

STRESS OPTIMIZATION



**Your Guide to Greater Confidence & Calm for
Greater Health & Wellbeing**

WELCOME TO *Stress Optimization*

You may already understand that stress is the body's way of responding or reacting to a perceived threat. It's a primitive response, designed to protect you against harm through the release of a flood of hormones to include epinephrine and cortisol that allow your body to have the energy to stay and fight or run in flight for safety. This was necessary in times of hunting and gathering, discovering new lands and settling into civilizations.

As people left the caves and created communities that have led to modern civilization and living, our threats are much less and very different than they once were thousands of years ago. Yet to the brain, keeping you alive, is the most important job it has and so the fight or flight, "stress response" remains active in our systems even though the dangers are in many ways gone. (1)

In today's modern world, we are not running from life threatening risks, but we are living with new types of dangers and stress. In this guide, we will dive into the new stress effect that is present in day to day living. You will discover the impact that this is having on health and your ability to optimize your wellbeing. From awareness to action, you will enjoy some practical and tactical steps to take immediately to shift into higher states of health, happiness and vitality.



Modern Stress Explored

Today's stress is different than the past. Our systems are being overloaded in new ways, From busy schedules and daily life demands that can lead to overwhelm and overload to many stressors you might not suspect. It can show up in so many ways from traffic to video games, emails, sleep disruption, electromagnetic fields, chemically processed foods, toxins in the environment, text neck, medications, ruminating thoughts and more.

We have turned in fighting and flighting for "sitting and stewing". Sitting at desks, in cars, on our devices where we engage with work and life that comes at us 24/7. The new "threats" are different, they are chronic, meaning instead of happening only once in a while, they are happening more frequently. To the brain stress is stress, regardless if it is a tiger chasing you or a traffic jam.

As a result, the system is always on, in response to the constant stress. The flood of hormones keep your sympathetic nervous system in overdrive. This can lead to high blood pressure, gastrointestinal issues, immune impairment, metabolic dysfunction, hormone dysregulation, memory problems, mood imbalance and impaired performance. (2)

Knowledge is Power. When it comes to stress, it's not all bad. In fact, stress can be good but is all depends on you and your perception to the potential stressors.

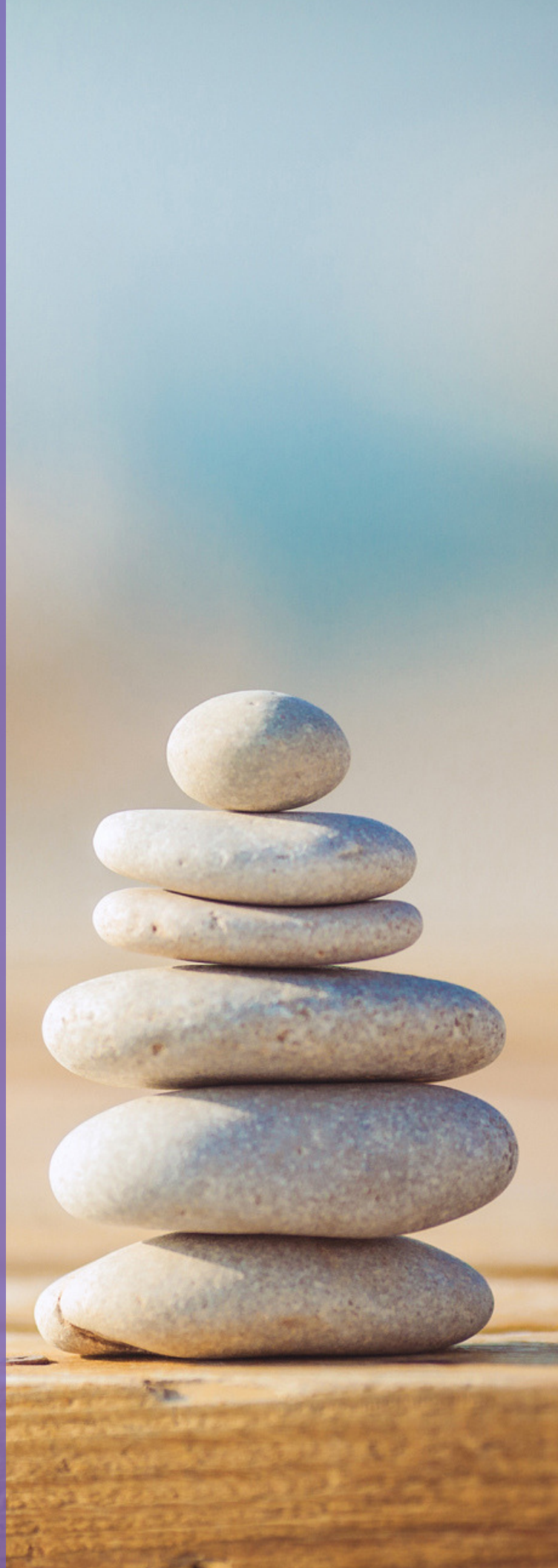


How to Tell if Stress is Good or Bad?

Fundamentally, the stress response is the body's way of protecting you, but the body protects for many reasons. Stress isn't just negative emotions or heavy workloads. It's a change that overloads the system which could be a new workout or diet, learning a new language, giving a presentation at work, throwing the game winning shot or traveling to a new destination.

This new input to the body, is actually a stress that puts your sympathetic nervous system on high alert to learn, engage and perform in new or very specific ways. Once you move through the initial newness, your body learns how to adapt and respond to a new steady state. This stress response is actually positive as it creates growth and optimization.

Stress is unique to the individual. One person's stress, is another person's joy. The science of epigenetics has proven that one's PERCEPTION of the event directly impacts the response to it which determines if it is or isn't "good or bad" stress. It's about understanding yourself and how you are approaching your life.



Do you perceive the new workout to be fun and great? If so, that will be a good stress to your body. Do you perceive the new work project to be painful and draining? If so, that has the ability to evoke a negative stress response on your body. Are you pushing your body too hard and not picking up on the cues of pain or fatigue? This can become a negative stress and although consciously you don't think its "bad" your body, by way of symptoms is trying to get your attention.

It is telling you that you are tipping the scales from a good thing to too much of a good thing.

Too much of anything to the body has the potential to become harmful. **When you tune in and notice your feelings and response to your day to day environment and actions, you gain the clues and insight to your perceptions.**

It is from here that you can change your response to the stress, and even change the environment itself for enhanced health, energy and wellbeing.

Seem confusing? Hopefully not because this is where things get super exciting- this is where you get to be in the driver's seat to realize you can be in control. Sure, **you can't control the people, places, or events that are showing up and potentially stressing you out BUT - you CAN control YOUR RESPONSE.**

This means that you can choose how you want to be reacting to the event. You can choose your emotion, your response that has the potential to positively enhance your health and life.



How to Tell if Stress is Good or Bad?

Assess Your Stress

How or in what ways is stress showing up in your life? Take a few minutes to take this brief stress assessment. It will help you to identify the areas that require the most stress optimization.

Life Events

- Marriage
- Personal Injury
- Relationship Challenges
- Divorce
- Death of spouse or family member
- Change in Health
- Pregnancy
- Financial Changes
- Change in Living Conditions or Location
- Child Leaving Home
- Not Happy with Career
- Career Change
- Change in Health of a Family Member
- Change in Friendships
- Too Many Scheduled Activities
- Lack of Work Life Balance

Lifestyle Environmental Toxin Exposure:

- Nicotine
- Alcohol
- Caffeine
- Recreational drugs
- Prescription drugs
- Over-the-counter drugs
- Chemically polluted air and water
- Mold, Fungi, Parasites (old homes, farms, well water)
- Pesticides
- Air pollution
- Electronic Magnetic Radiation (emitted from many electronic devices high levels can lead to cellular damage.)
- Artificial food additives, colorings and preservatives (diet soda's, flavored waters, fat free, sugar free products)
- Meats that contain hormones and antibiotics
- Refined foods and sugars
- Blood Sugar Dysregulation (skipping meals, not eating balanced nutrition)
- Dietary choices (fast foods, fried foods)... Did you know that we ingest over 30-50 tons of food in a lifetime? Now that is a toxic load!

Internal Toxins that Stress the System

- Bacterial, yeast, fungal overgrowth (Fed by Sugar and Artificial Sweeteners)
- Undigested food
- Food Sensitivities (Gluten, Dairy, Corn, Soy)
- Inability to Sleep
- Heavy Metals

Emotional Stressors:

- Tension in your body
- Feelings of upset stomach, agitation or discomfort.
- Comparison trap feeling not as good as another- question yourself and worth.
- Unresolved trauma or abuse (experienced as a child or as an adult)
- Unhappy relationships (with a relative, a spouse, a "significant other," a boss, a co-worker, a neighbor, etc.)
- Feelings of unworthiness, anxiousness, fear.
- Anxiousness, depression, frustration.
- Perfectionism- fear of failing or getting it wrong.

If you checked 4 or more of the above, you are experiencing a negative stress effect in your life. Take a moment to rate for yourself on a scale from 1-10 (10 being the most) how each of the areas that you marked are impacting your life right now. This will give you an idea of WHERE and WHEN you should employ stress optimization techniques.


NEXT UP- GOOD STRESS...



The following feelings and emotions all have a powerful impact on your body and health. Begin to notice when you feel these and why. Each of these emotional states produce positive hormones and neurotransmitter brain chemicals that combat negative stress. Each of these improve the health and function of your system. When you can begin to identify and understand when you are experiencing these positive emotions and resource states, you can use them to neutralize the stress effect whenever it shows up in your life.

Make a list of the many ways that you experience the following positive emotions:

- Curiosity
- Happiness
- Joy
- Serenity
- Hope
- Gratitude
- Confidence
- Kindness
- Playful
- Admiration
- Enthusiasm
- Pride
- Contentment
- Satisfaction
- Euphoria
- Inspiration
- Awe
- Enjoyment
- Amusement
- Cheerfulness
- Love

A photograph of a young couple smiling and embracing outdoors. The woman is in the foreground, wearing a plaid scarf and a blue jacket, with her hands clasped. The man is behind her, wearing glasses and a blue shirt, also smiling. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting with warm lighting.

Positive emotions play a powerful role in optimizing your health and life. You may know how you want to feel but actually feeling it could be another story. To discover how to shift into your stress optimizing resource states, enjoy the **5 step path below**.

Now that you have an idea of the things that can be causing negative stress to your system as well as the positive feelings and emotions that can stop stress in it's tracks, lets give you a simple 5 step path back to optimizing YOU.

5 Steps to Reduce Your Stress Burden & Reclaim Your Health

STEP 1

Become aware of when and how stress is showing up in your life. To help, make a list of your stressors as you know them from reading this guide. Don't worry if you don't know them all, just pick the most obvious ones that are troubling you or that are having the biggest impact on you.

STEP 2

Next, **quantify these stressors**, what is impacting you every day vs. the ones that are impacting you only once in a while? Rate each on a scale from 1-10 with 10 being the most to give them a number to make it easy to see where you should focus stress optimization techniques.

STEP 3

Choose how you want to respond to your stress. To do this, pick your top stressors and then pick your most positive emotion state (like love) and imagine what it would be like if you responded to the stress with love, kindness, understanding- fill in your emotion. Remember- it's not the stress- it's your perception to it that triggers the system either negatively or positively. Be willing to ask yourself WHY an event, person or situation is causing you stress. Once you know, consider IF you can approach your response through a different filter, meaning instead of responding out of frustration, what would your response be if you were curious or tolerant instead?

STEP 4

Take action one small step at a time to stop stress in its tracks. Just by taking a few minutes everyday to do deep belly breath breathing, you will lower your stress response and enhance your health. When stress shows up, choose how you want to respond, pause, breathe and then act.

STEP 5

Nothing changes until you do. Stress will always be present but it doesn't have to be bad or have a negative effect on you. Each day, take 3 minutes to stop and notice what is going well. By celebrating your new responses to stress, you will begin to see your life shift in so many wonderful ways, little by little every day.

Stress Busting Tips so You Can THRIVE!

What can you do to optimize your stress for enhanced health each day? Try on for size one of the many stress optimizing exercises below. If you can't change the stress, thank goodness you can change your response to it. Here are some simple things you can do right away, that only take a few minutes each day, to halt the stress response.

- **Breathe.** Your breath and the rate at which you breathe will immediately impact how your body responds to the world around you and any potential stressors. The normal, ideal rate of breath is between 5-9 breaths per minute. When you are breathing at a rate above 14, this induces anxiety. So the next time you feel your heart rate rise, your shoulders tense or your mood shift from happy to anxious, stop and breathe slow deep in and out breaths for 1 minute. As you do this, place your hand on your abdomen and focus on bringing the breath down into the belly for deep, diaphragmatic breathing. Long, full, rhythmic, in and out breaths are clinically shown to lower cortisol the stress producing hormone, lower blood pressure, energize your body and improve health. (3)
- **Change your environment** for the better. First- reduce and remove any harmful or negative stressors. Next replace and revive the environment with the sights, sounds and elements that evoke your resource states of your positive feelings and emotions. Look around and notice the changes you can make like freshening up the paint color on the walls, add in pictures of the people, places and things that make you feel great, how about sound? Play music that you love. Your environment is your first place that you can make the most noticeable impact in reducing your stress and increasing your good feeling vibes.
- **5 Second Stress Buster**- Count backwards from 5 to reset and reframe your brain. Research shows this to be one of the most powerful stress busting moves you can do to get out of overwhelm and into positive action.
- **Strike a Pose!** The Power Pose, in as little as 2 minutes increases testosterone and lowers cortisol levels. [Click here](#) to learn how you can harness this power to lower your stress and change your life in under 2 minutes!
- **Learn to say "no".** Know your limits, and don't take on projects or commitments you can't handle.
- **Stand at Attention** and take a few deep breaths with your shoulders back, chest open. Your body posture changes your mood and mindset. This is great to do every 60-90 minutes.
- **Laugh - Often:** Laughing and smiling have been proven to be the most effective and cost efficient methods of stress-busting - instantly changes your body's stress response.

- **Breakfast is the most important meal of the day!** Too often a cup of coffee and a bagel is the common go to for many but did you know this actually puts you in a cortisol producing, fat storing stress response state? To optimize your hormone for increased energy, fat burning and mental clarity- start your day off with a nutrient dense breakfast containing at least 12 grams of protein.
- **Put on your shoes and go for a short walk.** Research shows that as little as 20 minutes of movement a day lowers stress, blood pressure, improves your mood and enhances mental cognition.
- **Squeeze a tension ball.** Better out than in- let that tension go somewhere besides being held in the muscles of your body. To really get the most from this, as you squeeze- talk the stress away and notice how much better you feel.
- **Listen to your favorite music.**
- **Take an Epsom Salt Bath**
- **Practice Mindful Deep Breathing** taking a slow breath in for 4, hold for a count of 4 and release for a count of 6.
- **Tapping-** [Click here](#) to watch a video that shows what tapping is, how it works and how it can help you shift stress in moments.
- **Don't sweat the small things:** If it won't affect or bother you a year from now, why worry about it now? Or, is it life or death? Perspective!
- **Soak in the Sun.** Get some fresh air and sunlight. In as little as 15 minutes outside in nature you will boost your energy, lower blood pressure, help balance hormones, improve sleep, and increase your ability to relax.
- **Make ME time:** Do nothing, that's right, if you are always on the go, it's essential that you give yourself permission to STOP and simply BE in the moment. Practice reconnecting to simple pleasures like reading a book, writing, drawing, petting a furry friend, sitting on the porch and listening to the sound of the birds. Life is happening all around, sit back and soak it in.
- **What Went Well?** The field of Positive Psychology has found that by taking a few minutes each day to write out what went well and why- you increase your overall levels of happiness and lower stress levels. (4)
- **Meditation:** There are many ways to meditate, and that's what makes it so effective. Whether you sit quietly in your living room listening to the sound of your breath, or focus on the traffic light the next time it is red turning off all other sounds or distractions- meditation is simply a practice of mindfulness. It allows you for moments, minutes or hours to quiet the chaos and inner chatter so you find your center of peace, calm and clarity.

Not sure if your body is stressed or if it is, what is causing it or when you are triggered?

Track your biometrics. There are a ton of great devices from the garmin and fitbit to the biostrap. Your body will tell you if you will simply pay attention and notice. Many times, stress shows up in the most unsuspecting of ways. Don't guess with your health and happiness. Be proactive, track your biometrics and enhance your health today.

Stress is stress- either good or bad- the choice is up to you.

From sitting in traffic everyday or living in chronic pain - when you first become aware of when and why stress is showing up in your life you then hold the power to choose your response. Take it moment by moment, celebrate all that IS good and all that you are doing to experience the fullness of your health, vitality and life.

We hope the recommendations in this guide have helped you tune into the areas where you may be most affected and how to begin to transform each element- one stress busting step at a time.

Step by step and day by day, your stress will reduce in intensity and severity, helping your body to heal, your energy to improve, your brain to clear, your hormones to balance, your mood to lift, your life to transform and you to THRIVE.

