. Eating healthy is also not fully effective if you do not have the correct balance of nutrients.



If eating quick is unavoidable, then you should aim to consume healthy, nutritionally balanced foods. Foods like vegetables, bread, pastas, wheat and proteins need to be consumed as they contain your necessary energy for the day. You also need to ensure that enough resources are being consumed. Aim to eat these meals in moderation (i.e. two to three times a day). Doing this will provide sufficient nutrition for quick meals, and have the same effect as a meal that takes longer to eat.

When a person is stressed, there is always the urge to consume extra foods that are high in fat and sugars, which should be avoided. However it is important to snack because your body requires energy and it is bad practice to go hungry. Snacks can play an important role in good nutrition and eating. Snack at healthier foods such as fruit, salad, yoghurts etc. Consuming high sugar foods will give you a short burst of energy, but this will be followed by a 'low' period with a low blood sugar level.

Although it is important to incorporate healthier meals into your life, it does not mean that your 'special' foods need to be totally discarded from your lifestyle. Some of the more fattening meals that you consume can be converted into lighter portions so there is less fat and sugar. Dieting is important to a good nutrition and a lower level of stress. However, your experience must be an enjoyable or at least tolerable one as it is harder to stick to something that you do not enjoy.

3.4 Summary

The impact that stress can have on your body health is very serious and can cause problems to every major system. With the right nutrition, you can reduce the impact that stress has on your body and effectively repair any damage that has been done previous to this.

Important points learned from this chapter

- A balanced nutrition prepares your body for any stress that may be thrust upon your body in the future. There are four major aspects to a healthier, stress-reducing body.
 1. Having a well balanced nutrition
 2. Adopting a balanced diet
 3. Avoiding certain foods
 4. Increasing 'immune system enhancing' nutrients



- If a balanced nutrition is not present when stressed, the body will use up the spare resources that should not be touched. This lack of resources effectively drains the body's defences, making the person more prone to illness and greater levels of stress
- With a balanced diet and a correct nutritional management, your body will be well prepared for scenarios where stress is inflicted on the body. The following nutrients are
 1. **B vitamins:** These help the body cope with stress and control the whole nervous system
 2. **Proteins:** Assist in growth and tissue repair
 3. **A vitamins:** Essential for normal vision
 4. **C vitamins:** Protection of the immune system (antioxidants, diabetes protection etc.). Lowers the amount of cortisol in your body.
 5. **Magnesium:** Needed for a variety of tasks such as muscle relaxation, fatty acid formation, making new cells and heartbeat regulation.
- When the body becomes stressed, it craves foods that are high in fats and sugars. These are the foods that need to be avoided as they only provide someone with a small burst of energy which will result in a long period of fatigue. Examples of these foods are
 1. Sweets
 2. Alcohol
 3. Caffeine
- Smoking should also be avoided as it reduces stress initially, but this benefit is far outweighed by the long term damage that can be done to the body.

A good diet plan and a balanced nutrition is the main bulk of what is needed to successfully defend your body against stress. However, there still remains the psychological side of stress that needs to be covered.

4. Combat Stress Psychologically



A good diet with a well balanced nutrition is very important to achieving a stress-resistant body. What has not been covered yet is the psychological aspect of stress. Psychological stress management can be a key factor in reducing the amount of stress on your body.

There are many ways where we can manage stress. These help our bodies remain calm and effective in high pressure situations, and help us avoid long term stress problems. A large amount of stress is governed by the mind. If you learn to deal with the problem psychologically, you can then reduce the effect that stress has on your body and live your life to the maximum.

When combating stress with the mind, there are four rules you have must follow.

- Erase any negative thoughts
- Adopt a positive mind
- Listen to your emotions
- Relax your mind

Training your mind to learn these techniques will not only reduce the stress on your body, it will allow you to block any stress from future events in your life. This will allow you to take a step back from a certain event, and respond to the situation in the correct and precise manner.

4.1 Erase any Negative Thoughts

When an event occurs in our life, we will be exposed to some form of stress in one way or another. In many cases, the stress that we suffer is not entirely down to the event itself. In fact, a large amount is due to negative thoughts we clasp on to that enhance the stress level. Our reaction to the event makes a large contribution to the amount of stress that we suffer.



When a person thinks in a negative fashion, they disrupt the normal flow of their mind when the focal point, at times needs to be on other tasks at hand e.g. work. In order to have your mind clear of any disruptions, you need to adopt a positive attitude in order to optimise your performance.

There can be times where we speak to ourselves negatively, and this is sometimes well justified and helpful to us. However the majority of the time under stress, we put ourselves down when we really don't need to. Thinking in this way will cause stress and damage areas such as your self-esteem, confidence and overall happiness.

4.2 Adopt a Positive Mind

When a stressful event occurs, it is important to step back, take a breather and analyse the situation.

What is paramount in a psychological stress battle is the ability to erase any negative thoughts. The idea is to look at these thoughts you are having, record them in your mind or on paper and then look at how these thoughts can be reversed into something positive.

For example, if you are extremely busy working at home and have children to look after, this could be a negative thought you have...

"I have too much work to do and the kids are proving too much a distraction. It's all too much for me"

This way of thinking will only increase stress levels. You can reduce this if you step back, relax your thoughts and turn this negative into a positive.



"I love looking after the kids, and I know that I will get the work done eventually. After I have done this I will reward myself by going shopping"

4.3 Listen to Your Emotions



It is widely known that your emotions cloud your sense of proper judgement and you have to control them in order for your mind to focus correctly. It is much harder to focus on something when angry, depressed etc. However, even though they force us to make mistakes, it is always important to listen to your emotions as usually they are trying to tell you that something is wrong inside the body.

Controlling your emotion is similar to how you train for negative thoughts. Upon an emotion occurring...

- Relax and take a step back
- Identify these emotions and ask yourself why would this emotion happen for?
- Once you have found the reason, take action on the situation

In doing so you are managing/containing your emotions which will reduce the level of stress you inflict upon your body. When you start to feel certain emotions, this is the time to take action. If left to dwell on these bottled up emotions, this can lead to more serious stress related problems.

4.4 Relax Your Mind



Relaxation is one of the most important factors to a focused mind. Large quantities of us have situations where we work long hours without rest in order to get certain jobs done. If this is done occasionally, then there will be stress inflicted on the body, but the effects will be minimal. If on the other hand, this continues for a long period of time, there will be serious long term damage done by stress related illnesses.

In order to prevent this, it is important that you relax occasionally and take your mind off any work that you may be doing. Relaxation enables you to calm down and let some of the heat off of your body which is caused by stress.

There are many ways to relax your mind. Here are a few examples

- **Rest:** Rest is the obvious example. After long, stressful days, rest is needed in order to lower your stress levels.
- **Sleep:** The body needs sleep in order to recover. If you do not get the required amount of sleep (on average 8-9 hours) you will start to suffer because of this. You will notice declining changes in your body which include lack of concentration, tiredness and a severe lack of energy. If the person allows this to carry on, they will become stressed and the body will suffer. Maintaining a good sleep pattern is paramount to remaining focused and energised in your daily life.

- **Pastimes:**

Accomplished personal trainers like [Mark Woodcock](#) and [Ted-Bassett-Myers](#) believe that any goal can be reached with a structured training plan in place. The goal can be anything from increasing disease prevention to general overall conditioning of the body.

The stress that we suffer in life (work, other) can be easily balanced by taking up a hobby. Although this does not seem like it is relaxing, this gives you something to look forward to after a hard day at work and cancels out the stress obtained from a hard day at work, family bereavement etc. Exercise is one of the best ways to neutralise the effects that are brought on by stress.

4.5 Summary



Psychological stress management plays a huge part in reducing the amount of stress on the body.

Important points learned from this chapter

- A large amount of stress you deal with is in the mind. If you learn to deal with the problem psychologically, you can reduce the effect that stress has on your body
- When combating stress with the mind, there are four rules you have must follow.
 1. Erase any negative thoughts
 2. Adopt a positive mind
 3. Listen to your emotions
 4. Relax your mind
- These rules help us remain calm and effective in high pressure situations, and help us avoid long term stress problems
- **Erasing negative thoughts:** When under stress, it is important to realise that a large part of stress is down the negative image that we portray ourselves in. Being more positive about any situation will reduce the amount of stress inflicted upon your body
- **Listening to your emotions:** Listening to your emotions is important as an emotion is normally a warning from your body, indicating that something is not right. A problem with stress can be resolved if you listen and respond to your emotions accordingly.
- **Relaxing your mind:** Resting and relaxing your mind is important because a person with a mind that is not 100% will lose concentration, become tired and have a severe lack of energy. This loss of focus brings stress on your body.

Conclusion

You have now learned how important and harmful stress can be to the human body. If not treated quickly and effectively, you will suffer the consequences of stress. Even



if you do not notice anything in the short term, it will come back to haunt you in the long run. Stress is a very dangerous illness to disregard and sometimes, can even be fatal.

Almost any part of the human body can be affected by stress. The most important parts that can be affected are the brain, nervous system, digestive system and the heart. It is effectively a silent killer because it can eat away at your body and drain your vital resources, with the person being completely unaware of what is happening inside of them.

Although there is no quick fix for curing stress, it can be limited and well defended against with a balanced nutritional diet. Doing this provides your body with the essential nutrients that you require. As stress drains these nutrients from your body at an alarming rate, it is of the utmost importance that these resources are constantly 'topped up' in your body. Failure to do so results in your reserve nutrients being used up, which in turn results in a sudden lack of energy. If not treated quickly enough, this initial stress will result in degeneration of the mind and body.

The body, when stressed craves foods that are high in sugars and fats. These foods do nothing for you except provide an initial short burst of energy. This energy burst will run out fast, followed by a long period of fatigue. This is why a well balanced diet is needed to compensate for foods that are craved when stressed.

As well as a good nutritional balance, it is also important to be strong psychologically. A large amount of stress inflicted on the body is largely due to the mind adding to the amount of stress currently present inside the body. This is mainly done via negative thought, which needs to be erased and replaced with a positive attitude in order to successfully combat stress.

Close

If you follow the guidelines of this book, you will have no trouble reducing the stress in your body. Initially you may struggle as it is possible that you may have to sacrifice some parts of your lifestyle, but eventually you will find that you feel a lot better inside, whether it be physically, mentally or hopefully both.

I hope that you have found this book to be informative and helpful. We wish you every success in improving your health and reducing/preventing any stress that you



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...from distress to de-stress

may have to deal with in the future. Whenever you begin to feel stressed or even lethargic, please refer back to this book as it will get you back on the right tracks to a stress free, healthy lifestyle.

Have a wonderful, Stress free day!

Jayne Ritchie

For more information visit:

<http://www.bodychef.com>

<http://www.stress.org.uk/Diet-and-nutrition.aspx>