

MANAGING STRESS

John Miller

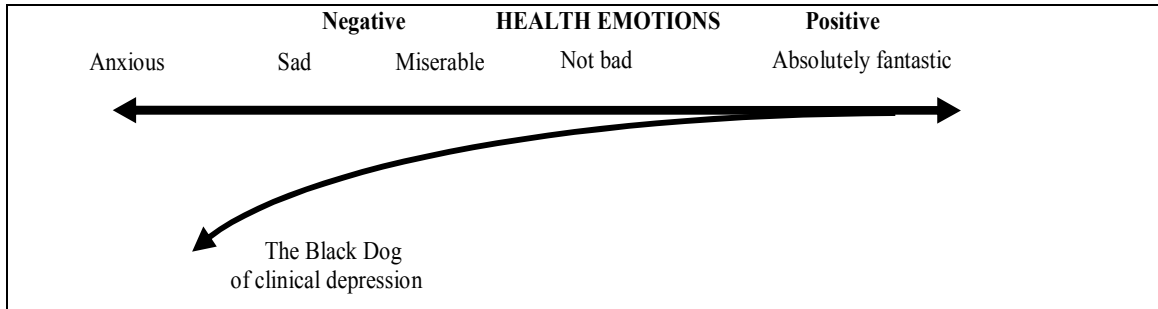
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MANAGING STRESS

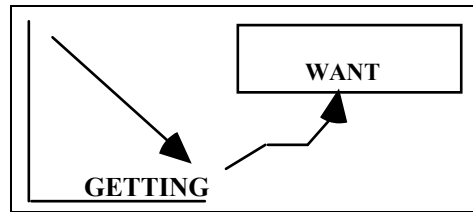
DEFINITION OF STRESS

There is an epidemic of dysfunction of the mind. The number of people who are anxious, sad and depressed is increasing at a dramatic rate. If you want less stress in your life, do what unstressed people do.



Stress is the distance between what you're getting and what you want. If you know what you want and you're on the way to getting it, you feel fantastic. If you know what you want and you're not on the way to getting it, you feel wretched.

If one of the brick walls of life is stopping you from getting what you want you can start to feel sad, miserable or unhappy. You can lose energy and vitality.



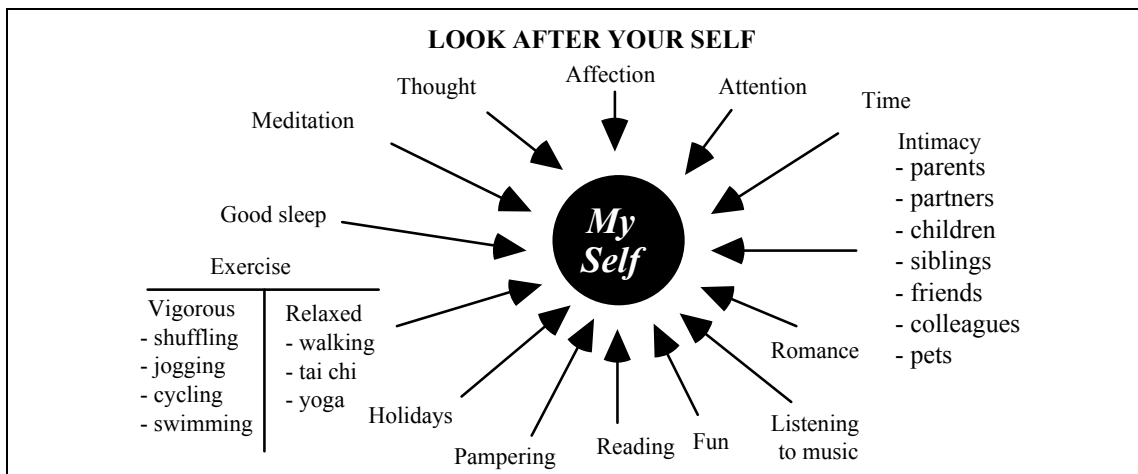
If you experience these symptoms, sit back for a moment and think, 'What do I need to do to fix up the cause of my stress?' Of course, for many people, the great stress of life comes from not knowing what they want and having to put up with what they're getting. Stress is the distance between potential and achievement. You can be pretty certain you'll start feeling stressed when your Self comes to an understanding that you are not achieving your full potential as a human being.

We feel distressed when

- we're not getting enough - of the things we want
- we don't have a clear idea of what we really want out of life
- there is a gap between potential and achievement
- there is an imbalance between the demands of life and our capacity to deal with them
- when we're not giving enough back to our *Self*.

GIVE BACK TO YOUR *Self*

Stress is the rebellion of the *Self* against lack of attention.

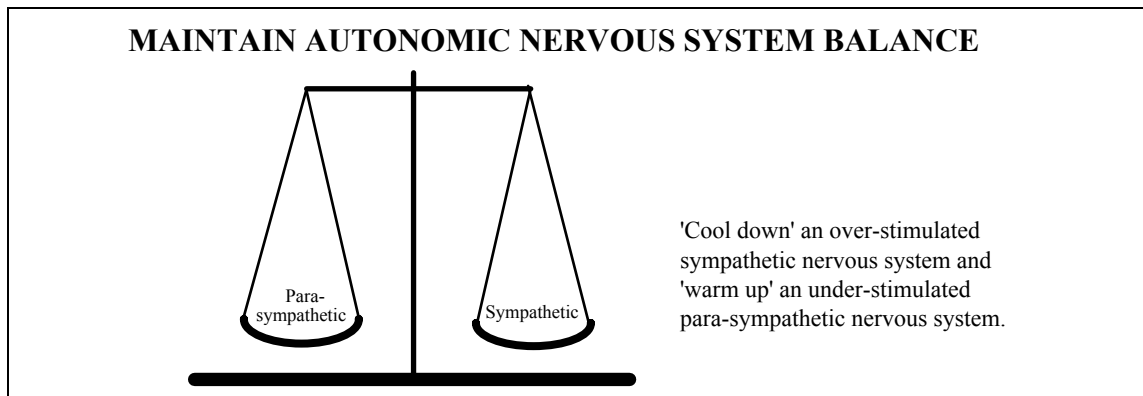


THE AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM

The autonomic nervous system runs sub-consciously the essential processes of your body like digestion and respiration, all of it under unconscious control. You don't have to worry about your heart rate, when to take the next breath, what's happening to your breakfast, it's all automatically controlled from the spot in your brain known as the limbic system.

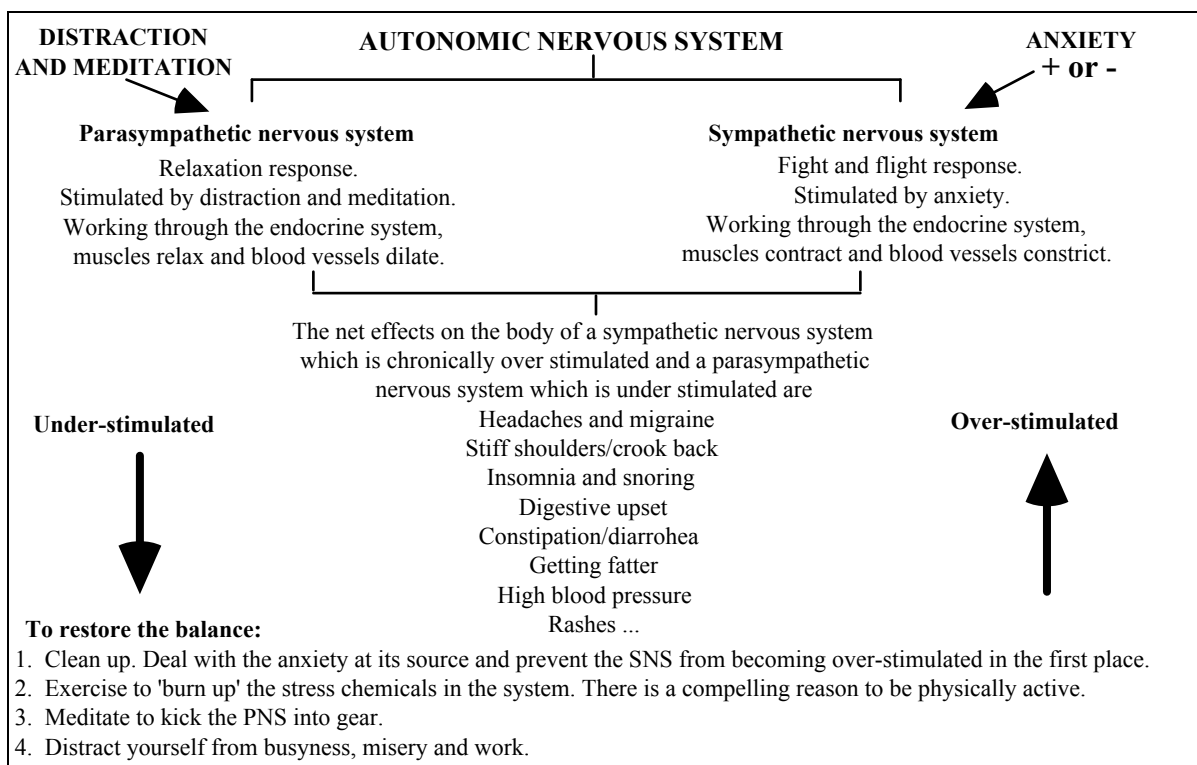
It has two 'branches' the sympathetic nervous system, designed to help the body deal with stressful situations (whether they be good or bad), and the parasympathetic nervous system designed to bring the body back to a relaxed state of homeostasis.

MANAGING STRESS



The autonomic nervous system governs many of the major functions of the body, digestion, respiration and brain activity ...

The autonomic nervous system is a bit like the air conditioner in a large building. Just as the air conditioner ticks over quietly in the background, maintaining a steady temperature all day without the inhabitants being aware of what's happening, so the autonomic nervous system ticks over in the background managing body system functions and helping them to meet the demands of changing conditions.



THE STRESS CYCLE

When we get stressed the body reacts in a flight and fight response. This is a normal, healthy function. However, the body was not designed to be aroused for extended periods of time. We need a balance of arousal and relaxation.

The stress cycle was originally developed as part of a primitive response. Man would be confronted by beast. Man would get frightened and run away. Once the crisis was over he returned to his normal calm self. The running contributed to the calming process by burning off the stress chemicals in the blood stream.

In the modern world, we get excited more often by nervous stress than wild beasts. And with chronic stress, every minute, hour, day, week, month, year and decade see us gradually getting more and more stressed. This is why blood pressure creeps up slowly over the years, particularly for busy people.

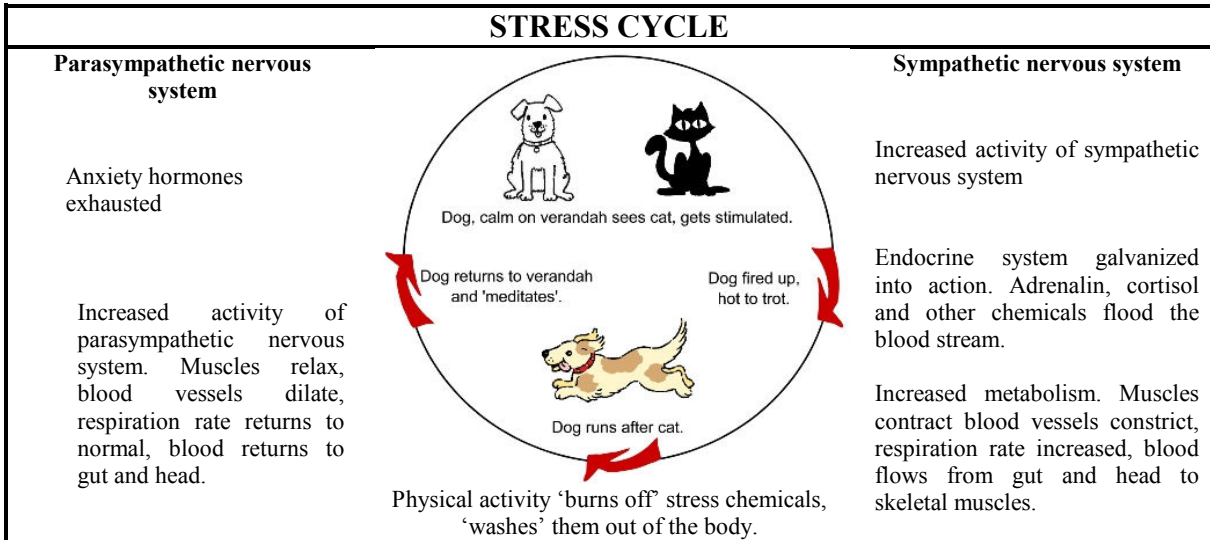
But, whilst we still get all the reactions of the flight and fight mechanism, we don't burn off the chemicals through physical activity or rest up to induce a state of calm.

MANAGING STRESS

ARE DOGS SMARTER THAN HUMANS?

In the illustration of the stress cycle, imagine a dog, sitting, nicely relaxed on the verandah. He sees a cat and becomes stimulated. The sympathetic nervous system is activated. The adrenal glands produce increased amounts of adrenalin and other chemicals, causing muscles to tense, pulse to quicken, blood pressure to rise, blood sugar level to increase, breathing to become more rapid and blood to flow from the gut and the head out to skeletal muscles.

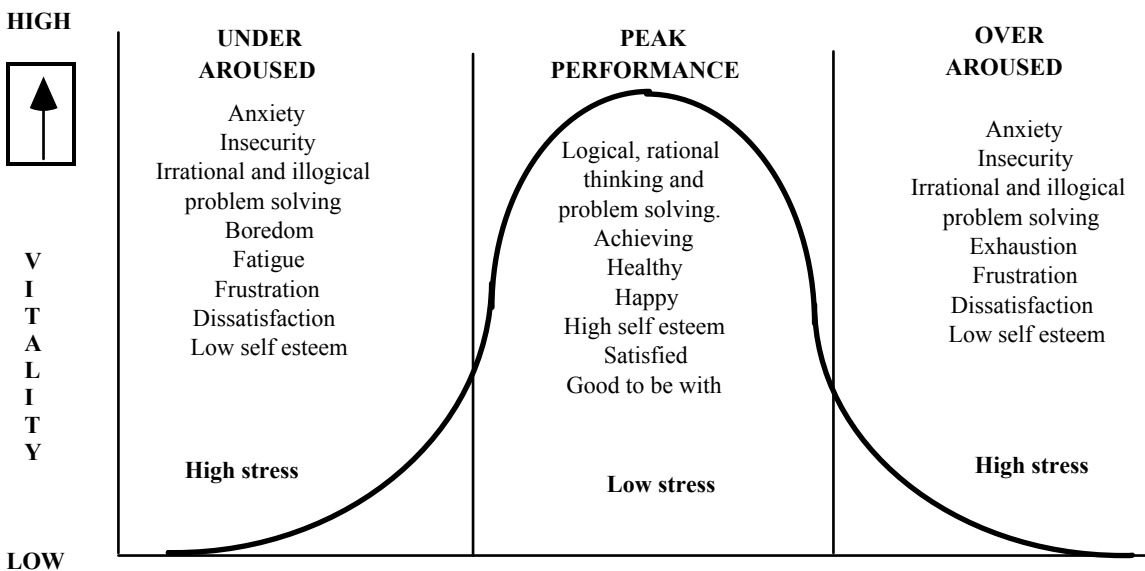
The dog runs after the cat, and in doing so burns off the stress chemicals. He then comes back to the verandah and 'meditates'. The physical activity and the meditation combine to 'cool down' the over active sympathetic nervous system and 'warm up' the under-stimulated parasympathetic nervous system.



The physiological mechanisms that the body uses to tell us we're stressed, (headaches, tight muscles, insomnia, fat gain, elevated blood pressure ...) are the **background noise** that accompanies stress. It is not normal. It is a warning that you can choose to listen to or ignore.

PEAK PERFORMANCE

You'll know from the signals your body gives you whether you're in the peak performance zone. Both the under-stimulated and the over-stimulated experience many of the same symptoms.



MANAGING STRESS

PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Complete the past

One of the things that stresses people is carrying the past with them into the future. You've been programmed – most of it good, some of it not so good. This programming has been stored in your subconscious in the form of habits, attitudes, values and beliefs. Some of this programming goes way, way back. The Jesuits said 'Give us the child and by seven we'll give you back the adult.'

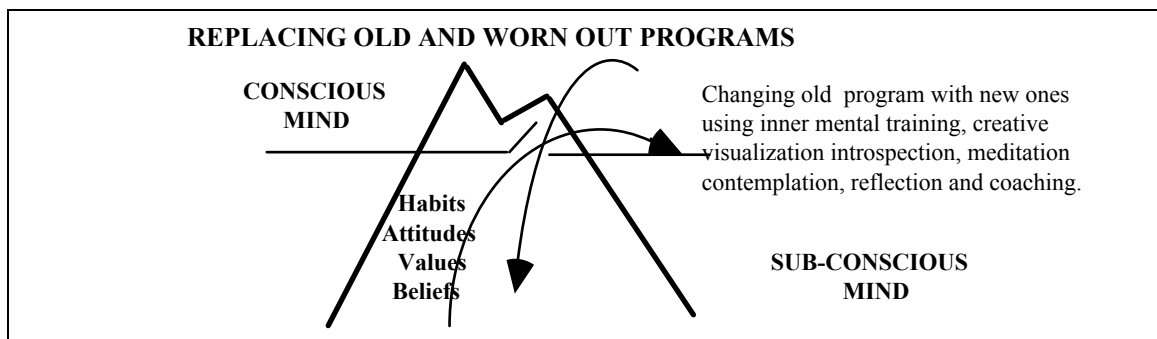
If there were things in the past that you feel are holding you back, then there's a fair chance that you'll be dragging them along with you – like a ball and chain. If it bothers you go and see a good counselor.

Live the present

The average Australian goes to work, comes home, has a drink, has tea, sits down in front of the TV for three hours, goes to bed, has trouble sleeping and then drags themselves out of bed the next day and does it all again. If you want to break this cycle, start doing the things that fit and healthy people do to put vitality into their present; read, get engrossed in a hobby, go out, play sport, keep fit, have friends around ...

Create a powerful future.

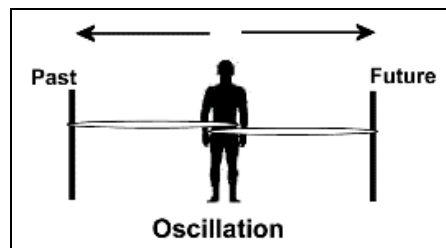
If the past and the present are pretty bleak, there's a fair chance the future will be much that same, unless you do some to change the situation. The thing to change is you. Things change when you change. These changes will be stimulated by your thinking and that in turn will be stimulated by what you read, who you talk to ...



VISION

There are two posts, one representing your future, the other representing your past and you are stuck in the middle with a rubber band around you and around each post. As you move forward into the future the rubber band from your past pulls you back to your past. As you move back to the past the rubber band from the future pulls you forward to your future. Either way you feel the continuous stretch of the oscillation.

You feel like you're getting nowhere. The oscillation drains you of energy and vitality. You're not focused on anything in particular. You keep getting more of the same. And because the future keeps moving out in front of you, you end up feeling like you're going backwards.



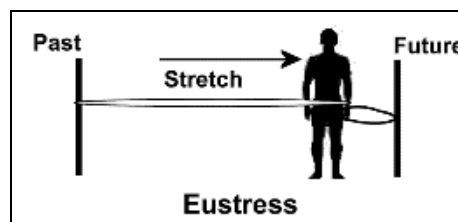
From Robert Fritz, 'The Path of Least Resistance.'

For most people life is an oscillation between the past and the future. (Goodness knows what happens to the present!) And of course you cannot go very far in life, if every 1 step forward is followed by 1 step back.

MOVING FORWARD

INVESTMENT

Time
Effort
Money
Thought



REWARD

Health, family, career and finances ... improve bringing with it.
- happiness
- joy
- ecstasy

If you have a powerful vision of what you want for the future of the big things in life – health, family, career, finances ... - you'll be drawn toward your future like a magnet attracting iron filings. You will feel the stretch from your past. It is a form of stress but it's a good form of stress, known as **eustress**. You can put up with it because you can see the prize, you can feel that things are getting better.

MANAGING STRESS

Investment

To be drawn into the future you will need to make an **investment** – in time, effort, money and thought and you'll need to be disciplined and persistent. You'll move forward when vision, goals, faith, commitment and action are strong enough to overcome inertia, repetition, resistance, laziness, and attachment to the past.

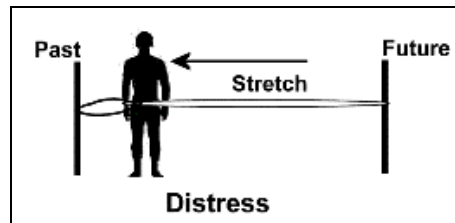
Reward

However, if you make an investment, sooner or later you'll reap a reward – you'll achieve the things you're aiming at. And when you do that the achievement is accompanied by happiness, joy and even ecstasy.

GOING BACKWARDS

COST

Health, family, career and finances ... get worse bringing with it.
- sadness
- misery
- anxiety



REGRET

As you move toward creating what you want, it becomes harder and harder to take the next steps toward creating it. It becomes easier to lose ground and move back toward not having what you want. Years of avoidance gradually undermine one's sense of power, happiness and fulfillment.
Robert Fritz

If you choose to go back to the past you choose the zone of irresponsibility – you end up relying on other people to look after you. The rubber band attached to the future post gets stretched. However in this case you end up with distress.

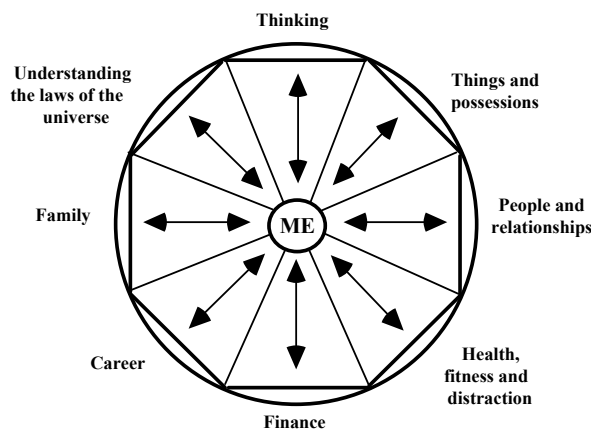
Investment

There is no investment, just a **high cost**. The big things in life get worse. Your health gets worse, your family situation gets worse, your career gets worse, you're always in financial distress.

THE GREAT WHEEL OF LIFE

Life is stressful. In order to reduce the stress you need to focus on all the major aspects of your life. I've selected eight key areas.

You feel good when you feel that you are being supported by each of the areas. To get and then maintain that feeling you will need to set goals for each area and work on them regularly.



LAWS OF THE GREAT WHEEL OF LIFE

1. When you have the feeling that you're being supported in life you feel good.
2. It is generally the case that people want to be supported by each area.
3. To stay supported you have to keep focused on each area. ie. you have to have goals.
4. If one or more areas are not supporting you, you feel wretched.
5. It is usually the case that when you're feeling sad, miserable and depressed, there is more than one area letting you down.
6. Stress generated in one area is bound to show up as stress in other areas.
7. Stress showing up in one area may be generated by another. eg. a lowly paid job may be the cause of financial difficulties.
8. Fixing up one area of your life may produce an improvement in other areas.
9. If you're looking to fix up your life, it doesn't much matter where you start. Choose the area that's going to give you good results in the shortest possible time. Getting fitter works wonders.

MANAGING STRESS

GOALS

People without goals generally have the belief that they cannot successfully predict a future that is much different from their past or present. Of course they can't.

The metaphors of sport provide good lessons for life. What team or individual would ever be successful if they didn't have winning as a goal, or if they didn't train. Winners can laugh and losers can please themselves. Lance Armstrong said, 'It feels better having won.' As in sport, as in life.

The main reason for having goals and writing them down is to

- enhance the degree to which you can predict your future
- give yourself something to aim at
- give yourself something by which we can measure your progress.

Many people think that having goals in their head is sufficient. It works for a few. 'Ordinary mortals' tend to 'fall asleep' or forget what their goals are unless they are written down in a place where they see them regularly.

*Better to hunt in fields for health unbought,
Than fee the doctor for a nauseous draught.
The wise, for cure, on exercise depend;
God never made his work for men to mend.*

John Dryden

MANAGING STRESS

MEDITATION

Meditation is one way of getting in control of our bodies and your minds. It is a particularly good way to stimulate the parasympathetic nervous system. When that happens, muscles relax and blood vessels dilate to the very core of your body. You feel more relaxed generally and your blood pressure comes down.

The brain operates on a range of brain-wave patterns, measured in cycles per second.

Cycles per second	Brain wave type	Mind state
14 - 20	Beta	Awake
7 - 14	Alpha	Daydreaming
4 - 7	Theta	Sleep
Below 4	Delta	Deep sleep

Meditation and stress management

At the Alpha level we experience the state of deep relaxation which is very useful in managing stress; calming the body and re-establishing equilibrium within the nervous and endocrine systems.

To get into the Alpha state when you are awake, sit or lie comfortably, close your eyes, take a deep breath and as you breathe out count from 3 down to 1 and relax.

Ainslie Meares worked for 30 years as a psychiatrist and used meditation extensively in the treatment of psychosomatic and psychoneurotic illnesses. He died in 1986, but his books are widely read and still readily available. (Ainslie Meares *Life without Stress*. Viking O'Neill 1991 Ainslie Meares *Relief without drugs*. Angus and Robertson 1995)

Here is some of what he had to say about meditation.

You may well ask: 'What is the purpose of experiencing this meditative state for a few minutes each day?' The answer is that it reduces the level of our anxiety.

The effects of meditation include inner peace, better interpersonal relationships, clearer thinking, increased work capacity, better sexual relationships due to less tension, absence of disturbing dreams, and smoother physical reactions often shown in better performances in sport.

The key to management of our stress lies in those moments when our brain runs quietly in a way that restores harmony and function.

It does not require long periods of meditation to obtain relief from stress. Ten minutes twice a day has produced dramatic relief in some hundreds of people who have consulted me professionally.

To get the full effect of meditation, it is important not to do it when too tired.

DISTRACT YOURSELF

The people I see who are most stressed are the people who can't distract themselves from being busy and miserable.

The average Australian goes to work, goes home, has a drink, has tea, sits down and watches television, goes to sleep, wakes up and goes to bed, can't sleep, gets up the next morning tired and does it all again. No wonder they're stressed out of their brain.

If you can't find time to

- get away from the desk at lunch time and go for a walk
- exercise
- go for a decent holiday each year
- meditate
- mix with friends
- go to the pictures in the middle of the week
- read a book
- conduct a good romantic life,

it's time you woke up to yourself. Get a life!

MANAGING STRESS

SLEEP

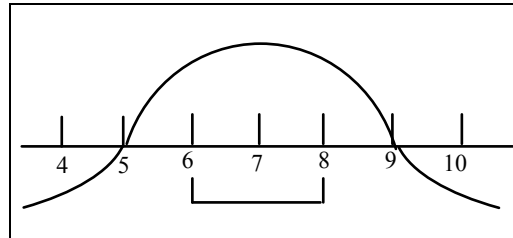
Sleep is one of the first casualties of stress. You can't get to sleep, you wake up in the middle of the night and you wake up tired in the morning.

The number of hours sleep we need is a highly individual matter. Whilst Percy Cerutti, famous and eccentric athletics coach said, *'6 hours for a man, 7 hours for a woman and 8 hours for a fool'*, I would think that somewhere between six and eight is about right for most people.

There is a **normal** spread of hours from 5 through to 9. Some people even get along very well with just 4 hours sleep a night. It is all they need. For most healthy, stimulated people 9 hours is too much.

Nathan Pritiken said that if you don't have time for exercise take an hour off your sleep. You'll need less sleep and you'll sleep better.

You need to find out just how much sleep you really need. The fact that you lie in bed tossing and turning may be your body's way of telling you that you need less sleep. In which case, go to bed later or get up earlier and go for a run.



SECRETS OF GETTING A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

1. Clean up anxiety

Complete the past, live the present and create a powerful future.

2. Physical activity

Twenty minutes vigorous physical activity is the springboard to better sleep. People who take part in regular physical activity can expect to need only 6 - 7 hours sleep a night.

3. Muscular relaxation

Get into the Alpha state and consciously relax the muscles in your body from the head down to the toes and drift off to a deep and relaxing sleep. As you breathe out say the word 'sleep' to yourself.

I recommend you use a **relaxation tape** to help get you off to a relaxed and gentle sleep. You can get my relaxation MP3 from www.fitandhealthyonline.com

When you are ready to go to sleep, put on the tape and let yourself drift away. You will wake up refreshed, relaxed, revitalized and re-invigorated next morning.

4. Lay off the grog

Being a depressant alcohol will help put you to sleep. However, the half-life of alcohol (four hours) means that your sleep will be disturbed mid-way through the night.

5. Focus your thinking

Most people are told to go to bed, they are not taught to go to sleep. When the 'monkeys are chattering', distract the left brain from its busy-ness by focusing on one thought.

6. Lay off the caffeine

Some people could drink 20 cups of coffee a day and they'd sleep like kittens. Others may only have one cup and it's enough to keep them awake.

7. Reduce your fluid intake

Having to get up to go to the loo breaks the sleep pattern. Then you may not be able to get back to sleep.

8. Steer clear of sleeping tablets - treat the cause of your sleep dysfunction

Sleeping tablets fail to produce the rapid eye movement (REM) deep sleep required for the body to recover naturally and then prepare for the next day.

9. Teach yourself to go to sleep using inner mental training

Train yourself over a 21 day period to go to sleep using the Silva white board and marker technique.

10. Take a holiday

Being stressed, anxious and unable to go to sleep may be a reminder that you need a long holiday.

HEALTH, FITNESS AND WELLBEING PROFILE

The mind is just one of many body systems in a complex ecosystem. The mind and the rest of the body systems are intimately connected. For instance, when we get mentally stressed, the stress registered in the mind is relayed to the body via the autonomic nervous system. Conversely when one of the other body systems becomes stressed, the stress is relayed to the mind. You may not realise how stressed you are until you complete this questionnaire but your body does. The body is incapable of dishonesty!

Circle the number appropriate to the degree to which you experience the symptoms on the left hand side of the page. The greater the symptom, the higher the score. Total the score at the bottom of the page.

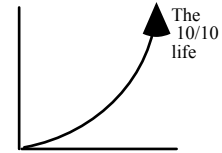
	None	Not much	A fair bit	A lot							
1. Headaches (including migraines)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2. Lack of energy and vitality	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
3. Candida - jock itch, thrush, tinea, furry tongue	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
4. Poor sleep. (Score 10 if on medication)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
5. Snoring and/or sleep apnoea (Use gas mask, score 10)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
6. Crook back, sore shoulders, stiff neck, RSI	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
7. Frequent colds, flu and sinus	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
8. Unsettled stomach, reflux. (If on medication score 10)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
9. Overweight - 1 point for every 2Kg overweight	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
10. Irritable bowel, constipation, diarrhoea, piles ...	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11. Shortness of breath from asthma	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
12. Low level of fitness*	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
13. Chest pain, palpitations	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
14. Rashes, zits, skin outbreaks, psoriasis, itchy skin	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
15. Mouth ulcers, cold sores ...	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
16. Elevated blood pressure (Score 10 if on medication)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
17. Elevated blood cholesterol (Score 10 if on medication)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
18. Elevated blood glucose (Score 10 if on medication)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
19. Shakes, nervous tics and mannerisms	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
20. Grinding teeth	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
21. Drinking too much alcohol (2 points per drink/day)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
22. Smoking too many cigarettes (1 point per cigarette per day)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
23. Drinking too much caffeine (1 point per cup per day)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
24. Anxious about life, insecure, apprehensive	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
25. Are you depressed? (Score 10 if on medication)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
26. Are you in the wrong job?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
27. Do you feel under-appreciated at work?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
28. Do you have a poor work/life balance?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
29. Are you unhappy with your family life?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
30. Are you unhappy with your financial status?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

The score of a normal, fit and healthy human being is less than

TOTAL

* Make an estimate of your level of fitness. You can confirm your estimate by measuring your fitness using the 5 minute 20 metre run. As a guide if you get less than 24 laps score 10. 32 laps scores 5. More than 40 laps scores 0.

STRESS RISK PROFILE



This profile is based on the habits of unstressed people.

1. Rate your ability to manage the stress of your life.

The more stressed you are the lower the score

Low											High	
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

2. Do you get a good night's **sleep**. Do you get enough sleep, do you get to sleep quickly, do you sleep like a log and wake up refreshed in the morning?

No											Yes	
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

3. What was the longest number of **consecutive days holiday** you had away from home the last 12 months?

			7			14				21	
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

4. Are you keeping yourself **fit and healthy** to the best of your ability?

No											Yes	
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

5. Is there **balance** in your life? Do you have good **distractors** that switch you off from being busy and miserable and which give you great pleasure?

No											Yes	
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

6. Do you **take time off** at lunch time to get away from your desk and get some fresh air? Score high if you exercise with vigour at lunch time.

No											Yes	
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

7. What is the average number of **hours you work** each week - include work-work and domestic work, particularly if you have young children?

	65		60		55		50		<45	
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	10

8. Are you good at giving back to your **Self**? Do you spend time thinking about your **Self**? Do you give your **Self** the time and attention it is craving?

No											Yes	
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

9. How many times a week do you **meditate**, for 10 minutes or more?

0		1		2		3		4		5	
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

10. Are you happy with your **family** (and romantic) **life**?

Not at all											Very	
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

To better manage your stress, do the things that unstressed people do!

TOTAL

GUNNADO

- what are you gunnado to live the fit, healthy, rich and fulfilling life -

FITNESS	DIET
SELF	FAMILY
FRIENDS	CAREER
FINANCES	OTHER

NOTES

It's not the blowing of the wind, but the set of the sail that determines your destination.
James Rohn

NOTES

Don't ask what your doctor can do for you, ask what you can do for yourself.

John Miller

NOTES

The truth that makes men free is for the most part the truth which men prefer not to hear.

Herbert Agar