The Little Black Book of Stress Relief Secrets

Inside You Will Learn:

- 5 simple exercises you can start doing right now to beat stress and regain control of your life

- How stress launches a sneak attack on your mind and body - and what you can do to stop it

- Early warning signs that stress is hurting you more than you think!
MESICS®

The Little Black Book of Stress Relief Secrets

Dr. James A. Manganiello

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Dedication

To the Memory of Bill Bellows
Legal Stuff

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Chapter One
America’s #1 Health Problem—STRESS

Many studies show that if you want to feel good most of the time and live long and well—then you need to protect your health and well-being. You can’t just sit back and hope for the best.

And if you want to avoid the misery of frequent unhappiness and getting real sick, then controlling your stress must be at the top of your “things to do” list.

Just below I’ll show you a way to do deal with your stress fast. But before I do, let me explain why stress has to be at the top of your list.

Because of medical science discoveries, we now know that your stress is not just about your feeling tense, upset, wired and tired. Not long ago stress was thought of as merely an inconvenient experience of tension or discomfort. We now know differently.

Your stress is also about the release of powerful chemicals into your body. As you shall see as you move through this book, these stress chemicals or stress hormones as they are called, can

1. not only make you anxious, depressed, worried and exhausted—but they can also
2. make you ill and kill you before your time with heart disease, cancer and other devastating health problems—and
3. interfere with and even ruin your chances for successful relationships and work.

The World Health Organization now recognizes stress as the number one health problem in industrialized countries.

As Dr. Paul Rosch, preeminent stress expert and president of the American Institute of Stress, has noted, in America stress is “...taking a terrible toll on the nation's health and economy. It is a heavy contributor to heart disease, cancer, respiratory distress, lupus and many other life threatening illnesses.
So pause for a moment now. And picture that when you are feeling very stressed, your “Stress Faucet™” is turned on. And it’s dripping dangerous chemicals into your body.

This book, including the stress-busting methods in Chapter 4 will show you how to deal with stress—anytime, anywhere. You will learn how to shut your Stress Faucet!

But before we continue through the book, let’s right now give you a brief practice you can use to get quick relief from stress.

**Do This Right Now for Fast Stress Relief**

This is called MESICS “Free Release Breathing”. It is a wonderful stress busting practice that’s easy to do. You will get results—fast.

Read the brief instructions below over once. Get a clear picture of the practice, then return right here and let’s do it.

Take three Free Release Breaths as follows:

1. **On your “in breath”—breathe in through your nose into your diaphragm.**

2. **On your “out breath”—breathe from your diaphragm out through your mouth. Just completely let go.**
   a. Don’t walk your breath out—**just let it go completely “hhhaaaa”**.
   b. On the out breath sigh if you are not in public—“hhhaaa”.
   c. If you are in public—do it quietly and discreetly

3. **Then tune yourself briefly to the calm, clear state at the end of your out breath. Rest there for about 7 seconds. Then repeat twice more.**
   a. Try to maintain your connection to the calm state at the end of your out breath for as long as possible

   b. This will give you a taste of what we call the “Stress Free State”

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1 Do it so your diaphragm rises on your in breath and falls on your out breath. Your diaphragm is just below your breast bone and just above your upper abdomen. It’s a muscle the size of the palm of your hand, a muscle wrapped all the way around the bottom of your rib cage.
“Free Release Breathing” is so powerful because it promotes the activation of what’s called the “parasympathetic” component of your Involuntary Nervous System. Forget the strange words and think of it this way: When this part of your nervous system is in charge, your Stress Faucet turns off and stress chemicals stop leaking into your body. That’s good.

Again, at the end of your out breath, you will feel at ease, calm and clear. Tune yourself to this experience. Once you are familiar with this practice, you can use it to reconnect to this calm, relaxed state of mind. Then, when you’re in a stressful situation, you will be able to deal with it quickly.

For now, let’s continue our way through the book. Walk with me a ways and learn what stress really is all about. Remember, knowledge is power.

**Why is Stress Such a Big Deal Problem?**

Stress is such a big deal because we now know that it drives many life and health problems. Consider this: Stress causes more premature and unnecessary deaths than all other causes combined. This fact is not commonly known or understood by the general public. And new studies show that stress not only drives a global epidemic of serious health and life problems, but it also ruins marriages and families.

The fact is that we don’t typically associate stress with serious illness, because we’re so **misinformed** about what affects our health. And sadly, so are many of our doctors. Scientific and medical research has repeatedly demonstrated a relationship between stress and serious illness.

Yet there’s resistance to making this knowledge available to the general public—resistance based on power, control and big money issues. More about this later.

For now, let’s just quickly note a few stress-related illnesses and problems, so we get a quick read on what we’re talking about. In alphabetical order:

Anxiety, arthritis, asthma, chronic infections, chronic neck and back pain, cancer, depression, diabetes, endometriosis, infertility, insomnia, headache,
heart disease, high blood pressure, impotence, insomnia, irritable bowel syndrome, low energy, menopause problems, PMS problems, rapid aging, sinus infections, skin problems (such as eczema and psoriasis), stroke, weight problems and—among others—some forms of ulcers.

**Chronic Stress Can Kill**

Chronic stress is especially insidious because it does its damage under the radar over long periods of time. It causes dangerous wear and tear on your body. Then one day a terrible health problem can show up like a violent storm that suddenly descends out of nowhere.

This happens daily to many people who wake up in the morning just like you and me. People who think it’s just another day—only to discover by day’s end that they have a serious illness.

I don’t want you to become one of them.

You don’t have to—if you learn how to prevent stress and stress hormones from ruining your life.

**Some Hard Facts About Stress**

I want you to take these facts in and ponder them. They’re the basis for your realizing something very important: You need a New Mindset.

A mindset focused on what you need to know and do to protect your health and well-being. And that of your family’s.

Consider the following:

- Research shows that up to 90% of the visits to primary care medical physicians in the United States are for stress-related problems.
- More than 100 million people are taking weekly medication to manage symptoms from stress-related problems and illnesses.
- Some of them need to medicate stress-related symptoms, but for most people, medication is not necessary.
- We can learn how to prevent stress-related illnesses without taking medications.
- Medications can cause serious health problems.
Medications are a major reason why doctors and hospitals are the third leading cause of death in the United States.²

Why So Much Medication?

We’ve become too accustomed to mediating our problems. Many physicians tend to throw drugs at stress-related problems, problems that can be best solved by other means.

Sadly, the pharmaceutical and medical industries are too often in bed together. One reason is that prescription drugs are huge money makers.

The problems caused by stress won’t be prevented by the temporary symptom relief risky pharmaceutical drugs offer.

Only when we address the actual source of symptoms, can we prevent symptoms reliably and safely.

Are These Stress Chemicals Running Around in You?

As we’ve seen, stress involves the release of powerful chemicals into your bloodstream, hormones, such as cortisol, norepinephrine, and epinephrine. Let’s look at this more closely.

These potent hormones prepare you for what’s known as the Fight-or-Flight Response. We’ll look closely at this important response as we move along.

Right now, note some of the signs that stress hormones are flying around in your body. You’re likely awash in stress hormones when your—

- heart pounds,
- chest or stomach tightens,
- hands and feet are cold a lot,
- muscles become tense and spasm,
- neck and/or back go out of alignment,
- often anxious or panicky,
- exhausted, yet can’t sleep well,
- feeling depressed,
- grumpy, angry and hostile.

**Why Stress Hormones Can Be Toxic and Deadly**

Stress hormones can be toxic and very unforgiving. They can do a job on your immune system, leaving you vulnerable to chronic infection and worse.

They become poisonous when they’re released into your body—too often or too much. And when they linger too long and seep into your tissues and cells.

How and why does this happen?

**The Key: Your Mindbody**

Groundbreaking mindbody science discoveries explain how and why stress chemicals cause so much damage. In fact, these findings changed everything we thought we knew about health, well-being and quality of life. But view-changing discoveries are typically slow to change the way most people think about these things.

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A Stanford university study showed that women with high daytime cortisol levels, a stress hormone, had fewer immune system cells known as natural killer cells. They had reduced immunity associated with higher mortality, especially breast cancer mortality.

Stanford University
David Spiegel, MD, Study Director
Such was the case when we first discovered that the earth was round—not flat. Many people still feared falling off the earth because flat earth theory was around for so long.

Because it was deeply embedded in the social consciousness—it was hard to let flat-earth theory go. Eventually the discovery that the earth was round and not flat, allowed us to set aside false ideas. In time flat earth theory disappeared.

Similarly what we call “body-only” ideas about health and well-being have been rendered obsolete by mindbody science. In time, these false ideas will be set aside as well.

The most significant discovery made by mindbody science is this:

- **Your mind and body are not two separate things. They’re an interdependent unit—your mindbody.**

  What you think and feel affects every cell in your body. And what goes on in your body—affects what you think and feel.

  This discovery changes everything, because it sheds new light on how and why we become ill. This could never be seen from “body-only” views. We now know that:

  - Whether your body stays healthy or becomes ill depends upon what goes on in your mind.

  To see the power in this discovery, let’s take a look at your “**Inner Pharmacy**”.

**Your Inner Pharmacy**

Your inner pharmacy is under the control of your **Involuntary Nervous System (INS).** More about your INS later. For now, let’s get the mindbody connection into your New Mindset. So you can begin to see what you need to know and do to protect yourself from stress and the release of toxic stress hormones.

Remember, your mind and body are an interdependent unit. So when you worry about things. Or when you feel troubled by situations you have little or no
control over. Your thoughts and feelings will have the power to influence events in your body.

Negative states of mind such as **fear, worry and anger**, can trigger a mindbody communication problem. They can lead your Involuntary Nervous System (INS) to make a serious error.

Your INS can misread your mental worries as facts. It mistakes your worries for solid evidence that you are in real life-threatening physical danger.

When your nervous system and your Inner Pharmacy make this blunder, powerful hormones flow into your bloodstream. These hormones then prepare you for fight or flight. But the problem is: They’re not really needed—it’s a mistake. It’s a **false alarm**.

If your Inner Pharmacy pours too many of these chemicals into your body too often, then your body will break down as a result.

Stress will, for example, weaken your immune system over time. When you’re flooded by stress hormones, your killer immune cells decrease in numbers and in strength. This leaves you open to infections and worse.

Prolonged stress can even interfere with your ability to contain and destroy cancer cells, cells that a hardy immune system could routinely overcome.

**Can You Prevent Inner Pharmacy Errors?**

Yes, with the right knowledge and tools you can. But there are problems in the way of preventing Inner Pharmacy errors.

One is that our health care system is really a **sick care system**; it doesn’t work to prevent stress-related illnesses before they occur. It treats them only after they happen.
And it treats them as if they were “body-only” problems (think flat earth). Most health service providers don’t understand the mindbody. And so they’re really don’t grasp “Inner Pharmacy” errors.

The key point is that they’ve been trained to treat the illnesses stress hormones cause. Not prevent them.

The Best Time to Fight Serious Illness is—Before You Have to

And so it’s wise to think of it as your job to prevent stress-related health problems from developing in the first place.

It’s an important job. You need to become well-qualified for it. Or pay the price. Keep in mind that no one plans to get ill or infirmed, especially before their time. Bad health news typically sneaks up on us, suddenly. Like an unwanted intruder or an unexpected storm.

You can certainly do a great deal to avoid such a fate—if you know how. I aim to point you in the right direction.

Let’s turn now to take a look at where stress hormones come from.

Just Where Do Stress Hormones Come From?

As we’ve seen, your mind and body are an interdependent unit: your mindbody. Let’s revisit what this means? Plant it in deep in your New Mindset.

The one focused on your job to safeguard your health, and advance your quality of life. Remember, your mindbody connection means that what you think and feel manifests in your body. And vice versa.

So we’ll review briefly so you can be crystal clear.
If you worry too much about financial catastrophe, for example, then your Involuntary Nervous System can misinterpret your worry as actual financial catastrophe.

And so it will signal your Inner Pharmacy to release stress hormones as part of an “emergency alert” reaction. This emergency alert reaction is the **Fight or Flight Response**.

This response is designed to be a short-term response only. It’s meant to release chemicals into your body to prepare you to fight or to flee—from life threatening danger.

But stress hormones now pour into your blood and tissues too often—in error. They’re released to protect you from danger—but that danger isn’t really there. This happens much too often and it puts you at risk.

The good news is: You can learn to stop it.

Let’s take a closer look at the mindbody details of what goes on to see how. Understanding this process will set the stage for what you need to know and do. So you can act to control stress hormones at their source.
Chapter Two
The Fight or Flight Response

**Knowledge is power.** Most people don’t know where their liver or kidneys are, let alone what these internal organs do and how. To appreciate the importance of controlling stress—you’ve got to know what stress is all about.

So let’s take a brief stress or Fight-or-Fight Response “tour.” Some of our tour will be a little detailed. So take a deep breath and get focused.

Why should you care? Because if you know what a Fight or Flight Response is—and if you have clear images of how it works—then you will be in a much better position to shut it down when you don’t really need it.

If you enjoy learning things with strange new names, then you’ll have some fun. If you don’t like learning a lot of new names, then don’t bother. Just follow the tour with a focus on the big picture.

**Why is Your Involuntary Nervous System so “Involuntary”?**

Your Autonomic or “Involuntary” Nervous System takes care of important business on its own. You don’t have to tell yourself to breathe air or digest food. These things just happen.

Nor do you inject yourself with powerful hormones, to get the energy and power to fight or flee from danger. Again, it just “happens.”

Your Involuntary Nervous System (INS) has two switches:

1. One is for routine housekeeping chores—that keep you alive, such as digestion, elimination, etc.

2. The other is for survival in the face of life-threatening danger.

When one switch is on, the other is typically off.
Your ordinary housekeeping chore switch controls the “parasympathetic” component of your INS, and the emergency alert switch controls the “sympathetic” component.

Be assured, you don’t need to remember these strange names. If you like, just make note of them in the back of your mind. But it’s not necessary.

Your sympathetic system’s “danger or emergency alert switch” was designed for short-term use only. Trouble happens when it’s on too often or too long because stress hormones pour into your body. And they remain there.

If the emergency switch is on too often—these hormones don’t get a chance to flush out. They’ll linger in your blood and your tissues.

The Fight-or Flight response is wired into your mindbody. It’s played an important role in keeping the human species alive for thousands of years. While it functions automatically—you can learn how to regulate and control it.

That’s KEY. Why? Because if you learn how to regulate this emergency response, you will be able to control stress and preserve your health and your quality of life. As we shall see.

**Your Ancestors Lived in a Different World**

Consider this: If your ancestors encountered a dangerous animal in the jungle, their emergency switch triggered quickly.
And their parasympathetic or housekeeping switch shut down.

The Fight-or-Flight Response would then reroute your ancestor’s blood. Reroute it from their stomach and intestines, to their arms and legs. So they could either duke it out with their arms, or run like hell with their feet.

**Messenger Molecules and Mismatch Theory**

This ancient fight or flight reaction develops as a result of messenger molecules. Messenger molecules that

- signal danger, and
- then initiate the release of a powerful array of stress hormones.

If your ancestors survived their dangerous run in. Then in a short while their emergency alert switch would shut off—and their bodies would resume their ordinary housekeeping chores.

But the bottom line is that you live in a vastly more complicated world than did your ancestors. The problem you face is that your brain and nervous system have not changed too much in the past 25,000 years.

But our social structure has changed radically. Life has grown very complex—and so much more stressful on the mind side of things.

This creates a **mismatch**. You have **obsolete** mindbody wiring, wiring that’s been passed down over many thousands of years (e.g. biochemical, neuroendocrine wiring for the Fight or Flight Response). But it’s not suited to present time.

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**Mismatch Theory**

“Cultural evolution has occurred at such a fast pace and has so impacted natural environments that the brain structures and behavioral proclivities we humans have inherited are adapted to conditions that are as out of sync with those of today as riding horseback on a freeway or throwing a spear at a freight train.

The mental equipment we are born with is attuned for surviving, adapting, and reproducing in a bygone era.”

Michael Dowd

“Thank God for Evolution”
It’s obsolete in the sense that, the original environment for which this wiring was developed—is long gone. Your current environment is dramatically different that the environment for which your wiring was originally suited.

Your wiring and traits that were at one time adaptive in an earlier environment—are not only no longer adaptive. They’re now maladaptive—i.e. they cause problems. Your mindbody wiring is “mismatched” for the environment that you now live in.

Our mental stress now regularly triggers the release of stress hormones—when they’re not necessary. And so too often, our stress levels just don’t get a chance to back off. We’re frequently worried about money, relationships, work and other things that are now part of our hectic life in this time frame.

The only solution to this, as we shall see, is for you to develop the ability to watch over and manage the wiring that controls your Inner Pharmacy. This requires training.

You need to learn how to regulate the control of the mechanisms that release stress hormones. This is essential for you to develop “A Sound Mind in a Healthy Body”—the gold standard for best levels of health and well-being.

**The Big Problem**

The big problem is that while the Fight or Flight Response protected our ancestors from danger. It’s ruining our health because we’re so wired—it almost never shuts off.

As a result, stress hormones such as cortisol, norepinephrine and epinephrine sometimes linger in your body for long periods of time.

Stress hormones continue to wash through the system in high levels, never leaving....and so the stress response that once gave ancient people the speed and endurance to escape life-threatening dangers runs constantly in many modern people and never shuts down.

Drs. Chrousos and Gold
Senior National Institute of Health Scientists

Stress is linked to the six leading causes of death – heart disease, cancer, lung ailments, accidents, cirrhosis of the liver, and suicide.

Lyle H. Miller, Ph.D. and Alma Dell Smith, Ph.D., Senior Stress Researchers
These hormones can **soak** into your blood, stay there, and then **saturate** your tissues.

**The Price We Pay**

We pay a steep price for this as we never seem to be able to deeply restore ourselves. And the housekeeping chores of our body get compromised as a result. They don’t get done efficiently.

It’s like taking out your trash each week, but leaving behind 10-15% of it. After awhile—you’ll have a real mess on your hands.

Your body’s housekeeping chores must be done well and they must be done regularly—if you are to stay healthy and enjoy good energy and well-being.

If they’re not done efficiently, then what gets set up are the conditions for break-down and disease.

**Your Hypothalamus Makes a Costly Mistake**

You have a small area in your reactive brain called the **hypothalamus**. It functions like a sophisticated computer center within your Involuntary Nervous System.

Your hypothalamus constantly monitors information. If it gets **messenger molecule signals** of danger—it reacts. It doesn’t kick the tires on the message.

Once your hypothalamus receives info it regards as evidence of danger or emergency, then it triggers the Fight-or-Flight Response. It picks up the phone and calls your Inner Pharmacy with instructions to release stress hormones into your body.

Again, the trouble is due to a mismatch between your past wiring and your present environment, as follows:

- Because of the complexity and speed in your life,
- your hypothalamus often misinterprets your frightened, worried or angry thoughts and feelings—
• as evidence of physical danger.

When it does, it secretes a messenger signal in the form of corticotrophin releasing hormone (CRH) which tells your master endocrine gland, the pituitary, that there’s trouble.

By the way, studies show that CRH triggers depression. Stress and depression are often two sides of the same coin.

After releasing CRH, your pituitary then secretes another signal hormone. This one called adrenocorticotropic (ACTH). ACTH goes into your bloodstream to set in motion a full-blown fight or flight response.

When ACTH reaches your adrenal glands, which sit on top of your kidneys, your adrenals release epinephrine (also known as adrenaline) as well as norepinephrine and cortisol.

This dynamic relationship between your hypothalamus, pituitary and adrenal glands is the heart of the Fight-or-Flight Response. It’s known as the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis (HPA).

The HPA is sometimes referred to as the “stress circuit”, because it’s like a closed loop information system. One in which your mindbody recognizes danger and releases the hormones you ultimately need to deal with it.

Your HPA or stress circuit works like this hypothetical illustration:

• Your chronic fear and worry about work deadlines, work situations, relationships, finances and world events —triggers the same response that a charging tiger did for your ancestors

• This goes on frequently—not just once in awhile
After conducting many years of research into the functioning of the HPA, medical researchers have concluded that chronic stress should not be taken lightly or accepted as a fact of life. "Persistent, unremitting stress leads to a variety of serious health problems,”

Dr. Chrousos
Senior National Institute of Health Physician-Scientist

Your hypothalamus misinterprets your intense and chronic worry as potentially life-threatening danger. It secretes a hormone CRH

CRH signals your pituitary gland that there is danger requiring fight-or-flight. Your pituitary gland then secretes ACTH to further the stress response.

When ACTH reaches your adrenal glands, it triggers the release of the hormones epinephrine, cortisol and norepinephrine.

These hormones that have a powerful affect on your kidney and cardiovascular functions as well as on your thoughts and feelings.

Stress Hormones—A Blessing and a Curse

Again, keep in mind that the Fight-or-Flight Response is meant for short-term use only. When you truly need it—it’s a Godsend. When you don’t need it, it’s trouble.

There’s an epidemic of stress-related diseases today because stress hormones linger too long in our blood and tissues. A problem that leaves many people vulnerable to serious illness they could avoid otherwise. It’s a problem that can shorten your life considerably.

Let’s take a closer look at just how this happens by turning to the work of a pioneer in stress research, Dr. Hans Selye. His brilliant research was a work of art. The powerful impact of Dr. Selye’s work continues today, years after his death.

Many regard Selye’s discoveries as revolutionary. They’re as important as the discovery that the earth was round. In this next chapter we’ll see how he cast new light on the conditions that give rise to both health and illness.

Dr. Selye has a good deal to tell us about stress.
Chapter Three
An Amazing Discovery
Selye’s General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS)

Hans Selye was a Swedish physiologist and physician. He discovered the processes that link stress with illnesses. Selye called stress driven illnesses “diseases of adaptation”. Diseases such as

- heart disease,
- high blood pressure,
- cancer,
- lupus,
- diabetes,
- stroke
- and many other stress hormone-related illnesses and problems.

Dr. Selye’s work was so valuable and compelling because of its depth and clarity. He showed us just how stress can make us ill. Let’s take a look at how he did it.

Make some room for his insights in your New Mindset.

The General Adaptation Syndrome

Selye conducted a number of innovative experiments on the physiology of stress. He formulated some of his important ideas in what he called the General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS).

The General Adaptation Syndrome is one of the cornerstones of modern health psychology, mindbody science and medicine. Again—it opened the door to understanding stress-related illnesses. Here’s why.

Selye saw that your body always seeks to maintain homeostasis or balance within its internal environment. It makes great efforts to maintain balance, in response to whatever stressful changes might throw it out of balance.
For example, whether it is 10 degrees in winter or 99 degrees in summer, your body works hard to maintain an internal temperature of around 98.6. It works hard to stay in balance.

Whatever the source of biological stress, the body makes efforts to resist it, **resistance** meant to maintain the constancy of its inner environment.

If you suffer from any one or a series of stressful events, including injury, disease, acute or chronic psychological stress—your body responds by working to restore its internal equilibrium.

With other words, your body will resist imbalance by working very hard to get things back to the way they’re “supposed to be.” Keep in mind that this can take a lot of effort and energy.

**Just Feeling Sick**

The syndrome of "just feeling sick" results from your body's attempts to adapt to any long-lasting interference with its inner balance. This includes interference from a **dripping faucet** of stress hormones caused by Inner Pharmacy errors.

Without any clear signs of illness, you just don't feel right. You feel off or sick, in an unclear general kind of way.

Makes sense right? And if your body has to struggle relentlessly to adapt, then the syndrome of “just being sick” gets more severe. It can deteriorate into bodily damage, damage that grows worse and later surfaces as a disease.

Today the most dangerous illnesses that threaten us are known as what Selye called, "diseases of adaptation."

What he means by this is that many times these illnesses result from wear and tear from the hard work your body does to “adapt” and stay in balance.
The effort to stay in balance is the effort to adapt. Adaptation means to resist imbalance in efforts to recover your equilibrium. So you can maintain a constant internal environment in the face of forces that disrupt your balance.

**The Three Stages of the General Adaptation Syndrome**

Selye's General Adaptation Syndrome is a stress syndrome. It involves three stages. Let’s take a look at each of them. As follows:

1. The stage of *Alarm*
2. The stage of *Resistance*, and
3. The stage of *Exhaustion.*

If you understand Selye’s General Adaptation Syndrome, you’ll be able to appreciate why stress hormones are such a threat. Again—you’re building a stress busting and an illness preventing *New Mindset.*

So don’t leave these ideas just in your head. Notice what’s going on in your daily life. Check in on your energy levels and how you feel, and make note of your thoughts and feelings. Keep what you’re learning actively in your mind so that it can work for you.

**Stage One—The Stage of Alarm**

The first stage, the *alarm reaction* triggers your body’s emergency alert resources. Your HPA (stress circuit) activates, and the hormones that drive the Fight-or-Flight Response release into your body.

By the way, mindbody science research discovered that these very same hormones play a central role in your memory. This discovery is an important one. As you know, some of our most painful memories are stressful.

For example, if you have a car accident, your body releases stress hormones in response to physical and emotional trauma. Then your recollection of the accident actually gets linked with the release of these hormones.
And so you remember the accident, you retrigger the release of the hormones. Because your memories are biochemically tied to the condition of your mindbody at the time of the accident!

It’s as if parts of your brain keep having the accident every time you “remember” it.

This is one reason why painful experiences from the past imprison many of us. They continue to affect our mindbody “as if they were going on now.” And that’s why sometimes—we can get stuck in a Stage One Alarm reaction.

To become free from difficult past experience requires careful work. You have to relieve the connection between your memory and the physiological conditions that were originally part of your pain and suffering.

MESICS Training can help you do this, but more about that later.

For now, let’s move onto the second stage, the Stage of Resistance.

Stage Two—the Stage of Resistance

In the Resistance Stage, your body attempts to restore its inner balance. It does what it has to do to counter the alarm reaction.

Resistance works to return your body to the condition it was in before what triggered the alarm reaction created strain and imbalance.

Your body has tremendous resilience to bounce back—but it has limits beyond which it just can’t go.

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3 MESICS is an acronym for the Latin phrase: Mens Sana In Corpore Sano. It means “A Sound Mind in a Healthy Body”. MESICS translates scientific discoveries into actionable knowledge and combines it with powerful tools—so you can put that knowledge to work for your health and well-being.
When your body reaches its limits, then strain goes one step further into symptoms. Symptoms are really warning signals.

Symptoms such as headaches, heart rhythm irregularities, depression, anxiety, pain and so on. They tell us that we’re under adaptive strain.

With the right knowledge and tools, you can respond to these signals wisely; that’s what your New Mindset will empower you to do.

- Instead of creating more strain,
- or taking medication,
- or drinking or drugging,
- or just passively hoping for the best,
- you can play an active role in helping your body out.
- You can do things that will ease the strain,
- and enable your body to get back in balance.

MESICS Breathing™ is one powerful tool to do exactly that. I’ll tell you all about it up ahead.

For now, just note that when symptoms develop, they burden the Resistance Stage even more. Additional strain gets piled on top of what your body is already struggling to reverse.

**Stage Three—the Stage of Exhaustion**

The last stage, the Stage of Exhaustion comes about when you are worn out, when you’re wired, weary and depleted. It is when you have **nothing left**.

**Exhaustion** happens when the force of the problem causing your imbalance is greater than the force of your resistance, of your capacity to restore balance. Herein lays the critical problem.

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*Diseases of adaptation are often preceded by signs that Selye called "just being sick" including feeling chronically tired, grumpy, depressed, weak and unmotivated.*
The Critical Problem

The problem is critical because stress hormones don’t leave your body as they were meant to. And so you have an impossible task trying to restore yourself to balance.

If you can’t shut off the emergency alert switch so that your parasympathetic system kicks in at good levels—then you’re in trouble. Because your body’s **housekeeping chores** won’t get done properly.

The chronic release of stress hormones causes your body to run out of gas. Like a car that just can’t go any further. In the exhaustion phase, your body suffers damage.

When your body becomes seriously depleted and exhausted, you become ill. Ill with diseases that can include one or more of the following: heart disease, high blood pressure, cancer, and, among many others, diabetes.

These illnesses are not always diseases of adaptation. But there’s growing evidence that they very often are. And Selye’s work has made it easy for us to understand why.

A quick review:

- Stress-related illnesses and **“diseases of adaptation”** are different names for the same thing
- They result from chronic periods of extended stress
- Periods that exhaust your resources
- And that interfere with your body’s housekeeping chores
- Very often “diseases of adaptation” can take many years to develop

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**Chronic stress destroys bodies, minds and lives. It wrecks havoc through long-term attrition. It’s the stress that the never-ending "troubles" have brought....**

**The worst aspect of chronic stress is that people get used to it. They forget it’s there. People ...ignore chronic stress because it is old, familiar, and sometimes, almost comfortable.**

**Chronic stress kills .... People wear down ... physical and mental resources are depleted through long-term attrition....**

Dr. Lyle Miller and Alma Dell Smith
Senior Stress Researchers

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The Little Black Book of Stress Relief Secrets
Page 30
OK—Let’s Give Dr. Selye a Hand

Let’s give Kudos to Dr. Selye. He’s given us an important key. And we can use his discovery of the General Adaptation Syndrome to our powerful advantage.

As I noted to you above, and as we’ll see in later chapters, you can prevent stress-related illnesses. You can do so by learning and applying the tools and strategies to avoid or minimize the exhaustion phase.

You can, for example, control and stop alarm reactions that are unnecessary and undesirable. And you can greatly strengthen your body’s ability to restore balance—as it resists imbalance.

MESICS™ Training methods and strategies will train you to do just that. They’ll train you to short-circuit the Flight or Flight Response at its source.

I’ll get you started using some of these powerful tools up ahead, tools based on your New Mindset. They’ll help you to short-circuit the unnecessary release of stress hormones into your body, and flush them out of your system when they’re released in error. You’ll be able to save yourself a lot of trouble and heartache as a result.

Another Note on “Your Job”

One thing is clear from what Han’s Selye taught us. You shouldn’t be casual about stress. Stress hormones can wear you down—gradually, but inevitably.

And so you may not want to wait until tomorrow to do something about your stress. It’s best if you deal with it now—not “tomorrow”.

By the way, there are clear signs of your mindbody’s efforts to restore the balance upset by stress hormones. If you can recognize these signs for what they are, you can act quickly to help things along.

Let’s first take a look at some of the psychological and physical signs. Then we’ll consider what you can do about them.
Psychological Signs of the Resistance and Exhaustion Phase

Do you experience three or more of the following psychological signs of Stage 2 and Stage 3 stress levels?

- frequent anxiety and/or panic
- sadness and depression
- forgetting things a lot of the time
- lost desire for sexual intimacy
- grumpy and quick to anger
- foggy thinking
- trouble staying focused
- worried a lot of the time
- emotional confusion
- trouble sleeping
- trouble making decisions
- numerous accidents
- feel negative much of the time
- trouble learning new things
- trouble relating to people
- feel miserable a lot

Physical Signs of the Resistance and Exhaustion Phase

Do you experience three or more of the following physical signs of Stage 2 and 3 stress on a regular basis?

- diarrhea or constipation
- cold hands and feet
- sweaty palms
- trembling fingers
- low energy
- chest pain
- frequent urination
- ringing ears
- headaches
- neck and back pain
- nausea
- dizziness
- poor digestion and frequent gas
- sinus infections and head colds that won’t quit
- elevated heart rate
- skin problems
- teeth grinding.
If you regularly have three or more of these psychological or physical signs of the wear and tear of stress hormones—then NOW is the time for you to do something about it.

Up ahead we’ll take a look at what you can do. When we get there, we’ll sort the strategies and interventions for reducing stress levels into two categories.

One category of “stress busters” is provisional and short-term. The other is more permanent and more long-term. But before we get to these, let’s widen our lens some and take a look at a powerful source of stress in our lives—“job or work stress”.

Job stress is a major cause of health and quality of life problems right now. And it’s getting worse as our work lives become more strained and more complicated.

Keep the question in mind: Is your job stressful? Our task is to not only prevent illness. It’s also to create conditions for a high quality life. And our work here will give you an important part of the recipe for doing both.
Chapter Four
Job Stress

According to Dr. Paul Rosch, successor to Hans Selye and renowned medical scientist, job stress is widespread and expensive. It costs America huge sums of money—some $300 Billion annually.

This huge expense comes from coping with the damage caused by stress-related work problems such as:

- absenteeism,
- reduced productivity,
- substance abuse, and
- health care costs.

Large numbers of people simply burn out from work related pressures, and the stress resulting from the manic pace of work life today. We all seem to be hell bent on doing more—faster.

Many of us regard our work related stress as acceptable. It feels like part of the territory that comes with trying to do our best for our family and ourselves.

This can be a dangerous mistake. Here's why.

Toxic Work Stress

According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), the nature of our work lives is changing at breakneck speed.

Job stress is now the single greatest threat to employee health.
Difficult work situations are the primary cause of employee stress, but our personality can also play a role in creating our job stress.

Our tendencies to view things stressful terms can make a bad work situation even worse. But it's actual work setting problems that cause high levels of stress for most employees.

**Work Stress Dynamics**

A few years back, I worked to help organizations and their employees create a collaborative win/win atmosphere where employee initiative and bottom-line success could go hand in hand.

I came across a serious problem that was hard to resolve. The problem was this: On a fundamental level, business owners (as well as executive management) and employees regard themselves as adversaries.

Many business owners feel that they are entitled to call the shots in pretty much any way they see fit. They feel entitled because their money started the business, and their money is at risk in the business.

They have a point.

Employees, in contrast, often feel financially exploited, undervalued and psychologically abused. By owners and upper management, people who feel entitled to arbitrary authority.

They too have a point.

Both owners and employee points of view have partial merit. But because owners and executives have the power, they typically get to define reality.

And that’s a situation that can create huge amounts of stress for employees.

Workplace stress causes approximately one million U.S. employees to miss work each day.

American Institute of Stress

More than one in four workers have taken a “mental health day” off from work to cope with stress.

American Psychological Association
**Work Stress Triggers**

Some of the conditions that breed job stress are as follows:

- vague job descriptions and too little or poor training
- excessive work load that’s out of line with employee skills, training and energy resources
- employees have too many “hats” to wear
- unsafe work conditions
- too frequent and abrupt changes in work responsibilities—leaving employees feeling out of control
- job insecurity and lack of chances for advancement
- boring work responsibilities, with little or no room for creative input
- difficult or impossible time pressures with no room for rest
- abuse and disrespect from supervisors
- lack of decision making power over matters associated with work responsibilities

**Early Signs of Work-Related Stress**

Working for too long under difficult conditions produces familiar signs of stress. Some of the early ones are as follows.

Can you recognize any of these relating to your work?

- Job frustration and dissatisfaction
- Insomnia
- Digestive problems
- Depression

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Eighty per cent of American workers report serious work-related mental stress.

**Gallup Poll**

“Patients who had ischemia in response to mental stress had a three-fold increase in the risk of death compared to people without mental stress,”

**Dr. David S. Sheps**
Associate Chief of the Division of Cardiovascular Medicine, University of Florida Health Sciences Center, Gainesville.

**Health care expenditures are nearly 50% greater for workers who report high levels of stress.**

**Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine**

Many studies suggest that psychologically demanding jobs that allow employees little control over the work process increase the risk of cardiovascular disease.

... differences in rates of mental health problems (such as depression and burnout) are due to differences in job stress levels.

On the basis of research by NIOSH and many other organizations... job stress increases the risk for development of back and upper-extremity musculoskeletal disorders.

**Encyclopedia of Occupational Safety and Health**
• Anger
• Hostility
• Repeating negative thoughts and feelings
• Muscle tension
• Headaches
• Elevated blood pressure
• Aches and pains

If our work situation improves, these stress-related signs and problems usually back off. But if it doesn’t get any better over the long run, research indicates that we’re at risk for severe health problems.

Job Stress: Here’s What the Research Tells Us

Like anything that causes prolonged release of stress hormones, work stress can cause serious health problems. The Encyclopedia of Occupational Safety and Health has summarized some troubling research.

Work stress can cause cardiovascular disease, musculoskeletal illnesses, and psychological problems (which triggers a vicious mindbody cycle of stress). In addition, work stress contributes to

• Impaired immune function
• Cancer
• Cardiovascular disease
• Ulcers
• Substance abuse
• Weight problems
• Depression
• Musculoskeletal problems
• Family problems and
• Suicide

Work Stress—The Bottom Line

From a quality of life perspective, work you do because you feel you should or must do it—can be a problem. The chances are good that such work will drag you around for years on a long road of stress.

Here’s why.
Over the long haul, “should or must” obligations and responsibilities become a stressful burden. Because an important part of who you are needs to do what it wants and loves. “Should or must” work creates distress and stress because it’s too often disconnected from your unique abilities and purpose.

If you are to stay healthy and enjoy an high quality of life— your work must bear the stamp of your personal vision and unique purpose. When your work life becomes a day in and day out struggle, it sours into meaningless toil and labor.

The sad truth is that we live at a time when the prevailing view of life is too focused on economic growth and gain. And this view has a big blind spot for the price we pay—in the form of health problems and unhappiness.

This view too often misses what makes life truly meaningful and worth living.

Consider This

If you do more of what you want and love to do for work—then your job stress will be low. If, in contrast, your work is based on what you feel that you should or must do, then your work will be a job stress magnet.

A major reason that work is so stressful for us is that it’s not meaningful. It’s just something we feel we have to do to make money.

Our lives are often so busy with manic speed. And with what we feel we must do to earn money. That we miss some of life’s richest possibilities, possibilities that only become visible when we’re moving slowly.

Just why has our life become so manic and stressful?

“Americans now work almost a month more than the Japanese and three months more than Germans.

We are also working harder.

In a 2001 survey, nearly 40% of employees described their office environment as “most like a real life survivor program.”

World Health Organization Survey
No Wonder We’re Tired and Wired

Today we work on average of fifty hours a week. And we sleep 90 minutes less a night that did our grandparents. We actually get nearly 600 fewer hours of sleep than did our grandparents—each year.

Our work, and the life we build around it, often leaves us feeling estranged from our own existence. We can feel as if we are starring in a meaningless and stressful movie. A movie someone else has written the screenplay for.

The fact is that our inner life aches at “just for money” work, work that lacks depth and meaning, because such work has no connection to our all-important “inner spark”.

This spark is there. The one you can light a fire with. But it can only be found within your deepest nature. Not at the surface of your life. You have to penetrate the surface and dive a bit deeper. You need the right knowledge and tools to do this.

Your Inner Spark—and “Inner Balance”

Good News: A strong and balanced mindbody connection—will grant you access to your “inner spark”. (you do want to start a fire in your life, right?) A strong well-balanced mindbody connection goes hand in hand with a strong and well-balanced Involuntary Nervous System.

In a condition of “Inner Balance”, your body is humming and your housekeeping chores get done at best levels. Your body’s systems and your organs are almost smiling—and there’s no strain.

And your mind is relaxed, at ease—and aware. You even move in and out of a creative, self-assured experience of “flow”. Flow is a condition in which you feel and function at your very best. While your mind is free, open and clear.

Under these conditions, your inner spark finds you. With Inner Balance, something special can happen. It’s as if you awaken from a dream and restore your connection with yourself. And you drop into who you deeply are.
Most of us lose ourselves in two things:

1. Our limited, conditioned identity,
2. the steady bombardment of trivialities that steal our attention

With Inner Balance—you can find yourself again. You find the “you” that lies beyond the noise of your conditioning and beyond trivialities of any kind.

This is the “you” that has your **unique signature**, a signature that’s yours and yours alone. Once you find it—you can write it all over your work life. It gives you the personal power to do whatever it takes to be able to work at something you really care about in circumstances that don’t drive you to an early grave with stress.

**You Can Train for Inner Balance**

A marathon runner trains to prepare for running 26 miles. She runs regularly. She runs a little bit longer each day or so to increase her capacity to run long distances.

Similarly—you can train for Inner Balance. Slowly, slowly you increase your capacity to create and maintain it. In time you’ll be able to live and work from a different center of gravity.

You can learn how to do this through MESICS Training. As your Inner Balance becomes stable, you’ll get some remarkable things:

1. you’ll be immunized against many of the toxic effects of stress hormones
   a. you’ll be healthier and happier
   b. and you’ll dodge the stress-related illness bullet
   c. and live longer

2. your connection will be restored to your deeper identity
   a. you’ll discover more of what you want and love,
   b. you’ll do what’s needed to create a work life around it, and so
c. your quality of life will improve considerably

d. you’ll have the ultimate solution to job stress

The Ultimate Solution to Job Stress

The ultimate solution to job stress is to find or create work that sets your life on fire with more of what you want and love.

If your work life lacks real passion and purpose, then it’s a black hole for stress and stress-related health problems.

You didn’t come here just to just get by or to just make money and buy things. Though you’d never know it given the trivial view of life pumped out on a daily basis by popular media.

Please note that the idea of doing more of what you want and love. And less of what you feel you should or must. Has nothing to do with being irresponsible. Or not keeping your commitments.

Don’t leap into magical thinking and tell yourself that the universe will make your work dreams come true. You have to assume responsibility for making your dreams come true.

Our task is to get the right knowledge and tools we need to shed our conditioning and dive deep. And then do the hard work necessary to create a work life that does justice to who we really are. That’s the recipe for a great work life, one that will keep you healthy and inspired.
Chapter Five
Stress Busting Tools and Strategies

Let’s set some perspective here for your New Mindset. By now it’s clear that mental stress triggers hormones that can put your health at serious risk.

The first thing you need do to protect your health is to realize that **you actually have to do something** to protect your health.

You have to feel this for real. And let it in so you can get over the speed bump that’s in the way when you have to learn and do something new.

We need to value our health and not take it for granted. Health and well-being are critical parts of the recipe for living a high quality life—long and well.

Critical parts for a life lived as an adventure of meaning, unique accomplishment and loving relationships.

You now have the **knowledge** about what stress is. And about how it can shorten your life. And you have a growing base of knowledge about what you must do to prevent stress hormones from ruining on your life.

Now let’s give some **tools** to put that knowledge to work.

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*Health is the greatest gift.*
Buddha

*Time and health are two precious assets that we don’t recognize and appreciate until they have been depleted.*
Denis Waitley

*He who has health, has hope. And he who has hope, has everything.*
Arabian Proverb

*The preservation of health is a duty. Few seem conscious that there is such a thing as physical morality.*
Herbert Spencer
Easy to Use Tools—for Right Now

Let’s begin by looking at some tools you can use right now to reduce your stress levels.

Keep in mind Dr. Hans Selye’s three stage General Adaptation Syndrome:

1. **Alarm**
2. **Resistance** and
3. **Exhaustion**

**MESICS Breathing: A Powerful Stress-Busting Tool**

MESICS Breathing™ is a simple—but incredibly powerful tool. It will help you to avoid or bounce back from depletion and exhaustion.

And it will empower you to get and maintain Inner Balance. It’s an antidote to poisonous stress hormones.

Train daily with it for a few days and then longer. It’s easy. You’ll see a remarkable difference—in a short time. If you train using MESICS Breathing for a month or so, you will recalibrate your Involuntary Nervous System to much healthier levels. It will increase your “Vagal Tone” thereby changing your heart rate to support greater well-being and heart health.

You will feel better, enjoy more energy and be able to carry a greater stress load without going into a Fight or Flight Response.

**MESICS Breathing—More of What Will It Do For You?**

OK, 5 things to note:

1. MESICS breathing will strengthen your cardiovascular system and your immune system for maximum longevity
2. It will balance your Involuntary Nervous System and reduce Inner Pharmacy errors
3. As your Involuntary Nervous System comes into balance—your stress hormone levels will go down considerably
4. Stress hormones will release less frequently

5. When they do release—you’ll be able to flush them out of your blood and tissues more quickly and more thoroughly

6. You’ll feel a lot better, have more energy and be more in control

Let’s take a look at how to do MESICS Breathing™.

**MESICS Breathing: How to Do It**

The beauty of MESICS Breathing is that it’s very simple. It involves slow, elongated *Diaphragmatic Breathing*. Diaphragmatic Breathing is when your diaphragm rises on your in breath and falls on your out breath.

Your diaphragm is just below your breast bone and just above your upper abdomen. It’s a muscle the size of the palm of your hand, a muscle wrapped all the way around the bottom of your rib cage.

Try this now:

- Put one of your hands on your diaphragm (just below your breast bone and just above your upper abdomen) and the other on your chest
- Take a deep breath in and out

Did the hand on your diaphragm rise when you breathed in? And did it fall when you breathed out? If yes, great. If no, then practice until you get it.

When you take a deep breath in and out, your diaphragm should move the most, not your upper chest or lower belly. With training your upper chest won’t move much and your lower abdomen hardly at all. With practice you’ll be able to do this—no doubt.

Here are the step by step instructions for the basic MESICS Breathing Practice. Keep in mind that you can train for MESICS Breathing most anytime, anywhere.
At first, it might be best for you to train sitting on a chair or lying down, so you can become familiar with the practice. Then once you get the feel for how to train, you can take it “on the road”, into your life circumstances.

Remember. Breathe in to, and out from, your diaphragm. As follows:

1. Breathe in through your nose to the count of four to six. Slowly.
   a. Whatever your count—take a full in breath by the end of it.

2. At the end of your in breath—pause for just a slight moment.

3. Then breathe out through your mouth, to the count of four to six.
   a. Whatever your count—take a full out breath by the end of it.

4. At the end of your out breath, pause for another slight moment.

5. Continue as above.
   a. Test what works for you. Don’t strain yourself. You can gradually get to six. You should be comfortable while practicing.
   b. If you feel uncomfortable. Stop. Return to your regular breathing. Then resume and try a lower count.

How Long and How Often Should You Do The MESICS Breathing Practice?

Five minute sessions are good. Ten are better. Fifteen are best, especially if you’re under a lot of stress, or if you have a Stress-related illness.

You need to train—if you want results. But one great thing about MESICS Breathing—you can do it pretty much anywhere, anytime. You can do one or as many sessions as you like. And you can do it during the course of your day. Try it

- When you awaken in the morning
- Before you fall asleep
- While you’re driving
- While you’re listening to music or watching TV
• While you’re walking
• In most life circumstances

You can even use MESICS Breathing to change your energy level and your states of mind. MESICS Breathing can help prevent all stress-related illnesses. But it can especially reduce your risk for sudden death syndrome, heart attack and stroke.

A Few More General Stress-Busting Strategies

The following strategies are simple, yet effective. Give them a try. If you need help and instruction to do one or more of these—don’t hesitate to ask us.

1. **Exercise** to temporarily reduce stress levels.
   - Just 30 minutes of moderate walking 3-5+ times a week will help a great deal. No excuses. The research is clear and compelling.

2. Learn to quiet your mind—with **meditation**
   - An easy meditation method is to sit quietly. Begin with some MESICS Breathing or a series of Free Release Breaths to settle down.
   - Then breathe regularly. And count your breaths, on the out breath.
   - From 1 to 10. Repeat. Counting your breaths gives you focus.
   - If you get distracted—no big deal—just resume your count at 1 and continue. That’s how to train.
     - Try 2 minutes first day. Then add a minute each day until you get to 20 minutes.
     - Then do 20 minutes once or twice a day

3. Learn to **listen to others**—it will soothe your heart
   - Dr. Jim Lynch’s research shows that when we really listen to others—our blood pressure goes down. (Listen to my interview with him on Stress Radio)
4. **Unburden your soul**, when needed. Share your feelings with someone who cares about you.
   - This is an important one. If you have no one right now—find a really good professional. Let us know if you need support.

5. **Be generous and friendly toward yourself.**
   - Get off your back. Avoid the dangerous stress that comes from heavy-handed self-doubt and self-criticism.

**How Much Stress Are You Under?**

There a number of different measures for formally assessing stress, some of them good, some not so good. A straightforward informal “stress self-assessment” will do you just fine. Just be sincere with yourself when you answer the following questions:

1. Do I have a job stress problem?
2. What’s causing stress in my life?
3. Is stress affecting my family and work life? How?

4. Am I making efforts to reduce my stress levels?
   a. If no, do I need to learn how to reduce my stress?
   b. If yes, are they working?

5. Is there someone I can turn to for love, support and guidance when I feel stressed out?
   a. If not, am I willing to get professional help?

6. Am I sleeping enough and am I eating healthy food—at least most of the time?

7. Do I have too many responsibilities—do I have trouble saying no?
8. Do other members of my biological family view the world in stressful ways?

9. Am I drinking or drugging to medicate myself from stress?
10. Am I too isolated and lonely?

11. Am I sitting on painful wounds, wounds that drive me into stressful views? e.g. hurt, grief etc,
    a. If yes, what do I need to do something about it?

**Importance of a Flexible Attitude**

A flexible attitude is a critically important **stress buster**.
When stress threatened Hans Selye’s balance and equilibrium, he recited a little jingle to himself that went like this:

“Fight always for the highest attainable aim—but never put up resistance in vain”

With other words, fight only for what you can attain, and practice letting go of what you can’t control.

Too often we drive ourselves crazy and sick by regretting the past and fearing the future, so much so that we never get to really be alive in the present.

Regretting the past and fearing the future produces toxic levels of stress. Regret and fear are two signposts of a mind that tends to view life in stressful terms.

Being vitally alive in the present is the secret to having a long life that can be well lived, loved and understood. More about that later

For now, let’s turn to some more focused ways to prevent stress hormones from damaging your health.

Though provisional, the following stress busting tools and strategies focus more deeply on modifying the stress circuit (HPA) itself. If you can self-regulate the stress circuit, you will add years and quality to your life.

### A Few More Focused Ways to Get Free From Stress Hormones

Recall that your Involuntary Nervous System has two switches: 1) The parasympathetic switch for housekeeping chores, and 2) The sympathetic switch for emergencies requiring fight-or-flight.

Remember, when one switch is on, the other one is usually off.
You can think of busting stress as **shutting down** the stress response switch and **turning on** the parasympathetic or ordinary housekeeping switch.

When our mental stress triggers the emergency switch frequently—when stress hormones flow into our body and linger—we unconsciously brace ourselves as if we’re expecting something bad to happen. This holding on restricts our breathing.

The next time you’re feeling stressed, bring some **attention** to your breathing. Chances are good that you’ll find that it’s pretty shallow, and that you’re breathing from the chest up.

Shallow breathing is unconscious breathing. Shallow breathing happens outside of your awareness in reaction to stress. Without knowing it, you’re trying to hold on and control things while bracing for trouble.

Not only does this tense your muscles, but it also reduces your oxygen intake, and it interferes with your release of waste products. Your body needs a good fresh supply of oxygen and it must rid itself of waste, or it won’t get its internal housekeeping chores done properly.

An effective remedy to unconscious, shallow breathing is to breathe with **awareness**. To do this—just bring attention to your breathing now and then. Check in on it, and make adjustments accordingly.

It’s like driving on a highway. You occasionally **check** your rear view mirror, your speedometer, your distance from other cars and so on. In time staying alert and checking your breathing will become quite natural. Train to make it so.
Conscious Breathing

Conscious breathing is a simple, yet effective way to counter stress. If you train well, you can use it to shut down the HPA. So the stress circuit can deactivate.

1. One useful form of conscious breathing is to
2. Take a few deep breaths, do Free Release Breathing if you like.
3. The sooner you do this when you’re feeling stressed, the better—
4. Because it’s easier to prevent a Flight-or-Flight Response than it is to reverse one.

As we saw with MESICS Breathing, the breath is a powerful way to develop self-regulatory control over your Involuntary Nervous System. It'll empower you to act on your own behalf. Try it and you’ll see what a difference it makes.

Remember, when the stress hormones cortisol, norepinephrine and epinephrine don’t wash thoroughly out of your system for periods of time—your health is at risk.

In terms of Hans Selye’s General Adaptation Syndrome, these hormones leave you in a chronic state of strain.

Diaphragmatic Breathing Again

Some of this will be familiar to you from MESICS Breathing:

You should breathe from your diaphragm, not from your chest—especially when you’re under stress.

As you breathe in, your diaphragm should fill first.

- As your diaphragm fills with air, it expands.
- On exhalation, let your diaphragm contract and as it empties out of air, then your diaphragm relaxes and falls inward.

Recall that under chronic stress, which is the norm today, stress hormones release and seep into our blood and tissues and stay there, a situation that leaves us at considerable risk for health problems.
Once you learn how to breathe from your diaphragm with ease, you can do so to **restore** your **Inner Balance** when under stress. And you can do this just about anywhere—without calling attention to yourself.

**Try This MESICS Conscious Breathing Practice**

What follows is a simple but powerfully effective 12-step practice. The 12 steps will help you to master **conscious breathing**.

1. Sit or stand with your back in a straight, but without any strain.

2. Open your mouth slightly and drop your jaw, completely relax your jaw muscles.

3. Breathe out through your mouth—completely.

4. Inhale slowly, through your nose—fill your diaphragm with air.

5. Hold your breath for a count of three.

   a. Then on the out breath—just free release, from your diaphragm. Don’t walk your breath out slowly (as in MESICS Breathing). Just let it go completely. (as in Free Release Breathing) If you’re alone—sigh when releasing.

6. Be mindful of the experience of **calm and relaxation** that comes with this breathing. Especially at the very **end** of your out breath. Between breaths.

   Note this calm state and become familiar with it. **Tune yourself** to the calm and peaceful state of mind at the end of your out breath. Training this way will lead into the relaxed state—when you need it.

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*The heart pushes the blood to the lungs for two reasons:*

1. to get rid of the poison of the body—carbon dioxide
2. To take fresh oxygen from the lungs

*The heart pushes fresh oxidized blood to the rest of the body and the brain*

*Without this purified blood life cannot go on for a minute.*

*Anything that stops the purification of the blood will cause death of the heart and of life.*

*Pundit Acharya*
It’s like knowing the address of a special friend. You can find her when you need to.

Do steps 1-7 a few times. If you get light-headed, return to regular breathing for a minute or so and then resume the practice.

In steps 8-13 your focus turns toward allowing your breath to become more quiet and to soften. You are now moving into “contemplative training” focused on the breath. Think MESICS Breathing.

7. **Change your out breath here.** Stop the free release. Instead, exhale slowly through your mouth. Out from your diaphragm.

8. Inhale slowly through your nose. Into your diaphragm.

9. Keeping your mouth open and jaw relaxed—allow your body to breathe on its own. Your body will regulate the pace and depth of breathing by itself, according to its needs for fresh oxygen and for gaseous discharge.

10. Allow your body to breathe and just be **witness** to it. Feel the wonder of its intelligence. And the calm that’s present when it brings itself into balance

11. If your breathing quiets down a lot and seems shallow, allow it. This is not the same shallow breathing that’s part of a Fight-or-Flight Response. It’s just the body in **balance** and at healing rest.

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**Breath and Energy**

When you breathe, you do more than just take in oxygen and release carbon dioxide. You also take in **energy**.

The contemplative sciences refer to this energy as the vital force that sustains life. It’s essential for health, well-being and quality of life. The air you breathe is not this energy, though it is an opening and a gateway for it.

As your energy goes, so goes your mind and body. The connection between your mind and body is, in essence, an energy connection. And so what you think
and feel, and what goes on in your body—depends upon the condition of your energy. Think of your thoughts and feelings as energy.

Stress hormones greatly disrupt the condition of your energy by throwing it into a state of imbalance.

You can use your breathing to regulate, balance and coordinate your vital energy. If you can’t control your energy—then your stress triggering thoughts and feelings will control you. And you’ll be frequently adrift in stress hormones.

The power of MESICS Breath and Energy training is that it quickly increases and balances

- your energy,
- your mindbody and
- your Involuntary Nervous System.

With dedicated practice you can re-set your entire system. So that it returns once again to a condition that better sustains and supports a good supply of well-balanced energy. And a strong and well-balanced mindbody connection will always protect you against stress and stress hormones.

The result is you’ll be more in control and more at ease. And you’ll have fewer health problems and a far greater quality of life. The better parts of life require a good supply of well-balanced energy.

As your body relaxes more and more everything quiets down. Your breath softens naturally, and your energy harmonizes. This is a sign that your body’s restorative and recuperative powers are operating.

Remember, your parasympathetic system and your body’s self-healing and self-rejuvenating systems—are one and the same.
**Why Inner Balance is So Important**

In terms of Selye’s General Adaptation Syndrome, as your breathing quiets and softens on its own, your body restores its equilibrium—its Inner Balance. And so it can flush out stress hormones from your blood and tissues.

Conscious breathing can make quite a difference in your life. You’ll be pleased at how much better you feel in both mind and body. If you train well, you’ll be more relaxed, more clear and more energized. And your body will feel like it’s getting a first rate tune up.

**Train and Practice**

Training and practice are critical—without applying these instructions regularly—they will remain on the page.

There’s an even deeper level of work you can do, work that will take you to a whole other level. Let’s check it out.

“Everything is practice.”

Pele
Chapter Six
Ultimate Solutions
A Look at the MESICS Method™

This final chapter focuses on solutions to stress that lay beyond the provisional tools and strategies we've just explored. They will give you a taste of what's possible.

This chapter asks the following question:

“What’s the **single** most important thing you can learn and do to prevent stress from—accelerating your aging, sapping your health and energy and playing havoc with your quality of life?”

Let’s set perspective for our answer to this question—with another question.

**Do You Want to Just Pump...?**

If your basement has a leak and you buy a sump pump to get rid of the water, the pump would be a good solution. But it’s only provisional. Your basement will stay dry—but just temporarily. After a hard rain, it will flood again.

If instead of buying a sump pump, you actually find and fix the source of the leak. Then you’ve got a much better solution, a solution that’s long-lasting. It’s a better solution because it **prevents** the problem—**before it happens**.

Similarly, methods meant to shut down your Fight or Flight Response—after it triggers—are very valuable. But they’re only provisional, because they won’t eliminate the conditions that trigger the release of stress hormones into your body.

But a method that trains you to prevent the release of toxic stress hormones into your blood and tissues, one that stops Inner Pharmacy errors at their source—is even more valuable.
The MESICS Method™

I’ve developed and thoroughly tested a powerful method. It’s a 5 Step practice that will indeed put you in the driver’s seat. I noted it earlier to you. It’s the practice called the “MESICS Method (MM)”. It’s an important part of the MESICS Training Program. I just want you to get some feel for it here.

The MM trains you to cut through and reduce the conditions that give rise to worry, anxiety and uncertainty. It trains you in the skills and self-assurance you need for what we call “mind-side fitness” or “inner fitness”.

The MESICS Method™ and Mind-Side Fitness

A sound mind is one trained to be calm, clear, strong and flexible. It’s a mind that doesn’t get swept out to sea by troublesome thoughts and feelings. Such a mind can stay calm, clear and aware. That’s the ultimate antidote to stress.

The MESICS Method will train your mind to be this way. You can use it anytime, anywhere. You can use it for example when you are

1. in a meeting,
2. on the phone
3. in face-to-face conversation,
4. in traffic,
5. whenever you are feeling stressed and/or angry, anxious or depressed

You can use the practice anytime you want to become aware and “Present”, aware and Present so you can prevent stress provoking views from taking you over. It will help you cut through stress and connect to a relaxed state of mind, so you can move into Inner Balance and be in control.

I developed an early version of this practice when I directed the New England Mindbody Institute, a precursor to MESICS. The Institute focused on stress hormone driven problems and illnesses.
Our investigations, including research that tracked heart rate, blood pressure, muscle tension and Involuntary Nervous System activity—all led us to an unexpected conclusion.

What did we find? When we put stress under a “microscope”, we always found what we called an anxious “**shaky uncertainty**”.

**Shaky Uncertainty**

Shaky uncertainty is an uncomfortable state of mind. It typically includes negative thoughts and negative emotions. Emotions that **breed stress** and trigger the release of stress hormones.

You can experience shaky uncertainty as guilt, worry, anxiety, irritation, hostility, self-doubt, hesitation and so on.

Shaky Uncertainty is a natural human condition when we’re caught in our conditioned personality at the surface of life. Shaky uncertainty goes hand in hand with an “unsound mind”.

Unsound not in the sense that we have a “mental problem”. But in the sense our **mind is not trained** to be “fit”. Trained to operate at best levels. An unsound mind lacks strength, stability and flexibility. We’ve found that chronic shaky, anxious and uncertain states of mind create an unhealthy body.

Most of us face emotional weather systems of shaky uncertainty. But we typically don’t understand why, or what to do about it. And so we don’t know how to deal with negative states of mind properly.

The MESICS Method will empower you to develop what we call **mind-side fitness**. Developing a fit and sound mind is the single most important thing you can learn and do. To prevent stress from—

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*High levels of hostility have been found to predict heart disease more often than high cholesterol, cigarette smoking, or obesity.*

*Health Psychology*

*People with high levels of anxiety can have between two to seven times the risk of heart disease.*

6. accelerating your aging,
7. sapping your health and energy
8. and playing havoc with your quality of life

A sound mind that’s clear, calm, strong, aware and flexible is a treasure indeed.

**Don’t Get Stuck In Obsolete Body-Only Views**

Before we move on to look further at “mind-side” fitness—let’s review with some of important mindbody science discoveries. Ones that are the cornerstones of the MESICS Training knowledge and tools I’m giving you.

It’s important to review. **“Re-Viewing” will plant knowledge and understanding—into your New Mindset.**

In time, these groundbreaking discoveries will render “body-only” views obsolete in the same way that the discovery that the earth was round and not flat—put flat earth theory to rest.

- Your mind and body are not two separate things, they’re an interdependent unit—the mindbody.
- Your mind can unnecessarily trigger your body’s fight or flight response (when it’s not fit/sound)—and it can shut it down (when it’s trained to be fit/sound).
- Your *conditioned* patterns of perception—your habitual “states of mind”—can make you ill. A “sound mind” can free itself from conditioned views.
- If Inner Pharmacy errors release stress hormones into your blood and tissues too often, and if they are not flushed out—your health and quality of life will suffer.

Now let’s look further into a sound mind—into mind-side fitness.
The Sound Mind and Mind-Side Fitness

Imagine if you tried running a marathon without training properly. Your legs would become shaky, unsteady and unstable before too long. You’d become exhausted and couldn’t go on.

In the same way, shaky uncertainty is a sign of an **untrained mind**, in the fitness sense of the word. And in truth, because no one ever trained us properly, we all have “unfit” minds.

The good news is that everyone has the potential to develop mind-side fitness—with the right training.

In many ways daily life has become a mindbody marathon. One you need to train your mind, as well as your body for. You can train both your mind and body for

1. Strength,
2. Endurance and
3. Flexibility.

Consider this: You can train your mind so that when shaky and uncertain states of mind hit—you can **host** them. Instead of being defined and possessed by them.

If you can “host” troublesome states of mind, then you can **prevent** them from triggering the Fight or Flight Response—when it’s not needed. With mind-side fitness, your Involuntary Nervous System won’t make as many Inner Pharmacy errors.

Are You Dreaming?

Mind-side fitness is very important. Why? Because without it, negative states of mind can too easily “**possess**” and define you, especially when you get swept up and “view” their story line as “reality”.

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For example, if you’re angry with me. Because you perceived that I didn’t consider your feelings during a group meeting. Then consider this. If your anger sweeps you up and defines you—then you’ll assume that your feelings testify to the truth. And you will be convinced that I truly didn’t consider your feelings.

But at least half of the time what you feel is more due to your conditioned patterns of perception than it is to “what’s out there”. I might have considered your feelings very carefully. But your subjective view may be that I did not.

Remember, we’re stressed less by the actual events in our life, than by the way we view them.

Being able to “host” a worrisome state of mind is like your having a nightmare—but being awake in it. If you’re awake, then you’re in control of how it affects you. Then it can’t possess you or define your reality.

Are You “Present”?

If you’re dreaming that a giant tiger is chasing you for lunch, but you don’t know you’re dreaming—then you’ll have no “Presence” outside of the dream’s storyline.

And so who you are in your dream, (“dream you”) will run away in cold sweat terror. But once you “awaken”, you come into a different understanding of things. You have the “presence of mind” to see what’s really going on.

You now “know” that you don’t have to look under the bed for a tiger. You know it was a dream and so you put it in proper perspective. The “danger” storyline collapses. No danger of an Inner Pharmacy error here. Right?
What the MESICS Method and Mind-Side Fitness Will Do For You

Similarly, the MESICS Method trains you for mind-side fitness or if you like, for Inner Fitness. It does so by developing your ability to be awake or Present even in stress provoking states of mind.

And so you’ll be able to see many of your fears, worries and concerns for what they are—dream like worried states of mind. Not literal reality. MESICS Mind-Side Training will

1. save your body from unnecessary wear and tear,
2. strengthen and harmonize your mindbody connection,
3. help create and stabilize Inner Balance, and
4. leave your mind more free and comfortable.

In many ways, your random states of mind are very much like dreams. And they are almost always going on. The real question is whether or not you’re aware and Present in them.

If you are, then you still exist outside the dream. And you define your own reality. If you’re not aware and present, then you become the dream. And it defines your reality for you.

Does Shaky Uncertainty Define You?

That’s why mind-side training is so critical. If you’re not mind-side trained, you’ll lack the strength, resilience and flexibility of mind—to stay aware and present.

Then every time shaky and uncertain states of mind descend upon you, they’ll define your reality. And so frequently trigger unnecessary Inner Pharmacy errors, errors that spill toxic stress hormones into your blood and tissues.

Many people are chronically in the flow of negative states of mind. For them, stress hormones flow into their blood and tissues like water drips from a leaky faucet. A Stress Faucet that never really shuts off.
Your Conditioned Self-Image is a Dream Machine

Stress results not only from your woes and worries—real or imagined, but also from your being stuck in a conditioned identity that’s too small for who you truly are.

As we saw when considering job stress, our family and cultural conditioning can confine and limit our possibilities. They can sit on us heavily so that something deep within us goes without. Goes without what it needs. That creates another order of stress.

Consider this amazing fact: Your conditioned self-image determines what you think, feel and do a great deal of the time—whether or not it’s accurate. And it shapes your habitual patterns of perception and so your tendencies to view the world in stressful ways.

It keeps a conditioned flow of thought and feeling going. A flow that writes the screenplay for a never-ending series of fictional movie episodes that you mistake as real.

In some ways, we're all starring in Rocky 4500.

Stress and Depression

As noted earlier, we now know that the stress hormone CRH (Corticotropin Releasing Hormone) triggers depression. Stress and depression are actually close cousins. Many people who take antidepressant drugs don’t really need them. Instead they need to stop the flood of stress hormones. The flood caused by too many inner pharmacy errors.

But stress and depression go hand in hand on deeper levels as well. If you’re stuck in your conditioned self-image, you’re not only at the mercy of stress hormones. You’re also not living the way something deep inside you needs to live.

You see, sometimes depression can be a valuable signal, a signal that tells us we are walking on the wrong life path.
Real Quality of Life

If you connect more to who you deeply are beyond your conditioning. And if you can live from there—you’ll not only reduce your stress, you’ll also greatly improve your quality of life.

You’ll move your life away from stress and into more satisfaction and more contentment. Satisfaction based on the self-assurance that only comes with connecting with you truly are. We call that kind of self-assurance—“Unshakable Certainty”.

Let me tell you a brief story to illustrate what I mean when I say that if you train for a connection to your deeper identity, the one beyond your conditioning, you’ll have the ultimate antidote to stress.

Consider this Story

Imagine that you purchase a home on Monday for $500,000.00, a home that you could barely afford to buy.

Imagine further that for some reason, to your horror, your insurance was not properly in place. And your new home burned to the ground on Wednesday. And so you lost your home and your money.

How would you feel?

You’d probably have enough stress hormones running around in your blood and tissues to fuel the next space shuttle flight. Because of the insurance mess, you’ve just lost your life savings on a home that you lived in for one day.

You could have just as easily gone to the bank, withdrawn your money and burnt it in the bank lobby. Seriously, that would have saved you closing costs on the house.
Did You Ever Think You’d Win the Lottery?

Now imagine that you hit the lottery for $70 million dollars on Tuesday. That’s the day after you bought your home and the day before it burned down. Such good fortune.

Suddenly, the loss of your home is not such a big deal. The loss is an inconvenience, yes. But it’s certainly no longer the end of the world.

Similarly, when you connect deeply to who you truly are, it’s the very best of fortunes. And when you live from there with love and courage, it’s as if you win the lottery every day.

This gives you an inner resilience, a base of “Unshakable Certainty”. That’s the ultimate antidote to stress and protection against toxic stress hormones. And it’s the Royal Road to living your life with gusto.

Well we’re going to close soon. I recommend the following to you: After you’ve read this book through—

- go back and focus on the practices
- the better you understand the reason why you’re doing a practice—the more powerful it will be
- establish a routine where you do one or more practices daily—then you’ll see strong results

I hope that this book adds something of real value to your life. I want you to be protected against stress so you can live long and well. If you like, let me know your views of the book and your results with the practices. I’d love hearing from you. Your feedback will help me develop the best possible materials for others. Write me at MESICS@comcast.net.

I wish you the best...take care... Dr. Jim Manganiello