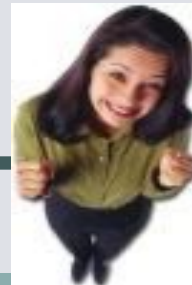


# Reducing Stress and Embracing Balance and Wellness



**Career Success Training Program**  
*Presented by*  
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# *Learning Objectives & Agenda*

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1. Defining Stress and How it Affects You
2. Warning Signs of Stress and Emotional Imbalance
3. Common Responses to Stress
4. 6 Core Stress Management Strategies
5. Defining The Stressors in Your Life
6. Creating New Solutions For Reducing Stress and Embracing Balance



# What is Stress?

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- Stress is necessary for life, creativity, learning, and survival.
- Normal physical response to events that make you feel threatened or upset your balance.
- The body's way of protecting you. Helps you stay focused, energetic, and alert.
- Sense danger – real or imagined – “fight-or-flight” reaction
- Both “positive” and “negative” and common events contribute
- Stress is only harmful when it becomes overwhelming.
- Stress overwhelm can cause major damage to your health, mood, productivity, relationships, and quality of life.
- Chronic, everyday stress can be as damaging and stress from traumatic incident

### 3 Most Common Response to Stress Overwhelm:

- **Foot on the gas** – Angry or agitated stress response. Heated, keyed up, overly emotional, and unable to sit still.
- **Foot on the brake** – Withdrawn or depressed stress response. Shut down, space out, and show very little energy or emotion.
- **Foot on both** – Tense and frozen stress response. “Freeze” under pressure and can’t do anything. You look paralyzed, but under the surface you’re extremely agitated

# Stress Warning Signs & Symptoms

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## Cognitive Symptoms

Memory problems  
Inability to concentrate  
Poor judgment  
Seeing only the negative  
Anxious or racing thoughts  
Constant worrying

## Emotional Symptoms

Moodiness  
Irritability or short temper  
Agitation, inability to relax  
Feeling overwhelmed  
Sense of loneliness and isolation  
Depression or general unhappiness

## Physical Symptoms

Aches and pains  
Diarrhea or constipation  
Nausea, dizziness  
Chest pain, rapid heartbeat  
Loss of sex drive  
Frequent colds and illness

## Behavioral Symptoms

Eating more or less  
Sleeping too much or too little  
Isolating yourself from others  
Procrastinating or neglecting  
Using alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs to relax  
Nervous habits (e.g. nail biting, pacing)

# Avoiding Overwhelm

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**Those who are aware of their stress and know how to manage it are less likely to get overwhelmed.**

**When stress is out-of-control, it can get in the way of your ability to:**

- Think clearly and creatively
  - Communicate clearly
- Accurately “read” other people
- Hear what someone is really saying
  - Trust others
- Attend to your own needs

# Managing Stress

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## Managing stress is all about taking charge of:

- your thoughts
- your emotions
- your schedule
- your environment
- your relationships
- the way you deal with problems

The ultimate goal is a balanced life, with time for work, relationships, relaxation, and fun – plus the resilience to hold up under pressure and meet challenges head on

**Read Kathy's Forbes Post** – [\*Are You Stressing Yourself Out? 5 Ways to Gain Control and Embrace Balance\*](#)

# *Emotional Awareness*

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## **Emotional awareness is key...**

- Our emotions, not our thoughts, motivate us.
- Without an awareness of what you're feeling, can't understand your behavior, manage your emotions and actions, and "read" the wants and needs of others.

## **Emotional awareness helps you:**

- Recognize who you are and what you like and need
- Understand and empathize with others
- Communicate clearly and effectively
- Make sound decisions based on the things that are most important to you
- Get motivated and take action to meet goals
- Build strong, healthy, and rewarding relationships



# *Consequences of Avoiding Your Emotions*

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*The consequences of avoiding your emotions:*

- **You don't know yourself.**
- **You lose the good, along with the bad.**
  - **It's exhausting and adds stress.**
- **It damages your relationships and your life.**

# Connecting With Emotional Awareness

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## 1) Emotions are aligned to physical sensations

Physical feelings are usually experienced somewhere *below the bridge of the nose*.

- Sensations in your stomach
- Tension in your muscles
- Subtle urges to move body parts
- Flashes of insight or “gut feelings”

## 2) You don't have to *choose* between thinking and feeling

Emotional awareness functions like instinct. The key is **balance**.

**3) Benefits:** Set healthier boundaries, communicate well, predict what others are going to do, and make better decisions.

# *Hidden Sources of Stress*

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## **Stress management starts with identifying the sources of stress in your life:**

- **Habits, attitude, and excuses:**
  - Stress as temporary (“I just have a million things going on right now.”)
  - An integral part of your life (“Things are always crazy around here.”) or as a part of your personality
  - Blame your stress on other people or outside events
  - View it as entirely normal and unexceptional

# Origins of Internal Stress

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**Internal stress is one of the most important kinds of stress to recognize and manage.**

## **Are you making yourself stressed?**

- Worry about things that are out of your control
  - Dwell on the negatives
  - Imagine the worst
  - Criticize yourself
- Hold yourself and others to unrealistic standards
  - Take on too many responsibilities
  - “Below the line” thinking

# *How Well Are You Managing Stress?*

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## **How well do you currently manage stress?**

Ask yourself the following questions:

1. When I feel agitated, do I know how to quickly calm myself?
2. Can I easily let go of my anger?
3. Can I turn to others at work to help me calm down and feel better?
4. When I come home at night, do I walk in the door feeling alert and relaxed?
5. Am I seldom distracted or moody?
6. Am I able to recognize upsets that others seem to be experiencing?
7. Do I easily turn to friends or family members for a calming influence?
8. When my energy is low, do I know how to boost it?

# Recognizing Stress

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## Acknowledging stress is the first step in lessening its impact.

- Hush the voice that's telling you, 'Oh, I'm fine.'
- Gain awareness of your **physical response** to stress
- **Observe your muscles and insides.** Are your muscles tight/sore? Is your stomach tight or sore? Are your hands clenched?
- **Observe your breath.** Is your breath shallow? Place one hand on your belly, the other on your chest. Watch your hands rise and fall with each breath. Notice when you breathe fully or when you "forget" to breathe.

# Unhealthy Coping Mechanisms

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## Unhealthy ways of coping with stress

These may temporarily reduce stress,  
but they cause more damage in the long run:

- Smoking
  - Drinking too much
  - Overeating or undereating
- Zoning out for hours in front of the TV or computer
- Withdrawing from friends, family, and activities
  - Using pills or drugs to relax
    - Sleeping too much
    - Procrastinating
  - Filling up every minute of the day
- Taking out your stress on others (lashing out, angry outbursts, physical violence)

# *Calmness*

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## **What does calmness feel like?**

- Calmness is more than just feeling relaxed; it's maintaining a state of energy, alertness and focus
- What does it feel like to be calm and stress-free?
- How much of the day do you feel calm, alert, productive, and focused?



# *Embracing Wellness*

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## **Your Wellness Vision**

- **What would your life look/feel like with less stress?**
- **How will you know when you are managing your stress better?**
- **What would greater “wellness” bring to you?**

# Dealing with Stress

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## Dealing with Stressful Situations:

- No one-size fits solution
- Depends on the situation and your style

### The Four A's

#### Change the situation:

- ✦ Avoid the stressor.
- ✦ Alter the stressor.

#### Change your reaction:

- ✦ Adapt to the stressor.
- ✦ Accept the stressor.

# *Stress Management Step #1*

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## **Step #1: Avoid unnecessary stress**

Not all stress can be avoided, and it's not healthy to avoid a situation that needs to be addressed. But there are many stressors you can eliminate.

- **Learn how to say "no"**
- **Avoid people who stress you out**
- **Take control of your environment**
  - **Avoid hot-button topics**
  - **Pare down your to-do list**

# Stress Management Step #2

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## Step #2: Alter the situation

Figure out what you can do to change things so the problem doesn't present itself in the future. Often, this involves changing the way you communicate and operate in your daily life.

- **Express your feelings instead of bottling them up.**
  - **Be willing to compromise.**
- **Be more assertive. Motto: *"I choose discomfort over resentment."***
  - **Manage your time better.**

# *Stress Management Step #3*

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## **Step #3: Adapt to the stressor** **Change Yourself**

- Reframe problems.
- Look at the big picture.
- **Adjust your perfectionistic standards**
  - Focus on the positive.
  - **Reshape Your Attitude**

Eliminate words such as "always," "never," "should," and "must."  
Telltale marks of self-defeating thoughts.

# *Stress Management Step #4*

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## **Step #4: Accept the things you can't change**

- **Don't try to control the uncontrollable.**
  - **Look for the upside.**
  - **Share your feelings.**
  - **Learn to forgive.**

# Stress Management Step #5

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## **Step #5: Make time for fun and relaxation** **– and for you**

- **Nurture yourself** – Commit to fun, **healthy ways to relax and recharge**
- **Set aside relaxation time.** Include rest and relaxation in your daily schedule.
- **Connect with others.** Spend time with positive people who enhance your life
  - **Do something you enjoy every day.**
  - **Keep your sense of humor.**
- Introduce **stress relief into your life each day (use all your senses)**

# Stress Management Step #6

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## **Step #6: Adopt a healthier lifestyle** **Increase your resistance to stress by strengthening your physical health.**

- **Exercise regularly.** Make time for at least 30 minutes of exercise, 3x per week.
- **Eat a healthy diet.** Well-nourished bodies are better prepared to cope with stress,
- **Reduce caffeine and sugar.** The temporary "highs" caffeine and sugar provide often end in with a crash in mood and energy. Reduce coffee, soft drinks, chocolate, and sugar snacks in your diet, you'll feel more relaxed and sleep better.
- **Avoid alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs.** Self-medicating with alcohol or drugs may provide an easy escape from stress, but the relief is only temporary.
- **Get enough sleep.** Adequate sleep fuels your mind, as well as your body. Feeling tired will increase your stress because it may cause you to think irrationally.



# *Your Stress Level Is Within Your Control!*

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## **Remember –** **Stress management is within your** **control!**

When you accept full responsibility for the role you play in creating or maintaining stress, your stress level will finally become within your control.

# *Your Stress Level Is Within Your Control!*

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## **Take Control!**

- 1) Where is the majority of stress in your life coming from right now?
- 2) What is your typical stress response?
- 3) Which one step from the 6 above will make the biggest change in your life today?
- 4) What can you do this week/month and beyond to embrace wellness?

# Breakthrough Takeaways

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- ❖ What are the key stressors in your life?
- ❖ What is holding you back most from managing your stress more effectively?
- ❖ What are you committed to changing in your life and work, starting today?
- ❖ What can you let go of today that will allow you to say "YES" to yourself and managing your stress?
- ❖ What concrete action will you take this month to embrace wellness and manage your stress more effectively?
- ❖ Where will you find empowered support?

**Your breakthrough to enhanced wellness and balance is here!**

*For more info, contact:*

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