

"THE PLAYBOOK"



Dramatically Improve Your Well Being
and Reduce Your Stress!

A Presentation By Jerry Bridge and LifeWorks Education

Jerry Bridge

Jerry Bridge is a nationally recognized motivational speaker, humorist and author for the healthcare industry. Jerry is well known for turning complex, topics into fun, engaging thought provoking programs. Over the past 25 years Jerry has presented inspiring keynotes and content rich workshops for tens of thousands of healthcare executives, clinicians, managers and administrative staff.

Jerry is best known for his ability to help people reduce stress, build teamwork and improve performance. His passion is to lead inspiring, motivating programs that empower people and have lots of fun in the process.



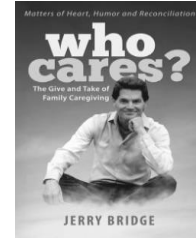
Seminar Leader & Coach

Jerry compliments each and every platform speech with in depth teaching and coaching. He believes that inspiration and motivation, while necessary, may not always get you or your team to the goal line.

A seasoned veteran, Jerry integrates over 25 years of specialized training and development with Landmark Education Corporation; a leader and innovator in the field of transformational education. Jerry is a master coach; from sales to teamwork to fitness and well being, attendee's complete his programs with practical tools, practices and no nonsense take aways.

"Jerry spoke at our annual meeting and the feedback was great. He was able to engage the audience in a lively discussion and provided them with many helpful hints for how to reduce the stress in their lives. He did all this with a good dose of humor, which we all needed... I highly recommend Jerry as a speaker!"

— Eileen Horton, Vice President, Healthcare Planning & Marketing Society



Author

Effective speakers are also passionate about writing and lifelong learning. Jerry follows form with his new book ***"Who Cares? The give and take of Family Caregiving."*** Whether you're a caregiver by profession or one of the many millions of american workers who now find themselves in that role, benefit from resources, principles and best practices for balancing work, family, and caregiving.

*"Your writing provides a window into a world that so many people experience, but that many feel they must endure in guilty silence. **One of the hardest jobs in the world is to be a caregiver, and I commend you for stepping up to embrace the responsibility and for documenting it in such an approachable way.** I believe your story maybe a healing tool for others. You have endured and changed what could have been a tragic story into one that inspires"* —Dr. David Charles Lozar

Personal

Jerry is a baby boomer from Baltimore. He's never lost his fondness for his hometown teams, blue crabs and Maryland hospitality.

Jerry has travelled the world running marathons, raising money and resources for ending hunger. In 1989 he met and married a woman from San Diego on the way to Moscow to run an international peace marathon. Jerry moved shortly thereafter and became a father to his Son Danny.

Jerry is a drummer, knows his way around a kitchen, and has performed stand-up comedy at the world famous Comedy Store in La Jolla California.

The following story is true...

Even though I've set my alarm for four am, I've been awake every 20 minutes or so since about 11:30 the night before. I can't help it, I'm anticipating the piercing, annoying beeps, knifing through the morning silence and directly into my brain. Turning towards my night stand once again, the bright red digits display the time - 3:44 am.

I've got 16 minutes before I have to get up, shower and make the 45 minute drive to the airport in order to catch the 6 am flight to Ft Lauderdale. I'm definitely pushing it.

The security line is really backed up this morning. Let the STRESS begin. My mind starts racing;

"I've got to make my flight, why is this line taking so long?! What's wrong with these people, move faster!"

I can feel my blood pressure rising, heart pounding, teeth gnashing. Apparently I hadn't been keeping my 'thoughts' to myself when I heard a voice from a woman standing just behind me;

"Just try and relax" she offered.

Not missing a beat, the snarky juvenile inside barked back, *"Don't tell me to relax!"*

"Did I really just say that?" I wondered.

Awful! Not only am I freaked out about missing my flight, now I'm ashamed and embarrassed, imagining a big bright flashing neon sign with an arrow pointing toward my head:

PUSHY, ANNOYING, INSENSITIVE, JERK - HERE!



As the cliché goes, the minutes that following seemed like an eternity. That is, until I could no longer stand the jerk wearing my clothes, inhabiting my body. Slowly I turned back toward her, sheepish and apologetic I managed to mutter;

"So uh, where are you heading today?"

We made small talk and I apologized for my nastiness. The woman was very sweet and more than generous when she assured me, *"Don't worry, you're doing good!"*

Ah yes, yet another opportunity to practice humility.

Laptops out, and shoes off we were finally closing in on the x-ray scanners. Feelings of relief and relaxation washed over me as I realized I would make my

flight after all. That's the moment when my new best friend and security line buddy asked,

"Oh by the way, what do you do for a living?"

"I'm a motivational speaker!" I proudly offered.

"And what do you speak about?"

Wait for it... "Stress!"

When it comes to living the relaxed, stress free life, the odds are definitely stacked against us. Even the so called experts, the ones that speak, teach, pontificate, and write books about the importance of reducing stress need to continually practice what they preach!

"The purpose of the playbook and workshop is to inspire, enable and empower you to take better care self care - without sacrifice, burden, or guilt - in order to better care for others while leading a healthier, happier, more fulfilling life."

While it's true that 'there are only so many hours in the day' and we are expected to 'do more with less', we can take better care for ourselves by learning how to access and utilize the resources we already possess!

We can practice self care by bringing greater self awareness to the unhealthy habits and patterns that cause unnecessary stress in our lives. We can also look to one another for the emotional or psychological support, boosting both our physical energy and positive outlook.

Learning how to think and act in new ways takes time and discipline. This workshop and playbook offer some new approaches to thinking about stress, well being productivity, with practices for mastering what you learn.

Is it worth it? It all depends on whether you want to live of stress and overwhelm, or a life filled with accomplishment, fulfillment and well being!

Sincerely,

Jerry



Playbook Contents

"The purpose of the playbook and workshop is to inspire, enable and empower you to take better care self care - without sacrifice, burden, or guilt - in order to better care for others while leading a healthier, happier, more fulfilling life."

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"You're in a hospital, Nurse Hill. If you collapse from exhaustion, the emergency room is just down the hall."

One: 21st Century Health-Stress Challenges

The purpose of healthcare is to alleviate suffering and increase well being. And yet, vast numbers of clinicians, administrators and medical staff are feeling over stressed, overwhelmed, over tired or worse, burned out!



In spite of all the advances in healthcare, the long hours, sacrifice, dedication and hard work, more Americans – and ironically, healthcare workers - are suffering from higher rates of **obesity, diabetes, and heart disease**. Sick, distressed employees are also prone to poor diet, low energy and depression. Sedentary lifestyles, lack of exercise, the exhausting pace of modern life, all play a part, increasing our stress and eroding our sense of well being.

Stress is the body's reaction to a change that requires a physical, mental or emotional adjustment or response.

Distress is a negative stress response. It occurs when stress continues without relief. Distress disturbs the body's internal balance causing physical and emotional symptoms: headache, elevated blood pressure, chest pain, insomnia, depression, panic attack and anxiety. (Definition from Kristi A. Dyer MD, MS, FT)

If that's not bad enough, **mental health issues** including; depression, anxiety, alcoholism, drug abuse and addiction, continue to rise at alarming rates. In short, collectively, we Americans sicker than ever. Consider:

- **Chronic, untreated stress can be life-threatening.**
- Research shows the constant strain from **chronic stress can make existing health problems worse.**
- A 2012 study published in *Brain, Behavior, and Immunity*, found that the inflammation associated with traumatic stress speeds up the progression of **heart disease.**
- People facing chronic stress are also more likely to develop more frequent and serious **viral infections.**
- Over time, the nerve chemicals involved in the body's response to stress can affect your **immune system** as well as your **digestive and reproductive systems.**
- Chronic stress can also lead to overeating, smoking, and other **unhealthy habits.** This constant strain on your body can lead to serious health problems, including **high blood pressure, diabetes, and depression.**

Put Your Mask on First!

I've spent a lot of time on airplanes, therefore I can recite, word for word, the flight attendants announcements regarding the safety features, seat belt instructions, and what we're supposed to do (other than freak out) in case of an emergency.

"In the unlikely event that there's a loss of cabin pressure, an oxygen mask will drop from the ceiling (hopefully) above. If you're travelling with a minor", the dutiful attendant informs us to, "put your mask on first before attending to others".

Right, put my mask on first. I get it, if I'm oxygen starved I could pass out and then I'm no good to anyone. Makes sense to me.

In the context of dramatically improving well-being and reducing stress, what would it mean for you to put your mask on first?

- What would you be doing differently?
- What habits or behaviors would you need to change?
- What new practices would you adopt?
- What support would you need?

Perhaps it's simply spending a few minutes each day, sitting quietly, taking a few deep breaths in order to release stress and anxiety. Maybe you'll invite a few people to join you for a walk during lunch. Or perhaps you'll imagine yourself as an 80 year old, writing a letter to your 'current' self, a letter in which you express your goals and aspirations for a healthier, happier, stress-free future.

Make a Conscious Commitment

Notice I say, *conscious commitment*, not your ordinary garden variety, clean the garage next weekend commitment, unless there's a ballgame or you decide to go to the movies instead kind of commitment. You know the ones you make about diet and exercise and health and blah, blah, blah. With so many blah, blah, blahs, the commitments become meaningless and you have zero power, none, zilch, to make the thing happen. Your word becomes meaningless.

And before you know it you're 40 pounds overweight or drinking too much alcohol to quell the stress and relieve the anxiety, putting you on the fast track to diabetes, stroke and heart disease. Yuck!

Making a conscious commitment to getting this workbook written, *I imagined a future* in which my writing would make a difference for you and for me. I imagined a future in which I had written something that would be an expression of who I am and what I have to contribute. Writing a workbook just because I thought *I should*

was never going to inspire anyone, let alone get me over the hurdles and to the finish line.

Exercising, reducing stress or eating well because 'you should' is a chore, a burden. If it's a chore you're probably not going to do it for very long before you quit.

Domains of Well Being

Physical



Mental-Emotional



Social-Spiritual



Section Two: Inhale, Exhale, Email

Sometime during the Fall of 2006 I started my work day like any other day and with the usual routine; wake up, pee, check email. By that time, checking my email had become all too routine; like breathing- a new respiratory function - inhale, exhale, email!

I remember sitting at my desk, in my pajamas, (one of the major benefits of self employment is wearing your pj's to work, the other is the commute, with only 20 feet from the bedroom to the office, the traffic is pretty light) staring at the hundreds of unanswered emails sitting in my inbox; some with attachments, some with red flags, and all the others that remained unanswered from so many months ago, helpless, calling out, barely any life left in them. I had hardly started my day and I was already feeling overwhelmed and anxious. My mind was dizzy trying to sort, delete and respond. Each response only brought more electronic mail. My brain hurt!

"We need to be careful that we don't allow our electronic devices to take control of us, spurring us to go faster and faster, do more and more, and in general, to believe that being busy is the enlightened way of life. Instead, being deeply connected to what matters most is the enlightened way of life."

Edward Hallowell, M.D.

As a baby boomer, I grew up in much simpler time; learning to write with pencil and paper, a time in which Sunday really was a day of rest (stores were closed!), a time in which most people enjoyed free time on weekends and a time in which there were only three, count them, three television networks. Those networks actually signed off around 2am. Unless you wanted to stare at the test pattern, it was time to go to bed!

Seriously, I just wanted to go back to bed, which would have been easy given the proximity to my bedroom! But going to sleep was not an option. I needed learn how to live and work in the new world, a world in which there was simply way more to do than time to do it.

I received no warning regarding the mental-emotional challenges of living in a world driven by technology. I didn't get the 'official letter'...and neither did you.

January 1, 2000

Official Instruction Guide and Health Warning regarding the use of Electronic Mail from the Federal Office of Stress Management

"Attention, over the next several decades your primary method of communication will be electronic mail, aka, 'email' and texting. There are many positive features and benefits to using these forms of communication. For example, you'll be able to send and receive messages from people, instantaneously, anywhere and anytime! You won't have to bother picking up the phone, interrupting people, or them interrupting you unnecessarily. You'll be able to send documents, large and small, pictures, even video!

Health Warning! *You may become so dependant on using this new form of communication that you could become addicted to it! No less addicted than a drug addict is to cocaine or gambler to the 'action'. In this case the 'action' will be the need to check your email, even when there's no reason, just to see if any new communication has arrived to your inbox. You may wonder, for example, if someone has sent you a funny video, perhaps with cats chasing birds through a sprinkler while the infant laughs and the dog stares in awe. You'll feel an unnatural urge to forward this video to everyone you know, they in turn will share the video with everyone they know, potentially interrupting an otherwise productive day at work or relaxing day at home.*

People will also tend use (and abuse) this new technology to avoid having actual conversation, share real feelings or have meaningful dialogue. Unhappy couples, for example, will 'break up', electronically! Millions of others will thoughtlessly use email and 'social media' to rant or gossip or engage in inane mindless chatter.

Countless numbers of people, young and old, will be transfixed with this new technology. Wherever and whenever, people will feel a compulsion to react and respond to electronic forms of communication, as their brains become overstimulated and saturated with neurotransmitters like dopamine, serotonin, and norepinephrine. They will camp out all night at shopping malls and wait in long lines in the bitter cold, simply to get the latest fix. In the future there will be a need for 12 step like programs to help people break their addiction to technology.

Volume. *Given the sheer volume of electronic mail, you'll need to figure out a way to manage the hundreds or thousands of emails and texts you'll receive on a regular basis. You'll need to sort what's important, work related from junk mail and figure out how to keep up with endless requests for your time and attention.*

And this is just the beginning! In the near future people will become enamored with 'Social Media', electronic group forums with names like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. This is yet another new technology that will tend to dominate your life.

Ironically, the technology designed to make our lives so much easier and simpler may have just the opposite effect. While the long term psycho-social affect of too much information and fixation on technology is not yet known, millions of people may suffer from any one of a number of the following side effects: excessive stress, anxiety, depression, experience trouble falling asleep and/or sleeping soundly through the night, experience trouble focusing or paying attention for any length of time, poor diet and lack of exercise.

Good luck!

Onemoore E. Gadget, Inspector General

Federal Office of Stress Management and Too Much Technology

The explosion of technology over the past 25 years has dramatically altered the way we think about and experience 'time'. It is a fact, that the more time we spend with computer screens, smartphones and every other form of technology, the more our brains (and nervous systems) 'identify' with those devices. In other words, we become what we consume.

For tens of thousands of years human beings ate, worked, slept and socialized within nature's rhythms; the changing of the seasons and the rotation of the sun. Our nervous systems were oriented to months and days, not bits and bytes, pixels and tweets!

"At the end of the day, do you feel more like a machine than a human being?"

Consuming too much information and overloaded with too many images, in rapid fire succession, - all while amped up on Starbucks and 'energy drinks' - we've become addicted to 'hurry up' and 'right now!'

How relaxed do you feel when having to wait for anyone or anything that takes more than a few seconds?

Have you ever been standing in the check out line at the grocery store and gotten behind someone that wanted to write a check? The line now stalled, I pick up the latest edition of 'People' (which I've already read I'm sure), my teeth begin to grind, my blood heats up.

"Who should I make this out to?" asks the check writer.

"How about, 'pay or die!'" I mumble to myself.

So, why the painful, obvious over reaction? Because I'm in a hurry that's why! (Imagine Al Pacino yelling from the top of his lungs... "I'm in a hurry, you're in a hurry, this whole damn world is in a hurry!")

I'm always in a hurry, it seems. Even when I don't need to be in a hurry, I'm in a hurry....and its killing me. Extrapolating my grocery store nightmare to its fullest extension, it might sound like this:



I'm in a hurry to get through the grocery line, in order to get to my car, in order to get home, in order to make the dinner, in order to eat the dinner, in order to watch the tv, in order to get to bed, in order to get enough sleep, in order to have the energy to wake up (refreshed?), in order to try and make it through another stressful day of work, in order to pay the bills, in order to do it all over again!

Slow down, you move too fast!

In 1966 Simon and Garfunkle sang about slowing down, kicking down the cobble stones, looking for fun and feelin' groovy. Well, that was nearly 40 years ago and I think its fair to say that millions of us are 'feelin stressy'. The rush and gush and pace of modern life is rediculous, unsustainable and incredibly stressful! And now, it's time to sing...



*Slow down, you move too fast.
You got to make the morning last.
Just kicking down the cobble stones.
Looking for fun and feelin' groovy.*

*Hello lamppost,
What cha knowing?
I've come to watch your flowers growing.
Ain't cha got no rhymes for me?
Doot-in' doo-doo,
Feelin' groovy.*

*Got no deeds to do,
No promises to keep.
I'm dappled and drowsy and ready to sleep.
Let the morning time drop all its petals on me.
Life, I love you,
All is groovy.*

Section Three: Brain Basics

Our brains, the **command and control center**, are organized primarily for survival. Had that not been the case you most likely would not be reading this workbook and you wouldn't be concerned about managing your health or your stress -because there would be *no you* to manage it!



Distilled a bit further the organizing principle of our brain is to tell our nervous system whether to **fight or take flight**. So, for example, if you were a caveman living somewhere on the African continent 4500 years ago, you would need to be hypersensitive to the threat of a saber tooth tiger. Not reacting by either fleeing or fighting (and surviving), might mean the end for you. And for many cave dwellers it was!

"You can use your mind to change your brain for the better-which will benefit your whole being, and every other person's life you touch."

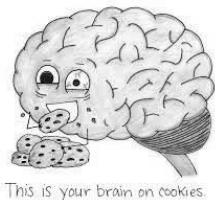
Buddha's Brain, Rick Hanson, PH.D

In current terms, imagine you're driving along the highway and there's a car merging right into your lane of traffic! You swerve to avoid a head on collision. Your brain is the control center, informing your nervous system. Chemicals like **adrenaline** and **cortisol** spring you into action, your eyes become dilated so you can see more clearly, your heart races, pumping more blood to your brain and body in order to increase alertness, stamina and strength. All of this happens virtually simultaneously as you turn the wheel, avoid the oncoming car and then recover!



Our brains are 'hard-wired' to react to stress in ways designed to protect us against threats from predators and other aggressors. Such threats are rare today, but of course, that doesn't mean that life is free of stress.

Meet your Brain 'under Stress'



When we're bombarded with stress, we feel as if we're under attack, the preprogrammed, reptilian fight-or-flight response locked in the 'on' position. When we encounter a perceived threat — on your morning run you suddenly startled by ear shattering sound of a fire engine whizzing past you - a tiny region at the base of your brain, your **hypothalamus**, sets off

an alarm system in your body. Hormone levels, namely the aforementioned **adrenaline and cortisol** surge.

You undoubtedly face multiple demands each day; shouldering a huge workload, making ends meet and taking care of your family. Your body treats these so-called minor hassles as threats. As a result you may feel as if you're constantly under assault.

Our body's response to this kind stress is normally short lived. Once the perceived threat is no longer present, adrenaline and cortisol levels decrease while heart rate and blood pressure return to normal, healthy levels.

Over the long term, the overexposure to cortisol and other stress hormones wreaks havoc on almost all of your body's processes; putting you at risk of increased health problems, including: anxiety, depression, digestive problems, heart disease, sleep problems, weight gain, and memory and concentration impairment.

You don't have to let stress control your life!

Dear Brain...

While I've enjoyed a life-long habit of physical exercise including marathon running, swimming, and brisk walking, I never gave much thought to the role my brain played in my overall health. Perhaps it was my interest in taking a holistic approach to well being - mind (brain), body and spirit - that the proverbial light bulb came on and I was off to the races!

I read everything I could to learn more about the brain, its various roles and functions regarding stress, mood, energy, focus and longevity.

I learned for example, while watching the PBS series, '**The Brain That Changes Itself**', that once upon a time medical experts and neuroscientists believed that our brains become *static* over time. In other words, each of us has a limited number of brain cells, and once those cells die there are no more new ones to come. Lacking the ability to 'regenerate itself'- to grow neurons and neural networks- the brain will eventually lose its cognitive and emotional capacities. Not good news considering how many brain cells I burned through in college alone!

Good news! Neuroscience, expert opinion and case studies show us that our brains have the capacity to grow and develop throughout our entire lifetime! This phenomenon is call *plasticity*.

And while this *is* really great news, it comes with a caveat. Most of us are familiar with the use or lose it mantra when it comes to exercise. Not unlike the benefits we

gain from physical exercise, there are things you can and should do in order to maintain a healthy brain.

Before my studies and *relationship* with the three inside my skull. My transformed what was once connection with my new



research I could hardly imagine a or so pounds of grey matter floating education, limited as it is, has an abstraction into something real; a best friend, my brain!

And how do you treat your best friends? With love, kindness, compassion and respect! You might go out for drinks once in a while, share a good book together, or take time to relax with a walk a swim or a nap. Love your brain and it will love you back, I promise!

Or perhaps you'll write a letter. After all, how long have you been together? How long has it been since you've written? "Never" you say, "well that's no way to treat a friend, is it?"

Dear Al (short for Albert Einstein, wishful thinking)

How are you? How are all your connections, everything okay in there? Are you keeping busy? Anything I can do to help you build stronger neural networks or make you more comfortable?

Well Al, I'm hanging in there, trying to take better care of the body, exercising and eating well...except for the sugar. I know, I know, too much sugar is not good for the body but I love the ice cream and cookies! I have been eating more fruit, you like that, right? I've also been eating lots more whole foods with different colors. Hope that's helping you to feel better!

Now I have been feeling pretty stressed out and anxious lately, so you might be working overtime sending signals to the nervous system and all. I'm really sorry about that. I'm taking conscious deep breaths throughout the day, hope that decreases the cortisol!

Anyway Al, I just wanted to thank you for working so hard over the years and taking such good care of me. You've been such a good friend and I promise to do what I can to do the same in return.

Best bros' forever,

Jerry

Neurochemistry for the Rest of Us

I'm the guy that dropped out of premed because I couldn't handle the science and I'm about to elaborate on the subject of brain chemistry, go figure. (My apologies to the bio, nuero, brain chemistry experts!) Okay, this is very basic but important to your health so pay attention!

- **Cortisol**- Cortisol, the primary stress hormone, increases sugars (glucose) in the bloodstream, enhances your brain's use of glucose and increases the availability of substances that repair tissues. Cortisol prevents the release of substances in the body that cause inflammation from injury and wounds. Elevated levels of cortisol, if prolonged, can lead muscle wasting. Cortisol also curbs functions that would be nonessential or detrimental in a fight-or-flight situation. It alters immune system responses and suppresses the digestive system, the reproductive system and growth processes. This complex natural alarm system also communicates with regions of your brain that control mood, motivation and fear.
- **Adrenaline** increases your heart rate, elevates your blood pressure and boosts energy supplies.
- **Dopamine**: A neurotransmitter essential to the normal functioning of the central nervous system and helps to increase focus. A reduction in its concentration within the brain is associated with Parkinson's disease.
- **Serotonin**: A chemical that is responsible for maintaining mood, sleep, memory, sexual desire, digestion and balance. **A deficit of serotonin leads to depression.** Various ways to increase the levels of serotonin in the body include mood induction, light, exercise and diet.
- **Opioids**: Known to play an important role in motivation, emotion, attachment behavior, the response to stress and pain, and the control of food intake.
- **Oxytocin**- Oxytocin plays an important role with intimacy, specifically in sexual reproduction. Sometimes referred to as the "**bonding hormone**", it has a role in various behaviors, including orgasm, social recognition, pair bonding, anxiety, and maternal behaviors.

Section Four: Health-Stress Habits

We human beings are habitual, its simply part of our nature. Over time we tend to eat the same foods, wear the same clothes, say the same things, and stress, unnessesarily,over the same, dumb stuff.



[**hab**-it] *noun* –

an acquired **behavior pattern** regularly followed until it has become almost **involuntary**:

'He has a habit of eating ice cream before bed.'

-a **dominant or regular disposition or tendency**; prevailing character or quality:

'She has a habit of being in a hurry, even though there's ample time.'

-mental character or **disposition**: a habit of mind.

-**addiction**, especially to narcotics

Exercise: designed to give you a direct experience of one of your habits at work.

- Cross your arms. (You've got to actually do this in order to realize the seductive nature and power of a habit.)
- Now, cross your arms in the other direction. How does that feel? Weird, right? Its as if someone, an alien perhaps, invaded your body. (In my case, I'm right brain dominated, so its left arm over right, every time!)

When asked to cross your arms, you will *invariably and habitually*, cross them in the same direction. You do this without thinking. A *habit* is something we're predisposed to doing, unconsciously and without thinking! The point is a good degree of your stress is habitual and unnessesary

Your Stress-Health Habits at Work

➤ Example One

Someone asks you to do for a favor that you can't honestly fulfill without it being a burden. Even though you're already over committed with your time, you say 'yes' (and reserve the right to resent the person for asking.) Your habit of being a '**people pleaser**' is running you ragged!

In this example, you might try saying something like "I really wish I could help you out, but I'm already overextended", a more comfortable way of saying 'no'.

➤ Example Two

You promise yourself that you will take time to exercise, practice yoga or meditate before (or after) work. As you begin to prepare for your exercise, you 'decide' (habitually) to check your email. While checking your email, you get a notification that your cousin is having a birthday. You wish your cousin a happy birthday and then decide to update your Facebook page. Three hours later, your brain is fried, you're too tired to do anything, like eating a healthy meal. You gorge on leftover pizza and diet coke, then fall asleep while watching the Housewives of Beverly Hills.

Social media, the internet and technology can easily seduce the best of us, stealing our time away from family, a good book and our physical needs! One way to break the habit is to **simply turn it off**, look away and acknowledge that there is no reason why you need to be interacting in the virtual world. You have decided to place a higher value on your health and well being. The time you spend taking care of yourself is **NOT negotiable**. The emails and texts and Facebook updates can wait!



➤ Example Three

You start to feel stressed and anxious while sitting in traffic. You're running late for work. Even though you know you can calm yourself by taking long slow, deep breaths (as you've badgered your love ones and patients to do many times!) you reflexively – habitually - grip the steering wheel tighter, knashing your teeth, and wishing the bleepiddy bleeps in the car in front of you would move out of the way!

The habit to break here is the impulse to react to stress with more stress! You want to resist the urge to pour more gasoline on the fire. Always being is a habit. Make a promise to practice slow downing and taking a deep breath.

As soon as you begin to feel the adrenoline flowing, and the anxiety building, discipline yourself to take those long, slow, deep breaths in order to release the energy of stress.

In this case, the stress may also fueled by feelings of a **lack of control**. The more you practice releasing control, the more you'll feel a sense of flow. You may not like the traffic (who does?) or the fact that you'll be late to work but in this case, those are the facts. **The more relaxed you are in the moment, the more relaxed you'll be at work and throughout the day.**

Can you see yourself in these habits?

Of course you can, we're all doing them, more or less. And that's the idea, to **recognize the habit that doesn't work and replace it with a new behavior.** The first and most important part of breaking the habit is noticing that you're in it!

Exercise:

In what circumstances do you find yourself over stressing or neglecting your well being? Be specific. Take some time here to identify some of your stress habits. Think about your routines in the morning, at work and so on. Where does the stress usually occur? Whom does the stress usually occur with? Now, get creative and invent some new, healthier habits. (Cross your arms the other way!)

Morning Routine:

Unwanted Stress-Health Habit:

New Habit or Behavior:

Routine At Work:

Unwanted Stress-Health Habit:

New Habit or Behavior:

At Home:

Unwanted Stress-Health Habit:

New Habit or Behavior:

Don't forget that just as it may feel strange to cross your arms in the other direction, developing new healthy habits and behaviors feels strange at first – even though it's good for you. Keep it up!



Section Five: The Body, Is your 'check engine' light on?

Why is it that so many of us neglect our bodies, ignoring the 'check engine light', and treating them our bones, blood, and organs like so much rusted metal, dirty oil and worn out tires?



"Sure it ran great when I first got, but now that I've got all these miles on it, why should I waste my money trying to fix it up? The 'check engine' light is on and the breaks squeal...I know I should have taken better care if it...I'll take my chances and hope it doesn't break down!"

Perhaps you're one of those people that only use high octane gasoline, the most expensive additives and synthetic oils to keep your car running great. While your tank is filling, are you filling your gut with 48 ounces of Pepsi and a large bag of Doritos! *'A little too ironic, don't ya think?'* (Thank you Alanis Morissette.)

-
- Are you living in hope that your body won't break down?
 - Do you relate to your body like an old jalopy, hoping to make it through the next workday or to the weekend?

If so, let's see what we can do to get you into the shop for a tune up and back on regular maintenance program!

Negative Self Talk

By being aware of how you actually think and feel about your body, you'll naturally take better care of it. By revealing some of the **negative self talk** and judgments - **'I hate my body'** - and by uncovering unconscious assumptions and expectations - **'I should be thinner by now, I look like a cow'** - you'll discover whole new possibilities for having a loving, nurturing relationship with your body, exactly as it is.

Think for a moment of the people you really love or the things you appreciate. What comes to mind? Is it your spouse, children, family, or kitty? What about hobbies like travel, sports or the arts? Perhaps it's simple creature comforts like relaxing in your favorite comfy chair, in the front of the big screen, just before the big game.

I bet if you do, there's one thing that probably won't readily come to mind, the one thing that too many of us take for granted but can't live without, our body! Most people I know, present company included, are much too **self-critical** and **judgmental**. My 'bag of bones' never makes the list!

Let's drill down and give your consciousness a good stir. Consider;

- Do you relate to your body like a thing, like a machine?
- Do you starve yourself or binge?
- Do you eat and work at the same time?
- Do you forget to hydrate (change the oil) by drinking enough water?
- Do you unconsciously consume salty-fatty-sugary foods while you're doing five other tasks, none of which, including your digestion, has your full attention?
- _____

In what ways you judge or criticize certain aspects of your body?

"I really like my hands, they remind me of my mother...but I'm too skinny and bony, I wish I had more muscular arms and legs."

"I don't like anything about my body, I'm ashamed of it, I wish I was invisible sometimes!" I'd just rather not even discuss it."

I love my legs but my rear end is so big, no matter how many squats I do I look like a bus from the back, I hate my butt!"

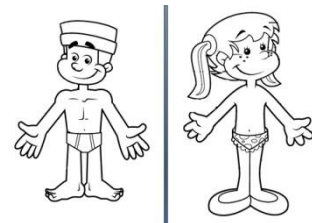
"It's okay, I try to keep in shape but other than that I don't think about it."

"Oh, it's my gut, my big fat stomach I can't stand. I've given up, I'm just never gonna be happy with it."

"Everything is starting to sag, the skin on the back of my elbows and under my eyes, I've got aches and pains I never used to have...I'm swear just trying to keep it together"

"What's the use? I'm just gonna get old and sick and eventually die anyway!"

What are your self criticisms about your body?



How would you characterize your emotional relationship with your body?

In the space below write down what you **honestly think** and how you **truly feel** about your body. If your body were your lover, how would you describe the relationship? Is it passionate and loving, or distant and cold? Has it been too long since you've spent quality time together?

Be as specific as you can. Sit quietly and take your time. You may feel, anger, joy, compassion, fear, shame, sadness or indifference. Whatever you feel and write down is okay:

Release the Negativity & Let It go!

Each year, People magazine publishes its list of the sexiest people alive; shirtless men with rock hard abs, full lipped curvy woman adorn the glossy pages. With these images of perfection imprinted on our minds and burned in our brains we're 'toast' in comparison.

So much of what we think and how we feel about the physical body, our bodies and the millions of other bodies on the planet is shaped and determined by culture and the times in which we live. In the mid 16th century, men possessing large muscular

Dear Slim (the name I've given for my body),

I feel so bad, I've never written before. If I have, I don't remember because it's been so long ago! Anyway, how are you? I know you had some aches and pains lately in your right hip and left arch. Gee, I hope that's healing. I've been doing some stretching as you know but it probably wouldn't hurt if I took you out for a swim. Would you like that?

Otherwise, with the holidays coming I've been really loading up on the sweets. I spoke to Al (my brain) about this, I told him that I will definitely be cutting back. I think between you me and Al, we'll get back on track right after the first of the year.

What do you think about all the fresh fruits and vegetables? Good, right? I thought you'd like them! I know that I've got to eat more protein so I'm looking into that as well. Anything else you feel you need for now?

Hey slim, I wanted to tell you that I really appreciate how much you support me and how grateful I am for everything that you do for me. I know I take you for granted but we are both getting older and I want to do everything I can to take care of you!

Please send my love to the heart. I've been stressing too much over stupid, meaningless stuff. I'm really committed to relaxing and staying positive.

Oh, as long as I'm thinking about, I know it's time once again to have the prostate examined. Dr Lovell is very gentile so you shouldn't worry. I'll keep all the relevant organs posted if anything comes up.

Otherwise, Slim, I just want to say once again how much I love and appreciate you....

Love ya,

Jerry

Section Six: Yum-Yum Eat Em' Up!

Here's a list of foods, nutrients and supplements to help reduce stress and send lots of love to your brain and body:

Nuts are packed with magnesium, which seems to help **keep cortisol levels low**. (Nuts are high in calories, so if you're watching your weight, make sure not to eat more than a dozen a day.)

Eat broccoli and low-fat ranch dip. Broccoli has folic acid, which aids stress reduction.

Sorbet with a vanilla sugar wafer. Sugary foods decrease levels of anxiety-producing hormones, specifically through the production of glucocorticoid, a stress hormone linked to storing more fat in the belly. Just a little sugar on the tongue is enough to produce a feel-good effect, so don't overdo it!

Oatmeal: Certain comfort foods, such as oatmeal, can reduce levels of stress hormones and also result in a **boost in serotonin**, which stimulates a feeling of calmness.

Whole grain English muffins with jam or honey. Complex carbohydrate-rich foods raise serotonin levels, boosting your mood and helping you relax.

Savor some Salmon. Omega-3 fatty acids help brain cells to function more collaboratively, helping you to deal with stress more effectively.

Indulge in some dark chocolate. By far the most potent endorphin-producing food on earth, chocolate contains more than 300 different compounds, including anandamide, a chemical that mimics marijuana's effects on the brain, and theobromine, a mild stimulant. Look for imported dark chocolate with a cocoa content of 70% or more.

Drink hot cocoa. Warm drinks raise your body temperature—a feeling we associate with comfort, so it triggers a similar response in our brains.

Black tea instead of coffee. A study by University College London shows that drinking black tea four times a day for six weeks lowered the stress hormone cortisol after a stressful event.

Drink green tea—packed with theanine, which increases the brain's output of relaxation-inducing alpha waves and reduces the output of tension-making beta waves.

Herbal Supplements and Teas

Here are the herbs and teas that are commonly used for calming effect and reduce stress-related insomnia, anxiety or anger.

- **Chamomile** is popular for its easy availability and wide range of healing properties. It is often used to relieve stress-induced symptoms such as insomnia and gastrointestinal disorders.
- **Mint** is commonly used to relieve stress and induce calmness. Peppermint oil's relaxation-promoting properties on gastrointestinal (GI) tissue and its analgesic and anesthetic effects have been found in past studies. However, individuals suffering from GI reflux, hiatal hernia, or kidney stones should practice caution when using peppermint oil therapy.
- **Barley tea** has proven effective in relaxing the body. Its capability to relieve stress is thought to derive from its contribution of tryptophan, an amino acid necessary for sleep and synthesizing serotonin – a neurotransmitter essential in the regulation of sleep and mood.
- **Passionflower** is marketed for its ability to treat sleep disorders, nervous tension, and anxiety. A recent study found that passionflower was as effective as oxazepam, a prescribed anxiolytic drug, in treating patients with anxiety disorders.
- **Valerian root** is sometimes used for treating anxiety and insomnia. While contradictory scientific research exists, this herbal supplement is considered safe when used appropriately over a short time period of less than one month.

Improve your diet and digestion.

A nutrient-dense diet and healthy digestion are at the core of long-term vitality. Nutrition affects every system in the body, but especially the brain. Traditional Chinese Medicine, for example, has long associated cognitive power with strong digestion.

More recently, researchers have found an abundance of neuropeptides (molecules that transmit brain signals) in the gastrointestinal (GI) tract, and have also shown that the beneficial bacteria in our GI tracts influence brain health, mood, and much more.

Seven: Stress Reducing Practices, Mission Possible!

"Your mission, should you decide to accept it, is to commit to taking action on at least one item on the list below. Good luck; this list will not self destruct, but you might if you don't take action!"

Take a Hike! Seriously, I bet you can make time for a ten minute walk. If you're just beginning, start slow, building daily walks into your routine. Option; relaxing music or quiet time, it's up to you!

Schedule time for yoga or some other form of physical activity; by scheduling the time you're making it a priority. Go ahead, get your calendar and block out time to get on the treadmill, jump in the pool or sign up for that Pilates class you've been thinking about.

Share with your spouse, lover, best friend or co-worker that you've made a commitment to yourself and a new future of health and vitality. Ask them to support you or, even better, join you!

Playtime! I'm talking about hobbies, passions, and creative ideas. I'm talking about having fun engaging with something that's of genuine interest, other than medicine! One of the doctors I recently interviewed enjoys creative writing as a way to decompress at the end of the day.

What about cooking, woodworking, painting, poetry, singing or playing music? Take a few moments now to think about and list a playful passion:

Journaling

Journaling is an excellent way to capture your thinking and clear your head at the same time. I've been keeping a journal since October of 2010. I use it as a tool for reflection and gaining deeper understanding and insight. I found journaling especially helpful in the face of major stressors'-death in the family, sorting out my feelings and dealing with depression.

Because I already spend too much 'face time' with computer screens, I prefer putting pen to paper. I find the physical act of writing very grounding, almost

spiritual. In any case, I encourage you to write to your heart's content... literally. Let's get started, write something here;

Read a good book lately?

When was the last time you read a good book? (Other than medical journals or work related) I'm not surprised when I ask audiences this question and overwhelmingly people will admit that their not taking time to 'relax with a good book'. No matter whether you prefer fact or fiction, reading engages the brain, stimulates the mind and lifts the spirit.

Once again, I'm old school; I like paper books, the feel of the pages, and the comfort and excitement of returning to the book by my bedside -or poolside.

Eat an Apple



If you happen to be reading the February 1866 issue of "Notes and Queries" you would learn, among other things, that to *"eat an apple on going to bed, and you'll keep the doctor from earning his bread."* And, as it turns out, there is good reason for this!

Apples are an excellent source of pectin; a form of soluble fiber than **lowers both blood pressure and glucose levels**. It can also lower the levels of LDL, or "bad" cholesterol in the body. Pectin, like other forms of fiber, helps maintain the health of the digestive system.

"Apples are rich in a variety of phytonutrients, including vitamins A and E and beta carotene. These compounds fight damage from free radicals and can have a **profound effect on health, including reducing the risk of heart disease, diabetes and asthma**. Vitamin C boosts immunity, which helps maintain overall health." (Amy Hunter, How Stuff Works)

It's time to forgo, or at the very least, cut back on the sugar snacks in exchange for some delicious, fresh, whole fruits. Make a plan to bring (and share) apples, bananas, berries, and melons for the entire staff to enjoy!



I Scream, You Scream, We All Scream for Meditation?

Have you tried the Hagen Dasz mint chip? It's to die for and I swear it will (or some other insanely great flavor like Rocky Road or Butter Pecan) relieve your stress - guaranteed to last at least through to the last creamy bite! After all, isn't temporary stress relief better than no relief?

Perhaps, but consider this nugget of wisdom: what do you imagine would happen if millions of people gorged themselves on sugary snacks every time they felt a little (or a lot) stress?

Given the endless, unrelenting stress modern life carries, millions of people would be overweight and undernourished - a health crisis of massive proportions! Diabetes, heart disease, and risk of stroke *would* all be on the rise. Okay, enough sarcasm.

Right, so more sugar, or pills, or booze won't give us the sustainable peace and calm we need. Let's go to plan 'M'. What I need, what you need, what we all need is to commit to **PRACTICE MINDFULNESS**. One of the easiest ways to practice mindfulness is to be quiet, take deep breaths and relax, anywhere and anytime.

Meditate

To think deeply or focus one's mind for a period of time, in silence or with the aid of a guide or music as a method of relaxation.



Practiced for thousands of years, meditation was used as a method for accessing and gaining a deep understanding of our human nature and of life itself. In today's world, meditation is a proven, excellent tool for both relaxation and stress reduction.

Considered a type of mind-body complementary medicine, Meditation produces a deep state of relaxation and a tranquil mind. During meditation, you focus your attention and eliminate the stream of jumbled thoughts that may be crowding your mind and causing stress. This process often results in enhanced physical and emotional well-being.

You can easily learn to practice meditation wherever and whenever you need it most.

Never meditated? It does not matter, anyone, even you, can practice meditation. I didn't begin to meditate until after my mom passed away in 2008. The practice helped me with the feelings of loss and provided me with a sense of peace and calm. Now, I find myself taking deep breaths whenever I feel unusually stressed or anxious; grocery line, in front of the computer, out walking and especially at the airport!

Spending even a few minutes in meditation can bring a sense of calm, restoring focus and improving performance. You will feel more relaxed and less stressed. Best of all, It's simple and the only cost is your time.

You can practice meditation wherever you are:

- ☺ When you wake up or in the shower
- ☺ Stuck in traffic while commuting to work,
- ☺ Just before or after a meal break
- ☺ Walking the halls, making patient rounds, or out for a walk
- ☺ Before, during or after a staff meeting
- ☺ Before or after a stressful encounter with a coworker or patient
- ☺ Or, while reading a workbook about how to reduce your stress

Give it a try, right now!

1. Sit in a comfortable, relaxed position. Or if you prefer to lie on your back, that's fine.
2. Close your eyes and take three deep breaths, inhale through your nose and then exhale through your mouth.
3. Each time you breathe, allow yourself to feel more and more relaxed.
4. Continue to sit or lie calmly for 3-5 minutes, taking conscious and relaxed breaths, and then open your eyes.

Deep Breaths-Big Benefits

Did you do it? If not, why not? Too busy trying to get through this workbook? Seriously, take five!

Okay, do you feel a difference, more relaxed, a sense of calm?

During meditation, you're actually allowing your brain to 'reboot', diminishing the information overload that fosters stress. The overall affect is cumulative and carries throughout the workday. Relaxation begets relaxation.

Over time, and with regular practice, you will naturally improve your emotional well being and enhance your overall health.

You can look forward to other mental-emotional benefits as well:

- Being more present with a greater ability to focus
 - Confidence in knowing that you have the tools to manage stress
 - Increased vitality, positive energy and renewed enthusiasm
-

Perhaps you or your patients have a **medical condition** that may be worsened by stress. There is a tremendous amount of research that supports the health benefits of meditation, helping people more effectively manage the symptoms of conditions such as:

- Anxiety disorders, depression, sleep problems
 - Asthma, respiratory problems
 - Cancer, Pain
 - Heart disease, High blood pressure
-

Relaxed, Focused, Quiet and Comfortable

There is a ton of information, aka 'the Google machine', regarding meditation practices, technique and theory. Let's keep it very simple. Four things to consider for maximizing the benefits from your meditation;

- ✓ Slow your breathing in order take in more oxygen; Take deep breaths, using the diaphragm muscle to expand your lungs.
- ✓ Focusing your attention to free your mind from distractions; you might try such things as a specific object, an image, a mantra, or even your breathing.
- ✓ Finding a quiet place with few distractions; no television, radios or cell phones may make it easier. With more experience, you can practice meditation in high-stress situations (during meetings, with anxious patients and co-workers)
- ✓ No matter whether you're sitting, lying down, or walking, you can practice! Be comfortable in order to get the most from your meditation.

One size may not fit all when it comes to meditation. My personal favorite method is '**guided meditation**'. I like the calming voice of an instructor along with relaxing music in the background. There are many free downloads from the internet to choose from. The meditations will vary from a few minutes to a half hour or more. Sometimes there is a topic or theme; gratitude, abundance, forgiveness, well-being and so on.

Some folks like **mantra meditation** in which you silently repeat a calming word, thought or phrase to prevent distracting thoughts. Or, you might try mindfulness

meditation, focusing your awareness on your thoughts, breath and body; relaxing more with each breath while bringing greater awareness and acceptance of 'what is' and living in the present moment.

Don't stress over getting it right!

"I close my eyes and just when I finally start to relax my cell phone rings, a few minutes later I'm still trying to meditate when I hear a train whistle, that's the sound my phone makes when I'm receiving a text. Now I'm anxious and wondering who's trying to text me!"

Sound familiar?

I'll try and relax by stretching instead. Oh great, looks like the cat puked on my yoga mat...I can't stretch and exercise on top of dried up cat puke....get me some formula 409 and some paper towels, quickly, I'm trying to relax!"

The **'take whatever you get'** is the best approach; remember the point is relaxation and greater well being. Trying to 'hurry up and relax', or stressing about getting it right lands you back aboard the crazy train! One of the best things about meditating is you can't do it wrong!

Anyway, if you get derailed with your meditation, simply go back to it. I like to fly solo, it's up to you. Maybe, instructor led classes are your cup of tea. There are tons of them and resources within a Google's reach.

I treat meditation like Advil or Tylenol, I take as needed. That fits my lifestyle. You may prefer to make meditation part of your daily routine; starting and/or ending each day. Remember, you only need a few minutes of quality time. No excuses!

Yoga anyone?

While I've never had any formal **yoga** instruction, I've seen plenty of people practicing it on TV or at the gym. My daily routine includes stretching, sitting and lying positions that I'm told are 'yoga like' and that's good enough for me. I love the way I feel afterwards, especially after waking up and before my wife and I go for our walks.

Whether you're in a formal class or create something on your own, the main idea is assuming postures along with controlled breathing that promotes a more flexible body and a calm mind. The balance and concentration required in maintaining various poses, centers in the moment and you in your body. With heightened 'body awareness.'



Eight: Burn Out

Burnout is a state of emotional, mental, & physical exhaustion caused by excessive & prolonged stress.

For healthcare workers, burnout shows itself as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, withdrawal from patients and coworkers, and cynicism. Workers may also feel, undervalued, lacking a sense of purpose and job satisfaction. Productivity and patient care suffer as a result.

With so much at stake, then, office managers and administrators must learn to recognize the signs of burnout among their providers and take steps to intervene where necessary.



The most commonly used validated measure of emotional exhaustion is the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI).

The MBI identifies 3 stages of burnout:

1. **Emotional exhaustion**; giving of yourself to others, the constant demand in the face of fear, stress, anxiety, anger and pain. Lack of acknowledgement of feelings and taking the time to return to self.
2. **Depersonalization**; treating patients, co-workers and self as cases, files, objects
3. **Lack of a sense of purpose or achievement**; your working longer and harder but don't feel very accomplished.

The Mayo Clinic used the MBI in the first national survey taken on physician burnout. The researchers compared 7,288 doctors with matched samples of other professionals; almost 46% the doctors reported at least one symptom of burnout mentioned above. **The survey showed that the prevalence of physician burnout is disturbingly high and significantly higher than burnout in the other professionals.** Not so surprisingly, doctors were more dissatisfied with **work-life balance** than the other professionals (40.2% vs. 23.2%).

The incidence of burnout is well documented among healthcare providers, not surprising given the physical and emotional demands of the job. Exactly half of the nearly 8,000 surgeons who responded to a 2008 survey by Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine reportedly met the criteria for burnout, while **27 percent of primary-care doctors reported burnout** in a study published by the University of Wisconsin's School of Medicine and Public Health in 2009.

The demands on healthcare providers keep growing—you are not only responsible for assessment, diagnosis, and treatment, not to mention any number of related administrative or practice responsibilities. Likewise, administrators, front and back office staff must face increased workload and evermore complex challenges.

Ironically, you may feel too busy (or exhausted) to take a step back and periodically assess your own well being or unhealthy work-life habits that lead to stress.

Disregarding the signs of stress, you may eventually succumb to burnout!

The most dedicated doctor in your practice is suddenly dragging in late, snapping at the staff, and giving patients short shrift — and you've got the complaints in hand to prove it. You'd chalk it up to stress, but somehow this feels different. It's out of character. It's more pervasive. It's burnout.

The Well-Doctor Checkup

As physicians, you must first care enough about yourself so that you can care for your patients; mindfulness and self reflection are techniques to help you get there. You'll need to slow down and take pause long enough to be able to evaluate what you are doing and to develop a work-life balance.

Exercise, a well-balanced diet, and meditation will improve concentration and help you recognize what's most important, at work and in life. These practices will naturally lead to greater fulfillment and sense of accomplishment with a lot less stress!

Studies also show that the root cause of stress and burnout has more to do with your mental-emotional state than with the circumstances or the environment in which you work. Personality traits typically found in physicians, such as discipline, endurance, inquisitiveness, perfectionism, and perseverance are all good qualities. But these same qualities can become deficits if they become excessive.

One study, for example, found that 20% of participating physicians met criteria for **obsessive compulsive disorder**. You can guess the result of an excessive devotion to work, an obsession with details and perfectionism?



So, while organizational changes are all well and good, the focus here is on you and the mind-body causes of stress and burn out.

Locating the source of burnout from within means that you have more control over stress than you may think or give ourselves credit for. (I'm not suggesting that the emergency room physician or nurse can totally eliminate feelings of stress or overwhelm with positive thinking alone. But the fact is there are thousands upon thousands of healthcare workers that perform in extraordinary circumstances and under tremendous pressure and stress -surgeons, pilots, police, and soldiers- to name a few.)

As outside observers we may wonder how the pilot was able to land the plane, or how the surgeon was able to perform an incredibly difficult procedure, literally with the patient's life at stake. From the surgeon's point of view, being mentally focused and physically relaxed is necessary in order to perform at the highest level. Think about it, would you want your surgeon stressed out?

Impact on Patient Care

Physician burnout can have serious personal repercussions and undermine quality of patient care. Do you 'walk the walk' when it comes to your own stress levels and well being? What about your team and co-workers? Are they over stressed and unhealthy? What's the impact to patients when stress levels escalate throughout the work day?

The health and well being of providers and staff directly affect the patient's perception of the care they will receive and the satisfaction (or lack of) they report. As one physician put it **"Until we cure ourselves, we cannot hope to cure others."** Consider;

- The overweight physician encouraging his patient to lose weight,
- The psychiatrist nervously avoiding eye contact or checking her watch while treating the anxiety ridden patient with low self esteem,
- The impatient, snarky receptionist lacking the empathy to greet patients and make them feel welcome while waiting to see the provider
- The ER nurse, exhausted from lack of sleep, lack of exercise and proper nutrition as she prepares for her next shift

Stress is contagious, like having the flu, stress can spread from one person to another. Whether we realize it or not, people around you feel your stress. Like microwaves, you don't need to see them in order for them to work, the food heats up, and so do you!

On the other hand, a healthy, focused energetic team promotes patient confidence and the likelihood they will positively respond and adhere to treatment.

"A hospital with soul is a place of healing. A hospital without soul is a body repair shop. The depth of human care will show itself in the people, in the building, and in the atmosphere."

Thomas Moore, Care of the Soul in Medicine

Warning Signs and Interventions

If someone on your staff is already exhibiting signs of burnout, it's time to intervene. You may have a sense that things aren't right, but ask the staff what they think as well.

When speaking with the physician, make an effort to be both direct and respectful.

It's one thing to say the nurses think you are being a jerk and another thing to say ***'I don't know what this is but it seems a little out of the ordinary.'***

I've seen short outbursts of anger, you're not answering the phone, and we're getting patient complaints.'

Describe what it is you see without being judgmental and ask them what's up.

It might also be something that's troubling the doctor in his/her personal life, which may require outside resources like an employee assistance program.

You have to try to get them to open up and if they say 'None of your business,' you have to be able to say 'Wait a minute, it is our business. We have a behavior policy and you are crossing it

If I see that someone is doing too much, or I start to see a lot of mistakes and the staff are getting frustrated, I'll mention it to the physician and ask them when was the last time they took some time off?

It's never comfortable to pull someone in and say we want to let you know how your behavior affects the bigger picture and how it affects morale, but we don't ignore signs of distress.

You should also encourage your doctors to make themselves a priority.

- Doctors are so focused on helping other people that they're often very disconnected with their own wants and needs.
- Remind them how diet and exercise can lower stress and increase energy. Meditation, yoga, and Pilates also helps put them more in touch with their own bodies. You need to help them break it down and help them figure out how they can make that happen.
- Reboot by taking several breaks (5-10 minutes) during the day to clear your mind and relax your body.



A Few Stress Reducing Practices to Avoid Burnout in the Workplace

➤ **You Will Never Get It All Done!**

In order to reduce stress and avoid burn out you've got to give up the idea of 'doing it all', or, 'getting it all done'. Those notions are fantasies and too many good people wind up burned out, stressed out or die trying.

➤ **Scheduling**

At least some of the burnout may be attributed to inefficient scheduling. Patient flow may be higher or lower at certain times of the day, week, month or year. Your goal should be to organize your schedule so that you're spending more quality time focusing on patient care and less time on administrative or managerial functions.

Work with your scheduling team so that you're not stuck in the office freeing you up to use your time in more meaningful ways; exercising, reading, relaxing, taking a class, etc.

Instead of spending 90 minutes at night going over charts for the next day, go home, take walk or go to the gym! Consider arriving half an hour earlier the next morning refreshed and ready to go!

➤ **Staffing**

Consider hiring an additional mid-level provider or nurse practitioner to handle routine. Handing off hospital functions to a hospitalist group eliminates the hassle of running back and forth between the office and the hospital. Let the hospitalist group to provide inpatient care for and return the patients back to the practice.

The partners at PRA Behavioral, a 40-provider psychiatric group in Schaumburg, Ill, made **a conscious decision to make work-life balance a priority.**

Administrator Paula Comm says "we've been in operation just over 20 years and early on our physicians made a decision to stop being on rotation at the hospital, which decreased stress levels tremendously. Now, we're on no hospital call lists at all and we don't even do inpatient work anymore. We are strictly outpatient."

All tasks should be assigned to the person on your team with the most appropriate level of training required for the job. Don't tackle paperwork that could be done more cost-effectively by administrative staff. Don't spend time doing nursing functions and/or clerical and tasks.

WELL BEING PLAN

Actions I will take or schedule to be more physically, emotionally, and spiritually, fit:

Physical	Emotional	Spiritual

"I stand for a future in which I am well; physically, emotionally, and spiritually. As a way of accomplishing this, I promise to take action, get support, and/or schedule the things I have written above. By making the commitment to take better care of myself – NOW - I'll be more able and effective at caring for my family, patients, and coworkers.

Name _____

Signed _____

Witness _____

Date: _____

Are you PRACTICIN' RELAXIN'?

Ever notice how good it feels to sing? Singing has the power to soothe your nerves and elevate your spirits. Here's the science; Hormones like Endorphins and Oxytocin are released giving feelings of pleasure and reducing stress. Even more, when people sing together they feel an enhanced sense of bonding and trust, reducing feelings of depression and loneliness.

Studies also show that the benefits of singing regularly increase over time, lowering levels of cortisol, indicating lower stress. We've already discussed the value and necessity of deep breathing and meditation to help reduce your stress. There is evidence that group singing may feel like group meditation, heart rates syncing and positive hormones flowing!

*Religious groups do it,
American Idol contestants do it,
People working on the chain gang do it,
Little kids and teenagers do it,
And sometimes, we do it in the shower or in the car,
We sing...*



Whether you can carry a tune or not, singing is a stress reducer! I've rewritten the lyrics to "If I only had a brain" from *The Wizard of Oz*. It's impossible to sing this song without smiling and relaxing, try it!

*If you're practicin' relaxin'
Life wouldn't be so taxin
In each and every day....*

*So it's time we start confessin'
Just how much we're stressin'
And learn a better way...*

*Now I know you're tryin hard
Just keepin up and feelin tard...*

*But with an open heart and some discipline
You really could relax within'
And surely you would then begin
To see the light of day*

*So let's start practicin' relaxin'
And life wouldn't be so taxin
Each and every day....*

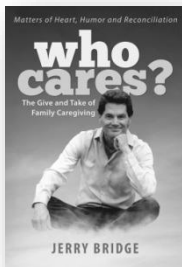
A great way to begin a staff meeting or break up the midday insanity!

Reading List:

- Buddha’s Brain, by Rick Hanson, PH.D.
- The Neuro Revolution, by Zach Lynch
- CrazyBusy by Edward Hallowell, M.D.
- iBrain by Gary Small, M.D.
- The Brain That Changes Itself by Norman Doidge, M.D.
- A Whole New Mind by Daniel Pink
- Your Brain at Work by David Rock
- Care of the Soul in Medicine by Thomas Moore
- Juggling Work and Caregiving, By Amy Goyer
- Grace and Grit. Insights to Real-Life Challenges of Aging for Adult Children and their Parents, by Fritzi Gros-Daillon
- Who Cares? The Give and Take of Family Caregiving, by Jerry Bridge
- A Year to Live. How to Live This Year As If It Were Your Last, by Stephen Levine

Keynote Speaking and Book Discounts for Groups

Interested in having Jerry speak for your association conference, company meeting or corporate retreat? Jerry can present a keynote, break-out session or workshop for your association meeting, annual conference or other important occasion.



For more information about topics,
fees, and availability:

office 805.219.0581

email: Jerry@JerryBridge.com

on the web: www.JerryBridge.com

