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# THE 5-MINUTE



# STRESS SOLUTIONS

RELAX AND FEEL GREAT IN  
5 MINUTES OR LESS

CLARENCE OLIVER

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## **Introduction**

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Stress is the biggest problem most people face in their lives. It's the number one thing people say they want to have less of. It's connected to the continuation of bad habits, to the deterioration of good health, and to irrational or myopic thinking. Stress, also can cause people to more readily gain weight, lose hair, and have other negative physiological effects. I've personally had issues with stress.

Who hasn't right?

But, I didn't want to be stressed all the time, I didn't want to be clenching my teeth, have an upset

stomach, or a shortened fuse. Stress burns up one's willpower and tolerance, which creates snapping responses, and drastic mood swings. In fact, during highly stressed situations, people swing like on a pendulum axis, from one extreme to another, our emotions swaying often from sadness to anger.

Often times however, the things that cause the most stress in our lives, are the things that we want most in our lives. Our jobs, unless we're hoping to hit the lottery are very important to us, and a great source of achievement for us. Many people enjoy a feeling of

accomplishment for a job well done.  
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Our health, whether it's the fact that we don't have the bodies we want, we're worried about getting sick, if we don't have health at all we're done and thus good health or bad health are still wanted compared to the alternative. Our families, if ever a beacon of stress existed, family life must be it, and yet, it will often be the point of our relaxation, our feeling of connectedness, and our focal point for much of the good we will attribute to our lives.

Stress is such a difficult thing to solve, because, often, the advice given is to avoid stress. Clearly, as I've

written this stuff out, it's easy to  
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realize that if one were to truly avoid  
stress, they would be avoiding life. So  
many self-help books seek to offer  
you ways to lighten your load, to  
remove the stresses from your life.  
Most works try to teach the avoidance  
of stress, rather than the dealing with  
it. They persist on the belief that if  
you can learn to organize your life,  
your time, your work, and your family,  
you'll have less stress naturally. And  
though that's correct, it's quite a tall  
order. Most people aren't that  
fastidious and though they may try to  
start following such a program it  
usually leads them to find a new

stress in their life. What should end your stress should not be causing you stress? If you spend your entire life trying to avoid getting sick, something that is almost impossible for any person, then, when you get sick, you'll be thrown for a loop with something as simple as the common cold. New studies have found that people with clean houses and clean rooms (overly clean and sterile) face more challenges with sickness. What's this have to do with stress? If you avoid getting stressed, then you're not going to know how to deal with stress.

The greatest way to alter your life, to change the problems into

opportunities, is to embrace them,  
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and accept them as part of your life.

If you live a stressful life, don't get rid of the life, get over the stress when it comes. Just like you'd get over a cold, or the flu, or any other stuffy nose, sore throat, ear ache problem, you can treat and get over your stress.

The truth is that in life, you are bound to have stress, you're bound even more to be stressed, and you're bound to want to feel less stressed. So when you accept that reality, when you believe that to be true, then, you know, the job isn't to avoid stress, it's to get over it or to harness it.

I am writing this book the for  
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the purpose of showing actual  
techniques that you can use to break  
stress when it arises. Techniques you  
can use to calm yourself down, focus,  
and get to work on what you need to  
do. These techniques have been  
proven time and time again to  
effectively alleviate stress in a person  
quickly, easily, and almost magically-if  
you would give me the honor of those  
words.

Stress is quite a funny thing.  
For all the griping people do, people  
don't really understand what causes  
their stress, and why, so often, they  
might feel stress... and why it's a good

thing. I'll explain that to you as well.  
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Give the techniques a chance, keep an  
open mind, and prepare to change  
your life.

## **Chapter 1: What is Stress?**

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Jarrood constantly complained about the stress at his job. Every time I hung out with him, he'd gripe and moan, he'd announce his annoyance with his boss, his coworkers, and the work. The work most of all, it was just so much work. "It's a slave ship they're running, they just want you to keep going and going and going." Now, we've all had jobs that we don't like, worked at places that we'd have preferred not to. However, in the case of Jarrood, this was the job of his choice, and in truth, as much as the work stressed him out, it was also his passion. Then, in 2008, the economy

collapsed, and he was out on his butt,  
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Married with a kid on the way, he was running around from company to company trying to get the same job that he thought was causing him so much stress. He'd pull up file after file, businesses after business, and was working harder than ever to find a job. He was more stressed than ever before and yet he was doing less than he had been doing. Suddenly, he realized that this stress that he had been having, it wasn't from the work, it was in spite of the work. He was stressed with work. He was stressed without work. "Stress," he soon came to conclude, "Is nothing

more than untapped energy” That’s  
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what he told me.

He suddenly realized that he was stressed at work, not because he had so much work, but, because he couldn’t figure out where to start working. So, as his mind went from one document, one program, one form to the next, his head felt overwhelmed, his mind felt foggy, and he began to feel what we all know as stress. Now, without the work, he was still stressed, thinking about what companies would be best for him, thinking about what companies might hire him, and not knowing where to start.

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Soon, he realized that if he didn't figure out how to focus, he was going to be a complete mess. Making that one simple change, putting his focus onto one task at a time, clearing his mind of any other things, began to change his stress. Suddenly, even with all the problems in his life, money, work, a crying baby, things were quickly becoming easier and less stressful. The stress was disappearing. When he got another job, he found himself able to do the work at an astonishing rate of speed, unlike before, and in under a year, he was promoted to a position higher than he had previously attained.

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Stress is so often seen as a bad thing that no one has taken the time to understand what is stress. After much study, a lot of personal experience, I have come to believe that, as Jarrod came to believe, stress is the unharnessed and untapped energy that builds up in us that our bodies give us to complete a task. Our minds are wonderful, powerful, unique, and creative tools, they're still greater than any computer, they're still more powerful than anything else out there in the world, and they prepare us for anything that we must accomplish. Whether that's getting done a twelve

page report the night before, or it's  
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lifting a car off a child, our minds,  
realizing what energy we need, gives  
us the energy to do it. I've had the  
privilege of meeting War Veterans,  
one of whom explained to me that he  
had gotten shot in his vest, he got up,  
fired back, and got cover. After the  
fighting stopped, his body wouldn't  
stop shaking. It wasn't fear. It wasn't  
anxiety. It was the adrenalin pumping  
through his body having nothing else  
to do in him, causing a slight tremor  
until he was able to relax.

When we get distracted,  
when we begin to not harness that  
energy that's inside us, when we have

more than one thing on our plate, we get stressed. Our energy begins to boil over. Often times it's a very basic neurosis of not knowing where to start and worrying that we're not going to be able to get it done. Your brain knows you need the energy, but, if you don't direct your mind to where to focus that energy, it will begin to show itself in other areas.

What happens when you have a lot of thoughts on your mind and you want to get to sleep. You're lying in bed, unable to sleep, unable to calm your thoughts, jittery, energized, wanting to get to work, divided by two needs, a need for rest,

and a need to get something done.  
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Stress is that untapped energy. It's not your great detriment. It's your great aide when you begin to know how to use it.

With that understood, I want you to understand the purpose of these techniques. I didn't write this book with the intention of becoming another one of those people that tell you to get the stress out of your life, to break away from the things in your life that are causing you stress, or any of these other answers that are often unrealistic. Break away from negative

people sounds good in theory, but  
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what happens if your parents are  
negative, your spouse is negative, or  
your children are negative, suddenly  
it's not nearly as realistic as you  
would think. In fact, it's quite cultish.

These techniques were  
discovered through a vast array of  
material, ranging from your usual self-  
help or spiritual book, to works of  
neuroscience , charisma, and goal  
achievement science, along with  
Hypnosis, NLP, and other strategies  
for personal change. They are meant  
to calm your thoughts, break your  
state, focus your mind, and allow you  
to get to work and get what needs to

be done, done, without any anxiety, worry, or stress exhibited in your day to day activities. These techniques aren't miracle cures, they don't end stress forever. That is impossible, that's called death.

Life is stress. Every second, our senses take in 11 million bits of information. 11 Million bits. Do you know how much work that is, filing away millions of bits of information that we otherwise are never aware of, never focus on, and never think about.

There is no avoiding stress, there's only dealing with it, and

utilizing it, and this book will show you how to do both.

The purpose of techniques for that matter then are not all or nothing propositions, but, pick and choose what works for you and what doesn't. There are nine techniques in this book. Some overlap, some will work with others, most can all be done to great effect by themselves. Some will help you unwind and build up your willpower and decrease all the stress in your body that you've gotten throughout the day. Some--a large amount--are going to show you how to break your rising stress in a matter of minutes.

Look at everything, then try  
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what looks the most appealing to you,  
and see what works best for you.

People often forget that major part, whether it's the guru that's writing the book (and I don't consider myself a guru) or the reader of the book. You don't have to do everything exactly as described. Though there will be step by step ways in which you can achieve each goal, if you can find a better way, or feel more comfortable doing something differently, then do it, it's your life, it's your mind. As long as you understand the underlying principles, the aims and the goals of

each technique, which I will also  
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explain to you, you'll be fine, and find  
yourself with far less stress, and far  
less problems.

## **Chapter 2: Meditation**

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Meditation is probably one of the most confused and misunderstood techniques in the world. But, it can change your life. Wrapped up in spiritual mysticism, shuffled about with miraculous imagery of monks, meditation has become something seen as far more complicated, or, at other points, far more ridiculous than it really is. Meditation isn't just a powerful tool to break stress, it's a powerful tool in your life that when used correctly, as I'll soon explain, can quickly put you on track to succeeding at whatever you want to do.

Meditation isn't magic. It

doesn't take hours. It doesn't require mastery to get great results. It's a progressive skill that you'll adaptively get better and better at as you continue to practice. You'll find the results more and more miraculous. The art of meditation is as simple as it looks. But for the purpose of this book, I will be showing you one of the best ways in which to harness the powers of meditation, quickly, easily, and simply, so that you can do it at your desk at work, if need be, or you can do it in your house after you put a baby down for rest, or you can do it in situations where you need to take a minute or two to regroup.

Remember, expediency is the name of the game, because, you don't want to spend great deals of time getting rid of stress, it'll only make you more stressed.

The purpose of meditation is a clearing out of the cob webs. It's an emptying of the mind. Now, hopefully you realize that emptying your mind of all thoughts can allow you to relax. If you clear out everything that's stressing you, your cortisol, endorphins, and adrenalin will all lower immediately, and you'll feel calmer. However, once you're able to break that stressful pattern, more importantly, you'll be able to retrain

and retarget your focus, so that you can actually begin to attack the work that needs to be done, and get it done. Whatever it may be. From doing massive paperwork to taking care of colicky baby, when you're able to approach it from a fresh mindset, you're able to do so from a calmer and less stressed mind as well.

This is important and often left out of the equation when people talk about and write about meditation. They leave it at just the technique and the basic benefits. It is incredibly important to realize that you don't want to fall right back into the same trap that was making you

stressed, and look at all the work, or  
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the problems you have in the same  
way--but, we'll explain a quick and  
easy process for you to figure out  
what to get done, called Chunking  
Down. But, first, meditation.

It seems like every day there's  
a new way to meditate to access your  
energy, to relax you, to help you lose  
weight. Some recommend guided  
visualization. Some recommend calm  
and soothing music. However, thanks  
to science, and doctors like Herbert  
Benson, we're now aware that  
Meditation requires only a few  
things. Some basic principles. And  
even these basic principles can be

flexible

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Herbert Benson MD wrote The Relaxation Response, a revolutionary book that has probably saved more lives than most books can ever give themselves credit for. He studied people doing Transcendental Meditation and suggested, quite contrary to what was believed at the time that there was a mind-body connection, something the majority of the world now can easily agree upon and believes, because, well, there have been a host of studies that prove it. Herbert Benson thus discerned what he held as the four necessities to enter the relaxation

response

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1. A quiet Environment
2. A Mental Device-a word or phrase or prayer you can repeat over and over.
3. A Passive Attitude-not caring if you got it right or not.
4. A comfortable position.

Now then, for the meditation that you're going to be doing, a quiet environment is ideal, but, it will not be absolutely necessary. All you need is an environment where you won't be distracted or interrupted or startled. This is important, only

because, just like when someone shakes you from a dream, when you get startled from meditation, for a few moments, you're left groggy, and can be thrown into a fight or flight response, which can inadvertently increase your stress. If this happens however... all is not lost, and I'll explain in a second what to do.

A mental device can be anything you want. If you remember Seinfeld, George's father was yelling, "Serenity Now!" The traditional meditative device of course is the, "Ahmm..." Which for me, always gets me thinking of Red Robin, "Yummm!" The best route that I've found is the

often discounted but easiest one and  
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most relaxing one and that is focusing  
on your breathing. Counting off your  
breath in 1 and 2's, thus as you  
breathe in thinking 1, as you breathe  
out, thinking 2.

A passive attitude is actually  
a great way to go at a lot of things in  
your life.

The greatest failure you will  
ever have is that which you start and  
never finish.

A passive attitude means that  
you don't concern yourself with  
getting it right, or being wrong, you  
concern yourself with just doing it,

and accept whatever comes. So many people worry that they're not getting into the proper state and that they're not quieting all their thoughts. They worry so much that they're moving and fidgeting too much. The list can go on and on. You can find a thousand reasons why you can't do something. A passive attitude means you stop caring if you make a mistake, stop putting weight behind missteps and trip-ups, and don't care if you finish last, just as long as you finish. You'll learn more even failing than you will by quitting.

With all that said, The first  
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meditative practice I want you to try is  
the easy to do, 2 to 5 minute mind  
break. In a crunch, you can do this for  
sixty seconds and still you'll clear your  
head. When you get real good, it'll be  
a very basic calming down exercise for  
you that you use whenever you're in  
need of a bit of relaxing of the nerves,  
or letting go of stress.

Plant your feet. This is very  
important. It's a technique and  
method all by itself and it's a  
powerful one at that. Quick summary,  
since I'll address it more fully in a  
couple of chapters. Planting your feet  
on the floor gives you a grounded

feeling

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Shut your eyes. Okay, if you're a bus driver, or doing anything where shutting your eyes isn't ideal, clearly, let's not do it, just because I'm publishing books doesn't mean I have the money to settle a lawsuit of any kind. Shut your eyes and breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Count in your head, one two, one two. Focus only on those numbers, it'll make it easier to clear your thoughts. Any time you feel your thoughts slipping, you feel your focus being diverted, count louder in your head, one two, one two, effectively drowning out your thoughts.

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Even for as little as a minute, you'll find your mind clearing up, and you'll find whatever stress you have, disappearing. Give it a go right now. Just shut your eyes, plant your feet, take some deep breaths, while counting one two one two in your head.

Then, open your eyes, feel the calm, and get to doing whatever it is you need to do.

## **Chapter 3: Progressive Relaxation**

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The next strategy for you to consider can be used anywhere and everywhere. You can do it in the middle of a crowd and ninety-nine percent of people wouldn't blink an eye, let alone make a comment. It interrupts any form of stress that you may have begun feeling, and it emboldens your focus and your ability to concentrate. To explain why, first, let me explain something about your physiology, since this will be very important to understand for several of the techniques that are to come.

Physiology determines mood.

The body leads the mind just as much as the mind leads the body. Sounds crazy right? You're thinking to yourself that for you to be reading this, for your body to move, your brain must be activated, and your motions thus come after thoughts. That's true. At least it's true in relation to the cognitive structuring of motion. Synapses fire off, and the mere act of me writing this has billions of cells igniting at once, sending little shocks to the nervous system in what can only be called miraculous workmanship. And yet, it doesn't change the fact that your physiology can alter and determine a

state of mind. Have you ever been sad? Stupid question... who hasn't?

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Ever seen someone sad? Okay, another stupid question. But, how do you know someone's sad by looking at them. Can you tell most of the time? Of course you can. You're not psychic, but, the way a person stands, the way their eyes look around, the way their face looks, all can inform you of their emotional state.

When you're sad, your shoulders fall down, your eyes become heavy, your face droops, and your breathing becomes shallow. When you're happy, it's the exact opposite, your shoulders perk up,

your eyes open bright, and your breathing steadies... Oh, and let's not forget about the giant smile that usually accompanies happiness. What happens if you artificially alter your physiology? You begin to adapt the attitude and moods that the physiology accommodates. Which is to say, change your body, change your mood.

The technique of progressive relaxation thus should explain to you quite easily why even with the most stressful of situation, you'll be able to snap yourself from the state, and easily alter your mood and your body at the same time. You may find the

process a bit strange, but, not at all difficult. It uses a process of overstressing your body. Think of your body like a rubber band and the more you stretch it the looser it becomes. The same occurs with muscle fiber, the tighter they become the more they then relax. By intentionally stressing areas of your body and then relaxing them, you'll increase your relaxation response.

All it involves is a few deep breaths in synch with tightening your muscles and then loosening them.

Take a deep breath in while tightening your hands and your

shoulders, then let out a breath, and  
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relax your arms and shoulders. Take a  
deep breath in while tightening your  
stomach and your back and then  
release and let your body go loose.  
Another deep breath, where you  
scrunch up your toes, tighten your  
calves, and release and let loose.  
Finally, one more, very deep, and big  
breath in, and tighten your entire  
body up, and release, and let your  
whole body go loose. Just like that,  
you should feel looser, more relaxed,  
with much of the tenseness you may  
have been feeling wiped away, and  
your stress disappeared with it.

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One thing to remember is to not lose sight of your physiology. Your physiology is a tool that will develop for you an even greater relaxation by just adjusting your body into ways in which you're more relaxed. Often times, if someone on the road cuts you off, or traffic is more brutal than usual, you might lean forward in your seat, and you might put your body into a position that's not comfortable for you. Be aware of how you position your body when you're stressed and likewise be aware of how you position your body when you're relaxing. I'm not talking about lying down and about to go to sleep, or

even letting off steam. I'm talking  
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about how you move around  
ordinarily when there's little stress  
happening in your life. Then, after  
you go through the Progressive  
Relaxation, put your body in that  
position.

## **Chapter 4: Plant Your Feet**

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All stress looms with not what you're dealing with in the moment, but, with an overall anxiety of what is about to happen. The average person in the middle of a crisis either breaks down or takes charge. We fight or flee. It's human nature. The person who breaks down, worries about something that's about to happen, the person that takes charge is focused on what is happening. In that, mindfulness is by far one of the greatest things one can achieve in their lives to find peace, certainty, and an ability to accomplish great things.

Mindfulness is an interesting

realization. As I talk about in more  
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depth in The 5-Minute Happiness  
Solution, mindfulness allows us to  
develop a different mindset and see  
the world in a different way. Being  
mindful means being present and  
being present means looking at the  
world the way it is and seeing what's  
actually happening, without the fear  
of the past or the worry of the future.

Jack, a client of mine, suffered  
a great deal of stress approaching  
women. He suffered so much stress  
that at the age of twenty-eight he had  
been out on a total of two dates in his  
life, neither of which had ended well.  
He was desperate for a change. He

really wanted to be better with people in general, but, women especially. So, instead of meeting him at my office as I might usually do, I met him at a mall. I wanted to show him that he was fully capable of breaking and avoiding the stress that he was encountering like by his own volition alone. He didn't need hypnosis. He didn't need NLP. He didn't need anything but a way to get his mind in the present, away from all the negative thoughts about what could happen. I asked him to rate his nervousness in talking to women, 1 he doesn't think anything of it and 10 he's petrified. Obviously, he said ten.

I asked him what his shoes felt like. He looked at me like I was crazy, stumbled about for a few moments, and then finally came out with an answer that they were warm and tight over his feet. I asked him what the bottom of his feet felt like against the floor of his shoe, and he explained how they were a soft hardness, awkward to think about, but, comfortable. I asked him then if he was aware of any other sensations, maybe the tightness of the lace at the top of his foot, and he thought about it, and he went on to explain all the sensations he felt in his feet with his shoes, smiling, and laughing at this

weird conversation.

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“Rate your nervousness to going up and talking to a girl right now?” I said.

He said, “Five or six,” then laughed again.

I told him to stand up and he did and I asked him what else he could become aware of feeling in his feet now, perhaps the floor pushing against his feet. He nodded. “What does the floor feel like pushing against your feet and your feet pushing against the floor?” He said grounded. “What’s your anxiety of going up to that girl right now?” I

pointed

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“Four or so,” he said.

So, I sent him on, telling him to focus in the back of his mind on the feeling of his feet. Now, of course, I worked several techniques with him at the office afterwards, but, with just the feeling of planting his feet, and putting his focus on them, he was able to confront a lifelong anxiety, something that spiked his stress levels through the roof, and go up, and talk to a woman. He now has a girlfriend that he's been in a relationship with for the last year, which, I know, because he still writes me to say,

"Thank you "

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Your feet are magic. Again I throw around that magic word, but they really are. Your feet tell people if you're paying attention to them, if you're interested in them, if you like them. I tell a lot more about the feet in my book *The 5-Minute Socializer*, but, right now, we'll focus on how they will be your answer to end stress, and alter your mood.

From the very beginning of this book, when I told you about Meditation, I told you that your feet held a great importance when it came to helping you relax. The feet have a

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plethora of things that they can do for you. They can in one moment bring you to the present and allow you to be more mindful. In another moment, they can take you out of your stressful thinking, any worries that you're developing, any anxiety your feeling. Finally, you can break any stressful state almost instantly.

There are several techniques. We'll go through three of them. I know that this may sound a bit unorthodox. Any questions that you can think of I've heard from several clients before. You can choose to use these techniques and take a moment out of your day and see how you feel.

Or you can say I'm crazy. Whatever  
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makes you feel better.

The first and most basic one is that you plant your feet and redirect your thinking from whatever is stressing you, to the sensation in your feet. Focus on the feeling of your shoes, the floor, everything, until your stress levels have lowered, until all you have is the present moment. Take a few deep breaths if you want to accelerate the process.

Next, if you're sitting, you can plant the ball of your feet on the floor and push your body up. This should both force you to adjust your seating

into a more upright and attentive way--thus altering your physiology--and it should momentarily give you clear sensation in your feet that allows you to be brought to the moment. Again, remember to breathe, and you'll quickly alter your stress, and develop a happier and more focused state of mind.

Finally, standing, sitting, a quick way to take yourself out of your head is to curl your toes in your shoes. Knot them up. Don't cause yourself any discomfort, but, enough movement that you feel it. This is a quicker and faster way of grounding yourself and it works like a charm. In

fact, I'm using the technique right now  
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in a crowded café, as I try to keep my  
focus and to feel comfortable  
surrounded on all sides by people and  
being jabbed with the occasional  
elbow with the unwitting movement.  
It's working like a charm. Then relax  
your feet and direct your focus.

## **Chapter 5: Chunking Down**

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Anything can be accomplished if you break it down into small enough pieces. This was the greatest truth that ever came into my life. This one technique can and probably will have an entire book written about it. It's a powerful method that when unilaterally understood and used leaves little that you can't accomplish. When you fully understand the ability of chunking up and chunking down large bodies of material, you'll understand all you need to really know in order to learn anything you want to learn as fast as possible.

For this chapter, Chunking  
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Down is your major stress buster tool that will alter the way you approach any problem, any work, or anything, allowing you to take even the most difficult work, and turn it into basic and simple bits.

As I said at the beginning of this book stress is often untapped energy. We're over inundated with information and often times with work. Whether you're a mother or a stay at home dad trying to take care of a child, you're a high powered attorney trying to research a case, or you're a corporate CEO, there's a lot of work. We've often believed that

people strive on choices. They want a multitude of choices. But, nothing could be further from the truth. Why when such a copious amount of diets do we still have fat people? Why with so many make money programs do we still have people who struggle to make a buck? Why, because, when there's too much information, our brains shut down, and we're unable to decide exactly what we want. When options are restricted, we're able to get more done. Want proof. What's easier, watching a movie beginning to end in a movie theater, or in your home? If you're honest, you'll probably admit that you've rarely sat through an

entire movie at home without getting  
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up and doing something.

The brain doesn't do well weighing dozens of options and, when faced with a multitude of choices, or a multitude of stimuli, stress levels increase rapidly. In her wonderful book, "A Calm Brain" by Gayatri Devi, she reveals that our minds, programmed for survival, in this new world, are at a constant rate of over stimulation. Our brains don't differentiate between the flashing lights, moving cars, and buzzing phones, than it did with rustling bushes, snapping branches, and other warning signs of danger. We're

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constantly put on edge between fight and flight and restraining these emotions have developed higher levels of stress.

Ever been in the middle of a conversation, get distracted by a loud noise, and suddenly forget everything you were talking about? Of course you have. Losing our place in conversation, losing our place in a book, losing a thought we hoped to retain, or, the most stress inducing thing, having an answer at the tip of your tongue. The only way we can remember it if we start at our last sentence, or, go even further back to the first few thoughts that we were

thinking, and suddenly we're able to  
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develop the full picture of what it is  
we were talking about, and, if we're  
lucky, be able to start up our  
conversation once again.

Chunking down is in a way  
finding that strand of thought. After  
we've been overloaded. After the  
stress has risen. We need to  
eliminate the stress with one of the  
techniques you've learned, or will  
learn, and then get to work in  
establishing a way of avoiding the  
stress mechanism and taking action.  
You need a tool to let you get to work  
without getting stressed again.  
Chunking down is that tool.

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It is the process of looking at your work and seeing how to attack it rather than looking at it as a complete task that will appear far more difficult as a whole. Anything is possible when it's broken down into small enough pieces, I can't say this enough. The most difficult piano solo is nothing more than keys being pressed when it's completely broken down. When you look at even the most complicated projects you may have in front of you, you need to examine what each part of it is, and break it down to its simplest forms. Once you've broken something down into it's smallest possible steps, you're left

with a project of varying degrees of difficulty and urgency and you can understand what you're capable of doing immediately, what you need to do before doing something else, and what can wait until the end. You get a clearer understanding of what drives you. Thus, you're given the full spectrum of your work, and are allowed to pick and choose the pieces that you want to begin with for the most part.

Often we find ourselves doing the easiest bits first. However, that's not always the best way to accomplish something. Starting with the most difficult aspects of any work often

times lets you accomplish the end of  
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the work with a greater ease, and far  
more relaxation than you would  
otherwise have. Whenever we do  
work, we use up energy. It's just a  
fact. For that reason, even if the work  
is easy, by the time we're finished it,  
we're going to be tired. Brian Tracy  
wrote a bestselling book called, "Eat  
The Frog" on ending procrastination,  
which basically emphasized the power  
of getting the hard work out of the  
way first. There's something  
rewarding knowing that it just gets  
easier and easier as you go along,  
rather than harder and harder. As  
you're getting more tired, as your

willpower is burning up, by making  
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your work easier as you go along and  
come to the end, you naturally allow  
yourself to stay relaxed.

How do you chunk something down?

Well, that's a bit of a difficult question and it depends on the work that you have to do. If you're taking care of a child and want to have a meal ready and clean the house, you'll approach it differently than if you have a report due, or need to get through a lot of research or paperwork. Let's however do something that's fairly easy to

explain, because of its multiple layers,  
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and that's a college report.

When I was in college I made money helping people write their reports so that they could ace their courses, and there came a point where I could write an A level report in a single night in a matter of the time that it takes for me to pound on the keyboard and get my words from my head onto the page. As you, the reader of this tome on stress can easily attest, I'm not great with the written word, not great linguistically, and my research consists of dozens of random books and texts and studies. So how did I accomplish this

achievement which gave me a 3.86  
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GPA, allowed for friends to Ace  
courses they never thought they  
would be successful at, and showed  
total strangers how to put together A  
papers in a matter of hours, no  
matter what the length, no matter  
what the studies, no matter what  
information was required (unless of  
course time was required).

First things first: dismantle  
what needs to be in the essay. The  
major mistake most people make  
when doing an essay on something is  
that they go about to learn about the  
topic that they're writing about.  
Though theoretically important and

helpful, it is completely unnecessary,  
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thus the magic of the art of chunking  
down.

It's cheating without the cheating. For anyone that has a moral qualm with this, I fully understand, and I can appreciate the want to completely learn and understand the topics that you're passionate about, but, at the same point, passion doesn't always an A make.

People try to learn new languages, but, instead of focusing on 100 to 200 words, which make up roughly 80% of communication for any language, they spend their time with

pronunciation, cogitation, and  
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learning the alphabet. We do not  
learn to speak our own language  
through the alphabet, instead, we  
learn through listening to words being  
used in context, we learn basic words  
first, then we learn complicated  
words. We learn simple sentences  
then complicated ones. But, we learn  
these by hearing the full sentence out,  
and then often times breaking it  
down. Fluency in any language can be  
learned in weeks to months, but, I'm  
guessing the majority of people  
reading this book struggled through  
Middle School and High School foreign  
language classes, graduating with no

more fluency than you started with.  
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This is because broad based learning  
is unnecessary.

Chunking down therefore allows for one to break the redundancies of broad based action and achieve goals through properly understanding the problem that you face. As with the essay, fully reading the question, gives you a complete idea of what it is that needs to be answered. Whether you're doing a Thesis on Evolutionary Violence: How Biology And Technology Have Altered Our Violent Disposition, or you're doing Tolstoy and God: How Religion Shapes The Greatest Works of

Literature. Once you know what  
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you're going to write about the work  
becomes a matter of organizing your  
thoughts. The same exist for any  
other problem. Once you know what  
you have to do, you can begin to  
organize those tasks.

With something like Tolstoy  
And God, the purpose of the report is  
simple, to flush out the religious  
symbolism, metaphor, and plot turns  
that exist through his massive body of  
work. It's a critical analysis of his  
literary achievements, with clear focus  
going to be paid to Anna Karenina,  
War and Peace, and The Death Of Ivan  
Illych, of course. Then, you're going to

want to quote his earlier work,  
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whether you've read them or not. In those, it would be obvious the point you're going to try and make, how and if he used the same impassioned nature of God in his Autobiographical trilogy and his early short stories as he did in his later works. You then want to develop a theme of the evolution of religious symbolism in his work, then moving over to define his own faith and how he viewed it, and comparing it to his work as well. At least as a possible structure. You have four distinct parts to write about: His late works, his early work, the man and his views.

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Now you know what you're focusing on, you need to now identify what are the easy parts and what are the difficult parts for you. This here would vary from person to person. You may find yourself still overwhelmed by the complexity or difficulty of the most difficult parts. This is where you are reminded to keep breaking things down until you reach the simplest bits to accomplish. In the case of this essay, the biggest difficulty would be to have not read the earlier books (if you're writing a thesis on Leo Tolstoy it should be a given that you've read the major works). In this case, you're faced with

some difficulty

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This leads to the final part of chunking down and that is figuring out the resources that you have that you can use to make everything easier for you. With the thesis, you have the internet, that can easily bring you to the best passages, give you different people's views, and different people's ideas, so to develop your own ideas and thoughts, and see if you agree with the interpretation of others (I did far more than that for my paper, I'm just giving an example).

Made simple, Chunking Down is a five

step process:

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- 1 ) See the work in full so you can fully understand the task at hand.
- 2 ) Develop A Full Understanding of How The Finished Result Will Look.
- 3 ) Break Up The Work Into As Many Parts As Possible From Difficult To Easy And Then Break The Difficult Parts Up Into Even Smaller Parts if Possible or Necessary.
- 4 ) Use All Resources At Your Disposal To Get The Work Done
- 5 ) Get To Work Going From Hardest To Easiest.

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In the end, chunking down is about prioritizing and minimizing the amount of labor, while pacing your work, so that you can accomplish faster, and thus continue a path of least resistance, and with the least amount of stress.

## **Chapter 6: Eat Some Chocolate**

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This can be a double edged sword if you're a chocolate addict, or you're a stress addict. We all have a comfort foods, the problem is that most comfort foods, 1) Aren't very good for us, and 2) They don't actually create a sensation of comfort in our bodies. It's a mere placebo, a mental appeasement, a belief that is not based on the objective reality. Chocolate on the other hand doesn't just offer the placebo effect of comfort foods. It's healthy benefits are widely known and accepted by medical science. From lowering blood

pressure, to breaking states of depression through serotonin release, chocolate, especially dark chocolate (the darker the better), is a stress buster that doesn't just make you believe you're feeling better, but, chemically induces feelings of being better.

Why does this work?

Roy F. Baumeister is the leading researcher on Willpower and in fact wrote the book Willpower: Rediscovering The Greatest Human Strength. In the book, he examined how stress can wear down on our judgment, on our abilities to make

decisions, and on our willpower, and  
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then he examined ways that we could  
alter such effects. He discovered the  
power of glucose. Carbohydrates or  
sugary foods-or anything that raises  
our glucose levels-can increase our  
willpower, sort of refill the tank.  
When we're under stress and  
controlling it, working through it, and  
getting things done, our body is  
depleting they're glucose reserves, like  
a car running on eighty down the  
highway. When we run empty,  
instead of stopping, we are no longer  
able to control ourselves as well as we  
were, we're drained, emotionally,  
physically, psychologically, completely.

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However, a simple snack, such as chocolate, or some other sweet could lift a person up out of this slump and reenergize them. It turns out that just like any machine, when we're running low on fuel, a refilling can work wonders to get us to where we want to be. Though, of course, like a machine, if you fill it up too much, you can flood it, and then you'll have an entire new stress on your hand with weight. Trust me, I've been there.

The one thing you don't want to do is to make yourself reliant on any source of food when you're feeling stressed. Unlike Meditation,

chunking down, using mindfulness techniques, this one is more of an emergency boost. The last resort: When you need a fast pick me up, a boost of willpower, and an abrupt end to a snapping stress. It's good if you're being dragged between meetings, or, it's a day where you feel completely beaten down. However, for anything less than deep or severe feelings of stress, you may want to utilize other techniques, lest you begin to create a feeling of dependency on some specific food to break your stress.

You do not want to condition your mind to believe that you cannot

be stress free without some food.  
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Nonetheless, keeping a little  
chocolate around, a couple Hershey  
kisses, wouldn't hurt that much  
either, and could be a great help to  
you, more than it'll ever be a  
hindrance.

## **Chapter 7: Time Out**

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Take a five minute break. Remove yourself from the stress. Step away and focus your mind elsewhere, calling a time out for yourself. In a study that searched for the best way to deal with disappointment and anger, they had three groups of people, each one arbitrarily given a grade on an essay they were told to write, some with very crude and cruel remarks. Each student was given a questionnaire to gage their level of annoyance and anger. Those who got the cruel remarks were then either left at the table with the essay to think about, removed and put into a

room to think about it, or given a pillow to punch. When their aggression levels were measured, those who were removed from the test and just left with their thoughts dropped immensely on the scale of being upset, the most upset were the people who punched the pillow, and those who stayed and looked at the test also mildly increased their level of disappointment, anger, and frustration.

What does this say about your work?

When you're stressed, if you stay surrounded by the stuff that is

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stressing you, as we all so often do,  
we're actually adding to our stress.

It's often best for us to remove ourselves, if only for five minutes, from whatever it is that is causing our stress. We can calm our minds and think more clearly and get more organized in our thinking. As any parent can probably attest, the occasional chance to step away for a moment, even a few minutes, can be a godsend and help them clear their minds.

Of course, the more time you take, the less your level of stress can become. If of course you begin to use this concept of taking a break to

procrastinate, you'll find yourself  
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overwhelmed with more stress than  
you were facing beforehand. This is  
why a five-minute recommendation is  
maintained in this book.

There are ways to take a  
proper break. I know what you're  
thinking, you've taken breaks before,  
you don't really need a lesson on how  
to calm down, relax, and take a break,  
and, you're probably right.  
Nonetheless, sometimes when people  
take a break, and I think we've all  
been guilty of this at some point or  
another, we don't actually take a  
break. We carry our work with us.  
We're focusing on the work like it's

right in front of us while we're trying  
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to get away from it. That doesn't  
work. If the work is still in front of  
you, even if you've stepped away from  
it, if you're carrying it around, and  
thinking to yourself, "I have to get it  
done, I have to get it done, why can't I  
focus!" You still won't be able to  
focus and you won't be able to relax  
and you'll just increase your stress.

No, the purpose of a time out  
isn't like a childhood punishment,  
where you're told to sit in the corner  
and think about what you did or  
didn't do, it's more like an athlete  
that needs to regroup and get their  
mind straight before they get onto the

field. They need to examine themselves, not focus on the whole picture, but, on what's making them lose focus in the first place, breathe, shake it off, and then get ready to get back into the action. A bad time out focuses on the mistakes. A good time out focuses on the solution to your problems. By beginning to develop a way in which you are going to tackle your work, you free yourself from stress by having a plan when you return to your seat.

Stress, as I've said, creates a myopic form of viewing the world. The more stressed a mind is the more the person is unable to see different

ways of achieving something, or  
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completing a task. In a study  
discussed in the book Drive by Daniel  
H. Pink, it was discovered that when  
monetary reward, extrinsic value, was  
placed on something being done, the  
level of work went down, instead of  
up. In point, one person, instead of  
calmly examining an issue, begins to  
do whatever they can to achieve the  
fastest results. This stress created by  
attempting to do something for a gain  
causes people to not think bolder and  
more abstractly. Whenever you  
welcome stress into your life, you're  
limiting the possibilities to create an  
alternative way of getting something

done

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With all of that understood, the best way to spend a five minute break from something that is stressing you out, is to create a game plan of attack, based on solution thinking and not problem thinking. I say it often, "People can think of a 100 reasons why they can't do something, verily one reason why they can." You want to turn that on its access, be a person who thinks of 100 reasons why you can do something for every one reason why you can't do it. It'll take some time, no doubt, to really perfect this new way of looking at a problem. You'll develop it over a period of

time. But, if you work at it, and you  
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build it, it'll come. And you'll be the  
better for it. Less stressed, more  
focused, and able to accomplish  
anything that you want.

## **Chapter 8: Defining Your Success**

You are stressed for a reason. Whether that's a logical reason, or an illogical one, it doesn't matter. Stress like pain is all too real while it's happening to you, whether or not it's happening as a reasonable response. Though most of these techniques that I've shown you will end your stress immediately, there are points where nothing will seem to work, where you suddenly are full of a feeling of being overwhelmed, and you can't bring yourself out of this stressful response. It's almost painful in the way that your mind begins to build

the stress up in your life. And yet, at the same point, you don't know exactly what's causing it.

This type of stress has plagued me for awhile. As someone who used to have chronic panic attacks when I was still in my teens, to say I was a stressed kid is an understatement. And yet, I continued, no matter what I've done in the past, to create situations, testing now, whether or not I can overload myself and build stress. How have I gone from someone who, with literally nothing to do, would sit in bed at night grasping his chest and hoping for the sweet release of sleep

or death, to someone who constantly  
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chases stressful situations, whether  
creating tight and near impossible  
work deadlines, or developing lofty  
and crazy goals, and working harder  
each and every year to achieve them.

While, I learned first and foremost to define my stress and my level of stress. Why is this not at the very beginning of the book? It would seem like a proper place to start. In fact, I had considered placing this one structure of understanding how to overcome stress through understanding stress right in the first chapter. However, I suddenly realized that it's not the proper place for it.

No, you see, you've accomplished a lot by reading this book already. You should have come to a new understanding of how to break stress and how easy it for you to disrupt a stressful state.

With that understanding, you can have a greater appreciation of what you need to accomplish when I talk about defining your stress. In a matter of speaking, techniques like Chunking Down and Time Out become worthless if you don't know what's making you stressed. But at the same time you might be saying to yourself right now, how can I not know what is making me stressed.

The quick answer is: often. FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY  
times, we're not that intuitive. Of course there are things that are overwhelming us, but, if you're under a waterfall, and worried about someone with a water gun, then you can see the problem. Often times that which triggers our stress, isn't our primary cause of stress. People run off a beach if it begins to rain because they don't want to get wet. No! Often times, you need to be willing to take a hard look at yourself and be honest.

For me, my greatest amount of stress wasn't my schoolwork, it wasn't the bullying I was getting, it

wasn't the lack of friends I had, it was  
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the feeling of not being significant, of  
not moving forward to my goal, of  
allowing other people to define my  
reality in such a way that my hopes  
and dreams, those wants for the  
future, seemed to become  
impossibilities. The more I saw the  
world this way, the more, I obviously  
began to get stressed out. The pain  
and the worry of these moments are,  
as I think everyone is aware of once in  
their lives, an overwhelming question  
of where am I going?

Now, your problem may not  
be as existential as mine. Your  
problem may be at home. Your

problem may be a personal way you look at the world. A client I have was overwhelmingly pessimistic. Because of that, she often stressed herself out with all the negative possibilities and all the worries. She worried also she was causing other people to get stressed. With all of that, she would create self-fulfilling prophecies. She'd shut down conversations and become aggressive, telling people she didn't want to get them stressed out, which then caused whoever she was with to become stressed out as well.

Once we realized that her stress wasn't what her real problem was, but that it was her view of the

world, it became easy to know what she needed to do. When we figured it out , all it required was a subtle reframe and developing for her a new behavior pattern when something stressful or challenging arose. In weeks, she had abandoned her old maxim, "Let me stress out about this for a minute and then we can deal with this," and moved to a more productive, "What is it that I can do?" A solution oriented thinking.

If however my client never came to realize that it was her outlook on events and problems that were causing her to stress out over things, rather than the actual

problems that she was facing, she would be forced into using my techniques each and every time something new arose in her life. Would the techniques work? Of course they would. Would she be putting a bandaid over a broken leg? You bet she would.

The fact is it's important to define what is really causing you stress. The process of going about and doing this takes only minutes out of your day.

This is not an easy task and though I could give you an exercise that could

get you the answer in a few hours in a single day. You can get it with less effort over a greater amount of time and taking only five minutes a day. So, instead of doing hours and hours of self-reflection, we'll work on a process of self-examination of your life through time. This method, awkwardly, is more effective, even though all it'll require of you is five minutes of your day each day until you get a real answer.

So, what is this magnificent technique that will readily change your life and awaken you to your mind and your habits? It's a journal. Okay, if you're a reader of my work,

you know I recommend journals for a lot of things. I love words, I'm living proof of the power of words, I enjoy the eloquent nature of how words work their way into our subconscious mind and can unravel for us entire precepts of reality. Well, words are going to be your friend as well. You don't need to carry around a journal with you either, this isn't like the efforts needed to lose weight, no... this actually is much easier. Just open a file on your computer and call it JOURNAL.

Once that's done, then all you're going to do is for five minutes, review your day, write, "I got stressed

today when I got stressed today  
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when..." Then, you're going to write:

"The biggest reason for these stresses was..." Whether it's a feeling, a thought, an actual event, you're going to write it down. Do this for a week to two weeks and as you do so, you should begin to see a pattern. You should be able to see what you are associating to these stressful events. If you're writing that you were stressed because you had a fight with your wife, you're worried about home, you were preoccupied with the children, clearly, something is happening in the home that you need to address and fix... things mind you, I

explain in detail how to do in my  
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book The 5-Minute Communicator.

There are hundreds of things that might be causing you stress that you might not even be aware of. To speculate might be stressful all by itself. But, to know is half the battle, because when you know what your main stress is, you then know what you need to research to defeat it. If you are pessimistic you need to research optimism, if it's a negative habit you have, then you need to research how to break habits, if it's family issues, you need to communicate more effectively.

No one is going to solve your problems but you. That is one truth you can take to the bank and believe. There is no spiderman or superman coming, you'll be waiting in vain. If there's an issue in your life, you need to know what it is, and you'll need to research what you can do to change it.

But, getting that understanding begins with five minutes out of your day, five minutes of self-examination, five-minutes of honesty. That's it, taking just five minutes, and you can understand your brain in a few days.

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Begin this process as soon as possible. Do not procrastinate. Do not stunt yourself. Start it tomorrow, start it now, look at your life, open a file, write Journal, and get to work. It's just five minutes. If you can't take five minutes out of your day to change your life, then, really, how serious are you about changing your life?

## **Chapter 9: Harnessing Stress**

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Stress, as I said, can be an asset. Nothing your body does, it does to harm you. Your body is simply supplying you with all the energy you need to accomplish your goals. So then, I've worked for awhile to figure out if there was a quick way to utilize stress consciously to achieve things that otherwise would seem ridiculously crazy, such as writing an entire novel in two weeks, or putting out million words in a single year, or breaking an 8 minute mile when you were only two weeks ago running a twenty minute mile. I wanted to know if I could harness my mental

facilities to accomplish things that I  
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had otherwise thought would be  
impossible and do it through the only  
process for which my entire body  
would need to be engaged in a single  
minded pursuit.

Through that process, I  
discovered a method of visualization  
that can increase my mental stress  
levels without activating the over-  
stressed responses, such as confusion,  
dread, or feeling overwhelmed.  
Imagine for a moment having all the  
energy, zeroed in focus, and obsessive  
zeal that you have in negative forms  
when you're feeling stressed.  
Suddenly, I was running a mile in

under eight minutes, barreling down the treadmill, my feet pounding away, my eyes focused on the traveled distance, and my body so completely in form that I'm able to keep pushing. I was doing pull-ups after a lifetime of never being able to do a pull-up. I was getting done reports, books, stories, and more. I was going out and using this hyper-active state to communicate with people in a lively and upbeat manner, to listen to them, to focus on them, to understand them all the better.

One of the most memorable lines in The Avengers for me was when Mark Ruffalo as the Hulk

responds that his secret for keeping  
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the Hulk tamed most of the time is  
that, "I'm always angry." When  
people ask me how I'm able to  
accomplish so much, from reading  
more than a hundred books a year, to  
writing novels, to learning languages,  
to developing a memory system that  
allows me to memorize vast amounts  
of text, my answer is always the  
same. "By being very stressed."  
People laugh and say, "That's not  
good for you."

However, my blood pressure,  
cholesterol, and weight have never  
been better. Each year, I become a bit  
healthier, and it seems to have

started when I began to harness my stress responses, activating specific responses in the mind, so that the body or the mind can be prepared for the task at hand, no matter how taxing, no matter how difficult, and no matter the circumstances.

Do you have a presentation to make? Do you need to talk about something difficult? Do you need to accomplish something? Do you have to get a large amount of work done quickly? Well, you'll want to harness stress, not avoid it, you'll want to utilize as many biological mechanisms you can use to alter the way in which your mind perceives the situation,

and feeds you the energy necessary to accomplish what you want.

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So, how do you attain this form of Maximum Potential Performance? Like I said, it's a process of visualization, unlike very many books on visualization ever teach you to do. The process is a fully imagined structure, it's not imagining the success, it's imagining the process. Let me repeat that. This is not The Secret, where you imagine attaining what you want, no, not at all. This is where you imagine completely doing what you're going to do. This way, you can build the sensations up in your body, the

amount of courage you need, the best ways to achieve your goal. Pretty much, you get to create your immediate future, create your responses, and create the energy you'll need to achieve the maximum results possible.

So, how do you visualize?

There are many books that attempt to explain visualization, in fact, there are entire books that try to explain it, but, in fact, it's not a very difficult task to accomplish.

Visualization could be said to be "Meditative Make Believe" which is to say, unlike when you pretended

the floors were lava as a child, you just sit back, and imagine what it would be like if the floors were lava, and play the scenario out through your mind, running the entire course of events as if you're actually doing it. Your brain cannot differentiate between a real event and a graphically imagined one. When they wired up a group of runners and told them to run a race in their minds, visualizing every move, researchers reported the same muscle groups fired off, and the same areas of the brain were activated, as if they were actually running the race.

Visualization is now not just

an accepted practice, it's nearly mandatory that every trainer teach the athletes under their care the technique of visualization. People who visualize before a workout have more endurance, more oxidized blood, and burnt more calories. It sounds crazy, I say this often, but, it's true.

So, first off, before you do the task, find some place quiet.

Second, plant your feet, whether you're standing, or you're sitting down, you need some place to plant your feet, so you can hold onto that grounded feeling needed to keep

your mind focus on the task at hand.  
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Third, you need to shut your eyes and begin the process of creating an image in your head of what it is you want to accomplish and how you'll go about accomplishing it.

Fourth, you have to completely embrace the sensations and feelings. From the nervousness, to the excitement, to what you know would make getting what you want done easy and fast. If you're giving a speech, you know you'll speak from your diaphragm, projecting your voice, so you don't strain your throat, you know you'll make eye contact with

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everyone, or try to, and you have a basic understanding of how you'll present the material. So think of the most successful and ideal way that you would do it. When you're done, when you see the success in action, and you feel your body ready to do it, get ready for reality.

Fifth, come back, wake up, and get ready to do it... go right for it.

This process is scientifically proven to work. Training through visualization has been found through the work of Dr. Blaslotto, who took three groups of people, tested their free-throwing

ability, and then broke them up. One group was to practice an hour a day, one group was to not practice at all, and one group was to practice through visualization only. The first group that practiced for an hour a day increased by 24%, the second group showed no increase in skill (as expected), and the third group increased by just 23%, not as good as those who actually practiced, but, pretty good.

Stress is untapped energy and often times we're calling upon it before we need it. This process allows us to know when we need it, it allows us to burn the energy off before we

need it, and it allows us to get the  
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practice we need before we go to  
accomplish what we want to  
accomplish. Visualizing the actions to  
completing your goal is a win, win,  
win situation. You'll love it. Use it.

## **Chapter 10: Meditative Flow**

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The process of meditative flow came to me as I tried to attain a balance of focus while moving from one activity to another. It's so natural for us to lose steam after we've finished a project and feel like we've accomplished enough for a day to then shut down for the rest of the day. Like many things, this is a product of society and how we reward certain actions. We're told as children, "Eat your peas and you can go and play." "Do this and you can go and do that." I began noticing that I wasn't just feeling accomplished after finishing a project, but, I was shutting

down. I needed to rest, I needed to think, I needed to do so many things that added nothing to my life. It wasn't even relaxation that I was going for. It was time that just disappeared and left me nothing to show for it. I didn't feel more relaxed. I didn't feel accomplished. I didn't feel anything. My time was just dawdled away in meandering acts that at the end left me feeling actually unfulfilled and wanting more.

I began reading a book called Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience written by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and I found the book insightful. He writes about those

periods where people experience a honed and powerful concentration and great enjoyment to their work. The conclusion is that people arrive to a state of such fluidity and absorption into an activity that they enter a state of flow. Meditative flow is a process I've developed to create a mindful peace that allows you to travel from one activity, task, and opportunity to another without having to redirect yourself or alter your state of mind. It's a state that takes some time, however, it's a state that we've all naturally had, where, right down to taking some time to put our feet up, relax, and enjoy the company of

someone feels completely natural.  
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It's one of those days where you don't feel like you've just accomplished something, you feel like every moment was made to count.

Now why shouldn't every day be made to count? Why should you allow yourself the inconvenience and the stress of allowing days to slip away from you? Why allow hours to disappear which you neither used to relax or to enjoy the company of a friend or to do something for yourself? It's well within your right to do so, it's not even bad for you to do it, but, you can do more.

Meditative Flow is a process of using the previous techniques talked about and bringing them all to fruition as one process of clearing your mind and focusing it, making your work simple to get done, but, at the same point, enough work that it challenges you without overwhelming you, and then allows you to move from one task to another. Whether that be moving from working to driving home and talking to the family or to another project, you'll enter this state and try to live in it.

However, of course, they'll be times you're not going to be in this state, and times you might even

struggle to achieve it and fail, and this is why you need to have a passive attitude. You don't want to dwell on the times you fail to make use of your time, that you fail to bring your focus to the left or your activities. You don't need to be an expert at meditative flow. You just need to use it as much as you can, harnessing your mind's ability to focus your attention and allow you to accomplish things in a way that becomes effortless.

I've written whole novels, over eighty thousand words long, in two weeks. Did it need editing? Yes. Did it need more editing than when I wrote a book in six months or two

years? No. In fact, by harnessing this meditative flow, it really needed less than what I usually needed to do.

How do you attain meditative flow?

The simple answer to this question is that you have to relax and get to work, then relax after the work is done and bring your attention to something else, then after that relax and bring your attention to something else. It's all about releasing your stress from your mind from your previous activity and then pushing your attention on to what you need to do or what you want to do.

I am diagnosed with ADD, I have been since I was a child, I have had more than a couple physicians recommend medications for it. There were times when I wouldn't finish a whole page of a book, my mind would wander, and I would be off on something else, and looking for more information. There were times when I couldn't sit through a movie without doing something else. There were times when I needed to overstimulate my senses so much just to crash my brain so that I could accomplish something that I thought I would never be able to get done. I've been a mess in my life.

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This is all to say that when I tell you how to focus your attention, you know that it should be really easy for you since I'm going to guess that you're more likely than not going to have a better attention span than I've had at some points.

Since what might work for me might be overkill for you, I'll lay out the bare principles first and foremost.

1 ) Know what you're going to do and that you can do it. Don't be vague at what you're going to do. If you're going to spend time with the kids, know that you want to watch television with them, know what you

want to talk to them about, or decide  
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that you just want to go along with  
them. If you're going to do work,  
what are you going to do for work,  
what are you going to get done. Know  
what you're going to do. Flow as  
Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi describes it  
as, "A sense that one's skills are  
adequate to cope with the challenges  
at hand..." Anything you are doing  
should have a challenge for you but  
not be impossible for you.

2 ) Relax yourself. Use any of  
the techniques that you've learned or  
any techniques that you've developed  
for yourself. Take a moment and let  
your brain completely relax. The best

method, in my opinion, is meditation.  
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Use meditation for five minutes to  
quiet all the thoughts in your head.

3 ) Drown out the world. The most accomplished people often appear in trance when they're doing an activity, whatever they're doing. A parent playing with their children and completely engaged with their children are lost in what they're children are doing. A worker getting done a big project has the whole world around them disappearing and all that's happening is the work they have to do. Drown out the world. For some that might mean that you want to bring music (that's what I do when

I'm writing, even when I'm in a completely quiet and empty home).

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You want to focus on the kids maybe that means shutting off your phone or your shutting off the television. Eliminate the distractions through whatever means you have. Clearly, you can't eliminate all distractions, but, if you get the majority gone, you'll be in good shape.

4 ) If Distracted, Relax, Reorient, and Get Back To Work. This can sometimes be the biggest challenge we have. When that harmonious flow that we've created and that had been going so well is suddenly disrupted, it's like trying to

get back into a good sleep. However, I've come to believe that it's because the smallest distraction creates a small level of stress that we don't truly notice but for the feeling that it's difficult for us to get back to work. Sit down, take a deep breath, and bring your focus back.

5 ) Take a Break Between Different Tasks. Finally, always take a five minute break between one task to another alternative one. Taking five minutes to purposely allow yourself to relax and recoup and develop a plan of action for what you're going to do next can alter the way in which you do everything. We

either overwork or we underwork, this process is about Optimal Work. It's about being able to come home with the same steam that you piled through work and not just drop off the radar after a hard day.

6 ) Enjoy yourself. Life's too long to be miserable. Forget the fatalism of the world that preaches that life's too short. Life can feel incredibly long if you're miserable. Are you always going to love every bit of the work you do? No. I can't stand editing a book. My father can't stand his boss. My mother has massive paperwork. My friends all have things they don't like. But when we

procrastinate, when we don't break  
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the work down, when we let it pile up,  
suddenly, we feel a great deal more  
stress, and we're constantly pulled  
from our flow with worries that we  
aren't going to accomplish  
everything.

Your life can be a lot more than what  
it is. You can accomplish more. And  
you don't have to be stressed to do  
it. Meditative Flow is one of the first  
steps to developing a mindset that  
will allow you to accomplish anything  
you want in life,

## **Chapter 11: A Life With Less Stress**

Congratulations, you've gotten to the end, it wasn't too long or arduous for you, I hope. You have learned some great techniques that I have used and I have taught to people who have paid more than two hundred dollars a session with me. You'll find that when you begin to use these techniques in your everyday life that people will begin to look at you differently. You're going to be walking taller, feeling better, be more cheery, and more upbeat, because, unlike everyone else, you're going to have the answer to getting away from any

stress in your life, and using it as the tool it is.

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The more you begin to accept that stress is not an enemy, the more you'll be able to harness its amazing powers to change your mind and your body so that you can accomplish amazing things. As you go through the next couple of weeks using the journal, you're going to discover some of the real turmoil in your life, and when you learn what it is, you're going to easily begin to figure out how exactly you can change your mind, and alter the way you think about it so that it's no longer a hurdle or a battle.

Your life is about to change, if you want it to change. Be excited.

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So few people are interested in making their life better to the extent that they'll sit down and read something that will help them. But, you've just done that, and because of that, I honor you, and I hope you all the best.

What is a life with little stress going to really be like?

You're going to find yourself able to calm down much more. If you have children, or a significant other,

you're going to discover that you're not nearly as burnt out, and your fuse won't nearly burn as quickly as it used to. If you work at an office and have lots of paperwork, it will no longer be so daunting. If you're a student with exams and studying, it won't nearly be so worrisome. No matter who you are, no matter what you do, no matter what awaits you, things are going to get easier. When you use these techniques that you've just learned, you're going to find yourself reacting, thinking, and behaving in completely new ways that may just amaze even you.

Imagine for a moment being

able to confront the biggest issues in front of you with a level head and clear rationality, able to look at the bigger picture, and think of newer ways of approaching a solution. In the next few weeks, if you work these techniques, you should be doing just that. When you aren't reacting to your stress and having to break those states of mind, that's the reality that you will slowly begin to develop over weeks and months of using these skills on a day to day basis. Imagine while everyone else is saying, "What a mess, how are we going to clean it up?" You're pushing people aside and coming up with solutions. No longer

are you dwelling on the problems that confront you, but searching for the answers that can solve those problems. When you get your mind to that place, you become a different person to the people around you, you become a leader, rather than a follower, you become someone people look up to, rather than someone people don't notice.

No matter what you do with this book, you now have the ideas that's in it. They're in your head. You're going to find that while you're being confronted again and again with the stresses of life that you have the tools, the techniques, the

methodologies, and the ideas that allow you to break the unhelpful states, and develop useful and positive responses that allow you to accomplish just about anything. You might not do it immediately. Though, when you're confronted with something that begins to stress you out, you're going to think to yourself... "I read that book, I could at least give it a try," and then you're going to try the technique and then you're going to try another technique and then you're going to try another.

In that moment, you're going to realize just how much you can control your mind and control your

stress and you're never going to look  
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back. I have that much faith in the  
techniques of my book. Stress does  
not have to be a negative aspect to  
life, it doesn't have to dominate you,  
it doesn't have to send you on tilt.  
You can harness it, you can use it, you  
can live your life without being ruled  
by it!

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# Live Better In Five Minutes or Less A Day

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# **Excerpt From 5-Minute FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY Happiness Cure**

It would seem happiness is an elusive quality in our society. Even though in America we have a great deal of material wealth, no one is starving to death, few people do not have some form of roof over their head (way too many don't, but that's beside the point), when people are surveyed and asked what they want most in life, they say, "Happiness." A majority of these people reporting to not feeling completely fulfilled and happy with their lives. There's a lot of discussion on why this might be the case. Gurus and religious leaders like to pop their two cents in and say that people just need to appreciate

what they have, rather than focus on what they want. That's a fair argument and there's certainly some truth to the matter. However, there seems to be more to it than that. The breakthroughs in happiness in the past thirty years with the rise of Positive Psychology have been breathtaking.

The field of Positive Psychology, a burgeoning and now popular field, with proper college courses, and a heft of research, has begun to crack the shell of what truly makes us happy. At every turn, it's often been shocking, confusing, and not at all what we had expected. The greatest breakthrough to be discovered is that happiness and optimism are learned.

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Though some people can be born predisposed to optimism and predisposed to pessimism, anyone can learn to be an optimist. This breakthrough means that happiness is in the hands of every person. It's a shame it's taken science so long to catch up.

The fact is that until the late 1980's, with more than 100 years of studies on the mind, the focus had always been on what made us miserable, believing that if we could answer that major problem, we could then create a bunch of happy and positive people. The very psychologist put in charge of our happiness for more than a hundred years were breaking one of the golden rules of happiness. Never Focus on The

Problem. Always Focus on The  
Solution. ~~FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY~~ And yet, for years, patients had to suffer horrible abuses with hopes that we could cut out, fry away, break down, or drug the depression, anxiety, stress, or other problems that subverted a person from being content and happy with their life.

Don't get me wrong. There are people who have chemical imbalances for whom medication is the proper course of action, there are people who a psychiatrist can surely benefit. However, for the majority of people in the world, let's face it, we could all just use with a few techniques to make us happier and more optimistic and see the world for what it is really is: A place of

opportunity, hope, and beauty. Even in the most horrid of circumstances, a child, like Anne Frank, can see the good in mankind. We're always going to have problems. We're always going to have difficulties. But we don't have to allow the bad to contaminate the good.

As long as you breathe there's going to be good things that happen to you and bad things that happen to you. And this book here is not written with some magical belief that you summon the good and you summon the bad. I do not believe that people are a hundred percent responsible for their fate. But you are one hundred percent responsible for your reaction. This is to say simply, "You cannot choose what happens to

you, but you can choose what you do about it. **FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY** Situations do not create a person, decisions in situations do. A 1978 study found that happiness isn't relative. A miserable person who wins the lottery, is a miserable person with a new house and a new boat. A happy person who loses the ability to walk, is a happy person with a new shiny chair that'll get him around.

The problem with attaining happiness then is often that the techniques to become happier are left out and rather replaced with some basic garble by gurus and preachers. And though, again, like I said, I'm sure they mean it all in good faith, and that these techniques have worked for them and

their flocks of followers. I don't want  
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some abstract feeling of happiness, some  
meager acceptance of life (though, I  
will detail to you the power of an  
acceptance mindset in the next chapter).  
I want true feelings of happiness. I want  
to feel solid to my core. I want to have  
the skills and knowledge that I can  
generate happiness in my life at any  
moment.

If with a single thought you can  
make yourself miserable, even on a  
happy occasion, then with a single  
thought you should be able to make  
yourself joyful, even on an unhappy  
occasion

[The 5-Minute Happiness Cure: End](#)

Sadness, Create Happiness, and  
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