



Life Coaching Strategies to Start Enjoying Your Life

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Introduction

Who doesn't want to manage their unhealthy stress? One Hundred and One Ways to Reduce Stress is intended to create an awareness of stress on physical and mental health. To exist in today's pressure cooker world, and deal with constant change, take the challenge to liberate yourself and manage personal stress.

Stress affects us all at one point or another, however, once it becomes a regular and uncontrollable part of your life, it should be considered serious. But what if you are "stressed out" and don't realize it?

As a personal life coach and career consultant, I observe the symptoms often. Signs of increased stress levels can vary from insomnia, depression, anger, aches and pains and high blood pressure. These are only a few ways excess stress affects the body and mind. Alcohol and drug problems, and heart attack and stroke, can occur if high stress levels are ignored.

You owe it to yourself and your loved ones to learn what self-help techniques are available to get your life back on track.

There are plenty of stress reducing self-help tips and techniques to choose from. They are economical, easy to use and have tremendous potential. Read a few tips before you start your day, or keep them at your bedside and implant them in your mind before retiring at night. Implement the tips and thoughts that pertain to your situation when the opportunity arises, or create your own opportunity to reduce the stresses in your life.

Living in a world without any stress at all would be very dull. Once you understand your own stress patterns and have learned ways to manage them, your health and disposition will improve.

To your success and well-being,



Dieter Pauwels

1. **Understand How You Experience Stress** – Recognize your personal stress signals to help slow the buildup of negativity and anxiety. Each of us has uniquely individual stress signals: neck or shoulder pain, headache, shallow breathing, stammering, anger and anxiety are all signs we are in stress mode. Pay attention to signals that identify stress and act to reduce worry and tension.
2. **Identify Your Stress Sources** – What events and situations trigger stressful feelings? Take time to discover the source of your anxiety and try positive ways such as exercising, meditation and talking things out with friends or family to change your reaction. Unhealthy behaviors develop over time and may take a while to change. Focus on changing only one behavior at a time.

Whenever possible avoid situations that cause you discomfort or stress caused anger. Be vigilant.

3. **Set Goals, Not Limits** – You’re on the planet to live your life and make a difference. Focus on your goals, not always a spouse’s or other family member’s goals. Plan ways to live your dreams and passions. If you do nothing, nothing happens. There are always road blocks to overcome, but it’s easier to move forward if you have a sense of empowerment and resolve.
4. **Learn to Say “No”** – If asked to chair another group or take on more responsibility, check your schedule and goals for the day. Saying “no” is an art that requires special communication skills, especially with your significant other, and in the workplace. The secret is being clear without being mean or thoughtless.
5. **Eat Healthy** – There are a great many healthy foods for you to choose from, and recipes from talented chefs on television and the Internet to help you prepare tasty meals. Pass on the junk food and eat more fruits, veggies and fiber. A healthy diet can lower the amount of stress hormone, Cortisol. Try eating slower with enjoyment rather than wolfing down your food. Take a daily vitamin supplement to help boost the immune system.
6. **Relax** – There is nothing wrong with hard work as long as you take time to be with your family, enjoy a hobby or sport, or even catch up on your reading. Meditation helps to release tension and calm those stressful heartbeats.

When you feel stress creeping up, try breathing in deeply from the stomach and releasing your breath from the mouth for ten sets.

Lie down with your feet propped up and close your eyes. Relax by visiting visually those places you love and find calming.

7. Use Your Humor – Did you know laughter seems to change our brain chemistry? Studies show a good laugh helps lower cancer rates, can help unite a relationship during hard times and aids the immune system. A smile is something you can never give away because it always comes back to you. Laughter and a sense of humor can influence others, heal and relieve tension.

8. Ask Yourself Why – Why is it we do certain things like quit our job and volunteer to help the underprivileged, run a marathon or learn a difficult new skill? Basically, because we want to. However, we get so involved in the how, we forget about the reason for doing it. Why you want something is actually more important than how you want to achieve it.

Write down your wants, needs, goals, hopes, and dreams. Does what you are doing now fulfill any of these objectives? Try this. If you figure out what you don't want, what you do want may become crystal clear. The more you understand why you're doing what you are doing, the less stress you will build. If you cannot come up with a good reason, then, stop doing it.

9. Follow Your Passion - Learn which activities appeal to you and the types of people you enjoy being with, and seek them out. Structure your life around interests you love. Joseph Campbell, a wise philosopher, advises you to “follow your bliss.” The more you do in life that follows your own flow, the more passion you'll have for what you do.

If you don't have the skill or knowledge to follow an activity of interest, seek out a mentor, take a course, or read whatever you can find on the subject.

10. Organize and Prioritize – When you have problems setting your priorities, try doing the most important and most difficult tasks first. Once they are out of the way, the smaller tasks seem much easier.

Keep a to-do list and calendar with you at all times. By making a list of what really matters, you may discover you're devoting too much time to activities that aren't a priority, and you can adjust your time table accordingly. If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.

11. Deep Breathing Techniques – Stress often causes us to breathe shallowly and this almost always causes increased stress. Mentally scan your body for physical tension. Does your chest feel tight? If so, you may be holding your breath without even knowing it. Shallow breathing puts less oxygen into the blood stream, producing an increase in muscle tension. When you experience headaches or feel anxious and uptight, try this:

- Choose a comfortable place to sit, preferably away from other people. Sit up straight and keep your feet flat on the floor. Imagine and feel your feet being rooted and connected to the earth.
- Place your hand on your chest. Place the other hand at your middle Dan Tian, one of your body's three reservoirs of energy centered at the middle of the chest.

- Begin taking slow, deep belly breaths. Concentrate on your body expanding and contracting. Visualize your energy sinking lower and lower into your body. Continue this breathing exercise for one to three minutes or a minimum of ten sets. Breathing into the lower 'dan tian' (below the naval) helps release fear and anxiety. In doing so, you create additional stability, and become more centered and secure within yourself and your body.

- 12. Manage Yourself** – One of the greatest sources of stress is over commitment or poor time management. Plan ahead. Make a reasonable schedule for yourself and include time for stress reduction as a regular part of your schedule. Trying to take care of everything at once can be overwhelming and, as a result, you may not complete anything.

Instead, make a list of what tasks you have to do, then do one at a time, checking them off as they're completed. Give priority to the most important ones and do those first. If a particularly unpleasant task faces you, tackle it first and get it over with. The rest of your day will include much less anxiety.

Most importantly, do not overwork yourself. Resist the temptation to schedule assignments back-to-back. All too often we underestimate the time allowed for completion. Make allowances for the unexpected.

Scheduling time for both work and recreation keeps you in balance. Too much of anything can lead to burnout. Did you know body cells age and die more quickly when you are under stress? Recognize when you are most stressed and allow yourself reasonable breaks. When things feel especially difficult, take a walk or change your scenery.

- 13. Connect With Others** – Being by yourself is fine, but being lonely is miserable. A good way to combat sadness, boredom and loneliness is to seek out activities involving others. Consider being a participant.

Sociable people seek out activities they can enjoy, like group hobbies, learning a new skill or language, or volunteering for a cause they are passionate about. Help yourself by helping others and making a difference.

- 14. Express your feelings** – When you feel something bothering you, it's best to get it out in the open. Bottled up emotions increase frustration and stress. Share your feelings. Perhaps a friend, family member, teacher, clergy person or a life coach can help you see your problem in a different light. Talking with someone else helps clear your mind of confusion freeing you up to problem solve.

Put out "brush fires" while they are still small. Even if it is slightly embarrassing, asking for help soon after a problem occurs may avoid many more serious problems later. Also consider writing down thoughts and feelings. Putting problems on paper can help clarify the situation and give new perspective.

- 15. Take a “Visual Vacation”** – Create a quiet scene. You can't always travel there, but you can visualize it. When you have the opportunity to remove yourself from a stressful situation, take a moment to close your eyes and imagine a place where you feel relaxed and calm. Notice all the details of your chosen place, including pleasant sounds, smells and the climate.

You can change your “mental channel” by curling up with a book you’ve been putting off reading, or playing relaxing music to create a sense of peace and tranquility.

- 16. Monitor Your Physical Comfort** – Be as physically comfortable as the situation will allow. Wear comfortable clothing. If it's too hot, go somewhere that has air conditioning. If your chair is uncomfortable or causes back aches, adjust it or change it. If your computer screen causes eye-strain, take shorter breaks away from the screen. Don't wait until your discomfort turns into a real problem. Take five minutes to stand up and walk around to release tension and prevent physical stress.

- 17. Get Physical** – Physical activity plays a key role in reducing and preventing the effects of stress. Academic life or administrative jobs are often sedentary, and by sitting around without exercising, stress may accumulate in your body. When you feel nervous, angry or upset, release the pressure through exercise or stretches.

Physical activity is a great stress buster, plus you'll be amazed by how much better you'll look and feel. In addition to distracting you from your problems, exercise has a physical benefit. Aerobic activity, in particular, can reduce anxiety, depression and tension. Brisk walking or bicycling for 20 to 30 minutes three to five times a week may be all that you need to help you manage your weight and mental stress more effectively. Yoga or martial arts give you a sense of power over mind and body.

- 18. Take Care Of Yourself** – Remember, you are special to others. Healthy eating and adequate sleep fuels you emotionally and bodily. Too many cocktails are ageing and can cause difficulties down the road. Avoid consuming too much caffeine and sugar. The temporary “highs” they provide often ends in fatigue or a “crash” later. Take time to eat the most important meal of the day, breakfast. A balanced breakfast starts your metabolism burning, and helps to keep you recharged throughout the day.

Well-nourished bodies are better prepared to cope with stress. Like an automobile running low on gas, if you are irritable and tense from lack of sleep or not eating right, you will be less able to go the distance when dealing with stressful situations.

- 19. Know Your Limits** – A major source of stress is people's efforts to control events, or other people, over which they have little or no power. When confronted with a stressful situation or decision, ask yourself, is this my problem? If it isn't, gracefully back off. If it is, can you resolve it immediately? Once the problem is settled, just leave it alone.

There are many situations in life beyond your control, starting with the weather, and including the behavior of others. Consider the fact that we live in an imperfect world. Learn to accept what is, and change only that you can change.

20. Choose to Be Happy Rather Than Always Right – Must you always be right? Is it upsetting when other people don't do things your way? Consider cooperation or compromise rather than confrontation. A little give and take from both sides may reduce the strain and make you both feel more comfortable. This helps diffuse a simmering stand-off and, to continue the discussion later, after everyone has calmed down and thought things over.

21. Have A Good Cry – Unlike the song with the same name, its okay for big girls and even big boys to cry. A good cry during periods of stress can be a healthy way to relieve anxiety. It can prevent the physical and mental consequences of bottling things up.

Have you ever laughed until you cried? Crying with joy or over a happy emotion is healing. However, frequent crying is a sign of depression, and you should consider seeing a physician or therapist.

22. Avoid Self Medication - Alcohol and other drugs do not remove stress. In fact, if addiction results, that only adds to stress. Although they may seem to offer temporary relief, addictive substances mask or disguise problems. In the long run, behavior while "under the influence" increases rather than decreases stress. Prescription medications should be taken only on the advice of your doctor.

23. Look for the "Pieces of Gold" Around You – It's easy to fall into a rut and see only the negative side of situations. When under stress, the positive seems elusive. Most of us know people who have spent years turning gold into garbage, or an honest compliment into a cynical reply; the Midas touch in reverse.

Negative thoughts can block like a pair of dark glasses, allowing little light or joy into your life. What would happen if each day for the next three days, you observed or participated in planting five "pieces of gold" in your environment?

Pieces of gold are positive, enjoyable moments or interactions. They may seem like small events at the time, but they can often provide an energy that presents ideas and circumstances in a positive, more balanced way.

24. Massage Your Stress Away – Massage therapy has been shown in several studies to be an effective remedy for stress. Research among various groups of people who face a lot of daily stress, such as caregivers for the chronically ill, hospital workers and teachers, all conclude a little massage therapy goes a long way toward relieving stress.

One recent study from the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in New Hampshire on patients undergoing bone-marrow transplants, found patient stress test scores significantly lower after receiving massage over the course of their treatment.

- 25. Aromatherapy** – The use of natural oils dates back hundreds of years as a proven aid for relaxation and stress relief. Studies were performed documenting the calming effects of aromatherapy on a group of mostly breast cancer patients receiving radical cancer treatment. Their tension, stress and anxiety levels dropped significantly after treatment.

Essential oils, which can be purchased in health food stores, have been found to affect brainwaves and alter behavior, though their mechanism of action is not well understood. Scents of lavender and citrus are two of the most often used for stress-relief. Keep pure essential oils on hand to massage a small amount into your temples in times of stress.

- 26. Yoga for Young and Old** – Researchers from Kaleid Health-Millard Fillmore Hospital in Buffalo, NY, measured whether yoga, listening to classical music or nature sounds could relieve stress. While all approaches worked to some extent, yoga worked the fastest to lower the blood pressure of those people subjected to mental stress.

If you decide to give yoga a try, protect yourself from injury by studying with a trained professional. Chair yoga is an excellent alternative for those who cannot do basic yoga movements. Before enrolling in a yoga class, check out your facility and make sure it is clean and uncluttered.

- 27. Develop A Support Network** – It's been proven women are better able to cope with emotional stress than men due, in part, to their stronger support networks. When stress becomes a problem, spending time with loved ones, meeting with friends or even cuddling up with your pet may help. Consider talking to a member of the clergy, a healthcare professional or a professional life coach; all of which can help get you through times of stress related depression or anxiety.

- 28. Understand Your Values** – The more your actions reflect your values, the better you will feel, no matter how busy your life is. Values are mental concepts that make meaning possible. They provide you motivation to act and a framework for making decisions. Values are just as important within organizations as for individuals.

When you begin a family, it's essential to build a family with values. It's never easy, but making a commitment to set value examples is a significant parental task. Get busy, figure out what your values are, since they shape performance, leadership and success at all levels.

- 29. Set Realistic Goals and Expectations** – Whether for personal or business achievement, setting goals is critical to your success. Goals provide you with direction and meaning in life and give you purpose. When you are stuck in a situation, goal setting is a way to get you unstuck and moving forward again.

Being realistic in initiating your goal setting is essential. If you are not realistic, you may compromise your goal and your passion to achieve it. Although sprinkled with challenges, goals are achievable. These difficulties help us grow and truly appreciate the achievement. Set motivating goals, and focus your time and effort on moving toward success.

- 30. Believe In Yourself** – When feeling overwhelmed, remind yourself of what you do well, and believe in your capabilities and inner resources. Belief in yourself is the best kind of faith you can have. Confidence means being motivated and inspired to do everything you want to do.

Those with true self-esteem are in control of their lives. They take responsibility for what happens in their lives, which creates a high self-worth. They understand how to tap into their creative or intuitive side and change circumstances to a positive outcome. A truly confident person does not judge others for what they can or cannot do, but sets an example of what is possible.

- 31. Mental Imagery Relaxation** – Mental imagery relaxation, or guided imagery, is a proven form of focused relaxation that helps create harmony between mind and body. Guided imagery coaches you in manifesting calm, peaceful images in your mind and furnishing you a "mental escape" from stress.

Identify what you say to yourself about what is going on with your illness or situation. It is important to identify negative self-talk and replace it with healthy, positive self-talk. By making positive affirmations while visualizing, you can counteract negative thoughts and emotions.

- 32. Relax To Music** – Combine relaxation exercises with your favorite music. Select the type of music that lifts your mood, or you find soothing and calming. Of course, the results depend on the music being played. Some people find it easier to relax while listening to specially designed relaxation audio tapes that provide music and relaxation instructions. There is a fascinating range of techniques, all contributing to the power of gentle music to sooth and calm.

- 33. Plan for Fun and Relaxation** – Fun and relaxation are an essential part of living a well-balanced life. Take time out from your busy schedule for weekly guitar lessons, a yoga class, a date night with your spouse, and even a guys' or gals' night out a couple of times a month. Work out at the gym or power walk away your stress. How do you squeeze in all this playtime while working full-time and sharing the responsibilities of raising children? If you believe the most important thing is to be happy in life, family and career, then you can always make time.

- 34. Is Your Attitude Showing?** – A positive attitude can help ward off stress and enable you to deal with change. A positive attitude means telling yourself there are things you can do to improve certain situations, and admitting that sometimes there's nothing you can do. To maintain a positive attitude during a stressful situation, here are some helpful hints:
- ✓ Stay calm. Stop what you're doing. Breathe deeply and reflect on your options.
 - ✓ Tell yourself you can get through the situation.
 - ✓ Be objective, realistic and flexible.
 - ✓ Keep the situation in perspective. Think about possible solutions. Choose one that is the most acceptable and practical.
 - ✓ Think about the outcome: Ask yourself, what is the worst possible thing that can happen? Chances are that it won't.
 - ✓ Tell yourself you can learn something from every situation.
 - ✓ Eliminate self-defeating words such as can't, never, should, and must.

- 35. Take Responsibility** – Focus on what you can control and accept that there are certain conditions you cannot control. As an adult, you are solely responsible for all the choices in your life. Once you stop whining, denying and blaming, and accept you played a part in the circumstance, only then can you position yourself to move forward and to learn from your mistakes.

Furthermore, recognize you are responsible for your “Now” and the way you respond to people, actions and events in your life. Anger management plays a role in taking responsibility. People who constantly blow off steam to resolve an issue are lacking maturity.

Blaming people from the past or holding on to resentment is a waste of energy. The reality is that they most probably did the best they could, given the limitations of their knowledge, awareness and experience. Take responsibility and grow in wisdom and as a person.

- 36. Reduce Caffeine** – Most Americans in need of a jolt of energy reach for a stimulant. Whether we're getting our fix from an espresso maker, a teapot, or a vending machine, caffeine is the drug of choice for people who need to feel fired up fast. Caffeine boosts energy by stimulating the central nervous system and increasing the heart rate and blood pressure.

However, this pick-me-up has a dark side. Caffeine sensitive people tend to feel jittery and anxious, not jazzed, after a cup of coffee, a can of soda or a caffeine packed pep drink. Caffeine can also sabotage your sleep, draining energy and the ability to make sound decisions, and leaving you feeling stressed. Many require more caffeine the next day to compensate for sleep loss. Caffeine may be addictive for those who consume it to create a feeling of false energy.

- 37. Be A Compassionate Observer** – Take a week to observe your life as an outsider might. Answer the following questions:

- ✓ Did I awake feeling rested and relaxed, or frenzied and exhausted?
- ✓ Did I take time to unwind before I went to sleep or was I still dealing with my concerns from the day?
- ✓ Did I wake up in the middle of the night with worries?
- ✓ For what percentage of the day was I fully present?

Continue to ask these questions of yourself until you are satisfied you have weeded out negative patterns. If you don't tune into what's important, loving and satisfying, you are merely existing and not living. You weren't born to worry.

Don't be timid, light a fire under your passiveness and take the slice of life the world is offering you. Hard work is rewarding as long as you take time out for calm and peace, and to nurture your emotional and physical health.

- 38. Silly Time is Good** – Those uncontrolled giggly moments are restoring and fun. When laughter is not readily available, and you want to liberate yourself from stress, take a warm, relaxing shower and pretend you're Celine Dion, or play your favorite song and dance around the house.

Have a slumber party with old friends just like you did in college or plan an outing to a place you have always wanted to visit. Letting loose and allowing yourself the moment helps to calm the mind. You'd be surprised how a little "silly time" can raise the spirit.

- 39. Monitor Your Negative Self-talk** – Are you aware negative self-talk precedes anxiety? Thoughts impact feelings which impact your view of the world, and that combination affects the thought process. The trick is to identify the negative feelings prior to anxiety setting in.

Cast these and similar thoughts from your vocabulary: How stupid I am, I won't be able to do it, I know I'll mess up or, I should have.... Why didn't I? Write down positive statements to counter the negative "put downs." The next time you feel anxious, ask yourself what you were thinking before feeling this way. Most likely it was a negative thought. You can change the outcome with positive self-talk.

- 40. Forgive Yourself and Others** – Accept the fact that we live in an imperfect world and people, including yourself, make mistakes. Forgiveness is the heavy baggage keeping you from total healing. It's a skill, coping strategy, good will and a choice. When the offense has been minor, it's easier to forgive than when someone has committed a major offense.

Forgiveness is also a process, a time to deal with our emotions: anger, grief and sadness. Forgiveness is not condoning bad behavior, nor does it require the other person to be physically present.

Although it is healthy to give yourself time to make the decision to forgive. The important objective is to be moving on from whatever point you are at. The will to improve one's self under difficult circumstances is courageous.

- 41. De-Mystifying Clarity** – At first glance, clarity doesn't seem to need, well, clarifying because it's usually the conflict that needs explanation. Creating clarity doesn't need to be stressful. To have clarity in one's life means having the sense of ease and confidence you will be able to handle what comes next. Clarity is mental and physical organization, allowing you to progress effortlessly.

When making a decision, clarity is the moment you have the answers and can take the best action to get where you have to go. This step alone can often make the best paths obvious. It may seem obvious, but do you have the information you need to make the decision? Surprisingly, we often don't, or we don't organize it in a way that reflects our priorities. Either way, this can make deciding difficult. Perhaps it's not possible to obtain more information. Taking action is better than not taking action at all. It's how we learn.

The process of getting clear is not always comfortable. Your decision may affect others and how they will feel about it. As you gather feedback from others, try not to get completely overrun by their opinions. Balance their viewpoints within the context of this being about your quest to discover what's ultimately true for you. Where do you want clarity in your life? The answer is a clue as to where you are missing clarity.

- 42. Embrace Imperfection** – Perfectionism is a major source of avoidable stress. It's setting yourself up for failure by demanding perfection of yourself. The word perfect means something different to everyone, thus, nothing is truly perfect.

Are you seeking perfectionism by placing unnecessary blame on someone else because you didn't turn out perfect; or creating endless spinning about making decisions; or procrastinating due to fear of making a mistake. This is emotional avoidance; the sibling to perfection is control. When you try to control, or force an outcome, you lose.

Whether you want to or not you, as all of us, will originate "things" with flaws. Insisting on that which cannot be done is a total waste of energy. Face your fears and accept the benefits of accepting imperfection.

- 43. Practice Mindfulness** – What is mindfulness? It might be described as simple, non-judgmental awareness of what one experiences in the present. Mindfulness is frequently equated to meditation because meditation cultivates mindfulness. As with any skill, mindfulness can be learned.

The mindful practice is in the repetitive act of directing attention to only one thing in this moment; a time when thoughts become mental events you can recognize and choose to act on or let go of. No one would suggest that just paying attention is the answer to all of life's problems. When you begin to understand how you are thinking, feeling and reacting, you can begin to learn new ways of being responsive to what is going on in your life.

Life in the fast lane and trying to balance work, children and marriage is often overwhelming. The opportunities to find a little quiet time to ourselves can be few and far between. Even while taking a shower or eating a meal, many are preoccupied with past or future, contrary to being attentive to the shower or tasting a meal. This way of thinking increases stress and anxiety.

- 44. Setting Realistic Expectations** – When it comes to setting expectations for whatever reason, some people have a peculiar way of going about it. There are those that set their expectations so low they know for sure they can meet them. Then, there are those that set such high expectations, they could never meet them. Both expectations create stress because neither choice is serving the person well.

In no way is this realistic thinking. That's because it's really hard to determine what's realistic at first. In the beginning, it's best not to focus on the outcome. Stay in the moment and go with the flow.

Once you get information, feedback and results, then you are in a position to establish a range of realism. Knowing the range is important because it anchors you, and gives you expectations to work from. With experience, hard work and knowledge, you'll gain more insight and, over time, set personalized, realistic goals.

- 45. Focus On the Positive** – When facing major challenges, try to look at them as opportunities for personal growth. If your own poor choices contributed to a stressful situation, reflect on them and learn from your mistakes. The power of positive thinking is most likely something we have all heard of before. It is an attitude that expects good and favorable results; whatever the mind expects, it finds.

It is quite common for people to say, "Think positive." Yet how many people do you know who stop to ponder what thinking positive means? When the attitude is positive, we entertain and see positive outcomes.

Once a negative thought enters your mind, be aware of it and endeavor to replace it with a positive thought. Changes take time, but they eventually happen. Persevere and you will turn your negative thoughts into optimism.

- 46. The Judgmental Predicament** – We have all heard how “sticks and stones will break our bones, but words will never hurt me.” Wrong. Words can and do hurt the human psyche. Harsh words not only inflict mental anguish but cause a stressful reaction in the recipient. We aren’t born with preconceptions or judgmental behaviors but we live in a world where this type of mentality is taught and dolled out like plastic bags.

Honor thy self and others is the creed we should follow, not only by what we say, but through our actions. When we judge people by their color, size of their house, their accent, level of intelligence or wealth, we are not exhibiting honor. Even if you are not a religious person, you may agree with a poignant golden rule, “Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.”

- 47. Meditation** – Sit in a comfortable chair in a quiet room — perhaps with a candle or soft music. Keep your facial muscles relaxed and your eyes closed. Inhale through the nose with the mouth closed. Exhale slowly, with the lips parted. Beginning at the top of the head, work your way down to your feet, focusing your attention on relaxing each part of your body before proceeding to the next.

Concentrate on your breathing. Relax and allow the breath to come from the stomach, not the chest. Disconnect from sounds around you and feel your body relax completely, and your brain waves slow to their lowest frequency.

Whether you de-stress using a meditation CD for deep relaxation, or you prefer your own method to drain tension, your goal is for a deep and stable relaxation that will extend itself into your daily circumstances.

- 48. The Power of Sleep** – The most time consuming thing you do is sleep. You spend one-third of your life, or six to ten hours a night in bed.

Getting enough sleep helps your body heal stress and pain. If you’re not getting enough sleep, you’re not giving your muscles enough time to rejuvenate themselves for the next day’s activity.

A firm or soft mattress is a matter of what you prefer. It has never been proven one mattress surpasses another. If you wake up without pain or stiffness, then that’s the right one for you. Here are additional guidelines that can help bring about a good night’s sleep:

- ✓ Establish a regular sleep schedule. When possible, go to bed and get up at the same time every day.
- ✓ Make sure your bed and surroundings are comfortable. Arrange the pillows so you can maintain a comfortable sleeping position. If you are cold, dress in warm clothes and add an extra blanket. If hot, dress in cool clothes and install a ceiling fan.
- ✓ Keep your bedroom dark and quiet.
- ✓ Use your bedroom for sleeping only; don't work or watch TV in your bedroom.

- ✓ Avoid napping too much during the day.
- ✓ Remember to balance activity with rest and recovery.
- ✓ If you feel nervous or anxious, talk to your spouse, partner or a trusted friend. Get your troubles off your mind before sleeping.
- ✓ Listen to relaxing music.
- ✓ Sleeping pills can be harmful when taken with other medications or abused. Talk to your doctor before taking any sleeping aid.
- ✓ Take diuretics or "water pills" early in the day so you don't disturb your sleep getting up in the middle of the night to use the bathroom.
- ✓ If you can't sleep, get up and read or do something relaxing until you feel tired. Don't stay in bed worrying about when you're going to fall asleep.
- ✓ Avoid caffeine late in the day.
- ✓ Maintain a regular exercise routine but don't exercise within two to three hours before sleep.
- ✓ Take ten deep breathes as you tell yourself you are going to sleep.

- 49. Indulge In Simple Pleasures** – No one is advocating that you should start training for a triathlon or an upcoming marathon (though it might interest some). You may even argue that there is no time for fitness in your busy schedule. Think twice about giving out that tired excuse. Being a couch potato and overworking without a form of exercise results in an increase in mental and emotional stress.

Take care of your inside and outside. Say “yes” to investing time for replenishment of your energy, personal renewal and regular relaxation. When you’re feeling stressed, take an aromatherapy bath, go for a nature walk, spend a lunch and movie day with friends or check out books from the library.

Perhaps you have been too busy to spend real time with your family. A family outing or picnics are great times to catch up on everyone’s news. Whatever you decide to do for relaxation, plan on doing more of it.

- 50. Follow Your Passions, Awaken Your Heart** – Passion can be described as one’s pleasure, one’s path or one’s purpose. Many people define passion as intense emotional desire and longing. Whatever passion means to you, a journey involved to discover and live your passion.

If there is something you already love doing, and you are thinking of making it a career, ask other people for ideas, do the research on the Internet, or through books and magazines. Once you’re satisfied you have enough information, give it a try.

- 51. Find A New Hobby** - When was the last time you hauled out your brushes and easel to paint the still life you never finished? Why did you give up helicopter training after only three lessons? Why is your coin collection wasting away on the top shelf of your closet? If you're bored with your old hobby, then it's time to hunker down and find a new one.

Think of it this way, if you had a sedentary hobby, perhaps the time is right to take up horseback riding or golf. No? There's jazzercise, tennis, skiing, yoga, swimming and running. Surely you can find a hobby that helps shed unwanted pounds or turns flab into buff.

If you're seeking a hobby that doesn't require gym shoes, try needlepoint, scrap booking, crafts or cooking classes. Ask yourself what you have always wanted to do and just do it.

- 52. Spend Time With Friends** – Whether you live alone or have a large family, friendships are important to your well-being and bring joy and enrichment to your life. A friendship, like any other relationship, takes dedication, sacrifice and work to keep the friendship going. In other words, to have a good friend, you must be a good friend.

Friendship means: Keeping your word, understanding each other's moods and feelings, being a good listener to your friend, being generous with compliments, caring about each other, disagreeing without hurting, being trustworthy, being genuinely compassionate and helping to solve problems.

Being a friend is a serious commitment, but a solid friendship is a flame that can never be extinguished.

- 53. Exercise Your Spirit** – We know exercise builds a healthy body, but did you know exercise can pump up your spirit as well? Tai Chi is a Chinese martial art that teaches precise physical movement as a way to build strength. It also requires special breathing techniques and dedication on the part of the performer. For this reason, it affects mind and body. For those seeking a physical exercise that requires discipline and focus, Tai Chi may be a beneficial choice.

Yoga has gained in popularity as a mind and body healing connection. The exercises are thought to bring body into harmony with mind and to promote healing and spiritual insight. Yoga consists of a variety of poses, breathing exercises and meditation.

If you are not into Tai Chi, yoga or one of the many mind, body exercises being offered, meditation and deep breathing can be practiced by anyone, anywhere, to calm and release stress.

54. Challenge Previously Held Beliefs No Longer Supporting You – Write down whatever causes you the most stress on one side of a sheet of paper. On the other side of the paper, write down the beliefs you hold related to the source. Ask yourself, is your thinking narrow minded about looking at a situation? Are there better ways of considering an issue causing you stress? Ask yourself:

- ✓ What other beliefs are possible?
- ✓ Which beliefs would be more productive than your current method to manage your stress more effectively?
- ✓ What steps can you take to reduce the symptoms of stress?
- ✓ Keep searching for newer and better ways to unleash tension and impact your belief system in a positive way. Climb out of the box and stretch yourself in new directions.

55. Bring Meaning and Purpose Into Your Life – Whether you're trying to find incentive to clean the garage or mow the lawn, the key to getting motivated is creating a sense of purpose.

When you are ready to work on accomplishing a goal, no need to stress out because you think it's unreachable. Understanding your purpose behind reaching the goal will help you achieve. Make a list of small things to draw on for motivation: If you clean enough space in the garage to park the car inside, buy yourself lunch or dinner out. This is a great example setting idea for children.

Having a clear purpose for an end result gives you the clarity you need to become motivated. Understanding the purpose of who, what, where and why gives you the confidence needed to meet your goals. The more purpose in your life, the more meaning and fulfillment you will experience.

56. Strengthen Spiritual or Religious Beliefs – Religion and spirituality mean different things to everyone. Overcoming the stress and loneliness of grief and pain can be the reason some turn to a higher power for relief. We work out our bodies; why not work on our core beliefs with God by using our minds and beliefs?

If your religion calls for you to attend a service or mass, when was the last time you set foot in your place of worship? Not just during the holidays, but during the rest of the year?

Religion and spiritualism brings people together. Some practice their beliefs to fill hollowness nothing else can, others show their beliefs in the form of service and kindness to their fellow man, and some feel comfort and peace when they involve themselves in meditation or prayer.

If you feel something is missing from your life, or your family life, perhaps spiritual and religious enlightenment can help fill that void.

- 57. Journal for Self-Discovery** – There are no hard-set rules for keeping a journal, a diary, or a blog. All three are one in the same. How often you write, how much time you spend are your personal choice. If you're a mother of three small children, you'll have less time than a person who lives alone and spends hours in solitude.

What you use for expressing yourself is also a matter of personal preference. Some use a book of blank pages, writing tablets or notebooks with removable pages. There is even journal writing software available. Though there is something about the written word that personalizes the event.

Like the written letter that never got mailed, writing out your feelings in a journal gives a sense of release from what is pressuring you. Study what you have written, then challenge yourself to look at your situation more objectively.

- 58. Wake Up 15 Minutes Earlier** – Have you ever noticed how important it is to have a solid start to your day? Avoid early morning stress by waking up feeling full of energy and not rushed for time. Jump start your day the minute your feet hit the floor. Give yourself a little more time to eat breakfast, or to avoid a jam-up in traffic.

What if when you open your eyes, you learn you've overslept and you're already thinking what can go wrong? Starting the day rushing around is a recipe for stress. Wake up fifteen minutes earlier and discover what can go right.

- 59. Be Honest With Yourself** – Be who you say you are. When people believe and count on you, you shouldn't let them down. Misrepresenting yourself, whether lying on a resume, committing fraud, negligence, faking miracle cures, or cheating in academia, lies have a way of creeping out of hiding. Not to mention how lies become a wall between two friends or partners — a real love buster.

Dishonesty is a hidden secret that cannot be mentioned, and can be as addictive as a street drug. It strangles relationships and compatibility. Honesty may be difficult in the present sense, but healthier in the long run. There is no middle ground. Either you are honest or you're not.

- 60. Make A To-Do list** - Invest just a little time planning your day and accomplish more. Write down goals, errands, chores, due dates for projects, etc. in your daily planner. This can be done before bed or first thing in the morning. The list should not be longer than one page. Assign tasks to hourly slots and don't panic if there is a snag in the schedule. There is always a natural stopping point when you can catch up.

Prioritize tasks in the order of importance, then urgency. If possible, don't lump lengthy tasks together. Schedule a less time consuming task after a lengthy one, allowing for lunch and short breaks. In addition to work related goals, try keeping a list of personal long-term goals.

After completing your To-Do List, give yourself a pat on the back by making a Closure List. It's an interesting task to discover how productive you were. This is also an opportunity to understand why you weren't as productive as expected and make changes accordingly.

- 61. Teen Stress** – Teens suffer more stress than parents are aware of. Eighty-five percent of teens are stressed about school, fear of failure and their future. Peer pressure is at the top of the list.

Lack of down time causes anxiety to build. Too many late nights and busy schedules interfere with getting enough sleep, and an unhealthy diet of fast food and junk can rob a teen's energy. Learn the stress signals:

- ✓ Irritability
- ✓ Lack of focus
- ✓ Anger
- ✓ Change in appetite
- ✓ Headaches and stomach aches

Look for what you can control such as finding less stressful outlets for your teen. Communicate by asking what is bothering them and work together to lessen stress.

- 62. Simplify Your Life** – Are you really simplifying your life by spending time to save money or spending money to save time? Spreading yourself too thin is a formula for stress waiting to happen. Here are some ideas to help get you started on making life simpler:

- ✓ You have every right to decide when to say “no” or “yes.” Pleasing people is a good thing, just not all the time.
- ✓ Don't be a slave to communication tools, software or Internet high technology. Keep overhead low. Life can become more balanced if you have time away from cyber toys.
- ✓ Cut down on unnecessary activities like playing chauffeur for your children and their friends. Instead, ask other parents to help out. Playing taxi for your children's activities can be nerve wracking. Ask them to decide which activities they can cut out. Give them some sound reasoning to help with the decision process.
- ✓ Share repetitive tasks with others.
- ✓ Get rid of unnecessary credit cards and other clutter cards you do not use.
- ✓ If you have joined the gym or an organization that you are not benefiting from, resign.

- 63. Desktop Dining** – Some 70% of Americans eat at their desk several times per week. The desk was not designed to be a tabletop. For one thing, it's filled with bacteria. Disinfect once a week. How can you focus on your food when you're answering emails with your sticky fingers on your keyboard? If you don't believe me, turn your keyboard over and check out the blitz of crumbs that fall out.

If you don't get away from your desk to eat outside or take a walk, you're missing an opportunity to get more oxygen to the brain. Try not to be a vending machine vulture. Pack something healthy from home. It's easier on the pocketbook.

Rather than eat alone, eat with a friend. It's an opportunity to interact with colleagues, laugh a bit and relieve stress. Bottom line — don't make eating at your desk a habit.

- 64. Stretching Exercises at Your Desk** – Sitting still at your computer is bad for your body. The way you type and hold the phone may be playing havoc on your bones, muscles and joints. Carpal tunnel and now, tennis elbow, is showing up in the workplace. People are warned about staying sedentary when taking long trips and flights that may cause blood clots. One solution is to break up desk work by doing stretch exercises at your desk.

Try no hands standing up and sitting down, shrug your shoulders up and down, shake out the hands, torso twist for upper body and doing leg extensions are just a few exercises to give your frame a break.

- 65. Delegate** – When you are running on stress overload, delegation is the key. Yes, it's an ideal way to save time and focus on what you should be doing, but knowing when to delegate is a major factor to being successful at it.

Several things such as being a control freak, feeling no one else can do the task as well as you, or you just plain can't give it up, can block you from being a successful delegator.

Instead, texture your time, note which projects can be handled by which person, engage them politely and communicate clearly about what you need. Don't forget to set a deadline for the task to be completed.

- 66. Break Down Time Consuming Tasks** – You have just been handed a project of epic proportion and are feeling overwhelmed. Sound familiar? If you are expected to complete a certain project yourself, to avoid stressing out, break it down to flowchart applications for the following reasons:

- ✓ Cost – Microsoft Office has a built-in flowcharting tool and it's free.
- ✓ Portability – Certain flowcharts are portable among Office documents.
- ✓ Collaboration – Everyone can use the same software tools.
- ✓ Analysis – Inputs and outputs are visual.
- ✓ Capability – Use a flowchart program with a standard set of symbols.

Try doing this next time you are asked to become a team project manager: Set up a flow chart system assigning certain tasks and deadlines to other specialists you want on your team. Meet regularly to track each assignment and brainstorm ways to avoid and hurdle roadblocks. Perhaps some of the assignments should be handled by outsourcing to vendors.

To avoid disharmony, if you remove a project from a team member to outsourcing, have another project ready to take its place.

- 67. Multitasking Madness** – Hurry, hustle and bustle are a regular way of life for many people. Multitasking is defined as an attempt to do simultaneously as many things as possible, as quickly as possible by using as many technologies as possible. We have become multitasking engineers, experts in hand held objects, walking and chewing gum at the same time.

Limiting multitasking is essential to our physical and mental health, not discounting the cost to U.S. economy reaching \$650 billion a year in lost productivity. Psychologists have found evidence of a “response bottleneck” that occurs when the brain is forced to perform too many functions at once.

A prominent educational psychologist told the San Francisco Chronicle, she worries multitasking children might become adults who engage in very quick, but shallow thinking. There is a place for deep thinking. Information is power.

- 68. Get Help to Reduce and Cope with Stress** — Manifestations of excess or poorly-managed stress can vary greatly. When you are continually in stress mode and don't know how to find calmness, ask for help. Some of the danger signals are: sleep disturbances, anxiety, anger, headaches and the most severe, burnout. Mental stress can worsen the intensity of existing disease and even wear down the immune system. If you are faced with unbearable stress, there are resources to help:

- ✓ Check in with your doctor
- ✓ Consider counseling or working with a life coach.
- ✓ Spend time with loved ones and discuss your stress openly.
- ✓ Learn about stress relieving techniques such as meditation and relaxation.

Taking the right action does relieve the powerless feeling from excess stress.

- 69. Avoid Second Hand Stress and Negative People** – When you take on other people's stress as your own, you may suffer from second hand stress. This can affect you mentally, physically and emotionally. You may be an enabler type of person, or perhaps you are rescue oriented and want to help.

If you have ever experienced an addictive child, then you know about excess stress. Perhaps you have a friend that is suffering over a divorce or a lost relationship. There is nothing wrong with feeling compassion for friends and relatives, but you must remember to always take care of yourself.

Develop coping strategies and cut back on taking on stress. Easier said than done? Seek outside help for your teenager, announce you will call your friend once a week rather than once per day and learn to recognize your limitations.

- 70. Take Control of Your Environment** – You can't control everything or everyone, so take control over what you can. Control can have negative or positive connotations: It is not a word associated with spirituality or enlightenment and frequently discounted. The positive side of control can help anyone master their life circumstances rather than letting those circumstances control them.

It's been said the truly successful person can take charge of himself and his environment in a positive way. Trusting the universe and letting go can be useful at times, but it is not a rational principle to apply to all areas of life. Think about your own life and environment. Are there areas over which you have lost control? Do you overspend, overeat and feel helpless about your work or home environment?

Apply three strategies to cure your physical, emotional, financial and spiritual lack of control:

- ✓ Imagine you are already in control.
- ✓ Define those areas of your life that are out of control and envision you are already in control.
- ✓ Don't procrastinate, take immediate action for control.

- 71. Avoid Taboo Conversational Topics** – Try to avoid conversational conflicts. If you get upset talking religion or politics, cross them off your conversational list. If you repeatedly argue about the same subject with the same people, be aware they may be trying to manipulate you or pick a fight. If you are feeling defensive, hurt, stressed or defensive, you are having a conversational conflict.

Stay calm. If you get angry, it lessens your chances of getting away unscathed. Try changing the topic, abruptly or subtly. You can always walk away saying you need another drink or more of that great shrimp. "Restroom" is always an okay getaway. Try using the "Humm" response or "If you say so." These and other opportunities make it easier to change the subject to something positive.

- 72. Face Your Fears** – We all have fears stemming from fear of the dentist, job interviews, fear of heights and on and on. Fear is part of being and part of growing. It creates emotional and physical change throughout your body: a rise in blood pressure, flushing, rapid heart beat and perspiration.

Fear may not feel good, but it can keep you away from harm. Change may cause fear and cause you to take risk to overcome apprehension. Beware of risking too much. This may increase your chances of failure. Ask yourself:

- ✓ Is your fear real or imagination?
- ✓ Start addressing your fear by taking small steps toward reducing it.
- ✓ Try not to focus on the fear itself, but on the process of elimination.
- ✓ Celebrate your accomplishments. Overcoming fear is growth and something to be proud of.

73. How to Compromise – Compromise is a learned behavior. Since we humans are verbal and social, and prefer not to use the survival techniques of the wild, we use compromise and bartering as a settlement of differences. It signals our willingness to work together.

First you must be motivated to negotiate a beneficial solution. Leave any arrogance and bad attitude outside the door. Ask the other party what they would like to see happen. Negotiating is give and take, so be flexible. Finally, no one should leave the discussion feeling like a victim.

74. Think Big Picture – A thoughtful mind is the cornerstone to great ideas. A picture maker always envisions the big picture outcome.

Your built-in beliefs such as thoughts, expectations and feelings help create the experiences you encounter. If you are a brick and mortar person who desires to become an engineer, mentally introduce those beneficial thoughts that allow you to envision and rebuild your life. You are responsible for your thoughts and what they attract into your life. Keep a positive attitude, define your vision and believe you can do it.

75. Be A Problem Solver – One of the most exciting facets of life is the ability to make choices. Some are simple, like what pair of shoes to wear, and some are more difficult, and strain our insight and decision making process. For sure, you can't just react to a problem, you must first rationalize it.

At some point, we all experience those tough problems that stump us and we need a different approach. When this happens, here are a few guidelines to help you out:

- ✓ Recognize a problem exists and is a worthwhile endeavor.
- ✓ Approach the problem with confidence.
- ✓ Understand the problem and the challenges you may encounter to solve it.
- ✓ Is there a prior problem you have solved that you can fall back on? Perhaps you need an even better idea.
- ✓ Explore your options and revise as necessary.
- ✓ After you make your choices, try them out. Persistence pays off.

- 76. Click Yourself Out of the TV Rut** – Many people watch television hour after hour to avoid confronting their depression or problems. Dramas, quiz shows and reality shows flash across the screen while the viewer observes in a daze or nods off from boredom.

There are enjoyable alternatives to the television syndrome. Climb out of that chair and get yourself outside for a short walk. Check out the neighborhood, note the changes. When was the last time you visited a museum? Call a friend and set a date for lunch or dinner, or have coffee at that new café and just enjoy the day. The possibilities are yours for the taking.

- 77. Compassion Is A Gift To Yourself** – The benefits of positively contributing to the lives of others is a powerful force at any age. Compassion was prevalent after 911, as it should have been, but we can't just put it on and slip it off like a pair of jeans. Compassion should begin at childhood with opportunities to help children nurture their compassion and self-esteem, and continue into adulthood.

Ask yourself, am I living my life according to my values and priorities? Am I walking the talk? There are various positive side-effects of enhancing one's compassion. The greater the force of your compassion, the greater your determination confronting hardships and your ability to convert them into positive circumstances. When you are compassionate, you add meaning to your own life.

- 78. Read to Relax** – Nothing says "relaxation" better than a good book. It may be a fascinating account of a journey around the world, a biography from long ago or the latest whodunit, you can lose yourself in the pages and forget about your own problems for awhile.

Whether you do your reading on a sunny beach, lathered in sunscreen, or curled up in an afghan on a cold winter night, reading is a satisfying way to learn and relax.

It's not difficult to find any genre of books nowadays. Shop on the Internet or sip something hot while browsing bookstore offerings.

When you read for pleasure, relaxation, or just to stay informed, you magnify your life.

- 79. Manage Your Anger** – Whenever we're prevented from fulfilling our wishes or forced to do what we don't like, resentment boils into anger and we become unhappy. Removing yourself completely from situations that make you unhappy is impossible because you cannot control everything that happens. However, you can learn ways to manage your patience threshold.

Fact: Problems do not exist outside our minds. When we stop seeing other people as problems, they stop becoming a problem.

Here are five beneficial ways to reduce anger:

1. Step back from the problem to reflect on the big picture.
2. Deep breathing can shift negative energy to a more positive reaction.
3. Vent to a friend or compose a letter you don't intend to mail.
4. Take time to be a good listener and to understand the other person's viewpoint.
5. Avoid cursing and being sucked into a battery of cuss words. Your words may be unforgivable.

- 80. Take Time Out to Do Something You Love** – If you're sitting around feeling like a firecracker set to explode, it's time for an attitude change. Working like crazy doesn't always earn a pat on the back. You need a real and balanced life. Working too much creates plenty of stress. Even if you're a caregiver, you need time away from illness to restore and nurture yourself.

Schedule "me" time on a regular basis. Take a vacation. Have friends over. You don't need to cook an elaborate meal....order pizza. Take a relaxing bath scented with your favorite aromatherapy. Think about releasing those problems you can't possibly solve and focus on the ones you can.

- 81. Join A Support or Community Group** – We all have something to give to others. There are so many souls out there who could use your help. Caring is not all about donating money, it's also about giving people your time and energy. Many lonely seniors would love to chat with someone who will listen, children need Big Brothers and Big Sisters and pet shelters can always use a helping hand.

Help out at the local food bank, run for office or chair the parade committee. The sky is the limit when bringing joy to someone else, and to you.

- 82. Stay In Touch With Your Emotions** – Our inner emotions are forever trying to say something, but so often we don't listen. Not the stomach growling to say we're hungry — we listen to that. Not the feet killing you from standing in line for concert tickets, but when we're about to take a risk and your gut says, "uh-oh." That's when you should listen up.

Countless opportunities arise while your emotions are screaming to warn you, or pushing you to proceed. When you're feeling stressed, take a moment to listen to the voice inside telling you to step back into calmness and listen.

To survive, many must deny their feelings. However, to live fully as adults, we must get back in touch with our emotions and learn ways to communicate them creatively.

- 83. Respect the Differences In Others** – We live in a diverse world where multiculturalism is the norm. To exist peacefully, it's important to respect the differences in others. People who look different or think differently view others as different. The diversities aren't what matters. It's the similarities that are important.

You should not assume you and your friends will agree on everything. If you talk more than you listen, you lose out on the learning experience of hearing a different point of view. Having mutual respect for a difference of opinion can actually expand your mind.

- 84. Envision Your Success** – Success may seem elusive to many. We can never be too thin, too beautiful or too rich. The real measure of success is the confidence you own.

Envision the life you want to live and build your dreams into it. Set your mind to it. Remember, good habits lead to better ones. Build the steps you need to attain success and keep a positive attitude.

You can't always get exactly what you want, but you do learn positive behavior changes. When your wish is answered, state your gratitude and move on to the next success.

- 85. Express Your Creativity** – Creativity means more than art and music. You may never be a Da Vinci, but when it comes to creativity, we all have the tools to express it. Many times we're afraid of our own creativity because it may not measure up to the geniuses of today.

Think about which forms of creativity are enjoyable and fulfilling for you, or focus on a form of creativity you would like to try such as gardening or writing. Self-expression is a wonderful way to feel joyful and confident within. Perhaps your creativity expression is a sense of humor or becoming a child's mentor. All work and no play turns anyone pretty dull. The point is, life is not all about getting things done. Part of your time should be spent expressing yourself to preserve your creative being.

- 86. Play to Your Strengths** – Conventional wisdom encourages us to develop our weaknesses. This is nonsense because you likely will never be more than average in weak areas. Successful people don't waste a lot of time correcting their weaknesses, they devote themselves to playing up their strengths.

We're all very different. In fact, part of that difference means you do certain things better than me, and I do some things better than you. How do you recognize your own aptitude? Chances are tasks that are easy for you and give you the greatest satisfaction are where your talent lies. Self-esteem is built on strengths, not weaknesses.

- 87. Be grateful** – Gratitude is more than saying, “thank you.” Gratefulness is being proud of the decisions you have made and confident those decisions are responsible for the life you have created. Ask yourself if you are truly grateful for what you see in the present and the future of each day.

Complaining is putting up a smoke screen to avoid having to take responsibility for your life and your decisions. Start a stress free new day by fine-tuning your thoughts, feelings and beliefs on what you are grateful for. Positive thoughts give back positive results.

- 88. Taking Action, the Path to Empowerment** – When you are given an opportunity, do you take action or put it on the back burner? Take a look at your life. Are you experiencing a loving relationship, a fulfilling career and great wealth? If not, take a harder look at where you can change. Then open your mind to learning about yourself as you gather the tools to take action.

When you find yourself searching, wanting and hoping, and not taking action to counter the energy going in and around you, you become out of balance. With that comes stress. When you contribute to negative conversation or thoughts, you lose positive energy and create a roadblock to taking action toward empowerment.

Empowerment is an on-going process of personal transformation that leads you to take greater control of your life. Like change, empowerment is not a one time event. It is an on-going process that happens over time. You cannot empower others, but you can empower yourself.

- 89. Power Nap to Good Health** – Power napping can improve mental and physical performance. Everyone, no matter how high strung or stressed, can nap, but the conditions need to be right.

- ✓ Try to nap just after lunch. Late afternoon naps tend to cause a deep sleep and you awaken groggy.
- ✓ Avoid large quantities of caffeine and foods that are sugar and fat heavy, and interfere with a person's ability to fall asleep.
- ✓ An hour before you nap, eat foods high in calcium and protein.

- ✓ Find a clean, relatively dark, quiet place as your nap zone.
- ✓ As you sleep, your temperature drops. Use a light blanket.
- ✓ Set your alarm, relax and prepare to fall asleep.

A 20 minute power nap clears the brain of useless information, and improves memory.

- 90. Schedule Time for Love and Sex** – Studies show people who are partnered or married live longer. People also live even longer if they schedule love making time with their partner. It's a great stress reliever for couples. If you want more intimate time with your lover, you need to focus on making it happen and not keep putting it off.

Schedule sensual dates with great food and lots of candles, plan a weekend getaway and carve out time for intimacy, both of you take a day off work and drive to the beach or the ocean for a leisurely picnic. Making time for more love and sex will always pay off.

- 91. Progressive Muscle Relaxation** – By relaxing and tensing all the muscle groups of the body, you can relieve stress and feel more relaxed in just minutes.

There's no need for special equipment or training. Begin by tensing the muscles of the face, grimacing for 10 seconds, then completely relaxing for 10 seconds. Repeat the steps with the neck, shoulders and so forth. If you are more comfortable beginning relaxation with the feet, try this technique: Curl your toes toward the soles of your feet as hard as you can. Do this for 15 seconds and continue the muscle tensing techniques upwards.

- 92. Regular Medical and Dental Check-ups** – Cut your risk and champion your health. Preventive medicine is just as important as seeing your health care professional when we are having physical problems. Childhood is becoming shorter and shorter, just as obesity is making adulthood shorter and shorter. There are numerous diseases we should all be aware of. Many are avoidable with regular check-ups, proper diet and preventative damage control. Remember, you are your number one asset and know your body better than anyone.

See your dentist and hygienist regularly. Decay and gum disease are prevented by regular cleanings and check-ups. Visiting the dentist is almost a painless experience nowadays. Dentists can identify mouth cancer, jaw and bite problems and suggest ways to enhance mouth hygiene.

Make a commitment to yourself by making your own health a priority and scheduling regular screening tests. An ounce of prevention really is worth a pound of cure.

- 93. Unleash the Power of Now** – If you have read *The Power of Now* by Eckhart Tolle, you are aware the book covers the topic of The Law of Attraction. It teaches one should never dwell on the negative — you get what you think, or your thoughts determine your destiny.

The theory behind The Law of Attraction is to live in an awakened state of consciousness throughout everyday of your life. This is achieved through meditation, techniques for quieting stressful thoughts, living in the present moment and finding a path to live a stress life of grace, ease and positive feelings.

- 94. Lighten Up, Be Happy** – There are degrees of happiness just as there are degrees of unhappiness. You cannot expect to be consistently joyful, but a cheerful attitude is contagious and helps to ward off stress.

The beautiful house, a new car or three figure job rarely bring personal happiness. If so, it's because people were already happy before they attained them. How do you get happy? You get creative. Emotions that surround happiness are confidence, satisfaction, comfort, contentedness, friendship, surroundings and sounds such as music.

There will be times when your affairs are tangled up and the world doesn't seem as bright or forgiving as it once was. This is when you must find your own happiness, perhaps, in others. The power of giving and loving rewards us with irreplaceable happiness.

- 95. Lower Your Financial Debt** – Nowadays it's not unusual to have one or two maxed out credit cards or a late fee charge on your car payment or mortgage. Of course, this can affect your credit score in a negative way. So, how do you fix it? First, start paying down your credit cards and that means not putting any avoidable new charges on them. Pay down the card with the highest interest rate first.

Inquire free of charge into your credit rating and review the information for any incorrect charges or mistakes. Report these to the credit reporting company: Equifax, Experian and TransUnion. Rather than inquire into all three at once, spread them out to every four months throughout the year. Some credit score companies even give tips on how to raise your credit score.

When possible (even if you eat rice and beans for a week), do not be late on your monthly payments. Ask those companies to whom you have made timely payments and are not listed on your credit report, to rate you on the "big three." Your credit score is the interest lifeline to purchasing a home, a car, receiving a small business loan and so much more.

96. Be Flexible – Changing families, values and technologies impels us to work in new and different ways. Flexibility in leadership, family and friendship can be the difference between employees that burn out, relationships that fail and even a successful interview. You may be flexibility challenged if you answer yes to four or more of the following questions:

- ✓ Do you expect others to follow your specific way of working or interacting?
- ✓ Do you believe flexibility may result in work or relationships spinning out of control and misuse of trust?
- ✓ Do you believe employees or family members would take advantage of flexibility decisions and break down the foundation of trust?
- ✓ Are you frequently a clock watcher noting employee arrival and departure time?
- ✓ Are you annoyed with special scheduling requests?

Effective flexibility can lead employees and family members toward meeting timely and specific goals, and increased self-confidence and loyalty.

97. De-clutter Your Space – When your home or office is filled with clutter, the hardest part of reducing it is knowing what is and what isn't clutter. Start with three large bins and five minutes of clutter reduction in each room. Label the bins keep, toss, and charity. Start with a counter or a shelf and gravitate to closets and drawers.

Select an item and, handling it only once, place it in the correct bin. Do this for one week and you'll see progress enough to make you want to keep going. When you have sorted through your clutter, place the "stuff" from the keep bin neatly back into the room.

Once you have completed all de-cluttering, learn to love your stress free space all over again. "We don't need to increase our goods nearly as much as we need to decrease our wants." (Donald Horban)

98. Stimulate Your Mind – Do you know how to entertain a thought without accepting it? Every active mind needs to learn how to be a good host to new ideas. It starts with initiating the entertainment of a new idea. Not one of the 57,000 old ones you had yesterday, but getting rid of the old ideas to make room for the new.

Perhaps it's something that has been on your mind, and you wish to explore it such as filling out the names on the family tree, or learning about that pheasant you've been feeding after he unexpectedly showed up in your yard. Here's what can happen. You start putting these ideas together and suddenly, you have an answer to the engineering dilemma at work. Totally unconnected, but there you are.

Whether you exercise your brain with puzzles, brain songs as memory cues, games, or sitting around the fire solving riddles, learn how entertaining a thought can host new ideas and ease stress.

- 99. Inspire Your Children to Greatness** – There are so many people who invest in their children’s education and allow their own adult minds to vegetate. If you really want your children to do better, give them an incentive and get your own mind in shape. It’s stressful never having enough money to go around, or for your children’s education. Remember, you are their role model. When you invest in yourself, you are investing in your children as well.

Did you know 90 percent of the people that pick up a book to read never get past the first chapter? Audio books and CD’s are readily available and are a great way to pass time while in the car. Anything is a help toward maximizing the enormous potential that lies in your mind.

There is education available to us on all levels. If you haven’t received a high school diploma, begin working toward that goal. Seek information from the Internet. On-line courses are available that offer college credits toward a degree. There’s nothing wrong with working in an honest fast food job, but wouldn’t it be better if you invested in your future and your children’s future as well?

- 100. Your Body Is Your Castle** – Two-thirds of all visits to physicians are for stress-related problems such as heart disease, cancer, digestive upsets, headaches and back pain. Taking care of your body means more than just fastening your seatbelt. Have you ever noticed when you have an argument with your spouse, traffic becomes fiercer and the line at the grocery store seems endless? Having an anger meltdown is not the answer.

To survive, many people deny their feelings. However, to live as stress free as possible, we must allow emotions to surface in a creative way. Manage your anger. Anger is wasted energy. This doesn’t mean you must play paddy-cake with the enemy, but learning self-control can put you far ahead of the game.

- 101. Keep Your Mind Alert** – It is believed if we stimulate our brain, we can recharge our mental batteries and prevent the dreaded loss of memory.

The three types of memory are:

- ✓ Short-term memory – Events that happened in this instance
- ✓ Recent memory – Events that happened recently

✓ Remote memory – Events that happened long ago

Being organized is a way to help you recall important information, but the best way to keep your brain sharp is to exercise it. Regular cardiovascular exercise improves circulation to the brain and sharpens thinking. A good-night's sleep is essential to physical and mental regeneration.

Challenge yourself by managing your stress, staying physically active, eliminating smoking and boosting your education.