



LECTURE 2: INTRO TO STRESS AND ITS MANAGEMENT

This program is based on the idea, proven over and over again in clinical practice, that bringing stress in to your conscious awareness helps you to reduce it. All the elements of this coaching program work to use your mental focus to reduce your stress to healthy levels.

Let's start with some basics about stress. Stress is the body reacting to situations that require an adjustment or a response. Stress isn't just an emotion: you react to stress with physical, mental, and emotional responses. The body releases hormones and other chemicals and this pattern can be hard to change without help. You can experience stress from your environment, your body, and your own thoughts. Even positive changes like a promotion produce stress.

Stress becomes negative when you face a continuous challenge over-and-over again without relief or rest. It's obvious to say that stress is a normal part of life. "The fight or flight response" is a healthy response – but fight or flight reactions become chronic if prolonged. Prolonged activation of stress causes wear and tear on the body – both physical and emotional: headache, dizziness, lack of sleep and more.

It's at this point that stress starts to affect your performance. You find it harder to focus on solutions, make plans and act on them. Your thinking environment isn't honed for high performance. In a high-powered professional team or executive team competitiveness is often part of the way that you support each other to be at your best. But when you're feeling high levels of stress you can feel alone, even embarrassed, like you're the only person experiencing this sort of pressure and the symptoms that sometimes come with it.

And so, like a top athlete, we're going to get you back in to the right mindset for success. We'll get you performing well in all your roles in life: in love, in friendship, as a leader, as a professional, a parent, a subordinate.

Ok, so stress is a normal and healthy thing. You don't want to cut it out of your life, you want to learn to reduce it to healthy levels, by interrupting stressful activities with non-stressful activities. That sounds easier than it really is.

Ok, now let's talk about different kinds of stress.

We understand there are three different kinds of stress: Residual Stress, Recurring Stress and Time Stress.

- **Residual stress** is stress from the past. Post-traumatic stress disorder is a kind of residual stress in response to traumatic events. It's hard to budge without long term work. This program can help you identify the triggers of residual stress in your present life. But if you're facing this kind of stress you may also need to see a clinical professional and speak to your doctor.





- **Recurring stress** is stress in response to something that reoccurs – talking to someone you find difficult, daily tasks at work, cyclical actions or responsibilities in a day or a week of work. We tend to minimize recurring stress because of the very fact that it repeats. But it can ‘creep up’ on us and turn in to unhealthy stress quite fast’. This program is good for addressing recurring stress.
- **Time stress** is self-evident: this is stress related to a deadline. Procrastination can make time stress even worse. So, there are steps you can take to reduce the stress you feel in response to a timeline or deadline. This program is good for addressing time stress.

HOME WORK: Make a list of 3 to 5 stressors you experience in your daily life, then, list what kind of stress it is – residual, recurring or time-related. Share you learn with me in our next coaching session.

Let’s talk a little bit about how humans think. Most of us tend to think that challenging events occur and they automatically trigger a fight/flight response, but this is not correct. There is another stage after the event that influences whether the event will trigger a fight/flight response. It’s our thinking that affects how we feel. Situations don’t make us feel certain ways. People don’t make us feel certain ways. It’s how we interpret situations or things people say or do that influences how we feel.

So, a simplified, linear version of our thinking process goes something like this:

Event > Thoughts > Feelings > Actions > Results

The question for you is “Where in this sequence can you intervene to change the feelings and the results?”

To answer that question let’s do a mental exercise. As you’re listening to me now I want you to picture a giraffe in your mind’s eye. Ok, now picture the sun in a clear sky. Now, picture your best friend. Can you imagine those things? Yes, of course you can.

Now the next exercise is about emotion. Here’s the instruction: feel angry. Just feel it. Can you do it? Take a second, and try. What did you have to do to feel that anger? The answer is likely to be that you had to think about a situation or a person to trigger anger.

So we can’t make ourselves feel things. Emotions can’t be directed. We can make ourselves think things and this means thinking is a powerful tool for reducing stress.





So, the learning from this session is:

- It's continuous stress that leads to chronic, unhealthy stress reactions. The answer to chronic stress is to interrupt stressful activities with non-stressful activities. Now that seems overly simplistic but it's just one of the learnings we're focusing on.
- Diverting time to non-stressful activities can be surprisingly hard to do. When I asked you to rate your satisfaction across different areas or domains of your life, I was analyzing how much you're getting from these diverse areas of living. You need to spend more time devoted to your whole life, not just your work. You'll be better at work if you can learn to do this.
- You need to identify what kind of stress you're experiencing because it's important to resolving it. For example, you need to know whether residual stress is being triggered by recurring or time-related stress in the present. You can do something about recurring and time stress directly – but residual stress takes time and patience. You can take action and use our thoughts to reduce the stress related to the events in the workplace.
- It's almost impossible to command your feelings. You can't tell yourself to feel things. But you can command your thoughts. You can tell yourself to think things. You can direct your thoughts with mental focus – and that's what we're going to be doing in this program.
- Finally, we often can't change our circumstances. This is especially true in the workplace where we face the same kinds of pressures and have to work with the same people. But we can change our response to circumstances. This is why two different people can go through the exact same life event and come out with a vastly different experience of it. Changing your response is what I call in this program 'antidotes' and we'll do more on that in an upcoming session.

In the next lecture, we'll be looking at how to use your face, your body and daily routines to become a master of stress reduction.



Dr Scott Berry
Executive Coach & Psychotherapist
Message me [here](#)

