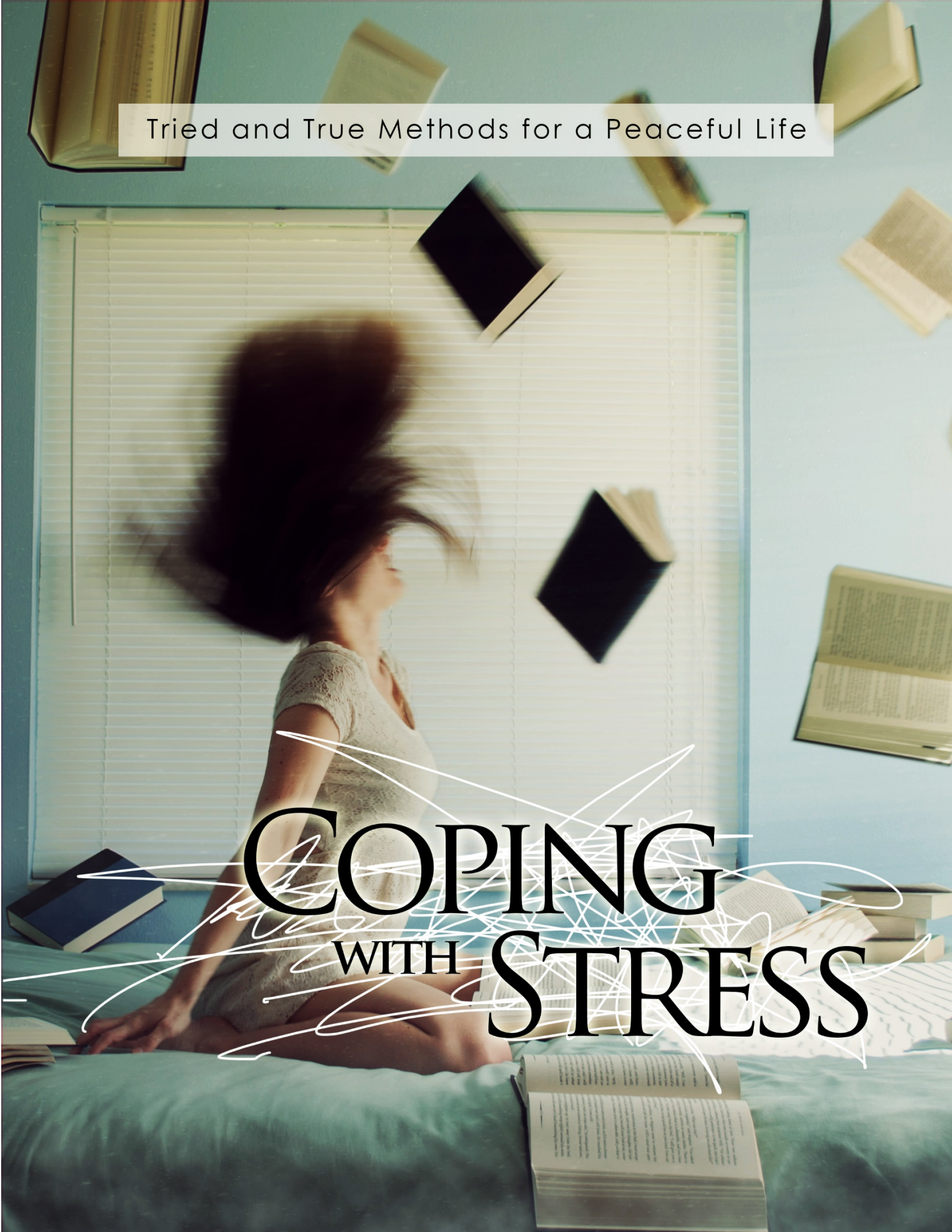


Tried and True Methods for a Peaceful Life

COPING WITH STRESS





Introduction

Stress management has become something that we need to use as a survival mechanism. When it comes to the pressures of daily life, it can easily become overwhelming. We have so many responsibilities and things to remember that stress seems to become just a second nature to most of us. Some of us are able to manage it in healthy ways, while others are not quite as skilled in that area. Fortunately, stress is not a new phenomenon. While the demands of daily living have changed, the fact is that humans have been combatting stress and utilizing it for their survival for centuries. It is possible to escape the trials and tribulations of a stressful life. Instead of fixating on the negative, we can focus on the positive to create a much better situation for ourselves overall.

The methods that humans have come up with over the years to cope with stress are vast and numerous, but one thing is for certain. These are tried and true methods that manage to get the job done. If you are stressed out, you can train yourselves to function despite it just like our ancestors did so many years ago.

In this book, we will begin to explore different ways of looking at stress. We can begin to manage it better by acknowledging the power we have over ourselves and the outcomes we face. Sometimes, we are even able to release stress by accepting that some things are simply out of our control and to only put thoughts and energies into a subject if we know that we are able to influence the outcome in some way.

Stress can be one of the biggest things to hold us back. But it doesn't have to be that way. If we learn positive coping mechanisms for our stressors, then we can easily become unstoppable! Once we have control of our minds, then everything else should come with relative ease. Nothing is beyond our grasp!

Not only that, but it can be beneficial to see stress as a simple byproduct of doing something productive, rather than feeling that it is an overwhelming barrier or obstacle that is going to get in the

way of our ability to be successful. If we are feeling the pressure, then we know we are doing something right.

However, feeling the pressure is not always a good thing. Especially when you don't know how to turn it off. So the most important thing you are going to learn from this guide is how to manage your stress in a way that can help you to become the best person you can possibly be and create the lifestyle of your dreams without the added negativity! Are you ready? Let's get started!

Chapter 1



Learning the Difference Between Assertive and Aggressive

Perception is a huge part of communication. When we receive a message, our brains filter it so that we can receive the feedback from the other party. If that feedback is perceived as negative, then it can change the rest of our interaction with that party in ways that may easily be avoided. If that feedback is perceived as positive, then it can alter the rest of the communication with that party for the better. Sometimes, we may feel that someone else is being aggressive toward us when in reality, their intention is to merely assert themselves or their thoughts or beliefs without offending you. In other cases, it can be that we do not know how to assert ourselves without coming across as aggressive and confrontational. These types of provocative interactions can cause a lot of misunderstandings and, ultimately, a whole lot of stress. And this is for various reasons.

When we are not able to communicate our needs in a way that others can hear and respect, this can create a toxic environment for us. We are not able to thrive if we can't voice the things that we need without starting fights. Maybe we begin to misunderstand others and assume that they don't care about us because they are not receiving the proper feedback from us that they are violating our boundaries. Or perhaps we are coming off too strongly and hurting people's feelings and being aggressive when we only really need to gently but firmly assert ourselves in a way that other people can hear and respect.

Nobody likes knowing that they are doing something wrong. They like it even less when they feel attacked for their mistakes. Most people will make an effort to treat you the way that you want to be treated if they are honorable enough to treat others with respect and kindness. But they are less likely to be considerate of your needs if you are communicating your expectations in an aggressive manner. Maybe you feel you need to be aggressive before the message will be received, but this is not always the case.

If you want to live in a stress-free environment, it is crucial to keep yourself in check when it comes to communication style. Learning the difference between assertive and aggressive communication styles

is pertinent to this cause, and it is something you will benefit from long-term, for the rest of your life. And it will be a guaranteed way to improve your relationships with those around you.

So what is the difference between speaking assertively versus speaking aggressively? And keep in mind that some people have a difficult time receiving either. If they are being reprimanded in some way, they may still find you to be at fault because their defense mechanisms may be in high gear. It can be difficult to get through to people like this at times, but that doesn't mean that you should go from being assertive to being aggressive, as this will only escalate the situation.

Assertive communication is respectful. You can speak your opinion to someone else while still being respectful of their opinions as well. You can ask them not to behave a certain way toward you and establish healthy boundaries without attempting to insult them for their behavior. You are simply letting them know that it isn't something you accept or want in your life.

Aggressive communication is far more damaging. Aggressive speakers may prefer to attack others for not believing the same way they do and do not show a lot of respect toward others for having differing opinions or tastes. If you offend an aggressive speaker, whether on accident or on purpose, they are more likely to react with hostility and escalate a situation rather than by being willing to view the situation objectively and seek out solutions for the issue at hand.

Aggressive communication is a step backward. And the key ingredient in the recipe for assertive communication is respect. Be respectful even if you disagree. If you find yourself getting angry about something, do your best to healthily remove yourself from the situation and establish your boundaries in that way.

It can be quite challenging for some of us to train ourselves to be assertive before we are aggressive, and that is okay. Don't give yourself a hard time about it or beat yourself up for your mistakes. Instead, see the ways that you can improve and always be honest with yourself about what you can and should be doing better. Then take the steps and time needed to improve.

It is also important to be able to identify aggressive speakers in your life so that you will know not to give them any ammunition that they can use to escalate a situation and cause you needless stress. If someone feels like being combative and disrespectful, you do not have to accept it. You can quietly and calmly make your boundaries known, with respect, and then do your best to remove yourself from the situation.

If this type of provocation is a constant thing, it may serve your life better to remove yourself from the source of the stress entirely. Some people do not want to improve themselves and find no fault in their styles of communication. They think that they have every right to plow down other people because they believe that they are right and there is no way around it. Often time, this can be a toxic behavior and something that you should do everything in your power to avoid. Limit your interactions with toxic people, especially when they cannot take accountability for their own actions and lash out with aggression when you are doing your best to be as respectful as possible.

Once you are able to do this, coping with stressful situations will be that much easier!

Chapter 2



Redirecting Your Thoughts and Feeling

One of the most important things you can do to reduce stress is to learn how to redirect your thoughts and feelings. When you find yourself getting overwhelmed by the triggering situations that you can face in day to day life, redirection is crucial in maintaining your peace of mind. And it is something that everyone can do.

To begin, you have to become mindful of the things that you are allowing yourself to think. Many of us have an issue with rumination; meaning that we are often prone to fixating on negative thoughts and emotions over positive thoughts and feelings. We read too deeply into negative events and are easily consumed and overwhelmed by them.

While it can be beneficial to spend a healthy amount of time reflecting on our lives, there is a slippery slope that can be difficult to get out of once we are there. We can take power away from ourselves by only considering the negative side of the coin and not allowing ourselves a break to think of positive things that can help us find solutions to the problems that we are ruminating on.

Fortunately, there is a great and scientific way to help us to focus more on the positive things and interrupt the negative thought spirals that can leave us feeling stressed out and sometimes even depressed.

Redirection is an amazing tool for anybody who wants to be a more positive person. To begin with, it will take some practice in mindfulness. You are going to need to be fully aware of the moment you begin slipping into a negative thought pattern. Without the self awareness necessary to identify your negative thoughts, redirection will be quite a struggle. But don't worry. Even if it is difficult to identify at first, over time you will become more aware of the negative patterns and intercept them more easily.

Once you have achieved the ability to identify your negative thoughts and feelings, you can begin to redirect them to other, more positive things. It can feel a little bit challenging at first. Especially if you aren't used to trying to change your train of thought. However, it is very possible to go from stressful, negative thinking to positive, productive thinking with just a little bit of practice and time.

Some mindfulness techniques that may be useful include meditation and breathing exercises. Taking time out of your day to really stop and reflect on the events that have occurred and how you have handled them, being honest with yourself about whether or not you responded with an appropriate emotion that you can be proud of or if you have reactions that could use some work. These are very important.

If you find yourself feeling overwhelmed then try to remember to take a time out and breathe. Don't let these emotions overwhelm and consume you. You are stronger than they are and you will always have the capacity to learn from reflection. Once you have managed to identify when you are having an emotional reaction to something, it will be that much easier to put into practice the strategy of redirecting your attention to better things.

It will help to have an arsenal at hand already of events and things that are the opposite of stressful. Think about things that make you happy and memories that make you laugh and smile. Consider things that bring you peace, even if it just as simple as the joys of nature surrounding you on an afternoon walk. Do not be ashamed of the things that bring you joy. Rather, learn how to take comfort in them when things begin to feel stressful and overwhelming.

This is one of the truest ways to maintaining a stress free life. Focus on your goals and meet challenges optimistically. Consider all of the times you were able to follow through on a goal and do something worthwhile, something you were proud of. Remember your successes and allow them to build up your confidence. When you are stressing out about failure, remember you are not always failing at everything. In fact, there are plenty of things you have done well and you will do well again, even if this particular situation is taking longer than usual for you to do well with.

It is important to have patience with yourself and forgive yourself for negative events that have occurred, which is something we will talk more about in a later chapter. In the meantime, work on remembering that you are capable of changing the course your mind has taken. You do not have to stay stuck dwelling in negativity. You have the power to remain positive, and that is always what you should try and choose to do.

Chapter 3



Taking Care of Your Body

It is far easier to avoid being overwhelmed by stress if you are doing everything you can to maintain your physical health. Physical and mental health are often closely related. When we are feeling sick and stressed out, this can sometimes be because we are deficient in certain vitamins or because we are not doing everything we can to stay on top of our physical health and well-being.

Not only that, but staying on top of a strong health and fitness regimen can promote chemical changes in your body that make it physically easier to maintain a better outlook on life overall. When your brain is surging with the rewarding chemicals of exercise and pride in your ability to take charge and care for yourself in ways you may not have been actively doing before, you will find it far easier to maintain a better mood.

The body requires maintenance just like the rest of us. In fact, it is arguably one of the most important things that we can maintain. If we ignore the needs of the body, we are prone to illness. Not only that, but if we are not thinking ahead we may find that our choices or lack of motivation will catch up to us later, when it is more important than ever to be able to maintain our independence.

Consider the senior citizens. So many of them had good diets and did regular exercise. Some of them are still sharp as tacks and seem like nothing can bring them down. They cultivated good habits and remained active throughout the course of their lives. However, there are some who are not as fortunate. They did not cultivate good habits or remain active. They led sedentary lifestyles that ultimately made them less able to take care of themselves and now they have to rely on the good will of others. They have gone from independent to dependent and some of them are even to the point where their awareness of their surroundings simply is lost.

Now, not all diseases related to age are preventable. However, much of the risk can be eliminated by taking care of ourselves in the present moment. We have to make sure our bodies are getting proper nutrition. We have to make sure they are moving regularly so that they don't end up failing us in the

future when we need them the most. The phrase “use it or lose it” has never been more important. Use your body and make sure that you are doing whatever is possible to maintain its health and well-being.

This isn't only important for your future, but for your present as well. Stress can be a huge factor in many untimely deaths. To take care of yourself physically and emotionally means to take accountability for the ways your body needs you front and center, giving it what it needs. Nobody else will. This is fully your responsibility. And while that may seem stressful, the good news here is that if you do it, your body will reward you with a better mood. Exercise will give you endorphins and dopamine and serotonin, all the happy and feel-good chemicals that your body needs to stay balanced in the world when things seem like they are going to fall apart.

It has been said that exercise is one of the most powerful anti-depressants there is. There is no need to get yourself hooked on pharmaceutical medications that can have awful side effects when you are able to exercise for free and get those good chemicals working in your body without any repercussions. Just be sure to be aware of your body and its limitations and you will always benefit from exercise!

Chapter 4



Identifying Your Bad Habits

All of us have a vice. Some of us are smokers, some of us are over-eaters, some of us spend too much money. The unfortunate fact is that most of us are usually trying to find a way to cope with the stresses that creep up on us during daily life. Maybe we aren't strong enough to handle them on our own. At least, that's what we tell ourselves. And in ways this can be true, but filling the void with negative habits and behaviors isn't what we need. What we need most during times like these is a good support system. We need people on our side telling us that we can keep going even when we feel we are destined to fail.

Not only that, but we need to be on our side as well. So many of us talk horribly to ourselves. We stop believing we are capable of doing great things. Or we feel overwhelmed and discouraged and don't see any point in continuing to try. We can get so beaten down and frustrated by the way things are going that sometimes we might even want to hurt ourselves a little bit. And that's what we do when we indulge ourselves in our bad habits.

It can be quite discouraging to be a part of modern society. Especially the way that marketing campaigns can so often try and tell us that the only way we will be good enough is by using their products. We have to steel ourselves against the pressures of consumerist culture and do our best to stay focused on what is best for us, not anybody else.

To do so we have to identify our vices so we know how to prepare for them. We have to stop and identify our triggers; what are the things that cause us to crave our vices? What situations or relationships are causing us to want to do things that are harmful to ourselves and our overall state of being? How can we begin to address these situations in a more positive way rather than by falling back on a vice that we know is only going to hurt us in the long run?

Dealing with stress is the goal of this book. But if you don't realize the things that are causing you stress and have a plan to press pause before reacting with a negative coping mechanism, then it will

not work. The first step in improving yourself is to know yourself. That is one of the most important things you can do. Especially when you are working on creating the life you want.

Don't beat yourself up for having a vice. The more terrible you feel about it, the more difficult it will be to break yourself of it. It can become a very powerful and negative cycle of a bad habit fueling bad feelings that cause additional stress that makes you crave your vice even more. Instead, work on practicing forgiveness and accountability. Know that you have a weakness, and if you fall back into using it, forgive yourself and try to stay away from it tomorrow. This is why many of the addiction therapies out there focus on the mantra "one day at a time." It is important not to overwhelm yourself when you are focusing on improving. And this is something that all of us can do, no matter how badly off we happen to feel.

So try to be honest with yourself. Think about what you do to cope with stress in an unhealthy way. Consider how you might want to deal with it differently, and don't beat yourself up when you find that you may slip up once in a while and still revert back to a coping mechanism that you know may not be particularly healthy.

There is a fine line between self-care and self-destruction. Some of us may have a hard day and feel we should treat ourselves as a way of caring for ourselves. We may say "I NEED a glass of wine," or "I NEED a cigarette" after the day we've had, but this isn't the case. What we need is a coping mechanism that will not be detrimental to us. Particularly if you may feel you are struggling with an addiction.

Rather than giving yourself "self-care" in the form of something self-destructive, maybe instead you could try to unwind after a difficult day with a long, comfortable bubble bath or a nice movie. Find other things that you enjoy doing that will give you just as much of a reward as your self-destructive patterns give you. Replace those negative rewards with positive rewards. You will never be more glad that you did than when you find yourself walking toward the life you have always envisioned for yourself!

Chapter 5



Know the Difference Between Stress and Chronic Depression

Some of us may think that it is normal to find it impossible to see the good in the world and to be constantly overwhelmed by the negativity surrounding us. And while it may be true that the world is a difficult place to live in, there is also something else to consider. We are not always going to be happy. We all have ups and downs. But if you find that your downs are overwhelming and seem impossible to get up from, you may be suffering from a more serious and chronic issue called depression.

Most of us are not strangers to what depression is. We find ourselves dealing with it at once point or another and many of us are able to move past it. However, it is possible for us to find ourselves stuck in a depression without even realizing that everything has changed. The things that once made us happy are no longer able to do so. We are having a more difficult time finding the joy and peace in the things that used to bring us these positive feelings. Our minds may spiral beyond our control to the doom and gloom scenario and we may not find anything that brings us the comfort that we desire. Because there are times when positivity feels like a cruel joke and is basically meaningless.

This is symptomatic of depression. If you suspect you may be suffering from depression, while the tips and tricks in this book may be beneficial to you in breaking through the symptoms, it may also benefit you to look into other resources dedicated exclusively to people who are also suffering from depression.

It isn't a bad thing to realize that you have depression or may need an additional helping hand in finally kicking it once and for all. In fact, so many people are working on themselves and happier for it because they finally named the demon that plagued them and are able to locate resources and tools that work well for them specifically. None of us are alone in having felt depression from time to time, and it doesn't make you weak or powerless to be suffering from it on a more long-term basis. The people who scoff at depression and claim everyone else should just get over it have clearly never experienced the physical changes depression can cause in the brain.

This is not some little issue that crybabies get because they can't cope. It is a physical change in the brain caused by long-term, ongoing stress and trauma. It is something that creates chemicals in the body that are difficult, if not impossible, to overcome alone. And anybody dealing with depression like this and can still manage to try to function in the world is incredibly strong and a wonderful source of inspiration.

If you feel you may have depression, or have already been diagnosed with it in the past, do not think of it as a condemnation. Think of it as an opportunity to get to know yourself better so that you can really embrace your options in life. You know what is plaguing you, and you know it is something that can be treated and reversed. You can seek out the tools you need to improve your life and get on the path to coping with your depression in a healthy way, even if that means speaking with experienced professionals who can help give you the resources that you need.

Just take care to look carefully into your treatment options and choose the path that is best for you. Just because everyone and their mother is advertising an antidepressant that works for them, be cautious in your choices as some may be very damaging long term to your health and your body chemistry. That doesn't mean that there are no solutions to depression, just that you should always stay informed before making any choice that can affect your body or your mental health.

Overall, knowing that you have depression can be a great thing. If you are aware of a problem, that is the first step in being able to resolve it. If you find it difficult to talk about, that's also okay. There are several online resources and support groups that will allow you to remain anonymous and still seek out the support you require.

All of us need a little bit of help sometimes. Life can be incredibly difficult and trauma is nothing to scoff at. We should never compare our problems with other people, and anybody who does so and treats depression as if it were something someone else should just "get over" is being very insensitive and obviously doesn't understand the scope of the issue. So just kindly dismiss them and continue working on what it is you need to become the person that you want to be. And if you are reading this book then congratulations! You are already doing more than the naysayers may be doing to get yourself out of an incredibly difficult rut and take steps toward being the healthiest person you can be! You can do it!

Chapter 6



Avoiding Toxic People and Behaviors

One of the most unfortunate things about modern society is that so many of us grow up in toxic situations that we don't even recognize as toxic. They affect us in ways we may be blind to, and this can even cause us to perpetuate these situations in the future. A good example of this is growing up in an abusive home, where the abuse just seems like a normal part of everyday life. But in reality, these behaviors are deeply damaging and invalidating to your sense of self.

However, because you don't realize that you are even being abused, you tolerate it. And it is even possible to pick up these behaviors and become toxic to somebody else. Some parents have learned toxic parenting techniques from their own parents and see nothing wrong with them in the slightest. This can just perpetuate the cycle of abuse and undermine the confidence of those you are trying to nurture.

Toxic behaviors can be defined as behaviors that diminish others and undermine their sense of self-confidence or self-worth. This can include physical, emotional, and verbal abuse, manipulation, and coercion. You may find that you have a friend who is interested in nothing but their own issues, and will undermine your problems by saying "that's okay, this happened to me and it was so much worse." You may find yourself in situations with people who don't show you respect or who criticize and poke fun at you for no good reason. You may find yourself in a relationship with someone who takes far more than they would ever be willing to give, then when you act like they do, they get furious at you and call you selfish.

These types of toxic behaviors are common, and whether we are used to them or not, they cause us stress. Stress is a funny thing. Even if we are experiencing it, we may not always recognize it or consider it a big deal. We may experience stress as stomach aches, headaches, or general anxiety when we are around someone else. Stress is not always a cut and dry thing to experience. Sometimes we become like those frogs who sit in water as it slowly comes to a boil, not realizing the danger we are in until it is sadly too late.

Sometimes our stress comes from being a toxic person who is driving other people away. It is very important to be honest with ourselves and to receive feedback from others when they are affected by our words or actions. If someone has told you that something you have done has hurt them, try not to be mad or to find a way to blame them for your behavior. Instead, take the time to think through the feedback and consider ways you could have dealt with the situation more calmly. And if you feel genuine remorse for the way you have hurt someone else, don't hesitate to apologize to them and let them know that you are reflecting on your behavior and trying to find a way to deal with their issue in a healthy way that may benefit the both of you.

It can be easy to become defensive if you don't realize that you are affecting others in a negative way because of your own toxic traits. All of us have ways that we can improve, and to be truthful, it can be really difficult to accept negative feedback about ourselves without feeling emotional about it. We do not like to consider ourselves to be the types of people who might hurt someone else, even if that hurt inflicted isn't intentional. Sometimes we get angry at the wronged party for pointing out how they have been wronged instead of taking a step back to view ourselves objectively. We are so caught up in trying to do the best we can that we feel it is unfair for others to tell us that we have done something incorrectly.

If our intention wasn't to hurt someone else then they must be wrong, right?

Wrong! We may just need to think harder about ourselves and the way we react to others. We may need to compare our behavior to the behavior of toxic influences in the past so we are able to identify where someone else is coming from and why you may have acted in a harmful way toward them. If you fear you may have toxic behaviors, don't worry. You can train yourself out of them and learn to be better. It doesn't mean that you are a bad person, it means that you didn't learn how to have an appropriate reaction to something that maintains the respect and integrity of all parties. Instead of getting defensive, get quiet. Listen to what others are saying about you and learn from it. And if you don't care to change your behavior then don't. Just know that your behavior affects people and it will have consequences on those that you choose to deal with in the future. Prepare for that.

If you find it difficult to remove yourself from situations with toxic people, ask yourself why. Are you the kind of person who has little confidence? Is it difficult for you to even identify toxic behaviors? Why do you feel you need to hold on to the toxic situation in your life? Is there something tying you to it that you can't control? If so, is there some way to limit your exposure to the toxic person or situation? You would not believe the weight that comes off of your shoulders from finally freeing yourself of a toxic situation. Everybody deserves that peace of mind, and you can have it to.

You don't have any obligation to serve someone toxic. They will do everything in your power to make you feel that you do, but you don't. don't let them manipulate you into believing that is the case. Treat these toxic situations as learning experiences so that you can begin to understand where your boundaries are and what you need to do to enforce them whenever necessary. Do not be afraid to set your boundaries and maintain them, it is one of the most important things you can do to maintain a stress-free life.

Chapter 7



Learn When to Ask For Help

For some reason, one of the hardest things in the world can be to ask for help. This seems ridiculous, considering we are such a communal species. There are billions of people in the world and we are all scrambling to do the best we can for ourselves and for our families. So why is it that it seems so impossible sometimes to ask for help?

Too many people feel that they have to go it alone. Maybe we have had an experience in the past that made us feel as if we had nobody to rely on. Maybe it seems as if there isn't anyone out there who actually cares what we are going through. Maybe we have been disappointed one too many times by others and we feel that the only person we can rely on to do something right is ourselves. Or maybe, we are just scared.

We are scared to be vulnerable. We are scared to admit that we don't have everything as under control as we might like. We are scared to think that anybody out there could possibly be doing better than we are and pity us or make fun of us for not being able to deal with our issues on our own. But here is a secret for you: everybody needs help sometimes, and the people who claim they don't are lying.

Life is hectic. It is unpredictable. It is overwhelming. And there are people and resources out there that are set up exclusively to help out with these types of unpredictable, overwhelming situations. Everybody is struggling in one way or another. We all have a lot on our plates and strive to juggle it all. We have past experiences that can plague us and fill us with self-doubt. We have bad days where we may procrastinate and not get everything done when we hoped we might. We deal with difficult situations that can throw us off of our plans and make our deadlines and goals come plummeting to the ground out of nowhere, leaving us in disorganized chaos and cold-blooded fear.

We are allowed to ask for help. We are allowed to be up front with the people who are relying on us and ask them for grace when we drop the ball, because life is stressful and chaotic and it can make us feel as if we have absolutely no power at all sometimes.

In those times, it is far worse to stay quiet and to let things go. If we do this then soon we begin to let everything else slip as well. We may lose ourselves to the ease of falling behind. We may accept defeat and find ourselves spiraling ever downward, not believing or even considering that someone out there might be able to reach out a helping hand to help get us out of the mess we've found ourselves in and give us the boost we need to get ourselves back on our feet.

It's never too late to try again. And with a good support network built up, then starting over is not going to be as difficult as it seems. The worst thing to do is to let things spiral out of control because you don't want to ask for help. If people are able, if they have the time and resources available to them, then they will help you. If you seek out resources, even just by going to the library or doing an internet search, chances are that you will find them. There are people all over the place who are in a similar situation. We should all be helping each other, not letting one another fall through the cracks. Even if it is something as simple as asking a partner or a child to do the dishes for you when you are going to be home late from a meeting and you have a hundred other tasks to accomplish can be a huge help to you. It frees up time and takes one stressor out of your mind. Be honest with the people closest to you about the burdens you bear, and be compassionate and receptive to those of others as well. You never know how difficult it may be for someone else to be struggling, just as you may struggle.

Treat others as you would treat yourself and offer to help them out once in a while. If a relationship is mutually beneficial, then that is all the more reason to continue to nurture said relationship and help to ease each other's burdens.

Never be afraid to ask for help when you need it. And if you find yourself taking on more than you can bear, let it be known. Don't hide it. Let people know you had intended to help everyone as much as you could, but you said yes to one too many things and now you are overwhelmed and scared of the failure you foresee. Try to work with others and they will try to work with you.

Chapter 8



Building a Support Network

Perhaps one of the most organic ways to remain stress free is to build a support network. When you have people in your corner who are willing to help you out, it helps to stay motivated and feel positive, even when things seem rough. People all over the world know the power of other human beings being a part of their circle. It is something unrivaled. We have friends for a reason. They are there to help us stay lifted when things are difficult and to give us someone to vent to when we feel like we need a listening ear.

All of us could use someone to talk to. Instead of keeping your problems to yourself all the time, open up a little bit. Don't become a chronic complainer, but be sure to nurture relationships with others that will allow you to get things off of your chest before they begin to get too overwhelming.

It can also help to have several different people's perspectives on the things that you are going through. Nobody wants to face their challenges alone, and all of us have biases in our thinking that can make it feel even more impossible to cope with some challenges. We may forget that we have the strength and capability to face the things that we are struggling with, while others may have faced similar challenges and could offer insights and advice that we wouldn't normally consider ourselves. Friends and family are far more likely to see your situations in an objective light. They do not carry your burdens and biases and can see what you are dealing with in a fresh light and offer a new perspective. They may even be able to help you prepare ahead of time by reminding you of what they know to be your strengths and weaknesses so you are armed with the best strategy to approach each situation possible.

If you are nervous about opening up to others, that's okay. You should always make sure that the people you choose to support you are genuinely coming from a place of caring and support. Learn the traits of a toxic person so you don't give them information that they can use to manipulate or hurt you for their own gain. Don't be surprised if you find yourself drifting away from the people in your life

who, rather than showing support, have a tendency to find ways to bring you down or turn all the attention back to themselves.

A support network should consist of people who are trustworthy. It can be made up of people who share your goals and ideals. The internet can be a great way to find people with similar goals who only want to surround themselves with others who share their goals and who are confronting similar issues. You may also be able to surround yourself with people who are positive and have confidence in your abilities. People who want to see your success and who have nothing to gain from your failure. People who will not be threatened by or jealous of your success.

The next step is to actually trust them enough to open up about your struggles. Let yourself be vulnerable and vent when you need to vent rather than holding it in and allowing it to cause your life more unnecessary stress. Being able to talk about our problems is a great way to get your attention off of the emotional element and begin to focus more on the possibilities of resolving the situation and finding solutions that you can be happy with.

Chapter 9



Having Patience and Forgiveness for Yourself

One of the most prevalent human instincts is to work and get through things in a productive way that will help us to ensure our survival. And when we find ourselves not quite measuring up, one of the next most prevalent instincts we may have is to beat ourselves up.

While some self criticism can be a healthy way to help us grow and improve ourselves through honest feedback, there comes a point when we may begin to be far too hard on ourselves for “messing up.” In fact, it is very easy for us to compare ourselves to other people and find that we don’t fully measure up. We are always making comparisons of ourselves against the status quo in order to figure out whether or not we can consider ourselves to be successful. If we are beating ourselves up for not being ahead of the race, it could easily become overwhelming to us to continue to compete. Every time we don’t perform the way we believe we should in comparison to others, we will have more and more additional stress. We will have invisible reasons as to why we are less than those around us. We will feel anger and resentment toward ourselves.

This anger and resentment can eventually become toxic and dangerous. If we feel self hatred without even realizing it, our stress levels skyrocket and our self confidence plummets. The harder we work on something, the worse we will feel about ourselves if even the smallest little things might backfire. This stress can compound and lead to self loathing and a whole variety of more stresses. Any time something doesn’t go your way it will be easier to find a way to blame yourself and feel even more self loathing.

This can contribute to insecurity and issues in our relationships because we are misinterpreting situations and the intentions behind other people’s actions and words. Insecurity and self-criticism can cause us major damage. It is so important to be able to identify it before it gets out of hand. And if you identify it already acting in your life, don’t worry! The best way to get yourself back on track is actually rather simple. Accept your flaws and what you consider to be your mistakes. Accept where you are in life and what you have or haven’t done to get where you are. Take all of these things and

accept them as a part of your experience, and forgive yourself for anything you feel you have done wrong or could have done better.

Take these mishaps as lessons and an opportunity for personal growth. If we try to treat every experience as a learning aid, then it will be that much easier for us to focus on the future that we most desire. We can stop beating ourselves up about the past and focus on our goals and staying on a solid foundation.

This may seem like a difficult thing to do, but stop and consider the way you treat others. Surely your loved ones have made mistakes in the past and possibly sabotage their own success as well. Maybe they work very hard and are very harsh with themselves when they don't achieve their desired results. Would you ever advise them to continue to dwell on what they consider to be their failures and weaknesses? Would you want them to treat themselves the way you treat yourself? Or does it seem silly to be so unforgiving of yourself? To the point that it impacts your self image and may even hold you back from achieving your goals?

Treat yourself the way you would treat your own family. The way you would treat your closest friends or a child. Forgive yourself for not always doing everything the way you wish you could and remember that every day is a new opportunity to make progress in the area you care about the most. Be kind to yourself when you make a mistake. Forgive yourself for things that have been weighing you down. And look at the past for the lessons that it may hold. Think about things you have been beating yourself up about and let it go. Release those things from your life and trust that it is okay for you to start fresh. Everybody deserves that chance

While on the topic, it may also serve you to extend that forgiveness to others as well. If you are holding grudges about things from the past, you are carrying that stress with you every single day. Do what you can to forgive others for how they have hurt you. Not for them or to repair a toxic relationship, but to give yourself the freedom to move on from the situation and make a clean slate where you can move forward unimpeded by the pains of the past. It's worth it!

Chapter 10



Overcoming the Negativity Bias and Thinking Positively

This one may seem like a no brainer, but there is a lot to be said for the powers of positive thinking. Many of us have a tendency to dwell on bad things and ruminate on the negative events and situations that have happened in our lives. We can all relate to having one bad thing hold us back from enjoying the rest of our days.

However, this is not necessary. Yet we do it, and sometimes on a major scale. Without the power of positive thinking on our side, it can be easy for us to become obsessed with the negative events and situations in our lives without giving enough credit to the positive events that have also taken place. It never does good to dwell on the past. The mind has a tendency to remember negative events with much more clarity and conviction than it remembers positive events, but that doesn't mean that there were no positive events or that the negative was somehow more powerful. It just means that we are affected by the negative things and often have a tendency to ruminate on them.

However, the reason we ruminate is to find solutions and to avoid negative situations and people. It is so we can find ways to remain positive and to filter out the things that cause us pain. And if we aren't able to filter out all of the things that cause us pain, then what we need to do is accept that those things exist and try not to give them any more power by being affected by them. It is important to our well-being and peace of mind to become self-aware so that we are not losing ourselves in the process of being consumed by the negative things rather than giving the positive things the recognition and appreciation that they deserve.

We all have many obstacles and it can be very difficult to overcome the negative thoughts that we surround ourselves with. However there is always a positive solution. Even if things aren't going the way we hoped they might, it can be crucial to remember that every path can lead to something good, if only you have the patience to wait out the storm and the optimism to seek out new opportunities and think outside the box.

Too often, we can get caged inside our narrow minds and feel that unless we do things in a very specific way, we will never be able to succeed in the ways we hope. However, being able to adapt is what allowed the evolution of the human species to flourish. We were able to become who we are today because we didn't allow our circumstances to control us; we learned how to control our circumstances. And if you are able to keep an open mind about the things that you are planning and understand that there is a high possibility that things will not go exactly as planned, you can prepare yourself to accept the consequences and remain optimistic as you search for alternatives to the situations that you find yourself in.

None of us are going to get everything right the first time. We all learn best through mistakes and trial and error. It is silly to get discouraged by a letdown or a setback when you could easily find yourself seeing new opportunities arising so that you are not as discouraged overall.

We all need to remember that just because we have "failed" at something it doesn't mean that we are failures ourselves. It means we are simply still looking for the path that will get us what we want in the most efficient manner possible. The second we stop seeing opportunities surrounding us, the sooner we will find ourselves trapped and miserable in the situations that we find ourselves in. There is no reason for us to allow ourselves to feel trapped when there are so many amazing opportunities surrounding us. Everything we do can be a chance to move forward and thrive in our daily lives. No matter what we are hoping to accomplish, it is possible. Whether we face several obstacles and have to attempt trial and error multiple times, there is a path to success and we can figure it out if we try. There is no reason to give up our efforts to do well and succeed in our lives.

Besides that, we also have to learn to examine what success means to us. What does it mean to you to be successful? Do you want a lot of money and a nice home? Do you want a good car and a lot of friends? Do you want to be able to network with people who are in positions of power and influence? Whatever success means to you should be personal. It shouldn't be based off of the things that other people have that you want. Truly think about your definition of success and then learn how to make every single day a successful day.

Give yourself goals and agendas to work with. Give yourself small, manageable tasks that you can achieve so that you can feel accomplished no matter where you are at in your journey toward your ultimate goal. Every day should be a reason to reward yourself for doing well in your journey. You should be able to see yourself making progress and doing the things that you most want to be able to do. And this doesn't happen overnight. You have to take single steps and take it a day at a time to get to where you need to be.

And until then, it is incredibly important to just enjoy the ride. Recognize that where you are at is good enough for now. Learn to love the moment that you are in, otherwise reaching for your dreams will become more stressful than ever. You have to be happy to know you are trying. You have to be able to accept where you are at and make a real, solid plan to get to where you are going. And you have to believe every single step of the way that the direction you are walking in is the proper one and give yourself the credit that you are due for making this journey in the first place.

It can be discouraging to feel like you are stuck in the same place at all times. It can be miserable to know that you haven't got the resources you need yet to do the things you want to do the most. But don't let those things get you down. Think about the big picture by thinking about the little picture.

Think about what you are doing today, right now, to make a difference in your life and the lives of others. Think about every consequence to the choices you are making and know that no matter where you end up, you have done well because you have made conscious choices to move forward. And sometimes that has to be enough.

If you keep a positive attitude, the stress will no longer be a burden that is depressing and that holds you back. Instead, you will be able to see things in a positive way and have an advantage over others who do not share in your optimism. You will be able to view your success in a way few others ever have and in a way that will truly help you to get to where you need to be in order to achieve your goals.

Staying positive is one of the keys to true happiness, and to be a success in this world, you have to define your own success and know that the battles you've chosen are ones that can be won in time. Don't expect anything to happen overnight and you will never be disappointed!



Conclusion

Coping with stress can be one of the biggest challenges that any of us face in adulthood. It can be very difficult for us to learn how to manage each little piece of our life and unify them so that they flow in a natural and comfortable way. It is safe to say that many of us are not raised in preparation for the burden of responsibility that we are to grow into, and a lot of us find we struggle more than we feel we should.

But don't be so hard on yourself. What you're going through is *hard*. And even if there are others out there you admire who are apparently equipped with all the tools and who seem to be able to manage more than you can with less stress about it, don't be fooled. We are all struggling in one way or another. Everything comes with a price, and stress is usually the bare minimum.

However, coping with stress can be very simple and an important way to help you move toward the path to success. Using the guides and resources in this book will help you to obtain that capacity. Everybody deserves to have peace of mind, but unfortunately if we leave that up to those around us it will never happen. Our peace has to come from within, and through very strict self-discipline. If we are letting the things around us affect us too much then it will be nearly impossible for us to move forward.

People in today's world can't afford to let stress overtake them. It is the people who have proper coping mechanisms and who learn to let things go and to stop stressing out about things they don't need to stress out about who manage to really make something of themselves and make an impact on the world. We are all in a position where we have demands placed upon us and it is dangerous to get caught up in feelings of stress and anxiety. Learning how to cope with these feelings is an important aspect of growing as a person and achieving the things that you need to achieve to succeed in the life you are dreaming to accomplish.

There are so many things that we can all do to help ourselves avoid the pitfalls of stress so that we can more easily achieve our dreams. Nothing in life comes easily or simply, and the sooner we accept that the easier our burdens are to bear. Sometimes it can be as simple as learning to let go of the things that are bothering us before we are able to finally let loose and be happy in our lives and the situations that we face. From exercising, to cleaning up our clutter, to saying positive affirmations to ourselves and remembering that our goals are within reach if we are able to keep them in sight, the possibilities for us to manage the stressors in our lives are endless!

One thing is for certain; we all deserve to live a life with as little stress as possible. While at times a little bit of pressure can help us to perform well, sometimes it can just be detrimental to our mental health and wellbeing. Instead of allowing stress to overtake you, remember that you are capable of so much more than you have probably given yourself credit for. Help yourself to cultivate habits that will help you reward yourself with the fruits of your labor and allow you to enjoy a stress free life! You have earned it! So continue to work toward that future.

Coping with stress is possible and within your reach. We can find ways to manage our issues once and for all, with or without the difficulties that are holding us back. We have to be able to separate ourselves from our emotions once in a while and continue to function despite our feelings of stress. By choosing not to dwell on negative situations and indulge our negativity bias, we can utilize the tools in this book to live more productive and stress free lives! Go ahead and start today!