



The Stress **Less Coach**

5 SIMPLE & EASY STEPS TO A *Calmer Life*

Are you ready for a life of calm?

Are you overwhelmed, anxious and fearful?

Do you want a life where you can remove unnecessary stress and get greater results in your life?

Never fear, this book will transform your life. It will help you to remove unnecessary stress and move forward easily and effortlessly to a calm life.

www.thestresslesscoach.com.au







5 Simple and Easy Steps to a Calmer Life

It's now time to acknowledge your-self for taking the time to learn and practice ways to achieve a calmer life.

You already know that scientific studies have proven that reducing stress will prolong your life and improve the quality of your everyday living experience. Reducing your stress will basically make you feel better in ways you can see and feel on a day to day basis. It will also help you to improve your life over a longer period of time. Some of these changes you cannot see or feel. I won't go into the scientific facts now. The most important thing for you to know now is that chronic stress is harmful to your physical and mental health. If you would like to improve both then you are on the right track taking the time to read this book.

There are so many ways that stress can show itself. Sometimes it is a 'one off' experience and at other times it can be ongoing. Stress in itself is not a 'bad' thing. If I say to you that I want you to jump 1 metre off the ground that could be seen as a demand on you. You jump 1 metre off the ground and it is no big deal. In basic terms, stress is just a response to a demand. I could ask another person to do the same thing and it could be a big deal for them. When do you want me to jump, how many times, will I be good enough?


The only way you can function as a human being is to respond to demands. The demand can come from external sources, like a request for a job to be done from a boss or it can from within you and all the beliefs that you have about how you should or shouldn't live your life.

Some people turn their stress response inside themselves with thoughts of self loathing and others

turn it outwards with hostility. Some people want to run away from the demand and others want to fight it (Flight or Fight Response).

We are all unique and our responses to life demands are just as unique. It could mean doing too much or too little of something like eating, drinking and sleeping. It might mean poor concentration at work, relationship difficulties, excessive alcohol or drug use and smoking. It might be sitting for far too long in front of the television or not taking a rest period to watch your favourite show.

Here are 5 simple steps to get you started. There is so much more to learn over time but let's start with some of the basics. Imagine a life of calm.



I asked a young woman why stress is such a problem for her and this is what she said; "It affects everything; friendships, relationships, work, eating and sleeping. It takes over everything and you can't escape it. It's all consuming."



Imagine...

A sense of inner calm washes over you as you see yourself as the master of your thoughts and feelings and all of your body responds in the same way. The muscles around your head and neck feel free and loose, your arms feel heavy and you can see the look on your face. It's a smile of sorts and it's a face with less intensity and lines. If you could see into your stomach it would be doing its' job with little effort, sliding and gliding and getting all the nutrition that your body requires. Your mind is 'collected', with just enough stress response to keep you doing what you

need to do well. You hear thoughts that are kind and enabling and you touch the world around you like you have never seen or touched it before....you could say you are 'smelling the roses'. A life of calm.....a life that can meet pressing or exciting demands when it has to but it can also slow and rejuvenate to get your body's fuel back in sync' to create another day.



A mother of four children said, "I get really angry and just fly off the handle at nothing. It affects my relationship with my family. I get angry and then everyone gets upset with me. When I 'fly off the handle' I know I shouldn't be doing it but I can't seem to stop if I am feeling stressed."

Imagine...

Before you take any of the steps below the first thing you need to do is to ask yourself this question.

"Do I really want to have a calmer life?"

If you are nodding silently to yourself then I would advise you to read on. If you are not sure because you have doubts about whether that is possible I would like to propose that the only thing holding you back is that you are scared of not being stressed (sounds a little weird but that is how your mind can work and it will be drawn to what you know and what has kept you safe in the past) or, you don't know where to start. Maybe you have been stressed and doing it tough for a long

time. It might be all you know. What could be scary is how you would begin a life that was filled with quiet and contemplative moments without levels of high adrenalin. Who would you be? What would you become if your life became calmer? Sometimes the thought of something new and different can be challenging and can provoke feelings of fear. That fear can be all encompassing to the point where, strangely enough, you may choose high stress and a life that is intolerable over choosing not to do anything at all. You may do this because the thought of trying something new or being someone new is almost too much to bear.

Picture This...

- ✓ You know you are stressed and you find it unbearable
- ✓ You know that something needs to change...but are not sure what needs to change and if you did, what can you do about it?
- ✓ The thought of doing something about your stress can be scarier than the stress itself
- ✓ Your thoughts go around in circles like a merry-go-round which makes you more stressed
- ✓ The more you think the faster you spin

STOP!

STOP!

STOP!

Get off the merry-go-round and get your feet firmly on the ground.

Let's deal with this now.

Yes You Can!

I ask you, right now to put the 'stressed you' into the palm of your left hand and the new, 'calm you', into the palm of your right hand.



Which one feels heavy? Which one are you drawn to? Your left hand is feeling heavy and your right hand is feeling lighter. You are naturally drawn to your right hand, aren't you? As you imagine being calm, your right hand will feel lighter and lighter. This is how your life will become when you effectively deal with your stress. Lighter, calmer and in control of thoughts, feelings and emotions. Imagine that.

I suggest that you find the ideas and actions in this book that work for you. The answer is and always will be, just do it! Try some new thoughts and actions. The 'doing' will eliminate your fear and will give you back some of the power you lose when you are stressed.

So, think first and then just do it!

Let's begin. Just do it!

Step 1

Imagine a life of calm.

There is nothing greater or more powerful than your imagination. You are in charge of your mind and therefore your results. If you imagine chaos you will get chaos. If you imagine calm, your mind and your body will work towards calm and not surprisingly, you will be calm. It is really that simple. Try this out for a moment. Close your eyes and think about the last time you felt really stressed and out of control. You may get a sensation in the pit of your stomach, maybe a butterfly or two or maybe you will instantly discover the muscles in your jaw tightening up and perhaps your breathing rate increasing. You may feel like your head is spinning.

Now, try the reverse.



Think about the last time you felt calm. It may have been in the shower as the warm water was trickling over your body or it may have been after a strenuous walk when all your energy was drained. Your thoughts slow down. Your body slows down. Your thoughts slow down. Now sense the difference from what you experience in your mind and body when you are stressed and then when you are calm. It may help to write the way you feel on a piece of paper. This helps to make the thoughts real and accessible.

It will now help to focus on a positive result you want in your life.

It could be the way you want your day to turn out, the job you want to create, the relationship you want to create or heighten, the house you want to buy, etc. It can be a short term or long term goal. Rather than thinking about all the reasons you can't get there, just focus on being there...in that job, relationship, house, etc. This is very powerful. The unconscious mind does not have the ability to distinguish between reality and imagination. This is such a powerful tool.

If you imagine something often enough, your unconscious mind will see it as reality and find ways to create it in your life. If you focus on that positive relationship often, you will be amazed at how many little ways you find to make it happen in reality.

Maybe you meet a friend in the next week who has a positive and loving relationship with a partner or child and talking to them after you have been thinking about positive relationships will help you to tune into the comments and ideas your friend has about creating and maintaining a positive relationship. Think about this for a moment. Imagine what could have been different if you only focused on future relationships that you believed would be negative or damaging.

These thoughts are repeated over and over in your mind and almost become a reality. When you meet someone who has a positive relationship you are more likely to disregard their positive comments because all that you are focussed on is a negative relationship. What you focus on is what you will get. If you mention your ideas about wanting a positive relationship with someone in the future you

“I feel I lose control of who I really am. I can't operate at the level that I know I can. I am not my happy self and I tend to withdraw and become quiet. All I want to do is clear my head of all my thoughts because when this happens it totally brings me down. I know I get more infections and lose all my energy. I feel tired all the time and it stops me from finding my strength.”



are more than likely going to have conversations about how to do that. If your focus is on negative relationships, you will get conversations about negative relationships.

In some ways it is like turning on a radar to search out the conversations or behaviours that you know will be helpful and resourceful to you. Once the radar is switched on it will constantly search for the positive and resourceful conversations and actions that will lead you, ultimately to a calmer life. It will also lead you to the results that you want in life, which in turn will lead you to a calmer life. Your mind is your greatest ally if used with a positive imagination.

The trick here is to convince yourself that something you would like to have or happen in the future, has already happened, and then your mind becomes programmed to make it reality. Believe in infinite possibilities and you will be rewarded. Always focus on the result, not the process or the obstacles... the RESULT. Basketball players focus on the basket and imagine the ball going through it. They don't focus on all the people running around trying to stop them. Footy players focus on the winning try

or the perfect kick. Top sales people focus on the next 'yes', not the 99 'no's' between now and then. When I work with clients who smoke, I have them focus on being a non-smoker. Create a clear vision of the result and hold it steady in your mind. There is unlimited power in focus.

A young working man said, "Stress impairs my ability to think clearly and I often take the pressure off by taking it out on other people as I am not able to think clearly. And then I get more stressed".





Step 2

Take time to meditate.

Really, all this means is setting aside 'me' time. I realise that some of you wonderful Mums and Dads reading this will ask; "When do I get some 'me' time with all my responsibilities for my children?" If you are a Grandparent you may have increasing responsibilities for Grandchildren and aging parents and have little time as well. All that you need to do is set aside 30 minutes each day for yourself and if it can't be totally for yourself then you can do this while you are doing something else. The most important thing to remember is that the plan to meditate is realistic and achievable. If you can learn to meditate while doing something else, then good on you! If you can find 30 minutes a day just for you then good on you too!

You can meditate in the morning, in the middle of the day or before you go to sleep at night.

The most important thing is 'taking the time' to interrupt all the ongoing thoughts that can take over. Meditation doesn't have to mean that you sit in a lotus position, in yogi clothes looking at a candle or a rose. Anything you can do to improve your experience is always worth a try though, so experiment. You can meditate in the morning while lying in bed staring at the ceiling, at night by going for a walk or running, while listening to music (my favourite) or in the shower, while cleaning, while washing your car, while manicuring your nails, while writing in a journal, while swimming, while relaxing in a bath, while waiting in a doctor's office, etc. I am using my writing experience, right now, to create a space for me and collect my thoughts. I feel calm.

There are so many opportunities for you to take a mental break, to focus on yourself, and gain clarity of thought. During the meditation, do the following:

- Allow all of those annoying chatty voices to talk. You know the ones...all of those conversations that play over and over in your head. The conversations you dwell on such as; why did so-and-so say that? Why did I say that? Why did he do that? What does that mean? When will this or that happen? They must think I am a fool. I am not good enough. My life is boring. I have no friends. If I don't work harder and longer I might lose my job. I am a lousy Mother etc...
- Once they have quieted down, enjoy the nothingness, the silence, the occasional random thought among the placid lake you are beginning to imagine. You can see the glass like stillness of the surface of the water. You can smell the trees surrounding the lake and you can hear that gentle rustle of leaves as the wind blows gently through. You see yourself walking strongly and calmly, with the only focus being the lake and its' surrounds. You arrive at the edge of the lake and breathe in deeply to smell the fresh air; your lungs expand just as they need to. You imagine the feel of the crisp cool water even before you touch the surface and slowly flick your fingers through it. You immerse the palm of your hand in the water and take another deep breath. You feel strong and with nothing else to do but savour the lake. Imagine.

Imagine...

- Doing something like this costs you nothing and can be accessed any time of the day. It requires almost no effort on your part...allow it to happen naturally.
- Now here is the best part...focus your attention on a result. It could be the way you want your day to turn out, the job you want to create, the relationship you want to create or heighten, the house you want to buy, etc. It can be a short term or long term goal. Rather than thinking about all the reasons you can't get there, just focus on being there...in that job, relationship, house, etc. This is very powerful. The unconscious mind does not have the ability

to distinguish between reality and fantasy. Let whatever happens, happen. There are no rules.

When you allow those voices to settle down, focus on nothing, then slowly focus your thoughts on the future you want, stress has no place in your life. You will drain the power from the monster, you put it to rest, then you appropriately focus that power where you want it...you focus it on the powerful future you are creating for yourself, your loved ones, and your friends. When you gain control of your life, you inspire others to do the same. Live as an example of human potential. Live in infinite possibility.

Imagine...



Step 3

Stop being a 'should-er' and become a 'could-er'

Sometimes you will expect things that aren't actually necessary, or even desirable, because you think that this is how things 'should' be. And if you were asked why things should be this way, you may not have an answer that can be put into words. You may come to realize that this expectation doesn't actually serve you, and can make you feel dissatisfied, frustrated, and stressed. This type of 'should' holds you back from enjoying your life, in ways that are sometimes subtle, and at other times glaring.

Take some time now to think about all the 'shoulds' that run your life. Here are a few:

I should look good every day

I should be a good daughter or a good mother

I should be strong and not show emotion

I should be happy all the time

I should know what will make other people happy

I should always know the answers

I should be a fantastic cook

I should keep a clean and tidy house

I should exercise every day

I should be caring

I should be able to cope

I should know what to do with my life

I don't know about how you are feeling after reading all these 'shoulds' but I am feeling very pressured. I almost feel like I need to run away so I don't have to face it. And let's be clear here, I don't believe that any of the above 'shoulds' are thoughts or actions that are 'have tos'. If you read back through the list you will see that most of the 'shoulds' are based on a belief system. Is

the belief true? Most likely not. Does it feel real? Almost definitely. So what is really going on here? Why would you create a list of your own 'shoulds' when you didn't have to? Maybe you don't know a different way of doing things or there was always an expectation from outside and within you to behave a certain way. My challenge to you is. Is this a belief that is giving you the life that you really want?

Now we get to the 'have to' do something. A 'have to' is stronger in terms of pressure than a 'should'. Think about this; I should look good every day to; I have to look good every day. I am feeling pressured again. What happens if you change the should or could to, I choose to or I choose not to? Did the feeling of pressure go down? It did for me.

For every one of these it will help if you change the 'have to' to 'could'. What this does is that it gives you a choice which creates less demand, less pressure and then less stress. I know you must be thinking that there are things that you really must do or have to do. It's worth exploring whether this is really the case. The language that you use in your mind will translate to action. Living in a 'should' and 'have to' world is very exhausting and stressful. Living in a world of 'I choose to' is empowering and less stressful. It becomes a life of calm.

I have to feed my kids

I have to go to work

I have to pay my bills and my mortgage

I have to take care of my health

This is where it gets interesting and your power of choice begins. Let's go back and look at all the 'have to' and look at what the 'have tos' could be interpreted to mean and then what replacing with could will do to your sense of demand and then your stress level.

I have to feed my kids (I choose to have children who will grow and be healthy)

I have to go to work (I choose to have a job and go to work)



I have to pay my bills and my mortgage (I choose to rent or own a home)

I have to take care of my health (I choose to have a healthy mind and body)

Remember, stress only happens as a result of a demand whether real or perceived brought about from within your own mind or from external sources. Regardless of where the demand begins it always ends up being dealt with by your mind. Your mind is your biggest asset.

OK. Here is your challenge. TODAY is the day you officially give up your 'shoulds' and 'have tos'. Start celebrating this day as it will bring you some real relief from stress.

What does it mean to give up your 'shoulds' and have 'tos'? It means looking closely at your assumptions about how to set your goals, how to

judge yourself, and how stressed you want to make yourself feel.

When I was younger I was very fortunate to have learnt this stress management strategy. I looked closely at how I was operating under an excessive number of 'shoulds' and 'have tos'. What I realised was that I was responding to standards of behaviour and judgement that came from other people and didn't really represent my values, needs, or my goals. This is common thinking that can become quite distorted. If you do it long enough you can start to own it as your own which continues the pressure and stress. Becoming aware of what expectations are unrealistic to expect from yourself or others can be freeing. The process of giving up the 'shoulds' and 'have tos' is simple, once you become aware that it is necessary. Today, I'd like to encourage you to begin the process of giving up your 'shoulds' and 'have tos'.

Simple Strategy 1.

One simple and effective strategy is; the next time you find yourself frustrated because things aren't going as you wish they would (for example, someone's not doing what you'd like them to do; your circumstances aren't shaping up as they might), and you feel wronged, take a minute to think:

- Is this other person really doing something that objectively any human being would know to be wrong?
- Have you ever found yourself doing something similar? (Be honest.) Are there sensible reasons that someone would do something other than what you think they should, without malicious intent?
- When looking at circumstances that "should" be different--what makes you so sure they should?
- Are there any advantages to how things actually are?
- Is there another way to look at things, if you accept that things are okay as they are?



Simple Strategy 2.

1. Make a list of things you believe you should do or have to do, that perhaps you're not doing. (Bonus points if these are things you feel you should do, that you are not doing. Extra bonus points if you are feeling stressed because you aren't doing them.) You can start each item with 'I should...', 'I have to...', and write as many as you feel comfortable writing.

2. Now look at each item and write why you should do them. Go with your gut or the first thing you think of, your first response. Is it because someone else thinks you should or you have to? Is it because you think you won't be good enough if you don't? Or is it because dire consequences will result?

3. Now evaluate which items seem reasonable to expect from yourself. If undesired consequences would result if you don't do something ("I should feed my children dinner each night," for example), it's obviously a reasonable 'should'. But there may be a long list of 'shoulds' that really aren't as important to maintain as you habitually think they are. Should you maintain a friendship with a difficult person? Should you fit into size ten (Aussie sizes) skinny jeans or have washboard abs before you allow yourself to feel good about your appearance? You get the idea. These are the ones to start letting go. Right now.

4. Repeat this exercise, but this time choose 'shoulds' that involve other people. For example; I should allow my partner to do his/her own thing more often.

Let's give them a break, too.

Simple Strategy 3.

One final strategy that can help? When you hear yourself 'shoulding' and 'have to-ing', change the 'should' and 'have to', to 'could'. Many of your 'shoulds' aren't necessarily bad ideas, but they are not the beat-yourself-up-if-you-don't-do-them ideas that we can make them out to be. Give yourself a break, and remember that your 'shoulds' and 'have tos' are a choice. Re-examining your 'shoulds' and 'have tos' is a way to let go of stress, to let go of thought patterns that cause stress.

Simple Strategy 4.

Repeat, repeat and repeat the new way of finding calm and reducing stress. To develop a new habit you need to repeat the habit until it is fully installed in your unconscious mind.



"I feel overwhelmed when I am stressed and cannot think straight. It is definitely no good for me or for anyone else around me. Work presents me with many potentially stressful situations but I try to put things into perspective by removing myself from the situation and taking some time to think about it. This ensures I don't say or do something I may regret."

Step 4

Eliminate and Say 'NO'!

Eliminate from your life every person and activity that drains you. Easier said than done? Try it. Simply stop participating in activities that take more than they give. Things that waste your time, resources, emotions, etc. Do this for a week to start with. Create a week of freedom. I give you permission to stop them as of this moment.

'NO'!



“Stress is the trash of modern life - we all generate it but if you don't dispose of it properly, it will pile up and overtake your life”.

Danzae Pace

It's OK To Say 'NO'!

Many people end up over-scheduling themselves because they feel uncomfortable saying 'NO' when people ask things of them. This may be because they don't want to admit to themselves that they can't 'do it all', or perhaps because they don't want to disappoint others. Unfortunately, they ultimately disappoint themselves by not having enough time to do what's important to them. Does this apply to you? If so, learning to say 'NO' might be a good time management priority and a way to a calmer life.

A single working Mum said this:

“I asked my son about stress and how it effects me and he rolled his eyes. I think he could tell you a bit about how it feels to be on the receiving end of the stick living with someone under stress. For me though, as I thought about it, I realized that there is good stress and bad stress. Good stress is when you set out to achieve a whole lot of things but have set yourself an achievable goal. Achievable if you stretch. Bad stress is when you are set up to fail. Experience let's you know the difference.

Then there is what you do with the stress. When you let stress rule your life you get angry, can't sleep, make mistakes and get angry.....

It gets to be a vicious cycle. For me I found that the stress when I was getting divorced stopped me from sleeping, or if I got to sleep, I would wake up in the

middle of the night and not be able to get back to sleep. I got to a point where I physically and mentally could not take it anymore and I just decided that it had to end, so I slept. Amazing how different you feel after just three days of good sleep.

Good stress can be a real buzz, but when you are working at that level, one little unexpected interruption or thing that goes wrong can turn productive stress into bad stress, so it is not where you want to work all the time. It can be a very useful way of getting through a crisis or a work emergency.

The biggest risk is not knowing when you are dealing with good or bad stress. If you can't tell the difference it is bad stress automatically.

Stress must always be a temporary state. When it becomes a way of life, it affects your health, reduces your immunity and makes you a right royal pain in the neck”.

Step 5

De-clutter your life.

Have you seen those fantastic home makeover shows where they clear out all the clutter in a room, and then re-organize the room by returning only those things that are vital to the needs of the homeowners? When I watch these shows I feel re-invigorated but I haven't left the comfort of my lounge-room. Imagine the re-invigoration that would occur for you if you removed your clutter. You may decide to do it both physically and mentally.

I have often wondered how anyone could have built up all the clutter in the first place and then like magic they have no clutter at all. If I am to be honest, I shouldn't be surprised as I can build my mind and physical clutter up to an intolerant point if I don't keep an eye on what is happening. What is important here is that you find a way to keep the clutter to a minimum. Find a way to sustain the clutter-less lifestyle so that you won't need to do the big 'clean ups' after a crises of some sort.

Think about this. The people on those home renovation shows always walk back in the house 'oohing' and 'aahing', feeling a little uncomfortable sometimes and then totally relieved. It's like a weight off their shoulders. You can use the same process to reorganize your life. In your mind, clear the clutter. Imagine it gone. Think about what you would be seeing, hearing and feeling once all the clutter is gone. You can access items of importance without spending a lot of time wasted searching. This applies to both physical and mental clutter.

OK. Try this. Clear everything out and then return only the things that are vital to your survival -- your job and sleep, for example. Then bring other things back into your schedule in their order of importance, adding new things that are important as well (like time for exercise), and leaving out things that are draining you or stressing you, like obligations that you'd rather not keep. This exercise can give you a greater idea of what things in your life are feeding you, and what things you may want to eliminate. (Note: Some more popular pieces of 'schedule clutter' include mediocre television shows, time spent with people who drain you; time spent doing tasks that could be streamlined.)

To Sum Up

Imagine a Life of Calm

Take Time to Meditate

Stop being a 'Should-er' and become a 'Could-er'

Eliminate and say "NO"

De-clutter your Life



“The greatest weapon against stress is our ability to choose one thought over another”.

William James





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A large, stylized sun graphic occupies the bottom half of the page. It features a yellow semi-circle at the top with white rays radiating from the center. Below the sun is a solid blue horizontal band.

We Guide. You Decide.