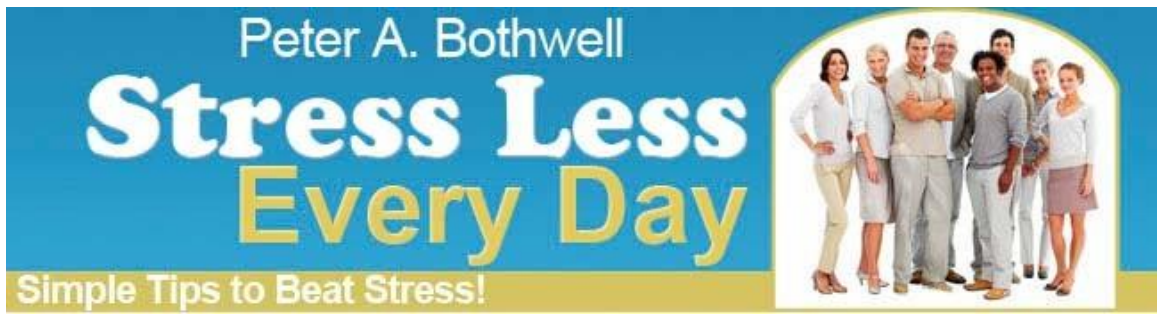


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About the Author

Peter Bothwell wrote “Stress Less Every Day” to share what he learned from his own battle to reduce the effects of [stress](#) in his [business](#) and personal life. Peter had thought that those effects on his health and his relationships were the price he had to pay for his lifestyle. But, no-one has to trade their [health](#) for their success.

Peter looked at many methods which are claimed to reduce or even eliminate stress. He said, “I would try anything which might help me to become more effective and lead me to the success I felt my efforts deserved.”

“I found that some ideas had worked great for some other people but were less effective for me.”

“So, I have included information about a wide range of methods which may be effective for some of my readers, not just those which were best for me.”

“I think that some methods were not right for me and some might have worked better if I had tried them at a different time of my [life](#).”

Peter emphasizes that he kept everything simple. “If it wasn’t easy for me to understand, I dug until I understood it well enough that I could try the method. Then, I wrote every word of my [book](#) many times until I was [confident](#) that my readers would understand it so that they could decide what might be worth trying in their particular situation.”

Reducing stress has made a great positive difference for Peter and those close to him.

He hopes that every reader will also achieve more in their [business](#) and personal activities after reading and applying the information in his book, “Stress Less Every Day”.

Introduction

I hope that my [ebook](#) will help you to successfully reduce and, over time, eliminate the bad effects of stress from your life.

I used to believe that the physical and emotional effects due to stress were a price we had to pay to achieve the [goals](#) we strive for in business today.

But, the truth is that the stress will stop us from achieving the results we are capable of and damage our physical and emotional well-being at the same time.

The paperless office is a dream. Most of us find that we have to work more just to keep up!

We all face greater competition simply because of the natural increase in population and the impact of technology and automation.

There is also greater competition because younger people are learning the new technologies by working with them as part of their world while we have to learn to adapt our lesser understanding of technology to new systems and ideas in our rapidly disappearing ‘spare time’.

When we sacrifice our leisure time to keep up with the new demands on us, it can have serious effects on our [relationships](#) and our socializing in general.

I hope this [book](#) will help you with tips to get better [control](#) of your aspirations, conflicting demands on your time and effort and the pressure it brings to your life.

Some sections of this book contain material on positive thinking and other popular psychology [tactics](#). I have only included those which I had some personal experience of or which I could find some recent research from credible sources. I know from my own experience that the methods I’ve tried have helped me or people I know well.

If you are skeptical or if it doesn’t fit your views you can skip the chapter, or perhaps read it and do your own research when you have time.

Peter Bothwell

Is Stress Normal?

Stress is a natural reaction to pressure of some kind being applied to us.



Stress occurs within our own bodies and is a part of our basic structure. It has helped humans to defend themselves in all kinds of potentially dangerous situations since prehistoric times.

It prepares our internal systems to get ready to either [fight](#) or flight.

Stress is caused by ourselves – not other people or events. The problems we have with stress is mostly because our reactions are too extreme or because we are prevented from reacting as we would like to, so we cannot release the [stress](#) and move on to other things.

Unfortunately, most people keep the stress within themselves and it continues to affect our thoughts and actions in a negative way until our [minds](#) are able to focus on other things.

Even when we start to deal with other, hopefully more positive matters the negativity becomes stored in our subconscious.

Unless we have a positive mind-set, we continue to store more negativity from every upset we encounter.

This becomes our standard reaction and that makes it much harder to break the pattern and install more positive and beneficial practices.

I believe that this [book](#) will help you to overcome your negative routines however long you have been using them.

Over time, it affects every part of our daily lives, both personal and [business](#) and can have serious effects on our self-image and our [health](#).

It's true that our modern fast-paced environment puts a lot of pressure on us and may reduce our ability to deal with it effectively.

However, I found that it is possible to make changes which will help to give us more control and greatly increase our potential for greater happiness and [success](#).

Get over False Starts

Everyone that suffers from negative [effects](#) of the stress in their lives realizes at some point that they need to change some of their regular behavior, so they can improve and reduce the negative effects of the stress to themselves and those close to them.

But, it's easier said than done. When they cannot achieve the results they want, they postpone trying to make any positive changes, usually for one of these reasons:

1. They believe that they will get better results at a later time when the pressure on them is not as great, or
2. They believe that they are not capable of making any significant improvements because they will always fail.

Both of these excuses are wrong. The delay will only cause more stress to accumulate in their [minds](#) and more intense negative effects will further reduce their well-being.



The biggest problem is that the person is likely to be less able to take effective action later on because their [health](#) and their self-image will both be at a lower ebb.

There is always likely to be more pressure on us every year through the rest of our lives in whatever type of activity we are doing.

Improvements in technology has produced more pressure because of the need to deal with the increasing amount of information and all of the

interaction which it generates.

Accepting the idea that we are basically powerless to improve our situation or prospects will be even more destructive.

Almost everybody can learn to deal better with stress and its effects.

One or two setbacks when we start to do something differently is not unusual or proof of a lack of ability to make progress.

Use them as a lesson about what not to do next time, rather than a stop sign. Remember that Thomas Edison, who produced the first commercially successful incandescent electric light [bulb](#) was asked how he felt about his previous failed attempts. He said that they weren't failures because they brought him closer to the successful [design](#). And, the rewards which he got certainly made all the effort and disappointments worth enduring!

Your first attempts will give you a better knowledge of exactly what is involved in changing the behavior or procedure. That will make the probability of success with future attempts all the greater.

Changing an ingrained habit, according to current research, is likely to take at least seven weeks of concentrated effort.

If something is not giving you the sort of results you expect, review your current method and see if you can improve it.

If the task seems very large, it could be worthwhile to break it into a number of smaller steps.

If it will take a significant period of time, arrange a small treat for yourself when you get a certain distance along the track to eventual [success](#).

But, the main focus should be the life-long benefit you gain from continuing until you succeed.

Who, When and “Why?”

These three questions will [help](#) you to start reducing your stress, keep your focus and maintain the effort through any disappointment or set-back.

“Who will do this for me if I don’t do it myself?”



The answer is obvious; you are the only person who can make the changes necessary to claim the better life which you deserve.

If you keep saying that you will start sometime, you are building more delay into your daily routine.

You can expect some negativity from people after they have been seeing you delay your action for a while. That will make you more depressed (if you let it).

But, when people see you making a sustained effort, they will be more likely to offer help and encouragement.

“When is the best time to start?”

The best answer is, “**Today.**” If you wait, there will always be further distractions and demands on your time and other resources.

For every week that passes, the effects of the stress you have is causing greater damage to you physically and emotionally. Your [confidence](#) in your ability to deal with the stress will only reduce further and more rapidly until you take action.

“Why will I do this until I succeed?”

This is the most important question.

You need to set a large goal for yourself which is big enough and important enough to keep you getting up when you are knocked down and maintain your enthusiasm for doing the boring but essential steps toward your [goal](#).

Your goal should be something tangible. Setting your sights on reducing your [weight](#) by a certain amount is good but fitting into a favorite outfit which is now too small (or a brand new one) might generate more enthusiasm.

Saying that you, “want to lose weight”, will not propel you toward success. It is likely to cause you more [anxiety](#) when you focus on the words every day but don’t feel or see any advantage from the effort.

The reason that it doesn’t work is because the statement is too vague and your [mind](#) cannot use it as a target. When you say something like, “I want to be able to fit into my blue dress for my daughter’s twenty-first party in three month’s time”, you have a goal that’s clearly defined.

The other important part of making a goal concrete is to have a reasonable date when you need to reach the goal – three months in this example.

Having a goal which is important to your partner as well as yourself will be more effective even if you do not mention it to them until you have made significant progress.

How Do You Start?

Start with small steps that don't interfere with your daily [routine](#) very much. When we start something new, our initial enthusiasm may cause us to start rushing before we have much idea of what it involved. If you do that, the first small upset to your plans is likely to make you feel very uncertain about continuing your efforts to improve how you deal with your stress.

Make it easy on yourself by choosing only one or two things (no more at first) which you find interesting and can see you getting some benefits from.

Get a Check-up

A vital step is to have a full medical examination and discuss the results with your doctor.

Get your doctor's advice about what you might do and the main areas you should concentrate on for reducing stress and anything else.

Some people have stress and related conditions which may benefit from prescribed medication or [specialist](#) help. Discuss your own situation with your [doctor](#) before using any medication or other process, including the suggestions in this ebook. Then you will be fully prepared and less likely make any mistakes by pushing beyond your personal limits and affecting your progress in reducing your stress and its effects.

This will give you a better idea of your own [health](#) situation. One of the most common causes of stress is when people worry about something about their body but they are afraid to actually consult their doctor about it.

The stress they suffer can sometimes cause damage even when they were worrying but there was no problem.

Clear the Decks!

I think this term started with warships where they got all the non-essentials stowed away as part of their preparation for battle.

Clutter of various kinds is a major source of frustration which leads to stress. Physical clutter can cause accidents and arguments with other people who use the same area. It is also attractive for bugs and other vermin.

This stress inducer is one of the easiest to reduce or even eliminate.

You may have a cluttered office or other workspace which causes problems for you and those you work with.

Your home may be cluttered, causing problems for you and frustration for your family.

I am sure that most people's [computers](#) are cluttered with old [documents](#), [pictures](#) or even programs which the person does not even use any more.

Many people let clutter accumulate until they have so much that they feel they cannot afford the time to clean it out.

My brother had that view but he decided to do a little every day. The improvement he saw encouraged him to set aside a couple of hours one morning to attack one room which took much less time than he thought it would.

So, he did a different area once a week until everything was cleared away. That meant not just out of sight but put back to regular use, recycled, donated or discarded.

When you see the benefits you gain, you will be encouraged to avoid hoarding “stuff” in the future.

Getting Things Done

When my brother finally sorted his business files, he set up a simple system and vowed that he would handle most documents once.

He sorts everything which comes in, whether on paper or in electronic form, by deciding whether to:

1. Deal with it that day
2. Defer until specific date which he notes in his diary
3. Discard it, or
4. Delegate it. If he delegates it, he arranges with that person that he will [check](#) it has been dealt with by a specified date.

The only stuff which is filed away is what is required for legal or tracking reasons.

A lot of people have every piece of paper which they received since they started in [business](#). There are requirements for legal and [tax](#) purposes to keep documents for a specified number of years. After that, you can make a computer record and securely dispose of the paper.

The accumulation of paper is often a cause for tension, especially if you store most it at home.

But, it is also a fire hazard. And that's another worry which you can easily minimize.

Getting Your To-do List Done!

I have adopted a simple system for dealing with all the tasks that compete for attention every day.

I make a list each evening of the most important items. Then, I decide on the most urgent and important.

The next morning, I focus only on that item until it is dealt with or taken over by someone else with a deadline for action, then I start on the next most urgent and important item.

Some people, and I used to be one of them, find it hard to get started in the morning.

I found a simple way to overcome that inertia was to do some small task before I had breakfast or even a cup of [coffee](#).

It needs to be something which requires some effort but doesn't have to be anything very complicated.

If you do a commute by public [transport](#) or in your [car](#), you might want to try the same tactic again when you get to work. The commute is often stressful and you probably feel a bit cramped up mentally and physically, but clearing up some small task first-up will make you feel more energized and the feeling will carry into the rest of your day.

Over time, this tactic will probably increase your overall productivity by a small amount compared to when you were starting your day with a cup of coffee while chatting with some colleagues.

Turning the Switch

There is just one more area which needs to be de-cluttered. That is our minds.

Few people that suffer from stress-related problems realize that they actually cause a lot of the damage themselves!

We all talk to ourselves continuously. Some people do it quietly, most people do it silently. This continuous commentary on what is happening, what we are doing and our interactions with other people is absorbed into the processing center which occupies about ninety percent of our [brain](#) – the subconscious.

What is stored there will stay for years unless it is overwritten by later messages.

The important thing to understand is that the subconscious accepts whatever



messages we feed to it as the truth.

Whether those messages are collected from other people or any other outside source like the media, or are produced by our mental [processes](#), they are all accepted unquestioningly by the subconscious.

We go to our subconscious for information frequently and it is usually supplied almost instantly.

If we fill it with negative messages, we will limit our capacity to improve on the results we have previously got or develop the [confidence](#) to start new projects or relationships.

The tendency to take in and store negative messages about our capabilities, relationships and work as well as the environment we live in is very common.

Think of the people you deal with every day. How many of them are positive, supportive and happy? How many are depressed (or depressing), cynical or negative?

If you want to change your own outlook and prospects, a good start is to reduce the amount of negativity to which you are exposed.

This is a good first step, because it will be very much harder for you to change your attitude and the messages to your own subconscious if you don't reduce the negative influences which are feeding a lot of that negativity to you right now.



Television news and similar material accessed on the Internet is often negative in tone, depressing or alarming (or both).

Researchers believe that watching television can upset our internal systems. Some suggest that there should be strict limits on the amount which we watch. They are alarmed about the possible effects on our kids who are able to watch a screen twenty-four/seven.

I'll give some suggestions about changing the messages you feed into your subconscious in the next chapter.

Mind Matters

Each person’s self-image (how they feel about themselves, their abilities and potential) has a tremendous effect on how they are regarded by people they deal with and the results that they get from those interactions.

If their self-image is poor, the interactions suffer and that, of course, causes more [pressure](#) on their self-image.



This negative slant to their self image may start to develop early in [life](#) if their parents or other adults who have some influence on them do not encourage them as they learn to deal with their environment and the people, young and old, who live and work in it.

This can have long-term negative effects as well as discouraging the child from learning about his or her talents and abilities or being as sociable as they might have been with more support.

The child does not have the experience or knowledge to understand that the negative comments aimed at them may not even be true.

This early experience can make them more negative in their own outlook, so they may come to expect to be less capable or successful than others.

Speak Well of Yourself

One factor which has great significance for how a person feels about themselves is their self-talk.

The first step to improving your self-image is to listen to your self-talk.

Do you talk yourself down when you are late for a meeting or social [event](#) with something like, “I can never remember dates!”?

It’s very common but it is also destructive of your reputation and your own self-image.



Those verbal messages also feed into your own subconscious, where they affect the probability that you will be late for the next event as well!

If you find that you are feeding negative messages to your subconscious, you can start to improve the situation fairly quickly.

Few people know that, while your subconscious has enormous processing power and storage capacity, it does not know whether the information you feed it is true or false.

That’s why negative comments by anyone that get into your mind can cause damage even when there is no basis of fact in them. What you can do is to feed statements which are positive to overwrite the stored negative messages, even if the new ones are not true when you say them.

You can help to reinforce this new outlook by watching for and celebrating any positive [developments](#), large or small, in yourself or your experiences whenever they come along.

You should see some benefit even if you feel a little skeptical about the process if you do this and consciously reduce or eliminate the negative input you have been accepting.

Give Your Worries a Reality Check?



Many people suffer a lot of unnecessary [stress](#) because of things which may never happen.

Before you allow worry to shackle your emotions and start to affect your ability to function at your best, I suggest you take some time to examine each of the problems you have to deal with carefully.

Even small problems can have significant effects on you if you dwell on possible negative outcomes.

You can only effectively handle any problem if you have all the facts.

Ask yourself:

- ? Is this major problem or not?
- ? Have I been through this sort of event before?
- ? If not, do I know someone that has and might have suggestions?
- ? What preparation do I have to do to deal with this?
- ? What are the possible outcomes of this problem or event?
- ? What would I be able to do if this does not work out as I want it to?
- ? What other information do I need to properly deal with this?
- ? Who can I get information from about this?
- ? Who can I get support from about this?
- ? Will anyone else I care about be affected by the outcome?

The important thing is to take action to measure the problem, the potential outcome and the resources that are available to you.

Until you have done that, any worrying you do will hurt you and reduce your [ability](#) to do anything at all!

When you review your answers to the questions, you will find many problems fade in significance and you will be better equipped to deal with the others.

I find that I sometimes only need to do two or three questions before the problem is almost gone.

Good Sleep is Vital

One common effect of [stress](#) is having difficulty getting to sleep and being unable to sleep for even a few hours without waking yourself.

It is important that we get sufficient sleep within each twenty-four hour period and that it is quality sleep where our body is rested and renewed.

Sleep is a complex multi-stage process. We move through the stages several times in a night and need all stages to get the expected benefits.

The most significant stages seem to be Stage 5 - Rapid [Eye](#) Movement (REM) sleep where we dream - and the level above that, which is where we have the deepest sleep.

The deep sleep stage occurs after more than an hour of the lighter stages.

A lot of the most interesting research comes from the study of REM sleep.

This is where our [muscles](#) become most relaxed (even more than the deepest sleep [stage](#)) and where it seems we do most of our dreaming.

Some research suggests that an inability to get sufficient REM sleep can cause distress and irritability, and even negatively affect our ability to learn new tasks for a while after we wake up.

Although some people seem to be able to function well with much less than the suggested eight hours a night, the research suggest that most of us would benefit most from about that amount.

If you have to get along with less, it will be even more important that you have the best conditions possible to ensure that your sleep is uninterrupted so that you get the most benefit possible.

But, many people seem to want to make it as hard as possible for themselves to get a good night's sleep.

They read, watch television or listen to their radio, work on [business](#) papers or discuss the day with their partner. All of these activities conflict with the need to set up a pattern of separating the day's activities from your period of rest.

Some couples save up any disagreement until bedtime and then argue the matter out with their partner! Their thinking is that they are unlikely to be overheard or interrupted. But, that hassle will almost certainly result in neither getting the rest and recuperation they need and does nothing for the [relationship](#).

They bring their supper into the bedroom and coffee or even an alcoholic nightcap ([alcohol](#) does not really relax anyone!). The [food](#) will have your stomach filled up while your internal systems will be trying to recuperate from that day's excesses.

You could have your supper an hour before going to bed.

Warm milk is probably a better choice of drink than anything else. Be very careful that the drinks are not spilled, or you will become upset and the opportunity for a reasonable length period of [sleep](#) will be further reduced.

It's much better if the bedroom is regarded as an oasis which excludes the hassles of the day where you can both relax.

All TVs etc should be banned from the bedroom except for the clock-radio and that should just be for the [morning](#) wake-up.

The ban may be even more important for children's bedrooms, especially if the child has any stress or sleeping problems.

If you are stressed when you are ready to go to bed, a warm bath might soothe and relax you.



Humor Yourself

Of all the qualities which can help anyone with their [business](#) and personal interactions, a good sense of humor is near the top of my list.

If you find that you haven't been laughing much lately, I suggest that you give yourself permission to watch a comedy either on TV or take your partner to a [movie](#) or show.



If you haven't been smiling much, you probably need a bit of practice as well.

Norman Cousins' book, "Anatomy of an [Illness](#)", is his [story](#) of how feeding his sense of humor with a lot of classic comedy films, while also keeping in touch with and following his [doctor's](#) advice, helped him to come through a serious medical problem.

But, don't leave it at the occasional dose of professional humor.

Start looking for things to laugh about and share a joke when you get the chance.

Smile at people who look like they also need one. It's a great, free gift and you're likely to get some in return.

Researchers say that a good laugh will release endorphins which are one way which the [body](#) reduces the effect of some [pain](#) and also make you feel better.

To get the maximum effect from any joke you tell, make sure it fits with the interests' of the people you tell it to; don't tell a joke about a subject which is totally different to what they were talking about.

Keep it positive and upbeat. Telling jokes against anyone is going to ensure that they won't appreciate your effort and you may also get a strong reaction from their friends then or later on.

Also, make sure that you give other people respect when they tell a joke and listen like you are [hearing](#) it for the first time. The idea is to be as good a listener as you hope that everyone you tell your jokes to will be for you.

Maintaining Your Motivation

As you start to steer yourself along the Stress Less Every Day path, there will be times when you find it hard to keep your [head](#) up and a smile on your face.

The next few chapters will explain some tactics which I’ve used or learned from my research or the comments of friends and other people.

It gets easier but there are always going to be people or events which will [test](#) your resolve. However, it is unlikely that it will ever be as hard as your first attempt to reduce your stress. Once you have had those first couple of small victories, your confidence and enthusiasm will start to harden so that you will be better prepared for future [challenges](#).

Your Support Group

This first section is about building and maintaining strong links to your support [group](#) and being prepared to be a part of other people’s support groups as well.



The first thing to do is to improve your ability to reduce your current stress levels and to take [stock](#) of your current situation.

One of the most important steps in working that out is to take a clear-eyed look at the state of your connections with your family and closest friends.

The first person to consider is your partner, then your [children](#) and other family members that you are close to either emotionally or by location.

Sometimes, you may have to try to repair important connections which have frayed or even been severed. You may need professional help. All you can do is your best.

To give yourself and the other person or people involved the best chance to come together and repair the previous hurt, you should try to get everyone focused on the current situation and the possibilities for coming closer together.

Everybody should understand that nobody is guaranteed to get everything they want from a discussion. But, start with the [belief](#) that everyone involved will be focused on getting the best result for all concerned so that they can have a good [relationship](#) in the future.

[Listening](#) well is actually a learned skill which takes most people a bit of practice. You need to make sure that you understand what your partner or other family member is saying and what they are meaning.

You also need to be sure that they understand what you mean.

Some people tend to focus inward when they are not speaking, and concentrate on what they heard before and what they will say next. That can lead to disaster.

I try to listen carefully and then briefly repeat the main points of what the other person said to me. That way, we both are agreed on each other's position at any particular point in the discussion.

If you don't understand the point of something which they say, ask more questions to get clarification, before taking the discussion away from that point.

Otherwise, there will be more likelihood of further misunderstanding, disagreement and less chance of a positive outcome for anyone involved.

The best way to improve the chance of a workable compromise is to try to have each of you look at the situation from the other person's viewpoint. Walking in the other's shoes is not as easy as it may [sound](#) but it can be a very useful [exercise](#) if the atmosphere is not too adversarial for people to do it in a sincere way.

If you know or are persuaded that you have been at fault for some of the situations, accept it and apologize.

Ask what, if anything, you can do to make amends? If there are important, relevant points which may explain some of your reasons for what you did, make sure that they are said without heat.

Let your partner make the points which they want to without interruption. Make your own points in the same spirit. Unless you both have a clear idea of each other's understanding of all the important factors in the discussion, there is little chance of an outcome that will be satisfactory to either of you over time.

Be prepared to have a break to allow each of you to catch your breath and cool down if needed.

Sometimes, it will be obvious that the disagreement is not being improved. Then, you will need to suggest that perhaps a session with a professional counselor might be a good next step.

The best result is more likely if all involved are focused on getting the most satisfactory result for each person rather than being a sole victor.

Communication A. B. C.

One of the most important [skills](#) when we are having any sort of dealings with other people is clear two-way communication.

Almost everybody thinks that they are experts; after all, we’ve been doing it since we came home with our mothers, haven’t we?



Yes, but we have all had a lot of conditioning since then which has included some attributes which get in the way of good communication. Some of us add our own tricks as well with the intention of getting an advantage or two.

These tips about improving communication will help you get your points across and understand what the other person wants so that you can tell,

most of the time, whether you have a good prospect of getting the sort of result you want or whether it really is worth trying to make a deal.

Be Prepared: You will be at a major disadvantage if you don’t prepare as best you can for any significant discussion.

That requires that you get as much relevant information about the other people in the discussion, what they really want from it and what they have to persuade you with.

Be Confident: Always look [confident](#) and friendly. Smile and look them in the [eye](#). Maintain your professional attitude, no matter what tactics might be tried. Also, go into any discussion with some goodwill for the other side. They will pick that up and probably reciprocate.

Keep Your Word: This is vital for the future and not just the current discussion.

Be Clear: Always make sure that the other people understand what you offer and what you want.

It works both ways, If you don't know what exactly they are offering, ask for it to be explained as many times as necessary until you do.

Get it in Writing: A verbal agreement is not worth the paper it is written on. No, I didn't make that up but it is a golden rule – forget it and you are likely to lose the gold.

Set Your Limits



One of the most common factors which can cause [business](#) people to suffer is high levels of stress and that they [trade](#) their personal time for the potential rewards in the future. After a while, they often discover that their rewards are not close to matching their sacrifice, often because they see a toll on their [health](#) while they aren't making much better results than they were before.

There are limits to what you can do in 24 hours. Some people are able to achieve more and some

cannot do as much in the same time. But, they may risk making more mistakes if they push beyond their current abilities!

The top achievers have often started learning to do these things earlier or had other advantages. They also have their own limitations which they had to work within so that they are not over-stretched or worn down by the demands on them.

I hope that you get this [book](#) before you reach that point of diminishing results, despite increased effort and stress so that you can take steps to make your [life](#) more balanced. You may think that you still can reach higher levels of [success](#) with a greater effort.

But take the time to make a clear-eyed evaluation of:

- ? The current state of your [health](#)
- ? Your employment situation
- ? Your current level of satisfaction
- ? Your family situation, and
- ? Will they stand the pressure on them until you reach your goal?

The next Chapter may encourage you to make room for more personal time.

Hurry Up and Relax!

This headline sounds strange but it is very good advice.

[Learning](#) how to get your [body](#) and your mind to relax is a very valuable skill which can produce dividends in many areas of your life.

There are many factors which prevent us from being able to relax enough.



Many of us actually think we are relaxed when anyone seeing us will realize that we are very tense – we don't notice some signs because we have grown used to them being part of our regular way of sitting or standing.

The first step with improving your ability to relax could be adjusting your

breathing.

A lot of people have adopted ways of standing or sitting which cause them not to be able to breathe well and which also often lead to aches and [pains](#) because of problems with their [posture](#).

Better [breathing](#) involves making sure that your air passages are not obstructed and that you draw the air into the full capacity of your lungs, then expel it as fully as possible.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: Some people become anxious and may risk serious symptoms any time they try to focus on their breathing. DO NOT try these or any other breathing exercises without the prior consent of your doctor.

Please note the warning above and don't take any risk. There are other strategies which you can use instead of controlled breathing if it is unsuitable for you.

Making some small changes to the way we breathe may help us to better manage our stress levels. This is another area where we've been doing

something all our lives but may need to adjust our [technique](#) because we have developed some bad habits which reduce our effectiveness in this area. Many people slouch or curl up in ways that may reduce our ability to have free flow of air both ways, from and to our lungs.

Another common error which people that have [stress](#) of any type often become habitual shallow breathers where they only take air into the upper part of their lungs. This can seriously reduce the amount of oxygen which their body can get from each breath.

Shallow breathing is a part of the “fight or flight” reflex response which prepares us for dealing with potential danger, but is not good for you when it is used as your regular method of [breathing](#).

You can check your current breathing style by placing one of your hands flat on your chest and the other flat on your abdomen. When you breathe in, you should feel your abdomen rising as air fills the lower part of the lungs. When you breathe out, it should flatten without any pressure from your hand.

This test cannot be completely accurate because you are aware of what should happen and you may unconsciously press the hand you have on your abdomen without even intending to.

If you find that your breathing is noticeably shallow when you breathe in or if you want to try to improve the action, you might try this simple [exercise](#).

Arrange to be undisturbed and alone for up to thirty minutes. Either set an alarm or arrange for someone to call you or come to the room after a set time, either twenty or thirty minutes. Take the phone off the hook and shut off your mobile phone for that time period.

Sit in a comfortable chair which supports your body but does not encourage you to slouch.

Keep your back straight while you put a [hand](#) on your chest and one on your abdomen. Feel the rise and fall as you breathe in and out.

At this stage, don't make any conscious effort to change your breathing to take in more air to the lower part of your [lungs](#). Just become as relaxed as possible about your breathing and your surroundings.

Without [pressure](#), start to focus on the passage of air from your nose to your lungs and then back again.

You will probably notice that your body moves more air than before into the lower part of your lungs after a while.

Use the opportunity to relax for those few minutes.

This will help you to feel better and encourage your [body](#) to continue the improved breathing pattern.

This type of breathing is reported to assist a small number of patients with a wide range of stressful conditions.

Diet Tips for Less Stress

There are many theories and countless products which promote one or more [food](#) types as helpful or even all-conquering wonders in the battle to reduce the effects of stress.

The most important thing is to ensure that you get a nourishing, well-balanced range of foods with enough of the important [vitamins](#) and trace elements.

Doctors often say that most people do not need [supplements](#), but it is a good idea to discuss this with your [doctor](#).

I was tested and found to have very low levels of Vitamin D, sometimes called the “sunshine vitamin”. That’s common with people that work in offices and don’t make an effort to get enough sunlight regularly. The number of people with levels like mine may be higher now because of all the warnings about the risk of melanomas and other problems due to exposure to too much sunlight at the wrong concentrations.

You might consider having a test of your vitamin and trace [element](#) levels as part of your annual check-up. That basic precaution is probably good insurance.

How we eat is as important as [eating](#) the right foods.

We need to take the time to eat our food slowly. That means we get to enjoy our food and chew it sufficiently to get full nutritional value.

Avoid eating while watching television. The programs are designed to attract attention and stir up your emotions, often in unpleasant ways. That does not encourage enjoyment or good [digestion](#).

Allow time for digestion.

Avoid processed [foods](#), except perhaps as an occasional treat.

[Water](#) is the best and most under-rated drink we can have.

Good levels of water in your system assists proper brain [function](#). When water levels drop, the [brain](#) is one of the first things which suffers.

The importance of water to anyone trying to reduce stress and deal with any sort of workload is obvious.

Comfort drinks like [tea](#) and coffee as well as “[energy](#)” drinks contain caffeine or guarana (closely related to caffeine but claimed to not encourage high [blood pressure](#) as much as caffeine) should be avoided.

Coming off a high coffee habit can be daunting but well worthwhile.

Dealing with Bad Memories

It is common for upsetting events to lodge themselves in our subconscious and for us to continue to be impacted by those [memories](#) for a very long time.

We don't have any training or ingrained [knowledge](#) about how to deal with tragedy or rejection. It is usually something which each of us has to learn to deal with almost like it has never happened to anyone before.



Many of us have family or close friends who try to understand and offer sincere support.

It can be harder still for those without these networks, but it is not easy for anyone.

The effects can cause us stress and interfere with our ability to have the best life possible for years.

Some research has been suggesting that some of the traditional ways that people handle their major disappointments may not give the best results.

Some people say that we should try to deal with as much as we can ourselves because others have their own troubles but that is very tough and can also make the people who want to try to help you feel devalued.

But, the research indicates that the benefits to be gained from talking through the event or its effects with an understanding friend or close relative are generally unsatisfactory.

In carefully managed trials, the researchers asked some of their volunteers to discuss their past event with an understanding colleague. In another study, different volunteers were asked to write a brief diary entry each day for a week about their event.

Both groups said that their talking or [writing](#) helped them but tests showed that there was no long-term benefit to the volunteers who discussed their event with other volunteers. However, the people that wrote out their [thoughts](#) about the event did show good results after doing that for a while.

This suggests that [writing](#) a diary about it helps us to better understand our own feelings about such an event and its consequences while discussing it with someone who is not directly involved has at most a temporary benefit. But, if someone wants to talk out their feelings about such an event, I would still offer an understanding ear.

Then, when we had talked, I would mention the diary idea as something I’d read about which could help.

I would not mention anything about that [method](#) probably being better because that might destroy any comfort which my friend or relative got from our discussion.

Gratitude can Really Help!

There have been people suggesting that acknowledging things, even small items, for which we are grateful in our lives can help our well-being since at least the eighteenth century.

I have found it helps me keep my positive frame of [mind](#) but I understand that many people have their doubts about it. It seems too simple to them.

But, there is a growing amount of careful research which is backing up some of those claims.

One test had three groups of similar people write about five items each.

One group wrote about five things they were grateful to have experienced or seen in the previous week.

The second group wrote about five things that happened to them in the previous week.

The other group wrote about five things they didn't like from the previous week.

After doing this for some weeks, the researchers noted that they saw a significant improvement in the attitude and [self-confidence](#) of the grateful group.

This is remarkably simple and so I hope you will try it as I did.

I am still [writing](#) in my gratitude diary because it works for me and it is great free [therapy](#)!

Get Ready for More Happiness and Success

When you start to see the results of your efforts to reduce stress, I know you will realize that there is almost nothing you cannot achieve.

I wish you the future you desire and the success you deserve.

Thank you.

Peter Bothwell

[Another eBookWholesaler Publication](#)