Stress Warning Signals

Physical Signals

- Tension, or migraine, headaches
- Change in appetite
- Aching jaw, tight forehead
- Excessive sweating
- Nervous tension all over; heart palpitations
- Tingling sensation in fingers toes
- Constant low grade fever
- Rashes, hives, skin irritation
  - Menstrual problems, missed menstrual period
- Increased blood pressure

Behavioral Signals

- Change in eating habits
- Sleep problems - Too much, too little
- Isolating self from others
- Increased nervous habit, such as nail biting or hair twisting
- Change in general activity level
- Change in sexual activity, either more or less
- Pacing
- Bossiness or inflexibility with others
- Stuttering

- Less interest in hobbies, familiar fun activities
- Sudden shifts in mood
- Vague feelings or uneasiness, restlessness
- Feelings of anger, resentment
- More easily frustrated
- Changed interest in sex, either more or less
- Desire to cry
- Feelings of inadequacy, powerlessness, hopelessness
- Fear that everyone except you is doing fine

Emotional Signals

- Upset by the unexpected
- Frequent and/or recurring nightmares
- Feelings of being swamped, overwhelmed
- Intolerance, irritability with others
- Increased fear of failure
- Apathy, general dissatisfaction
- Reduced confidence
- Worry that you are asking for too much help or too much time from others

Intellectual Signals

- Less able to make decisions
- Attention span shortens
- Repetitive thoughts
- Feeling confused, especially with familiar tasks
- Thoughts of escaping, running away
- Loss of objectivity
- Having difficulty remembering recent information or details of recent situations

- Difficulty concentrating
- Misunderstanding what others tell you
- Continually thinking particular thoughts
- Increasingly poor judgment
- Unable to slow down thought process
- Racing thoughts
Spiritual Signals
- Emptiness
- Loss of meaning
- Martyrdom
- Inability to forgive
- Loss of Direction
- Looking for magic
- Apathy
- Cynicism
- Needing to ‘prove’ self

Relational Signals
- Isolation
- Intolerance
- Resentment
- Loneliness
- Lashing out
- Hiding
- Clamming up
- Lowered sex drive
- Nagging
- Distrust
- Lack of intimacy
- Using people
- Fewer contacts with friends
What Stress Does to Your Body – by Naomi Barr
The human body is well adapted to deal with short-term stress, but if it remains on orange alert for an extended period of time, you can grow vulnerable to some serious health problems. Here's how major systems respond to your worries.

NERVOUS

The "fight or flight" response begins here: When you're stressed, the brain's sympathetic nerves signal the adrenal glands to release a chemical variety pack, including epinephrine (aka adrenaline) and cortisol. Persistently high levels of these chemicals may impair memory and learning, and up your odds for depression.

ENDOCRINE

Stress hormones trigger the liver to produce more blood sugar, to give you that kick of energy in the moment of perceived danger. But if the "danger" you're concerned with is a long-term dilemma and you're already at risk for type 2 diabetes, bad news: Elevated glucose levels may turn you into a card-carrying diabetic.

RESPIRATORY

At high-stress moments, you may find yourself breathing faster, feeling short of breath, or even hyperventilating. Over the long term, this strain on the system can make you more susceptible to upper-respiratory infections (so if you're considering a career in air-traffic control, you might want to stock up on Emergen-C).

CARDIOVASCULAR

Momentary, acute stress, like, say, when you're walking down the aisle to get married, will make your heart beat faster and blood pressure rise. Long-term stress, like unwelcome pressure from the folks to produce offspring, can cause narrowing of the arteries and elevate cholesterol levels, upping your chances of heart disease, heart attack, and stroke.

REPRODUCTIVE

Stress can lengthen or shorten your menstrual cycle, stop it altogether, or make your periods more painful. High levels of stress make bacterial vaginosis (BV) more likely and, during pregnancy, may increase the chance of your baby's developing asthma or allergies later in life. Bring on the prenatal yoga.

IMMUNE

Short-term stress can actually boost the immune system, helping your body fight infection. Ongoing stress, however, turns things in the other direction, possibly slowing wound healing, leaving you more susceptible to infection, and worsening skin conditions such as eczema, hives, and yes — acne.
DIGESTIVE

Extreme stress isn't unlike the morning after a bender. It can cause dry mouth, indigestion, nausea, and gas, and it stimulates the muscles of the intestines, possibly causing diarrhea or constipation. Have these symptoms chronically, and you may increase your risk for irritable bowel syndrome, severe heartburn, and ulcers.

MUSCULOSKELETAL

Muscles tense to deal with what your body perceives as danger. No one who's pulled an all-nighter with only PowerPoint for company will be surprised that constantly tight muscles can cause headaches and neck, shoulder, and back pain. Chronic stress may also increase your likelihood of developing osteoporosis.
We welcome family members, friends and other caregivers caring for persons with mental illness who share common problems which arise from mental illnesses. NAMI support groups for caregivers around the state can provide understanding, comfort, hope and help for family members, friends and other caregivers.

We provide a secure nonjudgmental environment where caregivers can discuss concerns and benefit from the collective knowledge and experience from one another. It's advisable to attend more than one group so you can find one where you feel comfortable sharing. Before attending the first meeting you should contact the group facilitator to confirm the meeting date, time, and location as information changes. You may also ask for more information about the support group, i.e., the composition, size and group dynamic. To find the one closest to your area call the NAMI Mass office at 800-370-9085 or email info@namimass.org.

The NAMI Connection recovery support group, for adults living with mental illness, provides a place that offers respect, understanding, encouragement, and hope.

The support groups are run by people living with mental illness themselves. Each group meets weekly for 90 minutes, is confidential, free of charge, and is open to anyone with a mental illness, regardless of diagnosis. To find the one closest to your area call the NAMI Mass office at 800-370-9085 or email info@namimass.org.

NAMI Basics is the new signature education program for parents and other caregivers of children and adolescents living with mental illnesses. The NAMI Basics course is taught by trained teachers who are the parent or other caregivers of individuals who developed the symptoms of mental illness prior to the age of 13 years. The course consists of six classes, each lasting for 2 ½ hours. Classes may be offered weekly for six consecutive weeks, or may be offered twice per week for three weeks to accommodate the hectic schedules of parents. The goals of the NAMI Basics program are:

1. To give the parent/caregiver the basic information necessary to take the best care possible of their child, their family, and themself.
2. To help the parent/caregiver cope with the impact that mental illness has on the child living with the illness and the entire family.
3. To provide tools for the parent/caregiver to use even after completing the program that will assist in making the best decisions possible for the care of the child.

The Course includes:
- Introduction to the stages of emotional reactions of the family to the mental illness; including crisis, shock, denial, grief and acceptance.
• Insights into understanding of the lived experience of the child living with the mental illness, including learning to separate the child you love from the illness that alters their behavior and abilities
• Current information about Attention Deficit Disorder, Major Depression, Bipolar Disorder, Conduct Disorder, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, Anxiety Disorders, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, Childhood Schizophrenia and Substance Abuse Disorders
• Current research related to the biology of mental illness and the evidence-based, most effective treatment strategies available, including medications used to treat mental illness in children and adolescents
• Specific workshops to learn problem solving, listening and communication skills
• Examples of strategies that have been found helpful in handling challenging behaviors in children and adolescents
• Information about the systems that are major players in the lives of children and adolescents with mental illness – the school system and the mental health system
• Exposure to personal record keeping systems that have proven to be effective for parents/caregivers in their interactions with the school and healthcare systems
• Information on planning for crisis management and relapse
• Information on locating appropriate supports and services within the community to build a community of support for the parent/caregiver.

To find a class in your area call the NAMI Mass office at 800-370-9085 or email info@namimass.org.

Family-to-Family

Family-to-Family is a free 12-week course for family caregivers of individuals with severe mental illnesses that discusses the clinical treatment of these illnesses and teaches the knowledge and skills that family members need to cope effectively. Family-to-Family offers resources, insights, coping skills, and genuine support for families. Our volunteer teachers equip the class participants with the knowledge they need to navigate the mental health system. The programs are taught by family members; people who have lived the journey and can relate on a personal level to those seeking knowledge and comfort. These volunteers are trained by NAMI Mass according to the best practices instituted by NAMI National.

From a sister: “This knowledge has helped me cope and feel empowered to lend real emotional support to my sister and my dad. I even convinced my sister to attend a NAMI support group with her husband last week. The class has been so powerful for me. I can’t express enough how much appreciation I have for your work.”

From a mother: “It grounded me and widened my perspective on my loved one’s experience... I was feeling so angry, powerless and hopeless upon beginning the class and now I am working closely with community supports in an attempt to get my daughter the help she needs when another crisis occurs. Now I am feeling more informed and hopeful.”

From a wife: “I had no idea on signing up for this course, what it would be like. It has had a large impact on my life (and my husband as well). The 12 weeks flew by and I find myself wishing it could continue.”

Regarding the volunteer teachers: “They were knowledgeable caring and funny. They made me feel comfortable when I did not think I could feel that way discussing this topic.”

From a 14 year old sibling: “It helped me to understand things I never would have known because I didn’t know what questions to ask.”

To find a class in your area call the NAMI Mass office at 800-370-9085 or email info@namimass.org.

In our own Voice (‘IOOV’) is a free presentation given by two people living with mental illness about their journey with their disorders. The hour-long talk is appropriate for family members, friends, professionals, lay audiences and other people living with mental illness. It includes a videotape, personal testimony, discussion and enriches the audience’s understanding of how people with these serious disorders cope with the reality of their illnesses while recovering and reclaiming productive lives. IOOV is presented to any type of group: students, law enforcement officials, educators, providers, faith community members, politicians, professionals, inmates, and interested civic groups. All presentations are offered free of charge. Throughout the IOOV presentation, audience members are encouraged to offer feedback and ask questions. Audience participation is an important aspect of IOOV because the more audience members become involved, the closer they come to understanding what it is like to live with a mental illness and stay in recovery.
How to Ask for Help

Learn to communicate skillfully with others so you can get the help you need. by Toni Bernhard, J.D. in Turning Straw Into Gold

How many times have you said to a friend or relative in need, "Let me know if there's anything I can do to help," and when you didn't hear back, fail to follow-up? I've lost count of the number of times I did just that—fail to follow-up when I didn't hear back from someone in need, even though I would have been happy to help in any way I could.

Yet, despite this pattern in my own behavior, when I became chronically ill and didn't get back to people who offered to help, I decided that, because they failed to follow-up, their offers weren't sincere.

I learned otherwise quite by chance. A friend came to visit and showed me an exquisite handmade dress she'd just bought for her granddaughter at a local boutique. When I told her how much I loved it, she asked if I'd like to get one for my granddaughter. I said "sure," and before I could get "but I'm not able to go shopping" out of my mouth, she was out the door.

She returned shortly with the dress in two sizes for me to choose from. I picked one, wrote her a check and, when she left to go home, she took the one I didn't want back to the boutique. That made three trips for her to the same store that day.

When I got sick, was she one of the people who had said, "Let me know if there's anything I can do to help"? Yes. But I'd never asked her to do anything. On that day, however, I saw in her face that going to get that dress was a gift from me to her. She can't restore my health, but she can buy a dress for me to give to my granddaughter, and doing it made her feel terrific.

Here's what I've learned about people who offer to help:

1. They're sincere in their offer: they mean it.

2. The responsibility falls on me, not on them, to follow-up.

3. The best way to take them up on their offer is to give them a specific task to do.

Numbers 1 and 2 are consistent with my experience when I was in a position to help others: I mean it but I rarely followed-up, sometimes because I got distracted and sometimes because I thought I might be bothering them.

As for number 3, friends and relatives aren't mind readers. We need to tell them what to do. This is what I learned from the "dress episode" with my friend.

And, the more specific the request, the better. "Can you help with my laundry every other week?" is more likely to be successful as a request than, "Can you help with my laundry sometimes?" even though your friend or relative is likely to say "yes" to both...
requests. The use of the word "sometimes" in the second request is likely to be a "set-up" for that lack of follow-up that we'll erroneously take as lack of sincerity on their part.

Many of us don't like to ask for help. We may have been taught that it's a sign of weakness, so we cling to the notion, "I can do everything myself," even if it's no longer the case.

I suggest you practice asking for help. Think of it as an experiment:

1. Make a list of what you need help with: particular errands, the laundry, some cooking, walking the dog, changing a light bulb, maybe even a shoulder to cry on.

2. Write down the names of friends and relatives who have offered to help, even if their offer was made quite awhile ago.

3. Match people with tasks based on their interests, their strengths, their time flexibility and your comfort level with them, given the intimacy of the particular task. A young neighbor may enjoy cooking for you once a week. I read about a woman who gets cooking help from a 10 year-old neighbor who has earned her Girl Scout cooking badge. We have a 12 year-old dog walker in our neighborhood.

4. Pick just one thing off the list and contact the person you've chosen. Be direct—no passive-aggressive pleas for help allowed! So, instead of saying, "If I only knew someone who could pick up a prescription for me," ask outright: "Can you pick up a prescription for me? I'm not well enough to go out."

The odds are high that the person you've called or emailed will be thrilled to be asked to help. Remember: it's your gift to them; it gives them a way to not feel helpless in the face of your health challenges. If you strike out, take a deep breath and try again. Even million dollar baseball players get more than one strike!

Two final thoughts.

First, it's odd that we think we're placing a burden on people if we ask them to do something for us even though, if we did the very same thing for them, we wouldn't consider it a burden. On the contrary, it would make us feel good to know our friend respects us enough to seek our help.

Second, if you feel unworthy of being helped by others, remind yourself of all the times when people were helpful to you. Obviously, they didn't think you were unworthy. Use those memories as a starting point for changing your self-critical thinking.
Boundaries are essential to healthy relationships and, really, a healthy life. Setting and sustaining boundaries is a skill. Unfortunately, it’s a skill that many of us don’t learn. We might pick up pointers here and there from experience or through watching others. But for many of us, boundary-building is a relatively new concept and a challenging one.

Having healthy boundaries means “knowing and understanding what your limits are.”

1. **Name your limits.**

   You can’t set good boundaries if you’re unsure of where you stand. So identify your physical, emotional, mental and spiritual limits. Consider what you can tolerate and accept and what makes you feel uncomfortable or stressed. “Those feelings help us identify what our limits are.”

2. **Tune into your feelings.**

   There are two key feelings in others that are red flags or cues that we’re letting go of our boundaries: discomfort and resentment. Think of these feelings on a continuum from one to 10. Six to 10 is in the higher zone. If you’re at the higher end of this continuum, during an interaction or in a situation, ask yourself, what is causing that? What is it about this interaction, or the person’s expectation that is bothering me?

   Resentment usually “comes from being taken advantage of or not appreciated.” It’s often a sign that we’re pushing ourselves either beyond our own limits because we feel guilty (and want to be a good daughter or wife, for instance), or someone else is imposing their expectations, views or values on us. When someone acts in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable, that’s a cue to us they may be violating or crossing a boundary.

3. **Be direct.**

   With some people, maintaining healthy boundaries doesn’t require a direct and clear-cut dialogue. Usually, this is the case if people are similar in their communication styles, views, personalities and general approach to life. With others, such as those who have a different personality or cultural background, you’ll need to be more direct about your boundaries. Consider the following example: one person feels [that] challenging someone’s opinions is a healthy way of communicating, but to another person this feels disrespectful and tense.

   There are other times you might need to be direct. For instance, in a romantic relationship, time can become a boundary issue. Partners might need to talk about how much time they need to maintain their sense of self and how much time to spend together.

4. **Give yourself permission.**

   Fear, guilt and self-doubt are big potential pitfalls. We might fear the other person’s response if we set and enforce our boundaries. We might feel guilty by speaking up or saying no to a family member. Many believe that they should be able to cope with a situation or say yes because they’re a good daughter or son, even though they “feel drained or taken advantage of.” We might wonder if we even deserve to have boundaries in the first place. Boundaries aren’t just a sign of a healthy relationship; they’re a sign of self-respect. So give yourself the permission to set boundaries and work to preserve them.

5. **Practice self-awareness.**

   Again, boundaries are all about honing in on your feelings and honoring them. If you notice yourself slipping and not sustaining your boundaries, ask yourself: What’s changed? Consider “What I am doing or [what is] the other person doing?” or “What is the situation eliciting that’s making me resentful or stressed?” Then, mull over your options: “What am I going to do about the situation? What do I have control over?”
6. **Consider your past and present.**
How you were raised along with your role in your family can become additional obstacles in setting and preserving boundaries. If you held the role of caretaker, you learned to focus on others, letting yourself be drained emotionally or physically. Ignoring your own needs might have become the norm for you. Also, think about the people you surround yourself with, she said. “Are the relationships reciprocal?” Is there a healthy give and take?

Beyond relationships, your environment might be unhealthy, too. For instance, if your workday is eight hours a day, but your co-workers stay at least 10 to 11, “there’s an implicit expectation to go above and beyond” at work. It can be challenging being the only one or one of a few trying to maintain healthy boundaries. Again, this is where tuning into your feelings and needs and honoring them becomes critical.

7. **Make self-care a priority.**
Make self-care a priority involves giving yourself permission to put yourself first. When we do this, our need and motivation to set boundaries become stronger. Self-care also means recognizing the importance of your feelings and honoring them. These feelings serve as important clues about our wellbeing and about what makes us happy and unhappy.

Putting yourself first also gives you the energy, peace of mind and positive outlook to be more present with others and ‘be there’ for them. When we’re in a better place, we can be a better wife, mother, husband, co-worker or friend.

8. **Seek support.**
If you’re having a hard time with boundaries, seek some support, whether [that’s a] support group, church, counseling, coaching or good friends.” With friends or family, you can even make “it a priority with each other to practice setting boundaries together and hold each other accountable.”

9. **Be assertive.**
Of course, we know that it’s not enough to create boundaries; we actually have to follow through. Even though we know intellectually that people aren’t mind readers, we still expect others to know what hurts us. Since they don’t, it’s important to assertively communicate with the other person when they’ve crossed a boundary.
In a respectful way, let the other person know what in particular is bothersome to you and that you can work together to address it.

10. **Start small.**
Like any new skill, assertively communicating your boundaries takes practice. Start with a small boundary that isn’t threatening to you, and then incrementally increase to more challenging boundaries. Build upon your success, and try not to take on something that feels overwhelming.

    **Setting boundaries takes courage, practice and support. Remember that it’s a skill you can master.**
Learning to say no By MARGARITA TARTAKOVSKY, M.S.

Learning to say no to people is one of the best things you can do for yourself, yet many people find it extremely difficult. Why? Because they want to be liked. The ironic thing is, people will like you better and respect you more if you say no when it's appropriate!

Why Say No

1. **People will respect you.** People who say yes to everything in an attempt to be liked are quickly recognized as pushovers. When you say no to someone you are letting them know that you have boundaries. You are showing that you respect yourself—and that is how you gain respect from others.

2. **People will actually see you as more dependable.** When you say yes only when you have the time and true ability to do a great job, then you'll gain a reputation for being dependable. If you say yes to everything, you're bound to do a bad job at everything.

3. **When you're selective with your tasks, you'll sharpen your natural strengths.** If you concentrate on the things you're good at, you'll be able to improve on your natural talents. For example, if you're a great writer but you're not so great as an artist, you may volunteer to write speeches but you shouldn't sign up to make the posters for your club. Concentrate on your strength and build your skills (and your experience) for college.

4. **Your life will be less stressful.** You may be tempted to say yes to people in order to please them. In the long run, you're only hurting yourself and others when you do this. You stress yourself out by overloading yourself, and you experience increased stress when you realize you're bound to let them down.

When to Say No

First let's point out the obvious: do your homework.

You should never say no to a teacher, friend, or family member who is merely asking you to live up to your responsibilities. It's not okay to say no to a class assignment, just because you don't feel like doing it for some reason. This is not an exercise in cockiness.

It is OK to say no when somebody is asking you to step outside your true responsibilities and outside your comfort zone to take on a task that is dangerous or one that will overload you and affect your academic work and your reputation.

For example:

- If a teacher suggests that you become the president of a club that he or she is advising, but your schedule is already overpacked.
- If a popular athlete asks you to help with his/her homework and you don't have time.
• If anybody asks you to do their homework for them.
• If anybody asks you to give them information that was on a test (if they have a later class with the same teacher).

It can be very difficult to say no to somebody whom you really respect, but you'll find that you actually gain respect from them when you show enough courage to say no.

How to Say No

We say yes to people because it's easy. Learning to say no is like learning anything: it seems really scary at first, but it's so rewarding when you get the hang of it!

The trick to saying no is doing it firmly without sounding rude. You must avoid being wishy-washy. Here are some lines you can practice:

• **If a teacher asks you to take on more responsibility than you need:** Thank you for thinking of me, but I will have to say no. I'm just over-scheduled at this time.
• **If a teacher asks you to do something you don't feel comfortable with:** This sounds like it would be a great opportunity for somebody, but it's not right for me.
• **If somebody wants you to cheat:** Sorry, I don't share my homework. That would get us both in trouble.
• **If somebody tries to push work off on you:** I just don't have the time to do a good job at that right now.
• **If somebody tries to overload you with a task:** I can't do that because I have an assignment due tomorrow.
• **If somebody tries to unload a problem on you:** I understand your situation, but I don't have an answer for you.

When You Have to Say Yes

There will be times when you want to say no but you can't. If you're working on a group project, you have to take on some of the work, but you don't want to volunteer for everything. When you have to say yes, you can do it with firm conditions.

A conditional "yes" may be necessary if you know you should do something but you also know you don't have all the time or resources. An example of a conditional yes is: "Yes, I'll make the posters for the club, but I won't pay for all the supplies."

Saying no is all about gaining respect. Gain respect for yourself by saying no when it's necessary. Gain the respect of others by saying no in a polite way.
A CHEROKEE TALE

An old Cherokee chief was teaching his grandson about life...

"A fight is going on inside me," he said to the boy.
"It is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves.

"One is evil - he is anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, self-doubt, and ego.

"The other is good - he is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith.

"This same fight is going on inside you - and inside every other person, too."

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather,
"Which wolf will win?"

The old chief simply replied,
"The one you feed."
### The three Rs'

#### RECOGNIZE
- The signs of caregiver burnout
- The value of support
- The power of saying NO
- That boundaries are beautiful
- The fight or flight response
- The impact of stress

#### REVERSE
- Developing emotional awareness
- Making friends with all your emotions
- Being in the here and now
- Managing stress
- The relaxation response
- Accessing your senses to relieve stress

#### RESILIENCE
- Postponing worry
- Challenging automatic negative thoughts
- Going from negative to positive
- Being aware how others affect you
- The value of laughter
- Taking a break
- Asking for help
- Finding time
COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS

1. **In polarized thinking**, things are either “black-or-white.” We have to be perfect or we’re a failure — there is no middle ground. You place people or situations in “either/or” categories, with no shades of gray or allowing for the complexity of most people and situations. If your performance falls short of perfect, you see yourself as a total failure.

2. **Overgeneralization** – We make assumptions based on one incident – I went to that store once and I didn’t find anything I liked so I’m never going in there again.

3. **Filtering** means that you only focus on the negative parts of a situation. I know, I got a B-in Math (even though I got an A in all my other subjects). Constantly focusing on perceived negatives alters our perception so we only become able to notice the negative.

4. **Mind Reading**. Without individuals saying so, we know what they are feeling and why they act the way they do. In particular, we are able to determine how people are feeling toward us. For example, a person may conclude that someone is reacting negatively toward them but doesn’t actually bother to find out if they are correct. Another example is a person may anticipate that things will turn out badly, and will feel convinced that their prediction is already an established fact.

5. **Catastrophizing**. We expect disaster to strike, no matter what. This is also referred to as “magnifying or minimizing.” We hear about a problem and use what if questions (e.g., “What if tragedy strikes?” “What if it happens to me?”). For example, a person might exaggerate the importance of insignificant events (such as their mistake, or someone else’s achievement). Or they may inappropriately shrink the magnitude of significant events until they appear tiny (for example, a person’s own desirable qualities or someone else’s imperfections).

6. **Personalization** is a distortion where a person believes that everything others do or say is some kind of direct, personal reaction to the person. We also compare ourselves to others trying to determine who is smarter, better looking, etc. A person engaging in personalization may also see themselves as the cause of some unhealthy external event that they were not responsible for. For example, “We were late to the dinner party and caused the hostess to overcook the meal. If I had only pushed my husband to leave on time, this wouldn’t have happened.”

7. **Control Fallacies**. If we feel externally controlled, we see ourselves as helpless a victim of fate. For example, “I can’t help it if the quality of the work is poor, my boss demanded I work overtime on it.” The fallacy of internal control has us assuming responsibility for the pain and happiness of everyone around us. For example, “Why aren’t you happy? Is it because of something I did?”

8. **Fallacy of Fairness**. We feel resentful because we think we know what is fair, but other people won’t agree with us. People who go through life applying a measuring ruler against every situation judging its “fairness” will often feel badly and negative because of it.

9. **Blaming**. We hold other people responsible for our pain, or take the other track and blame ourselves for every problem. For example, “Stop making me feel bad about myself!” Nobody can “make” us feel any particular way — only we have control over our own emotions and emotional reactions.

10. **Shoulds**. We have a list of ironclad rules about how others and we should behave. People who break the rules make us angry, and we feel guilty when we violate these rules. A person may often believe they are trying to motivate themselves with shoulds and shouldn’ts, as if they have to be punished before they can do anything. For example, “I really should exercise. I shouldn’t be so lazy.” Musts and oughts are also offenders. The emotional consequence is guilt. When a person directs should statements toward others, they often feel anger, frustration and resentment.
11. **Emotional Reasoning.** We believe that what we feel must be true automatically. If we feel stupid and boring, then we must be stupid and boring. You assume that your unhealthy emotions reflect the way things really are—“I feel it, therefore it must be true.”

12. **Fallacy of Change.** We expect that other people will change to suit us if we just pressure or cajole them enough. We need to change people because our hopes for happiness seem to depend entirely on them.

13. **Global Labeling.** We generalize one or two qualities into a negative global judgment. These are extreme forms of generalizing, and are also referred to as “labeling” and “mislabeling.” Instead of describing an error in context of a specific situation, a person will attach an unhealthy label to themselves. For example, they may say, “I’m a loser” in a situation where they failed at a specific task. When someone else’s behavior rubs a person the wrong way, they may attach an unhealthy label to him, such as “He’s a real jerk.” Mislabeling involves describing an event with language that is highly colored and emotionally loaded. For example, instead of saying someone drops her children off at daycare every day, a person who is mislabeling might say that “she abandons her children to strangers.”

14. **Always Being Right.** We are continually on trial to prove that our opinions and actions are correct. Being wrong is unthinkable and we will go to any length to demonstrate our rightness. For example, “I don’t care how badly arguing with me makes you feel, I’m going to win this argument no matter what because I’m right.” Being right often is more important than the feelings of others around a person who engages in this cognitive distortion, even loved ones.

15. **Heaven’s Reward Fallacy.** We expect our sacrifice and self-denial to pay off, as if someone is keeping score. We feel bitter when the reward doesn’t come.
Simple ways you can practice keeping it in the here and now

- As you awaken in the morning, bring your attention to your breathing. Instead of letting your mind spin off into yesterday or today, take mindful breaths. Focus on your breathing, and sense the effects of breathing throughout your body.

- Instead of hurrying to your usual routine, slow down and enjoy something special about the morning: a flower that bloomed, the sound of birds, the wind in the trees.

- On your way to work or school, pay attention to how you walk or drive or ride the transit. Take some deep breaths, relaxing throughout your body.

- When stopped at a red light, pay attention to your breathing, enjoy the landscape around you.

- When you arrive at your destination, take a few moments to orient yourself; breathe consciously and calmly, relax your body, then begin.

- When sitting at your desk or keyboard, become aware of the subtle signs of physical tension and take a break to stretch or walk around.

- Use the repetitive events of the day - the ringing telephone, a knock on the door, walking down the hall - as cues for a mini-relaxation.

- Walk mindfully to your car or bus. Can you see and appreciate something new in the environment? Can you enjoy walking without rushing?

- As you return home, consciously make the transition into your home environment. If possible, after greeting your family or housemates, give yourself a few minutes alone to ease the transition.

- As you go to sleep, let go of today and tomorrow, and take some slow, mindful breaths.

- Try not to make comparisons: you are comparing your insides to others outsides.
ELICITING THE RELAXATION RESPONSE

Pick a focus word, short prayer or prayer that is firmly rooted in your belief system, such as one, peace, ohm, the
lord is my shepherd. Hail Mary, shalom etc,

Sit or lie quietly in a comfortable position

Close your eyes

Relax your muscles progressing from your feet to your calves, thighs, abdomen, shoulders, neck and head

Breathe slowly and naturally using your belly breathing, and as you do say the word, sound, phrase, prayer that you
have chosen as you exhale

Assume a passive attitude. Don’t worry about how well you are doing. When other thoughts come into your mind,
simply say to yourself “oh well” and return to your repetition.

We will do this for five minutes, but ten or twenty is better

Do not stand immediately. Continue sitting quietly for a minute or so, allowing other thoughts to return. Open your
eyes and sit for another minute before rising.

Practice this once or twice a day. Good times to do so are before breakfast and before dinner. Regular elicitation of
the relaxation response has been scientifically proven to be an effective treatment for a wide range of stress related
disorders. In fact to the extent that any disease is caused or made worse by stress, the relaxation response can help.

MINI RELAXATION EXERCISES

These mini relaxation exercises will help your mind focus, help you relax, and help you absorb information. You
can do these short exercises at any time, however you are feeling. You can do them while you are stuck in traffic

• put on hold when you are on the phone
• in your Dr.’s waiting room
• someone says something to upset you
• waiting for a phone call
• sitting in the dentist’s chair
• feeling overwhelmed when you have too much to do
• standing in line
• when in pain
MINI 1

Close your eyes if you wish. Put your hand just below your navel. Take a deep breath, bringing the air in through your nose and out of your mouth. You should feel your stomach rising about an inch as you breathe in, and falling about an inch as you breathe out, This is called belly breathing. If you find this difficult try lying on your back or your stomach where you will be more aware of your breathing pattern. Remember to relax your stomach muscles.

Count to yourself very slowly from 10 to zero one number for each belly breath. If you start feeling dizzy or breathless, slow down your breathing. When you get to zero, see how you are feeling. If you feel better great. If not try the exercise again.

MINI 2

Close your eyes if you wish. Put your hand just below your navel. Take a deep breath, bringing the air in through your nose and out of your mouth. You should feel your stomach rising about an inch as you breathe in, and falling about an inch as you breathe out, This is called belly breathing. If you find this difficult try lying on your back or your stomach where you will be more aware of your breathing pattern. Remember to relax your stomach muscles.

As you inhale, count very slowly up to four; as you exhale, count slowly back down one. As you inhale count to yourself – 1, 2, 3, 4. As you exhale count – 4, 3, 2, 1

Do this several times

MINI 3

Close your eyes if you wish. Put your hand just below your navel. Take a deep breath, bringing the air in through your nose and out of your mouth. You should feel your stomach rising about an inch as you breathe in, and falling about an inch as you breathe out, This is called belly breathing. If you find this difficult try lying on your back or your stomach where you will be more aware of your breathing pattern. Remember to relax your stomach muscles.

After each inhalation, pause for a few seconds; after you exhale, pause again for a few seconds, Do this for several breaths.
STRESS BUSTER TIPS FOR STRESS MANAGEMENT - from the Benson-Henry Institute

38 Stress Busters

1. Start off your day with breakfast.
2. Occasionally change your routine by meeting, a friend or co-worker for breakfast - allow time to relax and enjoy it.
3. Find some time during the day to meditate or listen to a relaxation CD.
4. Instead of drinking coffee all day, switch to fruit juice.
5. Organize your work - set priorities.
6. Don't try to be perfect. Don't feel like you must do everything.
7. Avoid trying to do two or three or more things at a time.
8. Develop a support network.
9. If possible, reduce the noise level in your environment.
10. Always take a lunch break (preferably not at your desk).
11. Optimize your health with good nutrition, sleep and rest.
13. Celebrate birthdays and other holidays. Turn more events into special occasions.
14. Look at unavoidable stress as an avenue for growth and change.
15. Avoid people who are "stress carriers."
16. Avoid people who are "negaholics."
17. Don't watch the 11 p.m. news.
18. Give yourself praise and positive strokes.
19. Develop a variety of resources for gratification in your life, whether it's family, friends, hobbies, interests, special weekends or vacations.
20. Treat yourself to "new and good things."
21. Be assertive. Learn to express your needs and differences, to make requests, and to say "no" constructively.
22. Seek out the emotional resources available to you- co-workers, spouse, friends and family.
23. Don't be afraid to ask questions or to ask for help.
24. Allow extra time to get to appointments.
25. Take deep breaths when you feel stressed.
26. Try to find something funny in a difficult situation.
27. Find ways to protect yourself...take an occasional "mental health day."
28. Adopt a pet.
29. Take a mindful walk.
30. Understand that we do not all see or do things in the same way.
31. Practice mindfulness - learn to live in the moment.
32. Become a less aggressive driver.
33. Show kindness and consideration: Open a door for someone, pick up litter, etc.
34. When stressed, ask yourself "Is this really important?" and "Will this really matter a year from now?"
35. Resist the urge to judge or criticize.
36. Become a better listener.
37. Be flexible with change - things don't always go as we planned.
38. If religious, pray; speak to God, a higher power, or your inner guide.