

2023, Mastering Stress: Identifying, Eliminating,
And Taming Your Stress
By Peggy L. Ferguson, Ph.D.

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In the hustle and bustle of our lives, most people are no strangers to that nagging feeling of stress creeping in. We recognize when it's trying to take over, but how do we combat it effectively? To manage your stress, you must realize when you are experiencing it, identify and differentiate between external and internal stressors, and develop ongoing lifestyle changes that keep stress to a minimum.

Recognizing Your Stressors:

First and foremost, it's essential to be self-aware. You have a good grasp of what gets under your skin. Significant stressors often manifest as those everyday challenges and demands that push your mental and physical resources to their limits.

Your body's response to stress is an age-old survival mechanism - the fight or flight response. In the past, a lurking predator might have triggered it. In the modern world, however, it's usually less about immediate danger and more about constant pressure. Contemporary external stressors might include a demanding boss, mounting bills, a baby who won't sleep through the night, or worrying about an aging parent's health.

What's interesting is that many of us add another layer of stress by believing we "should" handle it all without flinching. This unrealistic expectation handicaps our efforts to cope effectively. Instead, we must recognize that stress is best managed by maximizing our resources, not depleting them.

Internal and External Stressors:

As you know, stressors come in two forms: internal and external. Internal stressors are the beliefs, attitudes, and cognitive distortions that hinder your application of living skills and problem-solving. External stressors are the tangible things and events that hassle your daily life, such as traffic jams, work deadlines, conflicts in relationships, or financial woes.

To master your stress, you must match your internal and external stressors with the proper stress management methods. For external stressors, your aim should be to reduce their number and impact. For example, if traffic is a constant headache, try different routes, travel at less congested times, and create a soothing playlist to ease your journey.

When it comes to internal sources of stress, like ever-persistent perfectionism, you must identify your limiting beliefs and replace them with realistic appraisals and expectations. It's also crucial to boost your self-acceptance and self-esteem.

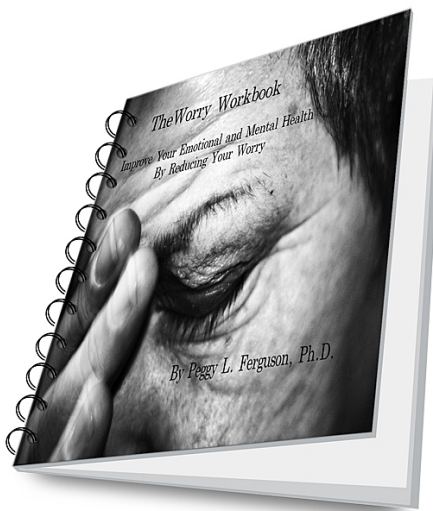
Lifestyle Adjustments and Self-Care:

To truly make headway in stress management, you must be willing to adapt your lifestyle. This adaptation should reinforce new behaviors and changing attitudes. Practicing cognitive therapy can help you identify and challenge those cognitive distortions that worsen your stress and hinder practical problem-solving.

Stepping up your efforts at self-care is one of the most effective stress management techniques. Care of self means consciously considering what you need to maintain your well-being, including regular exercise, adequate rest, proper nutrition, assertiveness in expressing your needs, managing your emotions effectively, setting and maintaining priorities, and shifting from negative self-talk to positive self-affirmations.

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Effective stress management goes beyond mere awareness; it involves developing a skill set for reducing or eliminating stress and effectively managing non-remitting stress. When you master the living skills needed to deal with life on life's terms, you build an arsenal of internal stress management tools instead of undermining the ones you have. By addressing your stressors with strategies tailored to your unique situation, you can regain control and lead a more balanced, fulfilling life.



The Worry Workbook offers a more profound understanding of another facet of stress and our mental and emotional well-being: worry. The Worry Workbook will guide you through exploring your concerns and anxiety and help you gain some valuable tools and strategies to reduce worry to a manageable level and regain peace of mind.

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