

How To: Successfully Reduce & Manage Your Stress



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Feeling Stressed?

Are you stressed out? Does it just feel like you'll never be able to get everything done? Does it make your head hurt so you feel overwhelmed and exhausted?

If you answered yes to any of these questions then this e-book can help you find ways to relax, refocus and handle everything that you face in your daily life.

Recently a client who had been to see me for a few hypnotherapy sessions about her stress updated me that she was "feeling very good. Thank you. It's been really amazing." Would you like to feel that good again?

Unmanageable stress is becoming more and more of a problem as we all attempt to cope with the ever increasing demands on our time and energy. It can be easy to feel simply overwhelmed by the amount we need to do, whether it is work deadlines, family commitments, social pressures or some other addition to that endless list of demands.

Another client told me he had become trapped within his stress and the demands of his work and social life. He felt so overwhelmed and anxious he couldn't concentrate on any one task because he was so aware of the other things he needed to get done. His confidence was suffering and his mind just felt confused and 'fuzzy' all the time.

After using just some of the suggestions you will find here, his head soon felt clearer, his memory and confidence had improved and he had seen his whole life become much more organised.

There are many things you can start doing right away that will help reduce your stress levels such as getting enough sleep, learning to relax, exercising and reducing the amount of alcohol you drink.

Has the stress level in your life become unmanageable? If it has, imagine how good it would feel to be able to manage the demands of your busy life with a sense of balance, confidence and control so you knew you could handle anything that comes your way.

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Remember the secret is in the doing, not in the reading. So when you decide that now is the time to take action, then read on.

The Warning Signs of Stress

Whilst a degree of stress can be useful to help motivate us and focus our attention on the job at hand, there are many signs and symptoms to show when your stress has become a problem.

Common examples include:

- Inability to concentrate or poor memory
- Feeling constantly tired or exhausted
- Reduced confidence and self esteem
- Difficulty getting to sleep or disturbed sleep
- Headaches and migraines
- Feeling on edge or near breaking point
- Increased irritability
- Changes in appetite
- Irritable bowels
- Feeling low, worried, anxious or worthless
- Sweating and nausea
- Increased blood pressure
- Feelings of being unable to cope, tense or stuck.

Important Note: If you even suspect that you may have a medical condition responsible for any of the above symptoms then you should consult your medical practitioner for advice before following any of the suggestions in this e-book.

Ten ways to start reducing stress today:

1. Get Enough Sleep

People who are highly stressed often have trouble sleeping – whether that's getting to sleep or having a wakeful, disturbed night.

You may lie in bed for hour after hour with thoughts of all the things you need to get done racing through your mind. As you are tired, these thoughts are often of things going badly which can make you feel even more stressed and anxious.

Sleep is the body's way of recharging itself, so getting enough good quality sleep is key to performing effectively every day and having the energy and concentration you need to succeed.

So how do you learn to switch off at night so you can get that level of rest you need?

- Make your bedroom a place of rest: you've heard this one before but are you actually doing it? Avoid doing things like work in bed or in the bedroom, leave your papers, bills etc. in another room. You know deep down that you will achieve very little progress while you look at them late at night so far better to tackle them again when you are refreshed in the morning.
- Sleep with a pen and paper: If you must take anything to bed with you, make it a pen and paper. If any important thoughts come to you, just jot them down as reminders for the next day.
- Switch off your work phone at night – and leave it switched off until just before you leave the next day.

Small Change = Big Results:

One client of mine would check her work phone for messages and e-mails throughout the evening and even during the night.

Needless to say she didn't sleep well because her mind was still active drafting letters, rehearsing what to say at meetings and on what else she needed to do. And let's be honest, if she did get an

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e-mail in the middle of the night, what could she really do about it until she got to work the next day?

The cumulative effect of her tiredness meant that she didn't perform as well the next day and so achieved less and became even more stressed and anxious.

However, just by switching off her work phone when she got home at night and leaving it off until she was ready to leave for work the next day, she found her stress levels plummeted, her sleep improved and her energy level soared.

Instead of spending her evening drafting letters in her head she could enjoy her time with her family and friends and even started doing enjoyable things like swimming and walking.

What small changes could you make for big results?

List at least three things you can commit to right now:

1)

2)

3)

- Cut down on caffeine: if you are lying wide awake in bed at night feeling exhausted but with your eyes glued open then consider reducing your caffeine intake in the afternoon and evening. Replace caffeinated drinks with the caffeine free alternative or better still, drink more water to refresh and energise your body.
- Leave your worries by the bedside: Need more help to switch off at night? Then do this simple process and leave all your worries and concerns by the side of your bed until the morning:

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The Worry Bag:

This is a very simple process that will help you switch off all those thoughts until the morning:

1. As you lie in bed at night, just before you go to sleep, imagine you have a bag or box to keep all your worries, anxieties and stresses safe in – you can decide what your own bag/box looks and feels like.
2. Hold the worry bag up close to your mouth and slowly say each of your worries into it one at a time (you can whisper them if you don't want anyone to hear!). Make sure each one goes right inside the bag and stays there. You may start to notice that your bag fills up and it may start to get a little heavier.
3. When you think you've put all your worries in the bag, just pause for ten seconds and check if another one pops up. If it does, put it in the bag.
4. When all your worries are in the bag, imagine tying a great big, tight knot at the top of the bag so you can be sure you are keeping all your worries nice and safe. Then put the bag down by the side of your bed so you know where it is.
5. Knowing that all your worries will still be there for you when you wake up in the morning, allow your mind to start to relax (you may want to play a nice relaxing hypnosis track or other relaxing music to help you).
6. In the morning the choice is yours – leave the bag where it is and go on your way or open it up and take all your worries back with you so you can deal with them.

Ten ways to start reducing stress today:

2. Learn to Relax

How do you relax? Very stressed people will often talk about how they find it hard to relax, or that they never/can't relax or how they used to do something (reading, exercise etc.) but now they don't have the time, focus or energy.

Many more will rely on tuning out in front of the TV as the way they relax – forgetting of course that TV is a stimulant and can often have the opposite effect (depending on what you watch!).

There are dozens of effective ways you can relax and refocus and get that inner sense of calm, confidence and control. Examples include:

- Listening to relaxing music
- Yoga
- Meditation
- Meeting up with friends
- Tai Chi
- Reading books
- Hypnosis
- Going for a walk
- And I'm sure you can add more to this list.

You can also practice using this breathing technique to help you cut off stress and relax quickly and easily wherever you are:

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Breathing to Relax

Practice doing this breathing technique as often as you can to naturally reduce stress and feel calmer:

- Close your eyes and become aware of your breathing.
- When you're ready breathe in for a count of seven and then breathe out for a count of eleven.
- Repeat at least three times, ensuring you count in for seven and out for eleven (so the out breath is longer than the in breath).
- Notice how you now already feel calmer than you did before. Use this technique as often as you can and you will soon find yourself feeling more naturally calmer more often.

One of the most effective tools that I use with my clients is hypnosis. Whilst more effective on a one to one basis so that it is personal to you, it is also possible to easily get hold of hypnosis music and audios to help you relax effectively.

However, many people are uncertain about hypnosis, what it involves and what it feels like.

What is hypnosis?

Hypnosis is a state of deep physical and mental relaxation, during which we allow ourselves to become inwardly focused. You are fully awake and alert whilst in hypnosis, and not under anyone's power or influence (despite what you may have seen or heard about in a 'show'!). If you wanted to you could simply open your eyes and 'wake up' at any point.

Most people love the feeling of relaxation they get and are surprised to find how aware they are throughout the session.

Several have described it as being similar to the experience of driving your car on a familiar journey while lost in your thoughts

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and then realising you have reached your destination. Others describe it as being like that moment before you fall asleep when, with your eyes closed, you are too comfortable to move yet you are fully aware of your thoughts.

Because if you could consciously let go of your stress you would, wouldn't you? In fact, you'd have changed it aside long ago. Problems such as fears, anxiety and limiting beliefs (e.g. 'I'm not good enough') are being run by your mind at an unconscious level and it may even feel like they are now part of who you are.

Stress exists for a purpose – it could be to let you know you need to slow down, or that you need help or maybe it protects you by stopping you doing things that could go wrong.

Whatever the reason, hypnosis works with your unconscious mind to satisfy this intention in an empowering and positive way, allowing you to find new ways of acting and reacting with new beliefs and behaviours.

Ten ways to start reducing stress today:

3. Move more

Exercise is amazing for helping with stress and anxiety. It gives you a break from whatever you are doing and just the act of getting away from a desk, room or building can immediately start to help you relax and get a different perspective. It also has a positive effect on sleeping.

When some people think of exercise they think of painful sessions at the gym or those cross country runs they hated at school. However, all you really need to do is move more and up your breathing and heart rate, so even a short walk is perfect.

Just by taking a 10-15 minute walk, you can easily release any tension that has built up and move to a positive state of mind. You may also be surprised when the answer to something that's been on your mind suddenly jumps out when you weren't thinking about it at all.

And before anyone says they don't have time to go for a short walk, consider the simple ways you could build it into your day:

- Parking slightly further away when you drive to work or the shops, or get off the bus a stop earlier.
- Instead of sitting at your desk, go for a 10 minute walk at lunchtime. You could even involve some colleagues so that it becomes more social.
- Involve your family so that you all go for a walk in the morning or after dinner.
- You could have a competition with yourself or a friend to see who can walk the most steps in a day – just buy a basic pedometer and you're ready to go.
- Take the stairs instead of the lift or escalator.

So whatever you like to do – get out there and do it!

Ten ways to start reducing stress today:

4. It's Good to Talk!

Talk to someone about the things that are getting on top of you – often just the act of putting our stresses into words can start to break them down and seem more manageable.

The person you talk to may also have some ideas and suggestions that will help you to reduce your stress levels even further.

Who could you talk to about the things on your mind within the next 24 hours - your partner, colleague, friend, relative, a complete stranger??

List the first three people who pop into your mind and then decide who you will talk to and take the first step (e.g. fixing a time for a chat/coffee) within the next 24 hours:

1)

2)

3)

Remember to take that first step to making it happen as soon as possible so it doesn't just become another thing on your long to-do list.

Ten ways to start reducing stress today:

5. Cut down on smoking and drinking

Many smokers use their habit as a way to manage stress, either smoking when they feel stressed or rewarding themselves after a stressful event. However, the 'relief' only lasts a short time and soon the stress returns along with the need to smoke another cigarette.

Much of the stress relieved by smoking is actually caused by the effect of the nicotine on your body. Further, smoking doesn't solve any of the causes of your stress, it just hides them temporarily. It is also a very unhealthy way to try and deal with stress.

Many people also try and use alcohol to temporarily mask the effect of the stresses in their life. Some people have a drink when they get in from work or maybe start to have one or two just to relax most nights, others binge drink at the weekend to forget about the other things going on in their life or to make them seem more manageable.

However, excessive drinking can lead to irritability, increased stress, frustration and insomnia – all of which can ultimately add to the stress you are experiencing.

There are also people who use food as their relief from stress – eating to feel better yet then feeling worse when they realise all the rubbish they've just eaten.

If you are smoking, drinking or eating to try and manage your stress, instead of dealing with the causes, then carry out the next exercise before deciding what you are going to do about it to regain your healthier ways of living:

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Creating Your Future:

What will life be like in the future if you continue to smoke/drink/eat as you do now? What will it be like when you make the decision to change?

Imagine going forward into the future and compare your two futures – ask yourself what will life be like? What will I be seeing, hearing and feeling? What will my health be like? What will I be doing or not doing? What will others (e.g. family, friends) be saying? How much money will I have saved or spent?

	CONTINUE	CHANGE TODAY
5 years from now		
10 years from now		
15 years from now		
25 years from now		

Once you have completed the exercise and vividly imagined your future, compare each future over and over and ask yourself – which future do I want to create? And what decision will I be making in the now to create it?

Ten ways to start reducing stress today:

6. Worried? Anxious?

Anxiety is just your mind picturing things going wrong so, if it does happen that way, you'll be fully prepared to deal with it. You could say your mind is trying to protect you by getting you ready.

Often that anxiety can push up your stress levels as you see all the things that you are doing (particularly the important things) going badly in the future.

Linked to this, if you are spending your time thinking of things going badly then that mental rehearsal can make it seem a foregone conclusion that it will go badly and so reinforce the anxiety you are feeling.

The following easy process will help you switch this thinking so you see, hear and feel the event going well – and then you can train your mind to prepare for it to happen that way. The more often you do this process, the better the results you'll achieve.

Ending the Stress of Anxiety

1. Close your eyes and just imagine you have a line of your life with your past in one direction and your future in another direction. Whether you see the line, hear it, feel it or just know it's there, is perfect. Experience it exactly in the way that's right for you.
2. Imagine floating up above your line, right above now so you are looking down upon now. Just get way up above the line of your life.
3. Bring to mind the specific event you are anxious about. Then float out above your life-line into the future and go to 15 minutes after the successful completion of that event you thought you were anxious about.
4. Turn and look back towards now having successfully completed

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it exactly the way you want to go. Create an image of things going perfectly, with all the sounds, sights, feelings and confident self-talk that goes with it.

5. You'll then wonder where the anxiety has gone. It will now have completely disappeared.
6. Looking back you may also notice some other things – you can see how calm, confident and relaxed you feel, how easily you complete the task.
7. Then take a moment to look all the way back along your time line to now and notice how all the events between then and now realign themselves to support achieving your exam goal.
8. Then turn and look towards the future and notice some of the amazing things that will take place because you performed so successfully.
9. And when you are ready just imagine floating back above your time line, back to the present time, down into the now and open your eyes.

And finally, just stop and truly consider, will the thing you are anxious and stressed about even matter a year from now?

Ten ways to start reducing stress today:

7. Accept things you can't change

There will always be things that happen in life that you have no control over, whether it's the actions and reactions of other people such as family, friends and work colleagues, national or local events, changes in laws, the performance of the economy or something else.

Sometimes there are things we can change. For example we could change what we say, how we say it and decide who we spend our time with.

For those things beyond your control, you have a choice whether you let them cause you stress that you can't resolve or whether you find new ways of doing things and accept the things you can't change.

So decide, which battles are worth fighting and which would you be better off just leaving alone?

1) Which stressful things in my life can't be changed by me right now?

2) Which things can I change?

Pick the top three stress factors in list 2 and decide what the first step you can take will be – and then make sure you action it in the next 24 hours.

Ten ways to start reducing stress today:

8. Prioritise and park

If you are stressed then it may seem like everything needs to be done at once, which creates the feeling of being overwhelmed.

And if you are trying to do everything then you may find you get nothing done as you're too busy thinking about the other things to concentrate on any one thing.

However, we all know, don't we, that not everything needs to be done right now and that some things can wait for another time. Are you turning things into big stuff when really they aren't?

Write down everything that you need to get done on a piece of paper. Then ask yourself, 'if you could only complete one of these today, which would it be?' Keep asking this question until you have a list sorted by priority. And then get started on that number one task.

If you find it too difficult, get someone to help you by asking you the question repeatedly or use this process:

Another Viewpoint

1. Think of at least two people whose advice you respect and trust. It does not matter whether you know them or whether they are still alive. These people will become your board of advisors.
2. Close your eyes and imagine that both people are sitting on chairs opposite you and facing you. Notice them in as much detail as you are able to – their posture, facial expression and the look behind their eyes as they look at you.
3. Imagine floating into the body of the first person. See through their eyes, hear through their ears, feel how they feel and notice the sort of things they say to themselves. And as you look back at yourself, consider what advice this person would have for you on your issue?

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4. When you have gathered the advice, float back into your body and take a moment to absorb the learning and advice they had for you.
5. Repeat steps 2, 3 & 4 with each of your other advisors in turn.
6. When you have done this, consider all the things that were stressing you in your life, and notice how things seem a little different once you consider the advice you have received.

And remember, a 'to-do' list will always have something on it that you need to do! That's what it's there for!

Ten ways to start reducing stress today:

9. Have Fun & Laugh a lot!

Ever felt stressed while laughing and having fun?

I thought not!

Find opportunities to laugh and have fun every day – watch a funny film, read a funny book, go and see friends who make you laugh.

Whatever you find funny and fun is going to lift your spirits, make you feel better in yourself and help you refocus when you get back to your list.

Think of five things that you find fun. It could be watching a particular sitcom, playing with your kids or something else completely:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)

Now, pick one that you can do today and go and have some fun! Whether you have ten minutes or an hour just go and do it!

Ten ways to start reducing stress today:

10. Instant Calm

You can train your mind so that you can instantly feel calm and in control whenever you would like to. As with most things, the more often you practice this, the easier it will become and the better the results you will get.

Instant Calm:

- 1) Remember a specific time in the past when you felt completely calm, in control and relaxed. Maybe it was a specific moment on holiday, or just sitting in the sun or something different.
- 2) Close your eyes and imagine floating back to that time and right into your body so you see what you saw, hear what you heard and feel the good feelings of calmness, peace and control.
- 3) Looking through your own eyes as though you were back there now, make everything you see bigger and brighter, the sounds crisper and keep intensifying the good feelings.
- 4) You can notice where in your body you feel that calmness the strongest and how from that point it grows and spreads and strengthens into all parts of you, until it feels like it's flowing through your veins. You can even imagine a dial inside you and keep turning it up as the feelings increase.

As you keep replaying the movie of that time in your mind, give the feeling a colour and take that colour to the top of your head and down to the tips of your toes, then make it brighter, and brighter again.

- 5) When you really feel that calmness and control, imagine bringing the good feeling back into the now. Have that calm feeling inside and then consider how all the things that used to seem stressful now seem to be a bit more manageable don't they? You can even take this feeling into future situations as you notice everything happening exactly the way you would want it to.

Ten ways to start reducing stress today:

And one extra:

It's often said that what we focus on increases so make sure you focus on what you do want (rather than what you don't want).

For example, consider these two thoughts: 'I don't want to feel stressed' and 'I want to stay calm'. Both aim to get a similar result but the first focuses on stress and the second on calm.

Which would you rather focus on – stress or calm?

Make sure your thoughts are focused on what you want such as success, confidence, calmness and relaxation.

Many people use affirmations to remind themselves of what they want so you may want to say to yourself something like 'I can handle this' or 'I am calm, confident and relaxed'.

Use whatever works for you that is positive. The more often you repeat it to yourself (in your head or out loud) the stronger the feeling becomes (if it feels like you are faking it at first just keep doing it and soon you'll find it has become real for you).

Stress busting!

Have another suggestion of how to reduce stress that works for you?

E-mail it to dan@elymindcoaching.co.uk and it may be included in the next update of this e-book.

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About the Author



Daniel Regan is an experienced hypnotherapist who successfully practices in Ely, Cambridge & Newmarket.

Daniel's qualifications include:

- Certified Hypnotherapist
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Further Help

Daniel is available for individual consultations in Ely, Cambridge & Newmarket. He offers a free 30 minute initial consultation so you can find out more about how right hypnotherapy is for you before going ahead. Read what some of Dan's past clients have said:

<http://www.elymindcoaching.co.uk/testimonials>

What else can hypnotherapy help with?

Hypnotherapy, hypnosis & NLP can help with a wide range of issues such as:

- Stopping smoking
- Weight Loss
- Anxiety
- Fears & Phobias
- Depression
- Excessive Drinking
- Guilt, Sadness, Anger
- Panic Attacks
- Low confidence/low self esteem
- And many other issues.

Contact Daniel for more information: www.elymindcoaching.co.uk

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