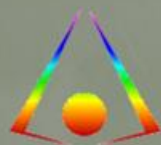




BEFORE THE BREAKDOWN

**How to be in control, manage stress
and avoid overwhelm**



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INTRODUCTION

If you're anything like I was in the past, you know exactly what it feels like to be stressed and overworked to the point of wanting to just throw your hands in the air and scream at the top of your lungs, wishing it would all end.

My guess is since you're reading this, you probably feel like that right now. Maybe you even feel this way for the majority of your day.

Today's medical world tells us that stress is tied to many diseases and disorders. It is the direct cause of premature aging, and is also the enemy of creativity, memory, and optimal mental functioning.

So, how then do we avoid stress?

Unfortunately, we don't and we can't. While this may sound depressing, there is a positive side to stress that you probably don't know.

Stress helps us navigate through difficult situations. It gets the adrenalin going when we need to do something out of the ordinary. It keeps you on your toes, and actually strengthens your immune system.

It is the ongoing long-term stress that can cause problems. Ask yourself if you've ever noticed some of the following feelings:

You are given a certain task, and you know you can do it, yet anxiety builds up while you are in a conversation with the person who is discussing it with you, which makes you feel overwhelmed, and unable to cope with what lies ahead of you.

FEELING OVERWHELMED

Now... by the time you face the question of “Where do I start?”, when you come back to your desk after your tea break, you know that you have arrived at ‘overwhelm’.

Basically you have reached a point of chaos in your current life experience.

When you reach this point you have reached ‘breakdown’ or are just short of reaching it.

“What now?”, may be your next question. It is a good question because it does give you a pause to allow an answer to come up.

Wait... “I can do this!” , is your next port of call. Obviously. You need to stay in control.

Losing, or giving up any sense of control would result in a sense of failure. So, you feel stuck. Yes, just check and observe the tension in your shoulder area. It is not just that you are sitting at your desk too long. You know you can manage each project you are working on right now. You know you have the strengths and capabilities to do so.

What is really going on? Where is the burning in your stomach or the racing in your heart coming from?

Your brain says one thing “You can do this”, and your body says another thing “I can’t cope”. Your rational mind tells you that it makes no sense to have the feelings and warning symptoms that your body is giving you.

How do you get out of this feeling of “It’s too much on my plate right now”?

STOP!

Yes, stop whatever you are doing!

There is no point in going on and just continuing the sequence of events that got you here in the first place. The rational argument would be that your workload needs to be completed and there is no time to stop or even take a break.

That may be true, but now it is time to realise that the momentum cannot be continued in the same way.

STOP! And take a deep breath.

STOP, before it is too late! STOP, before the breakdown.

It only takes a few seconds before your brain will give you the answer of what to do next. Yes, it is bizarre, but that is exactly what the brain needs.

Time to breathe.

With breath, oxygen gets to the brain and helps the brain to function again. Have you noticed that, as you ask the question of “Where do I start?”, you actually stopped breathing, or your breathing became constricted or it has been quite shallow.

So, take in a few deep breaths - it only takes a few seconds - your brain can function again.

Will the feeling of “It’s too much on my plate right now” go away? Maybe, or maybe not. It depends on the level of exhaustion the brain is already experiencing. Burnout or adrenal fatigue is the end station of overwhelm. Becoming aware of the overwhelm long before you hit this stage is vital to maintain health for your body, mind and spirit.

Embracing the body's warning signals makes sense. Stress is part and parcel of life. Managing your stress correctly is as important as brushing your teeth in the morning.

The interesting part is that you did not notice this coming. Normally you do not notice when the breaking point is reached. It is similar to the story with the frog in hot water. The frog does not notice that the heat is slowly turned up, until it is too late.

In the excitement and enthusiasm of running your set out career path, or business, you take on whatever it is needed to 'make things happen'. You feel on top of our game. Many executives claim they do their best work when they are highly functional with the mental and physical intense association with the stress response.

Little do they realise that this is a dangerous mental and physical health mistake. The excitement that comes with intense stress is emergency power designed to get you safely through a crisis or push to get a project completed.

HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Look, I get it. Nobody wants to fail.

Failure is not an option!

It is this expectation of self, as well as from others, that keeps us in hot water while the heat is being turned up. Yes absolutely, the focus is on the achievement of success, whatever may be necessary to put out as the end goal.

Really?

Just sit back a little and become aware of your breathing while you are focused on this end goal of your current project. If your breath is calm, normal and not shallow and does not change, then you may well be within your range of comfort of meeting expectations.

Should your breathing change in any way, or your thoughts go to the person in the team that you assume will let the organization or project down, then you are dealing with high expectations. It may well be that those may be basic requirements to get the job done, but for the person, the team as well as yourself, the expectations appear too high.

The excitement with which the project took off is slowly gearing down. The enthusiasm turns to fear of failure while the focus is still on the projected successful delivery of the project. Failure to deliver is not an option, so the only option out is to excel and put in extra energy, time and effort for completion to happen.

It has been my experience that these high expectations of the self, as well of others, or others of you, never take into account the human wellness failure. Life happens! When life happens, these projections cannot continue. A team member that falls out due to family matters puts extra load on the rest of the team.

Everybody has their own life and family issues, which unfortunately come into play more prominently when stress at work picks up.

That's often when life at home creates extra pressure at work, or the other way round. Families suffer when work pressures are off-loaded at home. Both are not okay. Work pressures then create a stress spiral that catches up to every aspect of life.

How does one get out of this spiral? Some people run. Changing jobs, change, divorce or the like are forms of getting out of this constant pressure not easing up. Others go into battle. Bad mood or nervous energy surrounds them, and everybody needs to stay clear.

Others freeze. They simply cannot do even the smallest task. While each of these coping mechanisms assists initially to get out of the spiral, they draw you further into the spiral when a total breakdown occurs.

With proper stress management, you not only get out of the spiral but prevent the spiral from happening.

As a team leader, you need to be and stay in control. It is up to you to motivate your team through their strengths and weaknesses.

There is no time to stop and reflect on how you are doing. The good news is that you manage your center of control well, even when feelings of irritability, anger, sadness or moodiness appear within, or around you.

The focus is on the project or workload at hand. Even when you sit with a pile of documents in front of you, either in hard copy or on the computer screen, you cannot allow yourself to notice that reading and comprehension is not as sharp as you know yourself to be.

You miss little mistakes. Your previous sharp and to the point focus starts slipping. You realise you need a break, but there is no time to do so.

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ALWAYS IN CONTROL

Have you noticed your super sharp focus today? It gives you that extra sense of feeling super productive. Your senses are somewhat sharpened on all levels and you give it that extra push to get the job done. Just as you let out the sigh of relief your eye catches something.

Your heart drops. Yes, you missed it - the key point. It can be anything from a switch of numbers, wrong date or whatever small mistake has slipped through the cracks. This is not the way your project normally ends.

Suddenly a sense of exhaustion comes over you and you realise that control is slipping through your fingers.

Sometimes your sense of loss of control is in the reverse.

The deadline is coming up and you see the words, letters or numbers and they do not appear to make all that much sense any more. The brain feels slow in the uptake. The more you want to work at your normal productive pace, the more your brain appears to slow down. Now the race against time is starting to catch up.

You feel more and more out of control and you can feel the stress building up from within. Your mind starts racing with all thoughts with simultaneous importance demanding your attention. It feels a bit crazy in your head. No, you are not going crazy, you are merely losing your sense of control.

You need time-out. It is time to breathe. Some deep breaths may just help in getting sufficient oxygen to the brain so that you can re-focus and gain your sense of control again.

It is a myth. Most highly effective people say that they perform best under pressure. Yes, you do get a lot done, simply because you have set your mind to achieving your goals.

The fear of letting go of control is insurmountable. The Pharma industry thrives on this demand of control. The truth is that as you keep yourself at this high pace, your adrenalin and cortisol levels build up in your body.

You literally fill your body with acids. These hormones create high toxicity levels in your system.

When these toxic levels are not reduced through stress relief methods that balance the system with what we call the 'bliss' hormones, dopamine and serotonin, then the body shows its stress build up in the form of various illnesses.

It is said that 'stress' is the Black Plague of the future as about 90% of visits to the doctor are stress induced.

What now?

It is really simple. If you know how to really relieve your stress instantly within a few seconds. Restoring the 'bliss' hormones is only a simple technique you may not yet know.

So, then what happens? Have you noticed some mental dullness or depression; problems reading or understanding conversations which comes from the difficulty in focusing.

Do you just put this down to lack of sleep? Ok, any information that may lead to admission of not coping, may not leak to either the team or the up-line managers.

It may appear more acceptable to allow the symptoms of physical illness to create a 'legal' time off for 'breathing space', rather than admit that previous coping mechanisms are now failing.

However, symptoms such as digestion problems, frequent flu or colds, desire to overeat or drink too much alcohol or needing drugs to relax, are all indicators of stress overload leading to loss of coping.

Sleeping disturbances and insomnia just sets up the next day to start at a low point which then leads to added stress, which leads to the breaking point and burnout.

LOSS OF COPING MECHANISM

Yes, you're feeling it. It feels like you're slipping. Something is off centre. Loss of control leads to loss of coping mechanisms.

How do you keep yourself afloat?

We live in a time in this world where we cannot afford to slow down. Everything is driven at an active pace and you learn to cope. Just one more task to complete to achieve whatever we have set our mind to.

What would happen if you just walked out of your office and not return for a day or two? I bet you would not know what to do with yourself unless you had set up a activity plan ahead of time.

Each of my clients that I ask this question to has a similar reaction. They stop breathing.

Chaos!

They feel they simply even do not cope with the idea, let alone it happening. Is this not also the reason why we do not pay attention to the messages in our body? It could be that you are striving to get your project well under way and 'outside matters' add to your already overloaded plate.

You start feeling the odd pangs of nausea or burning in your stomach. You put it down to eating on the run, or whatever you put your mind at ease with; unaware that your body is trying to tell you to slow down.

You have successfully pushed and finished your project. It is time to celebrate or take a good and well deserved rest. The next thing you know is that you end up in bed with flu.

Lucky you, if you've made it this far. This is the good news. Your body is showing you what a well deserved rest is really all about.

Do you see this as good news? Or, do you ignore this message from your body to you?

Just take a quick review of yourself, right here, right now. What do you observe about yourself?

Ask yourself "Am I really coping well?" "Am I failing or are my coping mechanisms failing?"

Failing to notice when your coping mechanisms fail actually leads to your breakdown. Can you afford a breakdown? Can you afford to lose your coping mechanisms? One cost is physical exhaustion leading to serious diseases and disorders.

A second cost is the reduced intelligence that comes with the activation of your brain's survival center - your brain stem which forces you to then slow down even more.

When your brain is focused in the survival-level in your brain stem, your higher thinking center is essentially shut down. Chronic stress throws your focus straight down into the brain-stem.

You may wonder why you start to have low interest in family, friends or social contacts. In fact you feel frustrated at the lack of empathy for your experience of stress.

Stress is not what happens around you and the world you live in. Stress is not what happens to you. Society is not stressful. Those are all myths and a good self denial of what is really happening to you in your body.

But, you feel irritated by the world you live in. Other people 'push your buttons' and you experience instant flare up of irritation, anger and frustration. Your normal 'calm self' becomes a demon inside and when this can no longer be controlled, the demon flares up and lashes out.

FRUSTRATION FLARE-UPS

What do I know? You are irritated and frustrated. As much as you try and 'be nice' your frustration walks before you. You are stressed. What do you know? You are irritated and frustrated. You are stressed.

There is simply no time to take things easy and in a functional manner. The job needs to get done and mistakes happen and the flare-ups are happening more and more. It does not take much for you to feel your 'buttons' pushed.

Someone is always at fault. It is a myth that it is 'normal'. Yes, it is normal to feel irritated and frustrated and even have the odd anger moment.

What is not normal is when these feelings come up more and more and others start up with flaring up around you more and more. Every flare-up is a loss of control and a loss of coping with the situation at hand in the best possible way.

The first step is to become aware that the flare-ups are your #1 sign of stress build up.

The second step is to do something about the stress. It is not what happens that stresses you - it is how well you manage it.

The third step is to find your center of control again.

It appears that nobody understands your point of view. You are still doing whatever you need to do to stay ahead and in control. In your mind others are just not giving you enough leeway to manage your tasks adequately.

You need to justify your position for yourself.

Victor Frankl has written about the meaning we give to life as the measure of survival. Your brain responds to your interpretation of perceived threat made real, and releases stress hormones.

These hormones make your heart race, speed up your breathing, contract your large muscles, dilate your pupils and cause your liver to release glucose for increased energy. Fight, Flight or Freeze are natural reactions and thus well known as “Stress Response”.

When turned on at the right time, it boosts your ability to perform well under pressure. BUT, it causes problems when the Stress Response is not released and then becomes chronic.

People experience high levels of anxiety and mental, emotional breakdown. If mental and emotional breakdown is not allowed to happen, the body reacts with a physical breakdown.

In short - pumping out stress hormones over an extended period wears down your body and brain, leaving you depleted, mentally dull, overwhelmed and even physically sick.

Chronic stress damages your brain and especially your memory. Stress is the body's response to your interpretation of an event or condition.

MANAGEMENT DISPUTES

Finger pointing is the lovely art of avoiding responsibility, because SOMEONE has to pick up all the broken pieces right?

Does that sound like you? Don't stress (see what I did there?), it is the fight for survival that creates an ordinary situation into a stressful one. You feel yourself surrounded by everybody's needs, while also having to protect your needs as well.

In today's society, everyone's point of view is right. You have to walk on eggshells to avoid offending someone, and this has resulted in stress and anxiety levels soaring to heights never before seen in human history.

Where is the truth in all of this? There can only be one right answer, right? There is, and it lies buried in all the disputes.

Stressed situations are a combination of stressed individuals. So the question arises, how does one not get stressed in an environment where everybody is losing their mind over a seemingly insignificant issue?

It takes one centered and calm person to relieve a stressful situation.

It takes a calm leader to handle disputes so that each and every delegate has an opportunity to center themselves, despite their individual feelings of irritation, frustration and anger.

Managing your own stress leads to the management of stress of those around you, and that is why I help people to overcome their stress and take control of their life.

That's why for a limited time, I am hosting an online consultation where I give advice to help you overcome your stress and provide a solution to all of your stress related issues.

To gain access, all you have to do is click on the button below to join:



Learn More

Ask yourself this question... are you going to wait until it's too late? How long before it's YOU that breaks down? Do you think all those people woke up in the morning and knew they would go ballistic?

It can happen to anyone, and you know that.

So do yourself a favour and get the help and support you Deserve. In this consultation I go over everything you need to cope with the stress of the 21st century and come out on top above your challenges.

So have a look at your clock. Your countdown has begun!

HOW TO ELIMINATE STRESS AND ACHIEVE SUCCESS IN YOUR CAREER

For a limited time, you can take what you've learned in this book, join me, Sonja Simak, for an online consultation and achieve the peace in life that you long for.

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