

HOW TO REDUCE STRESS AND LIVE A HAPPY LIFE

A question asked by millions

A BOOK BY VARAD AGRAWAL

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About the Author

Varad Agrawal was born and brought up in New Delhi and completed his graduation from Delhi University. This book is based on his own experiences. He is presently working in Noida.

How to reduce stress and live a happy life (A question asked by millions) is an attempt to reach out to the masses who keep on fretting about their adversities. It teaches how a person can live a happy and peaceful life. Citing a few real life incidences and situations is the best way to convey a message.

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This is a work of non-fiction. The book is based on real life experiences. However, all the names of persons have been changed to protect identities. Any resemblance of any character to any person, dead or alive or the resemblance of this story to any other real story is purely coincidental.

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Acknowledgement

The first thing I would like to do is, pray to the Almighty for everyone's well being. I would like to thank him for giving me the strength to write and complete this book.

For everyone their family is of utmost importance because of their unconditional support and love, so is the case with me. I would extend thanks to my parents – Mr. Vivek Agrawal and Mrs. Kinjalk Agrawal, who are my backbone. My mother used to write articles in various newspapers and still write her short poems and she has guided me throughout. My father kept on supporting me throughout as well.

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INTRODUCTION

Stress is the starting point of a downfall in a person's life. It leads to anxiety, depression and many other mental and physical problems. It is proportional to worry i.e. the more we worry, the more we invite stress and vice versa. Each one of us must have faced this at some point in life and if someone denies it, he must be lying. How someone manages it is the key. Most of the people keep on exaggerating and keep on thinking for long about a particular problem or an event that happened a long time back and live their entire life cribbing about it. The result is they destroy their present and future. Instead of being an architect of their future, they become the prisoners of their past. The remaining people move on. What's the difference between the two? Don't you think that the latter must have also been through the same situation as the former? Haven't both ever anguished over their past or any sour incident? The answer is "YES". We need to understand each of them.

Stress is something which is inevitable and we face it on a regular basis without even realizing. If you look in the Oxford Dictionary the word stress means "pressure or tension exerted". So we can't run away from it, but can find a way to reduce it. It is a subjective matter and, as a result, it can have different meanings to different people. It can be found in different forms. Some of them work as a blessing in disguise for example- meeting deadlines, acting quickly during an emergency, etc. The problem starts when we exaggerate.

It is nothing but a war within ourselves and, if we have to be victorious, we need to have weapons in our armory. Here the person against whom you stand off is "your mind". It's only you who can choose between victory or defeat. You have to fight on a regular basis. Sometimes you win, sometimes you lose. Even the most successful person on the planet has surrendered himself to this war, but the percentage of them winning is comparatively higher than those who are less successful or those who have failed. What measures do they undertake which separates them from others?

Before that we need to understand that one of the prime reasons for stress is thinking too much about a problem and blowing it out of proportion. That's the trigger point. We tend to think a lot about the things that have happened in the past or what will happen in the future. We should live in the present. As per a research, it is found that a majority of the things which we tend to think are vague. Once it enters, it takes control over our senses, mind and body completely. It affects our health as well like creating hypertension, blood pressure and many other fatal diseases etc.

In the following chapters, we will discuss the reasons for stress in our lives and how to combat them.

FOCUS ON COLLECTING FACTS ABOUT THE PROBLEM THAT IS EATING YOU

The primary reason for stress is problems in our lives. Everyone has problems, but most people don't know how to deal with them. I do the following things to get to the roots of the problem-

- a. Get the facts
- b. Analyze them
- c. Draw a conclusion

The first thing is to get the facts. You can't solve any problem unless you know the details. Small problems may take less time while larger problems might take more time to get resolved. However, the idea in both cases is gathering the data, and if one isn't able to cope up with the problems, then they stress about it. One major problem with most people is that they only try to gather the facts that support their way of thinking and not from a broader perspective. One has to be transparent if they need to get to the bottom of the problem because every person thinks himself to be right. We need to rule out impartially to resolve an issue and to live a stress-free life. This is the golden rule. When I collect facts, I see that I am collecting them for someone else, not for myself because it opens up my thought process and I know where I went wrong and how I can rectify the issue. It gives an altogether different dimension to my way of thinking. As the great scientist Albert Einstein has said ***"We cannot solve a problem with the same thinking we used when we created them"***. This means there is

something wrong in our way of handling the situation if it doesn't get resolved.

The next step is to analyze the facts and the best way is to write them on a piece of paper. **Charles Franklin Kettering** - an American inventor, businessman and holder of 186 patents has rightly said *"A problem well stated is a problem half solved"*. I have experienced the wonderful results of writing down the facts. During my preparation for exams, I always felt that time was running out of my hands and wasn't able to complete the syllabus. So first of all, I realized that something was wrong in my approach because I worked so hard, but still wasn't able to cope up with the syllabus. After discussion with a friend, I realized that I wasn't able to distribute equal time to all the subjects. I said to myself "Yes, that's it. That's the problem. If I divide the syllabus into small parts, then I will be able to complete it on time". After that I took note of the topics which I had to finish regularly and, as I said, I divided the syllabus into small parts. Since I wrote everything in a diary, I was crystal clear about my daily targets.

But one important thing is I divided the topics into parts as per my capability. So please don't set targets which you can't complete. This particular method worked wonders for me. I was stress relieved as I was able to accomplish my targets. Secondly, the results were also in my favor. But the most important thing is the execution portion. If you don't execute the plan, then it's just a complete wastage of your time and energy.

In the same manner, if you follow the above principles to solve your problems, chances are that you will be in a better position to find a solution.

So, in concise you have to do the following steps to get rid of your troubles-

- a) Identify your problems
- b) Analyze the problem and write it down on a piece of paper
- c) Start taking action

“Get the facts. Let’s not even attempt to solve our problems without first collecting all the facts in an impartial manner”

- Dale Carnegie

“To solve a problem it is necessary to think. It is necessary to think even to decide what facts to collect”

- Robert Maynard Hutchins

STOP THINKING WHAT OTHERS THINK ABOUT YOU

Many people worry about what the other's think about them. How am I looking? Will I be able to present myself properly? These are signs of lack of self-confidence and inferiority complex. We need to understand that everyone has his own perspective. We can't meet everyone's expectations and we aren't born to impress everyone. Generally, we concentrate on pleasing others rather than ourselves. Self-satisfaction is more important than anything else, but people do it the other way round. This is the crux of the problem mostly amongst the present generation. I have seen many students thinking "how I will be able to impress him/her, what he/she thinks about me, what the relatives/friends think about me, whether I will be able to match up with the latest fashion" etc. and create unnecessary mental stress. We live in other people's head. For example, we post only our best pic on social media after applying a lot of filters. This is quite normal. Even I went through this phase, but now it hardly matters to me.

If you know that you are here to make a future for yourself, then you should only concentrate on that. Why buy expensive clothes if less expensive, but presentable ones are easily available. If one can't afford to buy the latest smartphone, but has a basic phone, even that's fine. People will always try to judge you no matter who you are or what you wear. A boy in my neighborhood belongs to a privileged family, goes college in his Mercedes and has all the latest gadgets. So what do you think that people think about him? The impression which everyone has made in their mind is "He

is a rich brat and doesn't respect people". Going by the people's opinion about him, I also thought that he must be like that. So when I first met him I was feeling nervous. But soon I found that it was the other way round. He was a very obedient, respectful and family-oriented person. Yes, he throws parties in five-star hotels and can afford to have luxuries which a common man desires. The point is that people judge him without knowing him personally. He exhibits a very strong and positive character.

Once I asked him how he deals with the people who are quite skeptical about him? He replied, "I don't think about them because they will always judge me by their perception". This always echoes in my mind when I see someone thinking about another person's perception of them. I also started to follow the same principle from then on and believe me, it yielded wonderful results for me and I am sure it will yield the same results for you too. Firstly, you will be satisfied with whatever you have. Then you won't care about what others think of you. If you follow this principle, you will be at peace. If anybody judges you differently, just politely reply "People will keep on judging others (including you and me) whatsoever and I am very content with my present situation". If that still doesn't work, just ignore them because choosing people is in our hands. Removing them from our lives leads to positivity. Positivity is removal of negativity and negativity is removal of positivity.

Sometimes it might not be possible to completely eradicate those people out of lives, so we can at least limit our interaction with them. If you have to deal with a person knowing that he/she will pass comment on you or always point you out on unnecessary and irrelevant things, then limit your conversation to the minuscule

and after that leave from there. If you have to meet a client for a business deal, but you know that he/she will pass unnecessary comments, so the best way to handle is to meet, discuss about the deal and leave politely after that. Those people are like weeds that will hollow you, your body and your thinking. Spending time with them can ruin your entire day. They have got the calibre to demotivate you. It will also affect your way of thinking. Unable to concentrate on your thoughts as you will always think about others. Instead of focusing on how to improve your performance, you will tend to think that how your colleague got promoted.

This is the recipe for self-destruction. Apart from that, you lose one of the most precious elements of life and that is "time". Sometimes, I ponder about how many hours we waste, how much we pressurize ourselves, how vulnerable we become to depression, anxiety, nervous disorders, etc. due to those judgmental people who hardly play a role in our lives. Why not pay more attention to something which is more constructive, something that brings happiness to us? Why not spend that precious time with the people who care for you like family, friends etc.? Positive people are a dose of happiness which, if ingested, can have an everlasting effect on your body, mind and soul. They are like fresh air that purifies you. So, spend time wisely with the people around you because judgmental people are carriers of stress and anxiety which they will pass on to you.

Here are a few steps that can help you to stop thinking about what other's think about you-

1. Only you can control your thoughts and feelings-

We should understand that only we have full control over our feelings and thought. This will have a positive impact and we will

stop getting affected by other's. Consciously or unconsciously, when our feelings are caused by other people's opinions, we are allowing them to dwell in our minds and lives. We become a puppet whose string is controlled by their opinion. If someone ignores you then the spontaneous reaction is ***"the other person made me feel this way by ignoring"***. However, the fact is that the other person can't control our emotions and feelings. It's like we give a meaning to their action thinking that we don't deserve them, etc. We have an emotional reaction to our thoughts. To get least affected by other's opinions, you just need to change your thought process and this might take time because thoughts are usually automatic.

2. No one is perfect-

To err is human and we all need to understand this. Every person wants perfection and that's fine. However, sometimes we make mistakes and everyone must have committed a mistake at some point in time. We can compassionate ourselves well if we understand this. We can learn from our mistakes. Learn to move on but the problem is that the mind gets stuck on how the other person will think about us. We just need to remind ourselves that we can't control someone else's thinking and we did our best to avoid a mistake.

3. There are three businesses in this world-

Another way to stop caring about what other people think about you is to make sure that you mind your own business. I learned it from **Byron Katie**, an American Author. According to her, there are 3 businesses in the world.

The first one is God's business or you can say nature's business. Things which aren't in anyone's control are called God's business. For example, who will take birth and who will die, natural calamities, etc. are God's business, and no one can change it.

The second type is "their business". What your friend thinks about you is "their" business. If the other person isn't paying heed to your advice, that's "their" business.

The third type of business is "your business". If you get "irritated" by what your friends think about you is "your" business. If you feel "neglected" when the other person isn't paying heed to your advice, that's "your" business.

What other's think is their business and what you think is your business. What you think and what you do are the only things that matter.

"Stop thinking what others say or think...at last it's you who have to beat the world not them"

- Bablu Singh Parihar

"Great spirits have always encountered violent opposition from mediocre minds"

- Albert Einstein

"Do you know what happens when you decide to stop worrying about what other people might think of you? You get to dance. You get to sing. You get to laugh loudly, paint, write, and create. You get to be yourself. And you know what? Some people don't like you. Some will laugh or mock or point out flaws....but it just won't bother you all that much"

- Doe Zantamata

FINANCIAL STRESS

One of the common problems which most of us face is financial stress. Many of us think that if there is a hike in salary it will eliminate or reduce the level of stress, which might be true in a few cases. Everyone has to meet their expenses and need to make savings which is quite essential under present circumstances. Prices are rising and the cost of living has soared. We can't do anything about it. Even if the pay scale increases, the problem in most of the cases wouldn't get solved because when there is an increase in income there is a corresponding growth in expenditure as well. If you travel by public transport and, suppose there is an increase in your pay, then you will tend to buy yourself a bike or a car. This is because now you can afford it and there's no harm in that. That's quite natural. After a rise in pay scale, some would prefer to buy branded things. So again people will not be able to make their desired savings. Everyone suffers from financial stress, but the form of stress may be different.

Even the richest man of India **Mr Mukesh Ambani, Chairman of Reliance Industries**, faces financial stress sometimes but in a different way. You must be thinking that I have gone crazy that I am saying so. He can easily meet his own expenses and also for millions of people. But, as I said, there are different forms of financial stress. It isn't only limited to your expenses and having desired savings: security of wealth is also a kind of financial stress. He has a net worth of around \$6,460 crores and I bet you that he can't have even a peaceful night because every now and then he must be thinking about how to increase his wealth, how to get a

deal done, etc. We always tend to think that people of his repute live a very comfortable, easy and a stress-free life. That is not the case. To corroborate this fact, there is a saying ***"uneasy lies the head that wears the crown"***.

He's wearing a crown and that makes him uneasy as he has to think always how to maintain that crown. As they say, reaching the top is difficult and to stand there is even more difficult. We can't even imagine their kind of problems and we should consider ourselves lucky that we don't have to go through all that. I am not saying that one should not think big or I am not saying that you shouldn't try. Everyone wants it. The only thing I want to convey is that financial stress has to be dealt by everyone though the form may be different.

Here are a few practices which can help you to maintain your savings and keep a track on your expenses-

(a) Jot the facts—

Again? Yeah! As already discussed in the previous chapter writing down your worries, facts can help as it gives you a clear picture. In the same manner, if you take a note of all your expenses, then you will come to know where your money is spent. I am pretty sure that most people don't even know how their money is slipping out of their hands. I have heard many people discussing with their colleagues saying that "भार, पता ही नहीं चलता कि वेतन कब आया और कब, कहाँ चला गया (Mate, I don't know how the salary credited is spent because there are so many expenses to meet). In present days, we have technology with us that can take care of it. We have smartphones in which we can make notes. There are so many

mobile phone applications that can maintain our income and expenditure records. Once you start this practice, then you will exclaim "***Is that the way my money goes?***"

I was also in the same situation about a year ago, but one of my office colleagues gave me this idea and it's working out nicely for me. The first step is that you should know how you are spending your hard-earned money.

(b) Make a budget–

Once you come to know how your money is being spent, the next step is to make a planned budget. The idea is to have control over your expenditure. Clicking on a button, you can find many applications which will take care. If you ask its importance, here is the answer – almost all the organizations keep a track of their expenses and making an annual budget. Most organizations have a budgetary control mechanism because they have to keep an account of every penny spent. That is how an organization grows. If they don't make one, it won't be able to survive for long. Although their income and expenditure are much bigger, but the principle is the same, i.e. to have a budget.

All countries (governments) have a Minister of Finance for this and the simple reason is they have to run their economies. Similarly, we should also maintain a budget in our lives. Remember, every penny counts and if we let money slip away, we may be calling for trouble because we need to save for the future as well. There has to be a balanced approach regarding expenditure and savings. Many things aren't in our control, but this certainly is. Also remember this is not to eradicate fun out of our lives, the idea is to

keep a balance in earning and expenditure. People who have a control over their expenses have a better life. The reason is simple- you have a control and if you know that you are spending money on unnecessary things, next time you will refrain yourself from doing so.

There are many people whose lives are hanging on a thread because they have to meet their expenses at any cost and their savings are almost negligible. They are mentally and financially stressed. Even if they are able to save some amount of money, it might turn out to be a blessing for them. I know a house maid who keeps track of her expenses and savings. She has a budget for herself and keeps an account of her daily expense right from travelling to buying vegetables. The result is that she has accumulated a lot of savings which she uses for the upbringing of her children. Her son is in one of the reputed colleges in India and her daughter is working with a well-known organization. How did she manage to do that? If she had been cringing over her expenditures, then how would she have managed all this? The answer is she made a mechanism for herself. If she can do, why can't you? If she can set herself as an example, then why can't you?

(c) Seek different opportunities-

If, after budgeting your expenses, you still aren't able to have any savings or are left with just a few, in that case you have two options – either you fret, complain or crib about your present situation or chalk out a plan to have some additional income. If you are good at something, then pursue it. Most women are good at cooking, so why not to take out some time and deliver homemade food? If you

have a specialty you can enhance that. Food demand is something which will never end or go down.

There is a lady in my neighborhood who provides homemade food to students living as paying guests and she is doing really well. I met her once and asked her when she got into this business? She replied "around a year or so back". Further, she narrated that although she was good at cooking right from the beginning, she never knew that one day it would become a secondary source of income for her. She said that she was working in a Company as a receptionist and wasn't able to make both ends meet so she started delivering homemade food to get additional income. During the course of a year she has earned a lot and is living quite peacefully and happily. The idea is to look for options and opportunities because in this digital age we have got a lot of them. Everyone in this world is good at something or the other. So instead of fretting, complaining, focus on your skills and exploit them in your favour.

In a nutshell, do the following-

- (a) Make a budget for yourself so you can control your expenses and your hard-earned money doesn't slip away easily.
- (b) If you are still not able to make ends meet then try to look for opportunities around to make some extra income.

“Do not save what is left after spending, but spend what is left after saving”

- Warren Buffet

“The number one problem in today’s generation and economy is the lack of financial literacy”

- Alan Greenspan

“The safest way to double your money is to fold it over and put it in your pocket”

- Kin Hubbard

HOPE FOR THE BEST AND PREPARE FOR THE WORST

One of the biggest reasons of stress is the word "If". Yes, you got me right. It is one of the biggest contributing factors of stress in many lives. If we mentally accept the end result of an action and prepare ourselves for the worst-case scenario, then our brain tries to think a way out because it has understood the consequences. Worrying destroys our ability to concentrate and our mind becomes fickle. ***It's like when we have accepted for the worst, we have nothing to lose and that automatically means we have everything to gain.*** We often use a phrase in our daily lives "जो होगा देखा जाएगा" (We'll see whatever happens). This simply means that you are ready to face the consequence. When we know this basic formula, then why we do not apply it when it is required? Don't get mistaken, it doesn't mean to throw caution to the winds. It's just that this attitude will help the mind to remain calm and focused. I am not telling you to be carefree, but am just asking you to mentally prepare yourself for the worst. Do whatever you can do to face an issue and keep on explaining to yourself that you are ready.

One of my friends, Namit, used to be very nervous about facing interviews. He discussed his problem with me that he wasn't able to focus on preparing for it as he always feared rejection. He was lacking confidence and wasn't sure how to answer questions during an interview. I asked him if he had been rejected. He replied "no". I explained him that ***"you may be rejected for a job, but that's not the end of the world. If you keep on thinking about the result, your mind will not be able to concentrate, to prepare for***

the interview. Try to make your mind understand that in the worst case, you'll just lose a job, nothing else. Once you understand this, only then you will be able to think further". After a few days, he called me and said that he was in a better position than before. Now he was able to concentrate on his shortcomings and he was able to think about how to deal with them. He cracked the interview as he became fearless, confident and got the job.

I have seen many people getting nervous when they are called on stage for a discussion or a debate. I was one of them as well and had stage fright. Once I was asked to give a presentation on the ongoing economic crisis and I was completely blank. Adding to the woes, I had never given a presentation on the stage before. I had only 3 days to prepare for the topic but before that I had to get rid of nervousness. So, first of all I calmed down and explained myself that "at the most, people will laugh at my presentation, nothing else. Chances are likely that I will never meet those people. So why should I worry? And secondly, I am the lucky one who got a chance to walk to the dais and express my views on the ongoing topic". I felt a bit relieved after bringing those positive thoughts into my mind. So I prepared myself and I walked to the podium (although I still had a few butterflies in my stomach) with a lot of confidence and gave a good presentation which was well received by the audience.

If we apply the above principle, then we will never get worried about the future and can live our present happily and peacefully.

"I am prepared for the worst, but hope for the best"

- Benjamin Disraeli

STOP LINGERING

Yes, you heard it right. Suppose something is bothering you, immediately put in your efforts to resolve the issue before it swells. The problem with most of us is that we are quite reluctant in the initial stages without realizing the consequences. We should not linger and think that the problem will be resolved automatically; we must act swiftly before the problem snowballs into a fire. If you have a medical problem, won't you go to a doctor for a diagnosis, or will you ignore it? If you visit him in the beginning, the chances are that you may get cured, but if you linger on, it may take more time. In severe cases, you may have to grapple with it for longer than expected.

The same principle applies to our mental problems. Stress is all about mental issues and attitude. If the desired action is taken initially, the chances are that we may get enough time to equip ourselves with the tools to solve the issue, be it personal or official. ***Even if you don't get the desired results, then the fact that you are trying to solve the issue reduces the stress dramatically that may arise out of it.*** These are not my words, these are the words of CEO of Amazon Jeff Bezos. He says ***"Stress primarily comes from not taking action over something that you can have control over..... I find as soon as I identify it, and make the first phone call, or send off the first email... it dramatically reduces any stress that might come from it."*** If you aren't comfortable with your job, try to change it, although it may take some time, maybe 2-3 months or more. But if you don't make an effort, then you'll have to grapple for longer. It will lead to more stressful life, nothing else.

If you are weak in a particular subject, work on it right from the beginning. I have seen many children getting stressed during exams because of a particular subject or a topic. First, you have to understand the basics, otherwise, you won't be able to go forward. If your calculations are weak or you don't understand the mathematical formula, you can't solve it because your basics aren't clear.

We can learn from the experiences of others as they may have dealt with similar problems. It isn't that they have got any special powers that make them successful, it's their epitome of experience that makes them successful, and the core point is that they have done the basics right. If Jeff Bezos hadn't taken timely measures to deal with the problems at hand, those could have snowballed into larger issues that could have taken an eternity to resolve. Mr. Bill Gates said the following words for Mr. Warren Edward Buffett (An American investor, business tycoon, philanthropist, and the chairman of Berkshire Hathaway) ***"His ability to boil things down, to just work on the things that really count, to think through the basics – it's so amazing that he can do that. It's a special form of genius."***

People have a habit of lingering, and this problem is mostly found with those who have a very casual approach towards life. The irony is that we all want things to be done on time, but do we do the same? If we have developed this bad habit, what can we expect from others? When you keep on delaying work, they accumulate exponentially, adding unnecessary pressure on yourself because no matter whatsoever, you have to cope with it.

This bad habit should be uprooted right from the beginning. If you don't clean the dining table after having your meal and leave it for later, how can you expect your children to clean up after they finish their meal? They inherit their habits from the surrounding environment, and later they pass on these habits to the next generation.

Similarly, if you keep on delaying important assignments which are to be completed, how can you expect your subordinates to complete their assigned tasks on time? And when the due date is around the corner, then you exert a lot of stress and pressure to complete the work.

You have to do your own dishes (after an altercation with the spouse) and also have to meet the deadline (either by hook or by crook).

WORK PRESSURE

One of the main reasons for stress in our daily lives is work pressure. It starts as soon as we get up in the morning. All of us are in a rush to reach the office on time. After achieving our first goal (reaching office), we are in for a marathon which we can't win. I call it a marathon is because we have to do the work assigned to us, meet deadlines, and many other things. We exert pressure because we have to follow our Boss's instructions, and the Boss is always right. If we follow this golden mantra, then trust me, the majority of us will be stress-free. However, the problem occurs when we aren't able to do the things as per his expectations leading to his yelling, shouting, and screaming in front of others. We aren't able to concentrate on our work properly, which adds fuel to the fire. We need to understand that we can't always make him happy. I am not saying that everyone has the same nature, but most the cases, the problem is the same. Later we think of the day gone by, and we bring office stress into our personal lives. After reaching home, we shower our frustration onto our family, friends and the list goes on and on. In this manner, we aren't serving any purpose. We act as a stress carrier and in the due process, we also give stress to our near and dear ones without their fault. The other aspect of the problem is too much workload on our shoulders.

If we prioritize our work according to the deadlines or importance, though not being fully able to eliminate the work stress, we can lessen it to some extent. Please write down the work assigned on paper and go thoroughly over it before submitting. This will not only improve efficiency, but it will sharpen memory as well.

Once you write down the things, there are minimal chances of an error, and every Boss wants error-free work. It doesn't mean that he will be pleased, but at least he won't shout or scream at you in front of your colleagues and embarrass you.

Also, consider yourself lucky that you aren't in his shoes because no one knows the situation under which he might be in. Just imagine the kind of pressure he exerts upon himself and how he must be dealing with others. A stressed person can never be happy, and this reflects on others. Do we really want to earn ourselves a tag of "Stress Maker?" We certainly don't want to earn such a tag. So, the best way to control yourself whenever you come across a person who unnecessarily shouts and screams at you, is just thank God that you aren't facing the miseries of that person.

There are two options to look out for – either you look for a low-stress job or try to adjust yourself. The former might take a bit longer, but the latter is a sensible one. However, it's easier said than done, and it's a harsh reality. Imagine a situation where a notification pops up on your screen regarding a new task or an unfinished task from your Boss. Suddenly, the heart beats faster than thunder, the mind gets tensed, your breath quickens, and all the negative thoughts reverberate, which is quite natural. But what if you have to grapple with such situations regularly? It can lead to chronic stress, and this can lead to a psychological syndrome called burnout. Its symptoms are feeling of exhaustion, headache and muscular pain regularly, etc. Burnout is a condition where a person is mentally, emotionally, psychologically, and physically exhausted. A few work-related factors that ignite it are – low salary, heavy workload, no independence etc.

There are no scientific formulae to eliminate work-related stress, but the following are a few tried methods to mitigate it-

1. Sound sleep–

The general presumption is that we sleep soundly when we are stress-free, but we can reduce stress if we have a sound sleep. People make excuses like they don't get time for proper sleep. They don't realize that skimping on sleep affects their bodies, minds, productivity, concentration, etc. If you alter your sleeping habits, then it can make a lot of difference in your physical and mental health. For example, the present generation has a habit of sneaking into their phones at night, checking social media for a minute or two after getting up, etc. These are bad habits. When they wake up, they do all things in haste and, throughout the day, feel drowsy. So do you think that these people would be able to handle any pressure? The answer is no because their mind is tired and exhausted. So, instead of looking into the phone, why don't lie down and give our phone a rest as well.

Eating habits also play an essential role in our sleep. Always try to eat something light before going to bed because if you eat heavy, before dwelling into slumber, it will take time for digestion, and the body doesn't get proper rest.

2. Proper exercise–

Nowadays, everyone is so much engaged in their work that they forget about their physical health. Exercising regularly boosts our mood and health, improving stamina and energy. It rejuvenates your whole body. If you don't have time to go to a gym, a 15-20 morning or an evening walk, running, dancing, etc., will serve the

purpose as it has a soothing effect on the nervous system. When the nervous system works properly, the mind also functions well.

3. Try to reach out to people–

If something is tethering you or you aren't able to cope up with an issue, discuss it with your colleagues or your supervisor. Sometimes, the best way to reduce stress is just to express yourself. Talking can be really a good way to blow off steam and regain your calmness. One needs to be social with coworkers, family members, and friends as being an introvert can sometimes take a toll on your mental health.

4. Set up your boundaries–

Nowadays, there's a general presumption that one will be available 24 hours a day. One should demarcate a line between personal and professional life. That may mean not to attend calls while spending time with family or not checking up email once you trespass your home boundary. Different people have a different opinion about how much time to allocate towards work and personal life, but make sure to set some time for personal life as well. This will help to mitigate the potential of work-life conflict, and the stress that goes with it.

As already stated, this is a marathon which we try to win, which in most of the cases we can't. Instead of focusing on winning, we should try to ***finish it well***. Finishing it, getting paid, returning home without any stress, and having a sound sleep is the biggest reward.

“Do your best and let the rest go. You can’t be perfect, no matter how hard you try, so give yourself credit for making an effort, and try to stop stressing about the outcome”

- Lori Deschene

“Stressed spelled backwards is desserts”

- Loretta Laroche

“Don’t be stressed, express”

- Michelle Chang

OVERTHINKING

Many people don't understand the difference between thinking and overthinking. Thinking constructively and in the right direction always bears good results. However, overthinking leads to the opposite. Overthinking is when we keep on pondering irrelevant things or simply stating when we don't live in the present. Thinking is the process of considering or reasoning about something. The moment we think about the future or the past, we trespass into the territory of overthinking. It isn't always bad as one has to think of future repercussions and also past experiences. Problems arise with situations that are not under our control. They cause various health problems like heart diseases, nervous disorders and can be fatal too. It can also lead to Chronic stress-a condition that arises from repeated exposure to situations leading to the release of stress hormones.

We need to understand that we can only take care of our actions, not the result. When we know that the end result isn't in our hands, why take the stress? Many problems will be solved if we live in the present. Most of our worries are just a fickle of our minds and don't take place. I have seen many people worrying whether they locked their home before leaving for a party? Whether a thief will barge into their house and steal all the jewellery and precious items? The list goes on and on. If you go by the law of averages, the chances of these incidences actually taking shape are minimal, and people tend to overthink them. It is detrimental to personal lives and can affect relationships.

According to **Dr. Kathryn Smreling**, a marriage and family psychologist, *"all of us overthink from time to time. The key is distinguishing when it's a once-in-a-while occurrence from when it's becoming a serious problem and can shatter even the strongest relationships"*. It will have a more negative effects as it can cause anxiety. We keep on thinking about imaginary situations which haven't taken place. This is one of the reasons for problems in marriages. We should discuss problems with our spouse. Just think about it.

Following are a few ways to overcome it-

(a) Think positive—

A prime reason for overthinking is negative thinking. If you feel that something is bothering you, first of all, think about its impact in the near future, or say, a year down the line. What will be the repercussions? Think of its possible solutions. By doing this, you are distracting yourself from unwarranted thoughts and focusing on the problem at hand.

People are more attracted to smiling faces because life is full of problems, and we need an escape from them. A pessimist always thinks the other way round, no matter how much you try to convince him. Instead of being pessimistic, try to search for solutions as much as possible.

(b) Take a break—

If you are grappling with something which is eating you, immediately take a break and refresh yourself. Do meditation or anything that will distract you. The reason is that a tired mind can't think constructively, but a fresh mind can.

Children take a break from studies whenever they feel weary or are stuck with any problem. They go out to play for a while or do something which they like to do to get a fresh mind. The same principle applies to us as well.

However, you cannot go out and play while at the workplace, but at least you can take a break for, say about, 5 to 10 minutes. If that's not possible, then just go and have a cup of coffee or tea when your mind is stuck somewhere.

It's not necessary that your problem will be solved. However, you will be able to think about it more rationally and peacefully.

(c) There are two ways of looking at a half-filled glass–

Yes, it is true. It's on you how to look at things. I always look like a glass half-filled rather than a half-empty. Similarly, a situation can be seen in two ways – either as an opportunity to learn something new or as a problem. I always take it as a challenge, and when you are doing something, new problems will arise, but there is always an opportunity to learn something as well. People who have achieved great feats have always taken the situation as an opportunity, and that's why they are successful in life. We should accept a situation as a challenge and try to excel in it rather than always thinking negatively all the time. It's all about perception.

"The greatest weapon against stress is our ability to choose one thought over another"

- William James

STOP COMPARING YOURSELF WITH OTHERS

Stop comparing yourself with others as you are one of a kind. When comparison creeps in, we begin to envy and, in the process, invite unnecessary stress. We should understand that everyone is different, and instead of envying, we should learn from them. Jealousy arises when someone else becomes successful or achieves something which we desire. Instead of brooding, we should wonder where we are wrong and how we can improve ourselves. Comparing yourself with someone else means that you have accepted him/her as a winner or better than you. Please take it positively and try to imbibe the qualities he/she possesses. You won't become like them, but indeed, you will become a better person. It will have a dual advantage- you will give stiff competition to them, and secondly, you will stop stressing because you have realized where you were lacking and start working on it. So instead of having an inferiority complex, why doesn't one look at self-improvement? A person has to be a winner within himself first before being a winner outside. You all must have seen that the green-eyed monster doesn't rise in his/her life. Ego is the starting point in someone's downfall.

Ankit Arora, class topper of our college, was quite active in extracurricular activities and was also popular among the students. There was another guy, Karan Mehta, who was jealous of him. Karan always kept thinking about Ankit's success instead of thinking about his own, and to be honest, no one even bothered. One day he asked me that "why is it that Ankit is so famous and not me? I am also among the top ranks in the college, but why is he more popular than me? Am I a loser"? Then I replied, "If you have

accepted yourself as a loser, then no one can make you a winner. First, become a winner within. Only then you can become a winner outside. Secondly, instead of thinking about others, why don't you do some introspection? Why are you stressing yourself by always thinking negatively? Ankit is quite active in extracurricular activities like public speaking, inter-college debate competitions, etc., That's why everyone knows him, but that doesn't mean you are worse off or anyone else. Everyone is good at something or the other, and so are you. Why don't you focus on that particular thing and try to get better? Everyone can read that grumpy look on your face. He accepted it, and after that Karan started to focus on athletics because he excelled at it. Now, instead of fretting, he started to hone his god-gifted skills. In the inter-school racing competition, he showcased his talent and won a gold medal for us. Since then, he has never taken a back seat.

The same principle applies to every stage of life. If someone is better than you in any field, there's no harm in accepting it because it doesn't mean that you are lower. A winner always tries to make better himself and never frets about other's success or quality, and a loser does exactly the opposite.

"The jealous are troublesome to others, but torment to themselves"

- William Penn

"Blessed is he who has learned to admire but not envy, to follow not imitate, to praise but not flatter, and to lead but not to manipulate"

- William Arthur Ward

FOLLOW YOUR INTUITION

Yes, you heard it right "Follow your Intuition". People who are messed up with their lives are the ones who force themselves to do things they don't want to and later regret that they didn't listen to their hearts. When you do things according to your likings, you will never feel burdened; it will seem like play, and won't feel exhausted. In fact, you will excel. I am not advocating that one should just focus on what their heart says because sometimes it might not be enough to meet expenses. You need to have a source of income for survival, but at the same time, for living a joyful and happy life, you need to have a **"Source of Happiness"** as well. People have different hobbies like playing the guitar, reading, writing, practicing yoga, daily exercises, etc., and the list goes on. People make excuses saying they don't have time for hobbies as they are occupied with daily chores.

Time is no constraint when you follow your passion vigorously. Time is fixed for everyone i.e., 24 hours a day, and a successful person manages to adjust accordingly. If you wake up by 07:00 A.M. and start your day, why don't you wake up by 05:00 A.M. and give those peaceful and serene 2 hours to yourself? Initially, you might find it challenging to do so, but after some time, say about a week, you will start feeling rejuvenated. You will feel fresh and agile. If you can't do it, then you have to grapple with your daily routine. Remember, ***"Everyone has a family, everyone gets themselves and their kids ready, everyone is in a hurry to reach their office, everyone is in a rush to reach back home, everyone has to raise their kids, everyone needs to have dinner,***

everyone needs to go to bed, and everyone needs to meet their expenses". But what differentiates a successful person from a less successful one? It's time management. Had Bill Gates not managed his time, he would have been a common man. We idolize personalities like him, but most of us don't follow them. ***"You do have to be lucky enough, but also fanatical enough to keep going"*** are his words. No one would have known him had he wasted his time. So stop making excuses, give some time to yourself and do things which make you happy. No one wants to lie on their death-bed regretting "I could have done this, I could have done that," etc. The biggest punishment for a living being is when he/she incarcerates himself/herself in the prison of "Regret." Remember, all successful people whom we admire followed their intuitions, no matter how hard. Had they not followed their calling, no one would have known them.

The ex-Indian Cricket Captain, Mahender Singh Dhoni, is a perfect example. He worked as a travelling ticket examiner (TTE) at the Kharagpur railway station for 2 years for earning a living. However, his calling was for the Cricket, and he managed to become one of the most successful Cricket Captains to represent India. Had he given up on his dreams, who knows, he might have been living a stressful life today.

One more example that comes to my mind is of **Mangte Chungneijang Mary Kom (Known as Mary Kom)**. She resumed her boxing career after having two kids. She followed her intuition, and now she is a household name. Everything has a price tag attached to it as nothing comes for free. We have to pay the price for reducing stress in life, and that is ***"A bit of time management and following your intuitions"***.

Another dimension to the problem is that people don't know what to do. They are forced to do things right from the beginning. I have seen parents pressurizing their children to choose the subjects of their choice, rather than the subjects of the child's own choice. They are sowing the seeds of stress in his/her mind right from an early age. The result is that he/she isn't able to make their own decisions and is always low in confidence. They always have to dance to someone else's tune. Even if the child is lucky enough to choose his desired subjects, he/she is pressured to get good marks and again the same result. Children who are born and brought up in such an environment aren't able to do things of their own choice which ultimately leads to depression, anxiety, etc. When such people turn up for an interview, they aren't sure of themselves, and most of them get rejected. Everyone in this world has got some talent; they just need to identify and follow it.

My sincere advice ***"follow your passion and dream with perseverance"*** and happiness will follow.

" If you feel like there's something out there that you're supposed to be doing, if you have a passion for it, then stop wishing and just do it"-

Wanda Sykes

"Too many of us are not living our dreams because we are living our fears" –

Les Brown

SPEAK OUT WHAT IS GOING ON IN YOUR MIND

How many of us dare to speak our mind? Very few of us; it is quite natural because we don't want to confront or, if I put it this way, most of us are scared of the repercussions. There's a battle going on within ourselves, and we keep on thinking about how can we convince others, what will be their reaction, etc. The first thing is to write down the pros and cons of whatever is going on in your mind. You yourself know what is right and what is wrong. After writing down, make a self-assessment. If the negatives outweigh the positives, then obviously it's risky and it's always better to seek the advice of others. The problem arises when you feel more positives than negatives while someone may feel the other way. In such cases, we have to present facts politely. If lady luck is on your side, you might convince them and move on. In most cases, people don't present the factual data and end up in a mess.

A friend of mine followed this practice of writing down the facts. He wanted to start up a travel and tourism business, and while discussing it with his parents and relatives, everyone replied in negative. So, he made a detailed study and collected the data regarding this business. He went up for the second round of discussion and presented all the facts like the market condition (travel and tourism were booming at that time), its cost, the risk involved, planning, etc. Still, he couldn't convince all of them, but by then, he had convinced a few. He was firm in his decision. He told his father that if he doesn't succeed, then he will do what he wanted him to do. He got lucky the third time, and now he is quite successful in his life. My friend got lucky, but what about those who

don't get the desired results? Again, be firm and show that you won't be happy or you can't survive without trying to pursue your dreams. If you don't try you'll regret it always. If you are forced to do something against your will, you will not succeed. However, always remember to discuss things with elders because they are more experienced. They will always guide you in the right direction. Respect their opinion and always be polite. Remember, if you don't speak out, you will always be under pressure and stressed.

Most of us must have watched the blockbuster movie "3 Idiots". Remember the scene where Farhan tries to persuade his father, Mr. Qureshi that he doesn't want to continue with engineering because he was more inclined towards wildlife photography. He tells his father that he won't be able to live happily if he is forced to become an engineer. Here is the link of the same <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vWouk7Y38RE>.

In a nutshell, do the things which are close to your heart. However, before choosing an option for yourself, measure the pros and cons. Discuss with your near and dear ones and also lend them your ears. If you know you are going for the right option, show them your conviction towards your choice.

"Talking is still cheap. You need to express yourself, speak your mind, say what you mean, and mean what you said" –

Nurudeen Ushawu

"When you are balanced, and when you listen and attend to the needs of your body, mind, and spirit, your natural beauty comes out" –

Christy Turlington

POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT

One of the most critical factors of a child's development is the environment. If the child's environment is full of tension, hatred, lugubrious things, etc., then the child will always be wretched and will never live a healthy and peaceful life. The societal norms, religious beliefs, the atmosphere at home, etc. are various factors that have a bearing effect on an individual's personality. If a child is discouraged from the beginning and made felt that he/she is a burden and won't be successful, the end result can be devastating. The child will always be grumpy, will not be able to connect to society, and prefer isolation leading to poor health, stressed mind, skepticism, etc. This will further aggravate the child's mental and physical health.

One of my friends always used to shout, get irritated over small things and, in the long run, he had to face the brunt. One morning I met him and asked why he gets angry so quickly? He replied with a crotchety face, "Do you think I will be able to do anything in my life? Right from the beginning, I was told that I am dumb and good for nothing. No one, even my parents, ever bothered to listen and always shouted at me. What do you think a curse like me can do?" I saw his eyes welling and went blank for a moment. I tried to think about what he must have been through all those years of loneliness. He couldn't speak out to anyone about what he was going through. We never think of the reason for someone's peculiar behavior. No one is born with negative thoughts. It's people who sow the seeds of negativity in a person's mind which later on .develops into a tree with branches of

negativity and fruits of hatred, anguish and stress. The roots are so strong that they can't be axed down easily. I thought that it will take time to chop off this tree of negativity. I told him, "Don't worry I am always there for you and whenever you feel low, just turn to me" and to my surprise, he smiled at me - a smile full of hope and expectation as if someone has found an oasis in the desert. He said in a sobbing voice, "Thanks". It took just a moment to clear the clutter in his mind and fill it up with positivity, confidence, expectation, and a sense of belonging. Now, whenever he wants to discuss an important issue, he always comes up to me and I welcome him wholeheartedly. I realized it wasn't his fault that he got angry, irritated all the time, and was an introvert. Here the fault lay in his upbringing, the people who didn't listen and always treated him like a burden. We expect our children to be bright and excel in life, but do we give them a proper atmosphere to grow? We tend to forget that ***"what you sow is what you reap"***. You sow the seeds of positivity, you will reap positive results; you sow seeds of negativity, you are bound to get the same in return.

When a person feels that he/she doesn't deserve to be a part of society, then they force themselves to take the extreme step. Remember, ***"This Isn't The Solution."*** Life will go on, and people will get busy again after a few days of mourning. If your stress is failure, remember that Thomas Edison, the brain behind the bulb, could also have given up easily after failing in his first attempt. He made 10,000 attempts to make a bulb and failed as many times. Had he given up a, today we wouldn't have electric bulbs. People always remember you for your good deeds and contribution. Negative thoughts causes depression. If you have them, speak or discuss with your family, friends, etc., as it requires

just one person to talk to, and that can be anyone. Think about your loved and dear ones - what will happen to them after you, who will take care of them, will they be able to overcome the grief, and who will be responsible for their sufferings? Their life depends upon you. By taking this extreme step, would you be able to give justice to them? By ending your life, you are going to kill them, and their pain will be unbearable. One can't be so mean, can they? Thinking about them will give you confidence, and that's what is required. If you don't have anyone to talk to, then take the help of a counselor. There is no shame in seeking any help. Remember, ***"the world will only mourn for a few days, and after that, no one will care. People only remember you for your good deeds."***

Remember, people forget a person who has surrendered. Always keep on fighting the situation, no matter how hard, because most successful people have gone through the dark phases in their life and ***"Suicide doesn't end the chances of life getting worse, it eliminates the possibility of it ever getting any better"***.

It becomes our duty to make a conducive environment where people can talk, discuss their problems, or anything they want to clear the wayward thoughts going on in their head. As a parent, we must allow our children to speak up so that we can help them overcome any problem they are facing. As a teacher, make sure that there is a proper school environment so that students can come up with anything they want to share. As a friend, make sure that you have enough time to listen before it's too late. As an employer, make sure that there's a proper mechanism that allows employees to raise their voice if they have something to discuss in the organization.

Please make sure that you attend a person's call or a text. Only when a person is in distress then he/she tries to come to you. I have seen people ignoring calls or messages, thinking them not to be important. For you, it might not be that important, but for the caller, a small dose of your time can be a dose of confidence. It may not be possible for you to attend someone's call all the time but, even if you are busy, kindly drop a message saying you will call back later. It is a small step that can mitigate a big mishap.

If we make our surroundings positive, then people will be stress-free and live a peaceful and meaningful life.

"Yesterday is not ours, but tomorrow is ours to win or lose"-

Lyndon B. Johnson

"Pessimism leads to weakness, optimism to power"-

William James

"Perpetual optimism is a force multiplier"-

Colin Powell

DON'T WASTE TIME FRETTING OVER BY GONES

If we don't train our mind, it can fickle. It can dwell easily in its favorite place, i.e., **"The Past"**, for eternity, if not appropriately trained. It digs into the graves of the past and resurrects dead memories to haunt us. It becomes really miserable because the person cannot live in the present. It affects our lifestyles in a big way as we cannot concentrate in the office, personal lives, etc. People say forget the past and move on but had it been so easy, more than half of the world's population would have been living a stress-free life. So how to get rid of the past? I would like to share my experience. I had an issue with a friend, which kept me distracted for a long. Picking up the phone, I talked to him and tried to sort it out. I did everything I could, but we couldn't come on to terms despite it. After some time, I thought, why am I taking so much pain? Why should I feel guilty after trying my best? I did my best to persuade him, made every effort to be on good terms, and took the initiative to resolve the matter. The communication gap is a big issue. If you feel pestered by the past, try to fix it. It will really help a lot in easing your mind. The biggest mistake people make is that they keep on thinking about others- Mr. A did that, Mr. B did that, and all that stuff. We forget to think that we should make an effort and if nothing goes in your favor, you will earn a thing called "Experience" which will help you in a long way.

An acquaintance of mine was also suffering from the same problem. His business partner cheated him to the tune of \$1.5 million, which is more than enough to give a heart attack. He filed a

suit against him, and the matter kept lingering around 5 years. Finding him always stressed, which was quite obvious, I asked him the reason, and he narrated the whole story. I told him that he was trying his best, hoping to win the case. Many people in the world don't even bother to give a try. The only thing in our hands is ***"to keep trying."*** I told him it's not only him who is under stress, his partner, against whom the suit is filed, might also be having sleepless nights. We think we are the only sufferers, but that isn't the case. I asked him, "Why are you not using your experience for something else? You are doing your part and not leaving any stone unturned, so why worry? We can't change the past, but we can make efforts so that it doesn't affect our present and future." He said with a bit of confidence that "yes mate, you are right. I am trying, but nothing is in my control. Yes, my business partner may also be having many sleepless nights and I should use my experience in something else otherwise my present and future are at risk". Eventually, after a long toil, he won the court battle, but the battle within him was won much before. He started to focus on another business and made sure that he didn't make the same mistake as previously.

If I don't mention the story of one of my friends, then it'll be a sin. He was preparing for his examinations, and suddenly, his wife asked for a divorce. He was in shock, and when he asked her the reason, she replied "I think I am an obstacle in your life." He kept on persuading her that she was wrong. However, she was adamant and decided to leave him. Now imagine the kind of stress he must have been going through during that period. It's beyond imagination. One night he called me and, in a sobbing voice, he narrated the whole story. For a few minutes, I was also in a state of

shock and was speechless. I went completely blank as he kept on crying continuously over the phone (which was natural). Adding to his sorrows, he had his examinations in the next few months, and I felt like I couldn't help him. I controlled myself and told him to talk and try his best to persuade her. We had a long chat, and we kept on talking quite regularly. I kept on telling him again and again, ***“do your best efforts as nothing else is in your hands. Think to yourself, I am making all the efforts, and the rest is up to the Almighty. Even if I did something wrong, I made all the efforts to persuade her, and if she isn't willing to compromise, then that's her fault, not mine. So why should I take stress for the wrong doing of others when I did everything right”***. Slowly and steadily, these thoughts took over his senses, and he was in a better frame of mind after a few days. He was able to concentrate on his studies better and managed to pass his exams. Today he is associated with one of the biggest companies in India.

So whenever you grapple with the past, then do the following things-

- Make an effort to rectify the mistake or problem.
- Think that at least you are trying or tried your level best. There are many who don't even try and blame their fate.
- The end result lies with the Almighty.
- You always gain experience and use it in something else.
- Even if things aren't going in your favor, tell yourself, “I have given my best shot, and I should be proud of that.”

“Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow has not yet come. We have only today. Let us begin.”-

Mother Teresa

KEEP YOURSELF OCCUPIED AND LIMIT THE USAGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Always try to keep yourself occupied and don't waste time on unimportant things. Citing my own example, I wake up early in the morning, around 5:00 A.M. and do the things which I love. I love reading and writing (as I am doing right now). After a couple of hours or so, I get ready and leave for the office. After 9 hours of office, I return and give an hour to the topic which I have to write the next morning. Then I spend the rest of the time with my family and go to bed. This is quite a simple but effective routine because I hardly get time to think about anything else. Earlier, I thought about petty things. Later on, I realized I was harming myself more than doing good as I wasn't utilizing those precious hours in anything constructive and created unnecessary stress and hassles. Instead of wasting time and energy, I pondered that if I channelize my thoughts properly, it could lead to something meaningful. After that, I started engaging myself in reading, writing, etc. Slowly and steadily, I found myself occupied with something which will help me in the long run. You need some time to think about yourself and how your life is shaping up. It would also help you to introspect, but don't waste that time in trivial matters. If you also follow my idea, you won't have a chance for negative things in your life.

Negative thoughts are always knocking on the doors of your mind, and if you give them a sniff, they will leave their traces behind without you opening the door. This doesn't mean you should not enjoy or relax. I simply mean, doesn't waste your time on unwanted thoughts. This will have a dual effect – First, you

achieve your targets, and second, there will be less stress. Bill Gates is an example for all of us. He never wastes time. This is because it is ***“utterly impossible for any human mind, no matter how brilliant, to think of more than one thing at any given time.”*** This holds absolutely true as none of us can think of more than one thing at a time.

One of the problems with most of us is that we keep lingering on things as we take time for granted, and later on, we pressurize ourselves when we aren't able to complete them. For example, if you have been assigned a task by your Boss which is supposed to be completed in 10 days', then why wait till the last day? You should try to get it done 2 to 3 days before the deadline. For the first few days, people tend to relax, and by the time they realize, sometimes it may be too late, and they have to face the consequences. Whenever I get a task, I try to do it within the deadline, and after completing it, I concentrate on things that revive me. I hardly get any time for worrying. Yes, sometimes there might be some extraordinary circumstances that prevent you from completing your work on time, but the probability of completing it is much higher. This will also help you boost your career because every organization wants an efficient employee. An acquaintance of mine got a letter of appreciation from his company's management, stating that they acknowledge his punctuality and good work.

Time management is an important tool in personal lives as well because you simply get more time to spend with your family. Visualize yourself returning after a long day, and you are in a bad mood because of what happened in the office, so what kind of an impression will you leave on your family? Negative. Now visualize yourself returning in a cheerful mood, and here, the impression will

be positive. So, the option is entirely yours whether you want to make a negative or a positive impact.

One of the biggest distractions these days is “***Social Media.***” While doing an important task, one tends to sneak into his/her phone whenever a notification pops up, and on an average, it consumes around 5-10 minutes. It not only eats up a few minutes but plays with your concentration. As a result, there are chances that an error might occur without even realizing it. You might have to pay for it. This is a serious issue, and if not addressed properly, then it’s going to hamper a lot. An acquaintance came up to me as he was expelled from his job for the same reason. He told me that he worked for long hours and despite of that he told him to leave. I asked him how often he used to sneak into his phone while in the office. He said, “quite several times, but it doesn’t have to do anything with the job”. I told him it does matter a lot, no matter for how long you stay in office or how hard you work, if you’re not able to deliver properly then the company will sack you. Your Boss will ask whether you have completed the given task properly, and if not, then face the brunt. I further explained to him that looking into phone on regular intervals affects the concentration level because when you are doing something, your mind is completely dedicated towards it. If you break the concentration, you get distracted, and your mind loses track. That’s where the problem starts. Now, suppose this had not happened, the situation may have been different as he would not have been searching for a job. He has unnecessarily caused a problem for himself, and luckily I was able to make him understand that it was his fault. People nowadays play the blame game without realizing their mistake. I am not saying you shouldn’t attend an important call or message during work.

There is a solution to this problem. Taking a break from your work is the thing I recommend, but it should be a proper one when you take a break. For example, while taking a tea break or snack break you can look at your social media messages, notifications, etc. because ***“you aren’t working at that time”***. I consider time management important because if you can do things on time, you won’t stress.

It is a pervasive problem among students and children that they get distracted easily by social media. One of the reasons is that they follow the footsteps of their parents. I see many parents just sticking to their phones all the time, and the child imbibes such habits from their parents. Paying attention to their children is more important than paying attention to their phones because ***“you reap what you sow,”*** and here, most of the parents are sowing the idea that social media is everything to them. If we limit the usage, then our children will also do the same. Social media nowadays is a necessary evil, but we can limit its usage.

Apart from distraction, social media is one of the reasons for stress, anxiety, and depression among the present generation. As per a survey, it has been found that people who spend most of the time on social media have been shown to have a substantial (13%-66%) rate of reported depression than the ones who spend less time. By engaging themselves more on social media, they spend less time with their peers in real. Everyone wants a physical connection rather than a virtual one. Nowadays, many people have more than 1000 friends on Facebook and other platforms but hardly anyone to talk to in person. When a child doesn’t have anyone to talk to and can’t express himself, this adds to mental stress. There is a lot of difference between expressing yourself

virtually and expressing yourself physically. When someone talks to a person over the phone or face to face, one can understand the feelings by the expression or the tone, which might be missing on social media. Social media lacks the emotional element in most cases.

This addiction to social media also causes mental problems as well. One thing common nowadays is that if someone doesn't respond on What's App, Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter (4 most commonly used social media platform), the other person thinks that he/she is being neglected or ignored. This is also a reason for mental ailments like depression, stress, insomnia, etc. The sooner we realize, the better it will be for all of us.

We can't get rid of social media, but at least we can control its usage and protect our children from the mental problems that might arise out of it. Nowadays, we hardly find children playing with their friends in the park because most of them play outdoor sports virtually, not physically. As a parent or an elder, we should take an initiative and tell our young ones the importance of physical activities. This thing should be done right from an early age. If we expect that after reading this book we will guide our children to have a social and physical interaction, go out and play Football or Cricket physically and they will pay heed to your advice, then there are very few chances that it will happen. If we teach these things in their growing years, they will follow the same and won't get addicted.

Limit its usage by talking to your children, family, friends, and close ones because when you do this, you are showing that they are more important. Young ones will get a sense of belonging.

They will also talk to you, share their feelings, etc. When people talk to each other, there is a sense of real connectivity and a good means to reduce all the tensions and stress in lives. Remember, only your near and dear ones will help you in troubling times and not those who post a sad emoji or express their sorrow virtually.

So connect more physically and less virtually.

HAVE A PET OR A BABY

Out of context, right? The answer is “No.” Although it’s not possible for all of us to have the luxury of a baby, yet you can have a pet or play with stray cats or dogs. Many must be thinking that I am going out of the way, but strangely, this is a good way to reduce stress. When you reach home after a stressful day and see your little one passing that innocent smile, you get rejuvenated, gradually forgetting about the hard day at the office. If you find your pet waiting for you when you return, the way it leaps onto you as soon you enter your home eradicates all your tensions, and you start cuddling it, bringing an automatic smile on your face. This is a scientific fact that pet therapy can help a person suffering from medical issues like anxiety, stress, etc. You ask any of your friends, relatives, colleagues, etc., who have pets in their homes, and they will tell you how they act as a therapist. They lighten the environment by showing unconditional love and attraction towards the family, which helps a lot. Unconditional love is more beneficial than any medicine. Animals are a much better companion for a human than a human himself. They won't betray you or expect anything from you, and you get a sense of security with them. As human beings, we want a companion who is loving and caring, but nowadays these qualities have lessened (babies are exceptions). However, you will find them in abundance in animals. This is what is required to reduce stress.

I relate to this because I also had a pet. I had a kitten (unfortunately, she passed away) who always loved to sit on my lap. Whenever I got nervous, anxious, or angry, she used to come

and sit on my lap, and I cuddled and played with her. She was my dose of happiness as she didn't expect anything in return. All that she wanted was a bit of attention, food, and love. Trust me, it's magical.

This therapy is quite useful, especially for people who are introvert and living alone. Introverts can't easily express themselves to others but, when with pets, and they express whatever they have in their heart because they know no one will judge them. This therapy helps in curing various diseases like blood pressure, hypertension, anxiety, etc. If you don't have a pet, you can feed stray animals and spend a few quality hours cuddling them, and you will see the difference you make to them and vice versa.

“There is no psychiatrist in the world like a puppy licking your face” –

Ben Williams

AVOID HEATED ARGUMENTS

Many times, people enter into unnecessary arguments which lead to quarrels. I have mentioned this because when we do so, we unnecessarily shower anger and frustration, which is also a kind of stress. I am speaking from personal experience. I have seen many office colleagues entering into unnecessary arguments, which culminate into a disaster. I sometimes wonder what they gain out of it and why they do so. After a lot of research, I found out that ***"When people take an argument as a personal attack, that's the trigger point"*** and secondly, ***"When people enter into an argument without facts"*** things tend to get ugly. These two things mostly happen when there's a political debate or a discussion on a burning topic. There are always two sides of a coin, and we need to understand that everyone is entitled to have an opinion. We are no one to judge anyone. However, that doesn't mean we should keep mum if someone is supporting/doing something wrong. Everyone has their own perspective, and we should not jump to the conclusion.

Facts are the most important thing in a discussion. People argue without having proper facts. Then things tend to get ugly. During a discussion, make sure you have the relevant data and information, and if you don't have them, keep silent.

I am not saying one should not be a part of any debate or discussion. One should take part when they are properly equipped and make sure to never attack someone personally for their views.

Counter-attack takes place, and people get furious, which invites unwanted stress.

What's the point of having a useless, baseless discussion which only creates a negative environment? I have seen people having grudges just because of it, and that takes a toll on them. Whenever you feel that things are getting out of control, just stop and leave the place respectfully because no one wants to break an otherwise healthy relationship over such trivial matters.

“Arguments are to be avoided: they are always vulgar and convincing”-

Oscar wild

HAVE A FEARLESS APPROACH

Fear causes worry, worry causes stress, and stress causes diseases. This is a complete chain. We need to break this chain right now to stop the flow of diseases. It doesn't mean to throw caution to the wind and don't misinterpret "Fearless" with "Careless". There's a difference between the two. Fearless exhibits confidence, self-reliance and "Careless" exhibits "Carelessness".

Until and unless you develop a fearless approach, you can't achieve big. A bold person knows the *"If's and but's"* and is well informed of a situation that might occur and a careless or a casual one is exactly the opposite. Those who are dynamic always carry a pleasant smile on the face and are ready to accept challenges. A well-informed person can handle a situation much better. The same principle applies to an organization as well. If the owner of an organization is knowledgeable and valorous, then you see the organization blossom. However, there is a word of caution *"Don't go too fast."*

Nowadays, many people under 40 are suffering from maladies. This is because they want everything quickly and exert so much pressure on themselves that the nervous system gets impacted in a big way. Medical Science has expanded like anything. Today we have treatment for almost all the physical ailments, but we hardly have any medicine for mental ailments like depression, worry, anxiety, etc. Only we can cure them if we want. It's a disheartening fact that people nowadays, before even starting their lives, end their lives. Everyone wants to live a luxurious life, no

matter even if it takes a toll on their health. What's the point of having a Porsche, a Chartered Plane, or a Helicopter when you are living on medicines or having to inject yourself insulin weekly. According to Plato, ***“the greatest mistake physicians make is that they attempt to cure the body without attempting to cure the mind, yet the mind and body are one and should not be treated separately”***. We need to understand that things will come at the right time.

One of the reasons for worry is that everyone nowadays wants early success. By this I mean they want to have all the luxuries before 30, which might not happen in most cases might not happen. Setting a target or goal isn't a bad thing because everyone wants to achieve their goals as soon as possible and need to work hard to attain them. But sometimes, people misinterpret the word "hard work" to mean "work infinitely." There's a lot of difference between the two. Hard work means working with punctuality and in a planned manner. These are required to achieve your goals. "Work Infinitely" means to work without any plan. Sitting in the office till midnight and completing all the pending tasks doesn't mean that you are hardworking; it means that you are not working efficiently. If you are in the race of achieving materialistic things, then one thing is certain that you will be in the lead for "worries and stress", whether you get your Porsche or not. Secondly, you are on the verge of losing the most important thing i.e. "life." Work hard to achieve your dreams, but not at the cost of your health. Plan out your work but don't make living a luxurious life your only goal. When you are stressed, your mind and body don't work to their full potential- that might hamper your progress. We need to understand that to live a peaceful life, we need to live a

balanced life. Take out some time for family, friends, or things you like to do that rejuvenates you. This will give you the peace you need. It's important to maintain a pace under present conditions, yet it also requires ***"the peace to maintain that pace"***.

"Slow down and enjoy life. It's not only the scenery you miss by going too fast- you also miss the sense of where you are going and why"-

Eddie Cantor

"If you are an overnight sensation, you can be yesterday's news in no time. Whereas building something slowly and carefully that has value and quality, that's what's going to have legs"-

Anna Wintour

DON'T LET ANGER CONTROL YOU

It is humane to be angry, and nobody is untouched by this vice. Anger is inevitable, and controlling it is in our hands. If you don't control it, it will control you. This leads to unnecessary stress. It is something that we can't get rid of, and it is a necessary evil. However, we can mitigate its impact on our lives. If channelized properly it can yield good results, but by far, it has got more negatives than positives.

For instance, if you raise your voice against injustice, then it's absolutely fine to show your resentment. However, most of us get angry about petty issues that could have been dealt with politely. It can have a devastating effect on our body if not controlled. Slowly and slowly, it can snowball into something colossal, which can lead to repentance later on. We all must have come across headlines in the newspaper where a person stabs another in the heat of the moment and gets incarcerated. It just takes a minute to boil in indignation and that person has to repent throughout his life. If you set the alarm to wake up by say 06.00 A.M. and if you miss it out, you should be angry with yourself. If you aren't able to meet up with your planned schedule, then being harsh on yourself is absolutely fine because it's you who will be benefitted. But when the results are the other way round, then it's a problem. Suppose you are a senior at the workplace and you keep on getting angry unnecessarily on employees. In that case, it will have a negative impact on the Company since a negative environment will be created. Remember, I have used the word

“Unnecessarily,” and as I said, sometimes it is required to get the work done.

A common problem among couples is that they fight on petty issues. There are many such issues that can't be put into words and the impact is disastrous. Sometimes it can lead to a divorce. Why do such things happen? Because of ego clashes which take the form of anger later on. If there is some problem, then why keep it in your mind? Discuss it with your spouse and get it resolved. If one of them tries to converse with the other, the other should listen. If they don't, quarrels take place. It takes a long time to build a healthy relationship, and it takes just a second to destroy it.

Walking on a street, if a person accidentally collides with someone, instead of apologizing, many people start accusing each other, and sometimes, a heated argument turns into a scuffle. The situation gets worse when two-wheelers collide accidentally. Now imagine if a small incidence that could have been dealt harmoniously takes the shape of a scuffle and the police come into the picture. This can be avoided. What is the point if engaging in a skirmish with a person you are not likely to meet in your entire life becomes the reason for your medical bills? Is he gonna pay you? No.

If you keep getting angry over small issues, remember you are damaging an otherwise healthy environment or creating a negative environment and, ***"you are passing your habits onto your children."*** If we keep on fretting about petty issues, then how can we expect our children and family to be happy? When children grow watching their parents fighting, it is most likely they can't

grow up as a responsible adult. It's a complete cycle. If we keep ourselves out of those trivial matters and try to live happily, then the results will be the other way round. Anger always causes unnecessary stress, and we have to find a way to control it.

Following are a few ways by which one can control anger-

(a) Effective communication–

In many cases, the problem arises because people directly jump to a conclusion without understanding the other's point of view. In a heated environment, first of all slow down a bit and don't say anything that comes to your mind at that time. Lend your ears to the other because listening and understanding can definitely reduce the chances of an unnecessary quarrel.

(b) Problem-solving attitude–

Develop a problem-solving attitude. It's very natural to get agitated when things get out of control. There is a common belief that every problem has got a solution, but it doesn't hold true in all the cases, leading to frustration. The best possible response in those situations is dealing with the problem rather than how to solve it. It's surprising to know that in most cases, the problems can be dealt with easily. To illustrate, if you get angry when your child doesn't switch off the light of his room, just shut the door of your room so that the light doesn't enter. There are various situations that can be dealt with like that.

(c) Changing the environment–

Sometimes the situation demands a change in the environment, i.e., one should leave the place immediately to avoid unnecessary arguments. When you feel that you have tried your best to control the situation, but still the problem persists, move out. This will quell the situation. I always follow this practice when I feel that I have done everything on my part.

These are just a few ways of controlling your aggression. There are many other ways like engaging yourself in other activities or talking with someone, etc. The idea is to make sure that your anger doesn't take a toll on your health, mind, and body as it can play havoc. So try to control it to the extent possible so that it doesn't ruin your life.

“Anybody can become angry - that is easy, but to be angry with the right person and to the right degree and at the right time and for the right purpose, and in the right way - that is not within everybody's power and is not easy.”-

Aristotle

“ Whatever is begun in anger ends in shame”-

Benjamin Franklin

LEAVE NO STONE UNTURNED

One shall never bow down to adversities. We all must have heard, *“when life gives you lemons, make lemonade.”* It means that if there are obstacles in life try to convert them into opportunities. Easier said than done, but that’s the harsh reality. As long as there is a chance to improve a situation, fight for it. The problem is that people give up quite soon and then criticize their destiny for their misfortune. Every successful person on earth has gone through a challenging phase in his/her life, and had they surrendered, and they would have been a common man. There are two options – either surrender and keep on being disgruntled all the time or try to get out of the adversity.

Have you ever heard about Colonel Harland Sanders – The owner of Kentucky, Fried Chicken (known as KFC)? Here is his story. At the age of 5, he lost his father. By the age of 16 he left school, and by 17, he lost four jobs and married at 18. At 19, he became a father, and by 20, his wife left him and took their daughter with her. Between 22 to 28, he was a railroad conductor but failed miserably. He joined the army and did the dishes there. After that, he applied for law school, where he was rejected. Then he tried his hands on being an insurance salesman and again, he failed. At 65, when he retired, he was given a cheque worth \$105. He contemplated suicide. One day he sat under a tree and wrote his will, but he wrote what he would have accomplished with his life. He realized that there was much more to do. There was one thing which he could do better than anyone he knew, and that was cooking. He borrowed \$87 against his cheque, bought and fried up

some chicken using his recipe, and went door to door to sell them. At 88, he became a billionaire.

No one can imagine the pain he must have gone through. If he would have committed suicide, the world wouldn't have known him. Just imagine a person in his mid 60's, had to start from scratch at the retirement age. We can't imagine even in the wildest of our dreams the kind of mental, physical stress he must have gone through. But did he give up? No, because he understood that if there is still a chance, then why shouldn't he give it a try. Most people give up between 30-40, and here is a man who started from scratch at the age of 65. A person who was left bereft after his wife left him and took their daughter along when he wasn't even 20, just imagine how much agony he must have gone through? Why can't we take a leaf out of his book and follow him? Success never comes easily. Most people stress out when they fail in their very first attempt. Had being successful been that easy, then everyone on this planet would have lived a happier life. Everything in this world comes at a cost, and so does success. And the cost of being successful is ***"try hard, harder and harder"***.

"Hard work beats talent when talent doesn't work hard"-

Tim Notke

"No matter how hard you work, someone else is working harder"-

Elon Musk

"Dream big, stay positive, work hard, and enjoy the journey"-

Urijah Faber

PRACTICE YOGA

Stress is all about controlling your mind. If you can control your mind and body, you will have less stress and live a more peaceful life. For that Yoga is very useful. It has got tremendous effect over your mind, body, and thinking. For many centuries, ancient people have performed this art and has been a part of our culture.

Our Honorable Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modiji, has been vocal about performing yoga because it has numerous benefits. Since 2015 every 21st June is celebrated as International Yoga Day worldwide.

Even the Doctor's advice their patients to perform Yoga for their good health. In fact, there are many Yoga rooms in various hospitals like the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS). It can give a great immunity boost to people and provide them good health, both mentally and physically. It connects the body and the breath, and when both are connected, the thinking becomes clearer. You feel more inspired and positive, and when the mind gets positive, it becomes stress-free and peaceful.

Yoga is an antidote to stress. It combines stress-reducing techniques, including exercises and learning how to control the breath, clearing the mind, and relaxing the body and soul. If performed consistently, it can yield wonderful results.

Hatha Yoga is the physical practice of yoga postures. There are different types of Hatha Yoga. A few are slow, and a few are fast, like a workout.

Although there are many asanas, a daily practice of pranayama can really do wonders as it improves our respiratory system. Here are a couple of links for the same

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3p4r_ad2Y7g,

https://youtu.be/rd590U_4fll. It is an important part of any Yoga practice. Just learning to take deep breaths and realizing that this can be a quick way to combat stressful situations is amazingly effective.

Yoga also helps us in controlling the mind. There are various asanas that acts as a form of meditation. The poses have to be done with such concentration, that all other thoughts and worries are put to the side, giving your brain a much needed break.

Friends, these are just a few ways of living a healthy and a stress free life. Ultimately it depends upon the individual to choose their path.

“Yoga does not transform the way we see things. It transforms the person who sees”

- B.K.S. Iyengar

“Your body exists in the past, and your mind exists in the future. In yoga, they come together in the present”

- B.K.S. Iyengar

“Yoga is not a religion. It is a science, a science of well-being, a science of youthfulness, a science of integrating body, mind, and soul”

- Amit Ray